ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

by

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The Development of Christian Worship

Christian worship, with roots in the ancient traditions of Israel and modifications by the apostles and earliest followers of Jesus, is central to Christian expression. All Christians all over the world and all throughout history have assembled for worship. Just what did a 1st century worship service look like, and how does it compare to Christian worship today? What existing paradigms for worship did the early Christians acquire from the faith of Israel? What were the core elements of early Christian worship, and why were they important? How did Christian worship develop as communities moved from the 1st to the 2nd centuries and beyond? Could Christian worship be changed, and if so, upon what rationale? Even if adaptation was permissible, were there features that could or should not be changed? How ought one to go about assessing what is appropriate for Christian worship today? Is Christian worship a tradition to be preserved or is the field open to innovation and cultural adaptation? These are some of the questions we will seek to answer in this study.

At the outset, it is worth observing that many of the forms of worship in the Old Testament were not substantially different, at least outwardly, from what one might find in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Sacrifices, temples, altars, incense, purity and sacred times were all common religious expressions in Mesopotamia and the Levant. It was not these elements, in and of themselves, that marked off Israel's worship as unique. Rather, it was the presence of Yahweh himself, the one and only true God, that made Israel's religion unique (Ex. 33:15-16). Yahweh chose to use some of these common elements and transform them for his own purposes.

Worship Before the Time of Jesus

The English word worship, quite literally, means "worth-ship". It means to give worth to something, to give something its true value, to recognize and respect it for the true worth it has.[1] Hence, when we speak of worshipping God, we must understand that at the most fundamental level it is an activity that is about him, not about us. It is not about how we feel when we are doing it, whether or not we enjoy it, what we get out of it, or how it meets our human needs. Worship is about giving God his due.

In the Hebrew Bible, the most basic word for worship is the verb שָׁחָה, which means "to bow down" or "to prostrate" oneself. In the New Testament, the most basic word is the verb προσκυνέω, which means "to

[1] N. Wright, *For All God's Worth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 6.

kiss" or "to prostrate oneself (in order to kiss the feet)". Its fundamental orientation is to express an attitude or gesture of one's complete dependence on or submission to a higher authority figure.[2] Of course, worship, even in the Bible, encompasses a wide range of expressions, both emotionally and physically. Nonetheless, any expression whose defining essence is not compatible with the basic task of giving full worth to God, whatever else it may be, is not worship in the biblical sense.

Before the Patriarchs

In the very earliest periods, worship consisted of ritual actions expressing inward devotion to God. Cain and Abel brought to God offerings, Cain a cereal offering and Abel a first-born from his flock.[3] The Bible does not explain how they knew to bring offerings, but because their offerings are of the same types that later are to be found in the Torah (cf. Lv. 2:1, etc.), divine instruction has often been assumed. Whether or not this is so, the rejection of Cain's sacrifice does not seem to have derived from his choice of a grain offering, since the *minhah* was quite acceptable (cf. Lv. 2).[4] Rather, there seems to have been some attitudinal defiance on Cain's part that rendered his offering unacceptable (cf. Ge. 4:6-7). Later, in the family line of Seth, people began to "call on the name of the LORD" (Ge. 4:26), and in the context of larger narratives describing violence and exploitation, this intercession may well imply the desire for expiation of sin. Still later, when Noah emerged from the ark after the great flood, he built an altar to God, offering on it as a holocaust some of the "pure" animals and birds (Ge. 8:20-21).[5] Pure animals were typically domestic, meaning they held high value for domestic life. Hence, such offerings were not the same as killing a wild animal, which was, so to speak free, but pure animals cost the worshiper dearly. Much later, David would express the same sentiment when he said, "I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" (2 Sa. 24:24). Yahweh smelled the aroma of Noah's offering and reciprocated with the promise never again to destroy the earth by a flood.

These ritual actions by the earliest humans contrast sharply with the false form of worship in the ziggurat at Babel (Ge. 11). The worship of the

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[2] *BDAG* (2000) p. 882.

[3] The "first-born" is a representative of the whole.

[4] Some commentators have assumed that because Cain's sacrifice was not an animal (e.g., was not a "blood" sacrifice) it was unacceptable. However, the levitical code makes clear that grain offerings were, in fact, acceptable. Hence, the rejection of Cain must be established on other grounds.

[5] Whether the distinction between "pure" and "impure" was what was later to be declared as "pure" in the law of Moses, i.e., cattle, sheep, goats, pigeons and doves, is unclear. Most ancient Near Eastern cultures had some such distinction with regard to sacrificial animals.

ancients mentioned previously in intercession, building altars and offering sacrifices focused upon God himself. It was true "worth-ship", the giving to God his full worth. Babel, by contrast, was driven by human concerns: *let us build ourselves a city…so that we may make a name for ourselves* (Ge. 11:4). Babel, in the end, represents self-chosen worship—worship designed to appeal to human desires, human concerns and human exaltation. As Paul would say about some worshipers in his own era, "…these regulations look wise with their self-inspired efforts at worship…but in actual practice they do honor, not to God, but to man's own pride" (Col. 2:23, Phillips).

Thus, from very earliest times some clear principles for proper worship begin to emerge. All worship is not acceptable, and the heart of the worshiper, which God alone sees, is as important as the outward form. Also, worship should express dependence upon and commitment to God. It is appropriate to offer to God valuable things, things that are given at personal cost. Finally, true worship, as the very word implies, must be God-centered, not human-centered. Worship that is driven by human concerns, such as the efforts at Babel, God rejects.

The Patriarchs

Patriarchal worship took a step forward with the institution of God's covenant with Abraham. The appearances of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, his divine promises about the future, and the periodic building of open-air altars by the patriarchs to honor God's calling and theophanies punctuate the Genesis record. Altars marked off sites as sacred space to be honored by succeeding generations. Both Abraham and Jacob built altars at Shechem (Ge. 12:7; 33:20). Both also built altars at Bethel (Ge. 12:8; 13:4; 35:1-7), and here Jacob dreamed of a stairway connecting heaven and earth (Ge. 28:11-22). Later, the ark would reside at Bethel during the period of the judges (Jg. 20:26-28; 21:1-4). Hebron, where Abraham also built an altar, later was the place God instructed David to begin his kingship (Ge. 13:18; 2 Sa. 2:1). Moriah, where Abraham offered up Isaac (Ge. 22:9), would later become the site where God appeared to David (1 Chr. 21:26) and where Solomon built the first temple (cf. 2 Chr. 3:1). Isaac built an altar at Beersheba (Ge. 26:25), and later, Jacob would offer sacrifices there as well (Ge. 46:1).

Hence, the concept of sacred space was added to the concept of sacred ritual. Some sites were marked off as holy. They were distinguished from common space, reserved for repeated acts of worship. Indeed, it is at Moriah that the language of worship specifically begins, when Abraham tells his

servants, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Ge. 22:5).

The Tabernacle

The differentiation between what is sacred from what is profane, the sacrificial offering to God of things of great personal value, the basic orientation that worship is God-centered rather than human-centered, and the sincerity of the heart that must underlie all these expressions carries over into the divine commands to build a worship center. In addition, tabernacle worship was inextricably bound up with the saving, covenant activity of Yahweh, for the tabernacle was a sort of portable Mt. Sinai. Worship, therefore, involved expressing faith in God’s redemptive action (another way of focusing upon God rather than human concerns). It also tended to diffuse the tendency to view worship as a purely personal activity, since the activity of God had collective significance for the people of Israel, indeed for the whole human race! Tabernacle worship involved a *system* (sacred ritual), a *sanctuary* (sacred space), *holy objects* (clothing, altars, wash basins, lamps, tables, and so forth), and *holy time* (Sabbath, annual festivals). Sacrificial worship continues as the very center, though its form was now divinely governed in more detail. God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle “exactly like the pattern I will show you” (Ex. 25:8-9).[6] Sacrificial worship worked to repair and/or maintain the relationship between the people of Israel and Yahweh, or as the New Testament would put it, “The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (He. 9:22).

Still, worship consisted of more than sacrifice. The purity laws and the commandments for godly relationships of faithfulness, grace and mercy brought the concept of obedience and holiness into the daily lives of the people of God. Worship, while it had a center in sacred space and sacred ritual, never was to be disconnected from life itself. In fact, it would become a primary burden of Israel’s prophets to finger such a disconnection as undermining true worship. Further, the festival cycle of Passover, Unleavened Bread, First-fruits, Harvest, Trumpets, Atonement and Booths, not to mention the weekly Sabbath, meant that time, also, was to be divided into sacred and ordinary (Lv. 23; Ex. 20:8-11). It is more than incidental that the date of the exodus from Egypt became the beginning of a new dating system for Israel (Ex. 12:1-2). Sacred times included both penitence,

[6] In fact, the writer of Hebrews understood the “pattern” God showed Moses to be a replica of what actually existed in heaven itself (He. 8:5).

memorial and celebration—solemn assemblies and expressions of rejoicing (Lv. 16; Dt. 12:10-12, 18; Nu. 10:10).

The precise instructions for tabernacle worship were not options: they were regulations to be obeyed. When Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, took it upon themselves to deviate from the established protocol (whether intentionally or otherwise), they died under God's judgment (Lv. 10). When Korah and his companions attempted to usurp the priesthood, they, too, perished under God's judgment (Nu. 16). Later, when an Israelite with all good intent violated the holiness of the ark, he died immediately (2 Sa. 6:6-7; 1 Chr. 13:9-10; 15:11-15). Hence, the forms and objects of worship were not open to indiscriminate change. It was not the prerogative of humans to be innovative or to ignore what forms God had set in place.

The worship pattern given by God to Moses for the people of Israel both includes and expands upon the more primitive forms of the patriarchs and earlier. Basic concepts like *holy ritual*, *holy space* and *holy time* are defined more precisely and regulated more carefully. The people of Israel had been chosen out of all the families of the earth to be God's special people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:3-6). In time, a particular place would be chosen by God in the promised land as the geographical center for this worship, and there God would enshrine his name (Dt. 12). The contrast could hardly have been greater between "the place Yahweh your God will choose" and the tower of Babel, where the people said, "Come, let us build…a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves." The tabernacle was divinely ordered for the nation of God (Israel), while Babel was humanly contrived for the nation of man.

The Temple

The Psalms clearly reflect upon Mt. Zion as the special place God chose for his sanctuary (Ps. 48, 87, 99, 132; see, especially, Ps. 78:65-69). In fact, Yahweh is depicted as traveling with the Israelites from Sinai to Zion (Ps. 68:15-18). David, of course, had wanted to build a permanent temple to symbolize the completion of the conquest of Canaan (2 Sa. 7:1-3). However, God did not allow David this privilege because of his career as a warrior. Instead, the temple was to be constructed by David's son, Solomon, a more peaceful king, since the ideals of peace and rest were higher than the ideals of conquest and war (2 Sa. 7:4-17; 1 Chr. 22:6-10; 28:3). Still, though David was not allowed to build this sanctuary, he prepared extensively for it and set in place a number of developments and innovations that would characterize worship in this sanctuary.

In the first place, the temple was similar though not identical to the tabernacle. To be sure, the temple was a permanent, larger edifice, containing a portico, multiple stories and clerestory windows that the older tabernacle did not have (cf. 1 Kg. 6; 2 Chr. 3). Nonetheless, the basic form remained the same. Like the tabernacle, the temple was constructed of spaces with varying degrees of holiness, including a square Most Holy Place fronted by a rectangular main hall. The temple's primary furnishings, also, were essentially the same as for the tabernacle, including the ark of the covenant, the altar of incense, the menorah and the table for holy bread. The sacrificial system remained in place without substantial change. While it would be left to Solomon to construct this temple, the Chronicler clearly indicates that the architectural features were designed by David (1 Chr. 28) under the direction of the Holy Spirit (1 Chr. 28:12, 19).

Besides delivering to Solomon the divinely inspired architectural plans for the temple, David also divided the Levites into construction crews, gatekeepers and musicians (1 Chr. 23, 26). He divided the priests into 24 orders so they could minister in rotas (1 Chr. 24). He arranged for choirs and orchestras (1 Chr. 25), reminiscent of the singers that were organized when the ark was first brought to Jerusalem (1 Chr. 6:31-47; 15:16-28). If the Psalms are any indication, David's addition of music to temple worship was his most striking innovation.[7] The ongoing tradition of singing religious lyrics accompanied by musical instrumentation also is credited to the prophets Gad and Nathan, who were divinely inspired (cf. 2 Chr. 29:25-30). Other musical leaders also seemed to have been involved in the development of musical forms (cf. 2 Chr. 35:15-16).

The collection of the Psalms is more-or-less the ancient version of the modern hymnal. It consists of prayers set to music for use in temple service. These prayers are of widely varying types, including *hymns* (songs of praise), *laments* (expressions of grief or complaints), *psalms of trust*, *royal psalms* (emphasizing the Davidic king), *expressions of wisdom*, and *liturgies* (antiphonies with call and response). The Hebrew Psalter grew gradually, its final form consisting of five large collections.[8] Some compositions were especially composed for choir (e.g., Psalms 8, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 31, 39,

[7] While considerable knowledge is available concerning the music of Mesopotamia, the biblical references are largely imbedded in Psalm superscriptions, mostly in Psalms connected with David. Some 57 psalms are prefaced with the term *mizmor*, a term whose root indicates "to sing/play with a plucked instrument", cf. D. Foxvog and A. Kilmer, *ISBE* (1986) 3.447.

[8] See the divisions marked out at Psalm 1, 42, 73, 90 and 107. Each of these groups has its own heading, and each ends with a doxology plus the liturgical conclusion "Amen, and amen!" or something comparable. Also, notice that there are other markers that presuppose smaller subsets or collections within the larger whole (e.g., "the prayers of David, son of Jesse, are ended", cf. 72:20).

40, 41, 42, 44, 46, 47, 49, 51, 53, etc.), while others were marked for certain types of instrumental accompaniment (e.g., Psalms 4, 5, 6, 54, 55, 61, 67, 76, etc.), certain known tunes (e.g., Psalms 9, 22, 45, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 69, 75, etc.), special occasions (e.g., Psalms 30, 45) or in memory of some important event (e.g., Psalms 18, 34, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 142). Various musical terms preface the Psalms, and while today we can only guess what they might mean,[9] they obviously intend to direct how the psalm was to be performed in temple worship. While in time the older compositions would become part of the long-standing tradition of the worshipping community, new compositions could added as indicated by the expression "sing…a new song" (cf. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). That this development continued in kind even after the closing of the canonical collection is evident in the extra Psalm at the end of the Septuagint (Psalm 151).[10] In the Qumran collection of Psalms, several exist that were completely unknown until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.[11]

The destruction of the first temple was a divine judgment heralding the failure of temple worship. This failure was not due to neglect of the external forms of temple ritual, but rather, to internal unfaithfulness to Yahweh's covenant. Micah, the first prophet to specifically announce the coming destruction of the temple (Mic. 3:12), was followed by many others. In the first place, when temple worship became ritual without faithful relationship with God, or indeed, ritual without faithful relationships with other Israelites, the form of worship was emptied of any true religious value. Festivals, sacrifices and music did not in themselves constitute true worship, and they could be rejected by God (Am. 5:21-24). Blood rituals, even though required by God, became meaningless if the daily life of the worshiper was not itself an act of faithful devotion to the values and ethics of God (Is. 1:11-17; Ho. 6:6; Mic. 6:6-8). Eventually, Jeremiah would preach a blistering sermon against any temple worship that did not flow out of social justice and exclusive devotion to Yahweh (Je. 7:2-11). When the Israelites flirted with pagan religion, Ezekiel viewed the temple as a place of desecration (Eze. 8:6-18). God indicated that he would slaughter the worshipers who were not faithful to him (Eze.9). He would abandon his temple to prepare for its destruction (Eze. 10:1-5, 18-19; 11:11-24).

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[9] For scholarly attempts to decipher the musical terms, see E. Werner, "Music: Interpretation of Musical References," *IDB* (1962), pp. 459-466,

[10] Psalm 151 is still read by the Eastern Orthodox Church in modern times, though it is not canonical for Protestant Christians or Jews.

[11] M. Abegg, Jr., P. Flint and E. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), pp. 506.

The failure of the teaching office of the priests, also, contributed to the failure of temple worship. In a largely oral society, such as ancient Israel, the reading and teaching of the Torah at the great assemblies was critical. Such instruction was essentially a priestly function (Dt. 33:10; 2 Chr. 17:7-9; Je. 2:8; 18:18; Eze. 7:26). According to the prophets, the priests failed terribly in their teaching responsibility. They allowed their teaching function to be co-opted by bribery, syncretism, drunkenness, sacrilege and insincerity (Mic. 3:11; Ho. 4:4-9; 6:9; Is. 28:7; Zep. 3:4; Je. 2:26-28; 5:31; 6:13; 8:10; Eze. 22:26; Mal. 2:1-8).

After the exile, the reconstitution of temple worship in the 2nd temple period was begun by Zerubbabel (Ezr. 3; 6:13-18). The organization of singers was reconstituted (Ezr. 2:41, 65b; 3:10-11) as was the teaching role of the Levites and priests (Ne. 8:7-8). Ezra, especially, contributed to the revival of the teaching office. He erected a pulpit on a high platform from which the Torah could be read and explained to the whole congregation of Israel (Ne. 8:1-8). Temple worship continued from the time of Zerubabbel until the 2nd temple was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans. Though the temple was temporarily taken over by the Syrian Greeks under Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC, the liberation of the Jews from these pagans and the rededication of the temple ensured that temple worship would go on (1 Maccabees). A refurbishing by Herod the Great did not disrupt temple worship, though political interference in the priesthood by various local kings and Roman governors tainted its reputation, so much so, that the Qumran community rejected the current temple regime as hopelessly corrupt.[12] Nonetheless, the regular temple services were well-established by the time of Jesus.[13]

The Synagogue

The origin of the synagogue is shrouded in ambiguity. What seems reasonably clear is that the synagogue developed during exilic and/or post-exilic times as a consequence of the destruction of the 1st temple. The people of Judea and Jerusalem were evicted and relocated in Babylon, and the question of how to worship *sans* temple became a primary challenge. The Hebrew Bible offers no specific help. Nehemiah 8:1 might describe the context out of which the synagogue arose, even if it is not specifically a clear precedent. Greek inscriptions as early as the 3rd century BC mention

[12] For the history of the priesthood between the Maccabean revolt and the destruction of the 2nd temple, see J. Vanderkam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), pp. 240-490.

[13] For a more thorough description of temple worship in the late 2nd temple period, see J. Rousseau and R. Arav, *Jesus & His World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 296-302.

synagogues among the Diaspora Jews in Egypt,[14] and increasingly there are more and more mentions of synagogues from that time forward. By the time of Jesus, Jerusalem itself had many synagogues existing at the same time as the 2nd temple,[15] and of course, synagogues by that time are known from almost every quarter of Jewish settlement in Palestine, Mesopotamia, Asia, Greece, Italy and North Africa.

Originally, the synagogue was not conceived as a replacement of the temple, since both institutions existed side-by-side for many decades prior to the 2nd temple's destruction. According to an inscription from a Jerusalem synagogue in the 1st century AD, the synagogue was intended as a place for "reciting the Torah and studying the commandments, and as a hotel with chambers and water installations to provide for the needs of itinerants from abroad…"[16] The synagogue served as the schoolhouse (*beth midrash*), house of prayer (*beth tefillah*), meeting house (*beth kenesseth*), and house of judgment (*beth din*) for administering community discipline.[17] The reading of Scripture and prayer were central to the synagogue service, and one of the synagogues in Egypt is described as having a wooden platform (probably patterned after Ezra's) from which the synagogue leader and/or some other person would read. Music in the synagogue continued, but only vocally; instrumental music was forbidden by the rabbis.[18]

Various ancient Jewish sources describe the synagogue service.[19] The meeting opened with a call to "Bless the Lord" followed by the collective chanting of the *Shema* by both leader and people (from Dt. 6:4-9; 11:3-21; Nu. 15:36-41). Prayer took the form of Eighteen Benedictions, which were recited in unison with the congregation standing (hence, called the *Amidah* = "standing"). The benedictions were structured as three opening blessings or praises, twelve petitions and three thanksgivings. There were two readings from the Torah and one from the Prophets.[20] For Palestinian communities, the Scriptures either were read from the Hebrew Bible or offered in paraphrases in the vernacular called Targums (Aramaic). Greek speaking communities read from the Septuagint. A sermon accompanied the readings.

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[14] E. Meyers, *ABD* (1992) VI.252.
[15] The Palestinian Talmud numbers 480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone by the time of Vespasian Caesar, cf. E. Meyers, *ABD* (1992) VI. 252.
[16] E. Meyers, *ABD* (1992) VI.252.
[17] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 457.
[18] V. Matthews, *ABD* (1992) IV.934.
[19] e.g., Philo, *Life of Moses* II.xxxix.215-16; Josephus, *Against Apion* II.175.
[20] There may or may not have been a reading from the Writings, since there is a lack of evidence one way or another.

On festival days, the service concluded with the priestly benediction from Numbers 6:24-26.[21]

The synagogue, of course, was male dominated. Ten males were required to form a synagogue, and women did not count. Lattice barriers separated women from men during the service, or in some cases, women were restricted to balconies or galleries. Women could attend to listen to the service, but they were not allowed to read or study the Torah nor did they recite the *Shema*.[22] There was no precedent for this gender restriction in either tabernacle or temple worship, but it seems to have evolved out of an increasingly rigid patriarchalism.

Synagogue and temple did not exhaust Jewish piety, of course. The faithful Jew recited the *Shema* along with the Ten Commandments daily, morning and evening. Prayer, also, was offered twice each day (some sources say three), once in the morning and once in the afternoon at the time of the temple offering. Meals, also, were preceded by a blessing at the beginning and a thanksgiving at the end.[23]

Jesus and Worship

Jesus left no order for Christian worship. Still, though he did not institute a new system of worship forms, his teaching concerning public and personal piety served to sharpen the definition of true worship as well as set in place priorities that eventually would significantly affect Christian worship. Insofar as all forms of worship are directly related to the object of worship, Christ himself becomes the focused object of worship for Christians. This shift, in the Christian viewpoint, was the first time in history that the object of worship came fully into focus. That object is Jesus himself!

Jesus and Traditional Jewish Worship

Though a layperson, Jesus clearly grew up as an observant Jew in an observant family who attended synagogue and temple (Lk. 2:22, 41). Luke indicates that his attendance at synagogue was κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς (= according to custom). He was conversant with the various religious sects of his day (Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, etc.). He made pilgrimages to Jerusalem to celebrate the *haggim* (pilgrim festivals, such as Passover and Booths, cf. Mt. 26:18; Jn. 2:13, 23; 5:1; 7:10, 14, 37; 10:22). Two

[21] Ferguson, pp. 457-462.

[22] J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, trans. F. and C. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), pp. 359-376; B. Witherington III, *ABD* (1992) VI.957-961; P. Trible, *IDBSup* (1976) pp. 963-966. Synagogues among the Diaspora probably were less restrictive than those in Palestine.

[23] Ferguson, pp. 445-446.

synagogues, Nazareth and Capernaum, are explicitly named as places where Jesus either taught or read Scripture (Mk. 1:21; Lk. 4:15, 31), which in turn implies that he was recognized, at least in these circles, as a gifted speaker and qualified expositor. In addition, he used the temple precincts as sites for public teaching (Mk. 14:49//Mt. 26:55//Lk.22:53).

While no gospel narrative describes Jesus as participating in temple worship, clearly he observed standard Jewish religious customs. For instance, he wore a garment with a hem and tassels in conformity to the Mosaic commandment (Mt. 9:20//Lk. 8:44; Mk. 6:56; Mt. 14:36; cf. Nu. 15:38-40). He had no objection to paying the temple's half-shekel tax (Mt. 17:24-27). He described personal reconciliation with one's opponent as taking precedence over temple offerings, but adds that once reconciliation had been effected, the devotee should proceed with the ritual of offering (Mt. 5:23-24).[24] He attended the temple "at dawn" (Jn. 8:2), the time when pilgrims attended the offering of incense, offered prayers, and prostrated themselves before God. There might be theological reasons for doubting Jesus' personal participation in temple sacrifices, but arguments from historical silence leave this issue unresolved.[25] While Jesus certainly objected to some of the then-current interpretations of Scripture and features of the oral law as rigidly demanded by the Pharisees (Mk. 2:23-28; 3:1-5; 7:1-23; Mt. 19:3-9; etc.), and while he condemned the money-exchangers who turned the Court of the Nations into a bazaar (Mt. 21:12-13//Mk. 11:15-17//Lk. 19:45-46; Jn. 2:13-16), there is no indication of an outright rejection of either temple or synagogue. Though he denounced hypocrisy in temple offerings (Mk. 7:11-13//Mt. 15:3-9; cf. 23:16-22), he did not denounce the temple itself. In fact, on one occasion he urged a leper who had been healed to "[go to the temple and] offer the gift Moses commanded" (Mk. 1:44//Lk. 5:14//Mt. 8:3-4; cf. Lv. 14:10-32). On another occasion, he gave similar instructions to ten lepers (Lk. 17:14). To a Samaritan woman who raised the question about the legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple, Jesus simply replied,

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[24] Matthew's account simply speaks of the "gift" and the "altar", and we should understand this language to refer to gifts offered on the altar of burnt offering at the temple. We have contemporary descriptions of the act of carrying the offering, approaching the altar, and placing the gift on the top of the altar, cf. H. Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount [Hermeneia]* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), p. 222.

[25] Theologically, since Jesus was himself sinless and the perfect Lamb one could argue that it would have been unnecessary—indeed inappropriate—for Jesus to participate in all aspects of temple sacrifice. Offerings for both unintentional (Lv. 4:2; 5:13; Nu. 15:27-29) and intentional sins (cf. Lv. 16:16; Nu. 15:30-31) could hardly have applied to him who was without sin. At the same time, some temple offerings were connected with taking vows, showing spontaneous devotion to God or offering thanks (Lv. 3; Nu. 15:3, 8; Dt. 27:7), and there seems to be no clear reason to suppose that such offerings would have been theologically inappropriate for Jesus. Whether he ever took a vow, we simply don't know, but devotion and thanksgiving seem legitimate possibilities in the life of any pious Jew. In any case, the biblical record is silent about Jesus' participation in temple sacrifice.

"We [Jews] worship what we do know, for salvation is of the Jews" (Jn. 4:22b). One would be hard pressed to find a more positive affirmation of the legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple! While Jesus was accused of many things, he was never perceived as being other than a typical Jewish layperson.[26] Jesus' participation in the traditional forms of Jewish worship is all the more remarkable given the Christian affirmation of his deity. If anyone had the right to operate outside the boundaries of established religion, surely it was Jesus, the incarnation of God!

Jesus' Teachings About Personal and Public Piety

While Jesus participated in the traditional synagogue worship and seems to have affirmed the legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple, he also urged his followers to a higher level of personal piety than was generally expected. Piety was not to be defined merely by Torah intensification of outward observances. Instead, it was inward devotion to God—an intensification of the inward aspects of worship—that counted most (Lk. 18:9-14; 19:7-10; 22:34-40). Especially, Jesus warned against hypocrisy in the midst of outward religious ritual (Mt. 23:25-36).

With respect to prayer, the gospels do not mention whether or not Jesus participated in the traditional times of Jewish daily prayer. The fact that the earliest Christians did so indicates, at the very least, that Jesus would not have been opposed to it (Ac. 3:1; 10:9; cf. 10:3, 30).[27] Jesus' daily prayers are especially emphasized in Luke's Gospel, who tells us that he was praying at his baptism when the Spirit descended like a dove (Lk. 3:21). Often Jesus withdrew to lonely places for private prayer (Lk. 5:16), sometimes in the mountains (Lk. 9:28), sometimes all night long (Lk. 6:12), often in places of seclusion (9:18). Luke's depiction of Jesus in Gethsemene is the most graphic of all the gospels (Lk. 22:39-44). So striking were Jesus' prayers that his disciples asked him to teach them to pray (Lk. 11:1), and he responded with what we call "the Lord's Prayer". This is the prayer that Christians by the end of the century were praying three times each day with the admonition, "Do not pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded 'thus pray ye'," after which follows the text of the Lord's prayer with the

[26] J. Meier, *A Marginal Jew* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 345-349.

[27] By the end of the 1st century, the Lord's Prayer was urged to be offered three times daily, cf. *Didache* 8 (about AD 100). Clement of Alexandria (AD 150?-220?) wrote that many Christians engaged in daily prayer at the third, sixth and ninth hours of each day (9:00am, Noon and 3:00pm), because it coincided with the beginning, middle and close of Christ's passion and reflected the three Persons in the Trinity, cf. *Stromata* VII.vii.

addition of the traditional doxology apparently drawn from 1 Chronicles 29:11-13.[28]

Jesus was very much opposed to treating prayer as a means of earning merit with God (Lk. 18:11-14) or a tool for impressing others (Mt. 23:5). Though some might intentionally be "caught" at the hour of prayer in public places, thus enabling them to put on display their exhibition of holiness, Jesus urged that prayer should be private, to the point and accompanied by a willingness to forgive others (Mt. 6:5-15; Mk. 11:25). He commended faith (Mk. 11:22-24) and persistence in prayer (Lk. 11:5-13) along with humility (Lk. 18:9-14). By addressing God as *Abba* (Mk. 14:36; cf. Ro. 8:14; Ga. 4:6), the child's word for its father,[29] Jesus redirected prayer from externalism, formality and rigidity into intimacy and closeness. His prayers were often spontaneous (e.g., Jn. 11:41-42), but he also was accustomed to the traditional recitation of prayers from the Psalms (e.g., Mt. 27:46; cf. Ps. 22:1).

What was true of prayer was true of all religious expression. Ostentation was in irrevocable conflict with the values of the Lord (Mt. 23:5-12). Meticulous technical religious observances can never displace the much larger concerns of justice, mercy and faithfulness (Mt. 23:23-24). In the giving of offerings, Jesus put more emphasis on how much one left for himself as opposed to the sum of what one gave (Lk. 21:1-4). Almsgiving to impress others would receive no credit from God (Mt. 6:1-4), though generosity to the poor was an expression of true religion (Lk. 12:33-34).

Jesus' Use of Scripture

One of the most obvious features of Jesus' teaching and preaching was his regular appeal to the Hebrew Scriptures. While the fixing of the Hebrew canon was an historical process, by the time of Jesus there seemed to have been a generally accepted consensus about the three major sections, the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings.[30] Jesus regularly used introductory formulae for citing Scripture, such as, "It is written" (Mt. 4:4, 6-7, 10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mk. 7:6; 9:12; 11:17; 14:27, etc.) and "Scripture says" (Mk. 12:10; Lk. 4:21; Jn. 7:38, 42, etc.). Such formulae imply an appeal to authority that Jesus certainly did not accord to the oral tradition.

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[28] There is no clear consensus for the dating of the early Christian writing called *The Didache* (= The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles). Some scholars put it as early as 50-70 AD, but most are more comfortable dating it to around the end of the 1st century, cf. J. Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus*, trans. J. Bowden, C. Burchard and J. Reumann (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), p. 84.

[29] J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. 36-37, 61-68.

[30] R. Beckwith, "Formation of the Hebrew Bible," *Mikra*, ed. J. Mulder and H. Sysling (Peabody, MA: Hendriksen, 2004), pp. 48-49.

Oral tradition, especially by the Pharisees, was believed to hold the same authority as the written Torah.[31] To them, the Torah was a living tradition, not a static collection, and capable of fresh interpretations for each succeeding age. The collection of rabbinical running commentaries on the Torah, the Torah expansions (the so-called "fence" around the Torah consisting of cautionary rules as corollaries to Torah laws), the *Halakah* (regulations about civil and religious law), and the *Haggadah* (those things that were not points of law), made up the oral Torah, which stood alongside the written Torah. Both were believed to be of equal antiquity, handed down by God to Moses at Sinai and transmitted faithfully through the generations.[32] Yet, though Jesus was deeply reverent toward the written Scriptures and in fact interpreted the spirit of those Scriptures at levels higher than anyone had ever before known, he was decidedly negative about the oral Torah. He chose to ignore breaches of oral law (Mk. 7:1-13//Lk. 11:37-41//Mt. 15:1-11). Kosher laws were not the final defining factor for purity (Mk. 7:17-23). Sabbatical laws were not sacrosanct (Mk. 2:23-28//Lk. 6:1-5//Mt. 12:1-8; Mk. 3:1-6//Lk. 6:6-11//Mt. 12:9-14; Lk. 13:10-16; 14:1-4). Hence, while Jesus felt free to dispense with rulings from the oral Torah, he held the written Scriptures in the highest possible esteem, even to the point of declaring that the Scriptures could not be broken (Jn. 10:35) and the law would not fail until all was fulfilled (Mt. 5:18).

Jesus' Prediction of the Temple's End

The temple was the longest enduring symbol of Jewish worship and the presence of Yahweh. It was the center of holiness on earth. Hence, Jesus' prediction that temple worship would be eclipsed was quite controversial. There was not a clear consensus among the Jews of Jesus' day regarding the longevity of the second temple. The community at Qumran, of course, considered the temple to be corrupt and envisioned a new one.[33] Some apocalyptists predicted that God himself would pull down the second temple and produce its replacement (1 Enoch 90:28-29). Others (notably the Sadducees) were reasonably happy with the temple as it was. Thus, Jesus' predictions concerning the end of the second temple were not without precedent, but they would have been vigorously opposed by pro-temple sects.

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[31] Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.10.6 (#297).
[32] D. Russell, *Between the Testaments* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), pp. 63-68.
[33] Both the "Temple Scroll" and the "War Scroll" at Qumran either presuppose or describe a new temple, cf. J. Maier, "Temple," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. L. Schiffman and J. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 2.925-926.

Early in his ministry, Jesus encountered a Samaritan woman who wished to pursue the controversy between the respective temples at Mt. Zion and Mt. Gerizim (Jn. 4:20).[34] He told her that "a time is coming and has now come" when true worship would be on neither mountain, but rather, "in Spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:21-24). In fact, this is the very worship that God seeks from humans! Jesus' statement immediately led to the eschatological issue of the coming of the Messiah. Further, it suggested that the messianic kingdom would be quite different from what was popularly expected. The eclipse of temple worship could only be possible in a messianic context, yet how could the messianic age be associated with the demise of temple worship? In claiming to be that very Messiah, Jesus heralded the effective end of the second temple period (Jn. 4:25-26). As he would say later, "One greater than the temple is here" (Mt. 12:6)!

This private conversation was augmented publicly when Jesus cleansed the temple and predicted that it would be destroyed. With a whip Jesus drove out the money-exchangers in the Court of the Nations (Mk. 11:15-19//Lk. 19:45-46//Mt. 21:12-13; Jn. 2:13-17).[35] At the very least, his action was perceived as an attack on the temple and the "final straw" driving the priests and scribes to seek his death. Christian interpretation of Jesus' action has been varied. Traditionally, probably most Christians have viewed it as a reform effort aimed at cleaning up the external aspects of temple worship without necessarily condemning the temple itself. However, the act may also have been symbolic of the temple's end, especially when taken in conjunction with Jesus' specific statements about a coming destruction of the temple.[36]

Within a few days of the incident, Jesus told his disciples that the temple would be destroyed (Mk. 13:1-2//Lk. 21:5-6//Mt. 24:1-2). Was this merely a prediction more or less theologically neutral, or was it a direct threat of divine action? Earlier in his ministry, right after John described Jesus' cleansing of the temple, Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn. 2:18-22). While John is careful to point out

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[34] The Samaritans, based upon the Deuteronomic passages regarding "the place Yahweh your God will choose" [for his temple], believed that Mt. Gerizim flanking the Shechem pass was this site. It was where Abraham built his first altar (Ge. 12:6) and the Israelites renewed the covenant after crossing the Jordan with Joshua (Jos. 8:33). The text of the Samaritan Pentateuch actually specifies Mt. Gerizim in various places (e.g., Dt. 11:30 and after Ex. 20:17), cf. B. Waltke, *ABD* (1992) V.938.

[35] Of course, this event is depicted at the end of Jesus' ministry in the Synoptics and near the beginning of his ministry in John. For a discussion of this difference, see C. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1987), pp. 170-173.

[36] This is the position of E. P. Sanders, and he argues his case well, cf. E. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 61-76 and W. Herzon II, "Temple Cleansing," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), pp. 817-821.

that Jesus referred to his own body as the temple, and therefore, his cryptic remark pointed toward his own death and resurrection, it is not unlikely that a deeper layer of meaning was still present. If Jesus was himself the true temple—the very incarnation of God (Jn. 1:14)—then the physical second temple would seem to be unnecessary. Certainly the supporters of the second temple understood Jesus to be speaking against the physical edifice, for they brought up this saying at Jesus' trial (Mk. 14:57-58; Mt. 26:60-61). The charge was recalled later at the crucifixion (Mt. 27:40; Mk. 15:29). Further, Jesus' eschatological reference to the "abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24:15//Mk. 13:14) was a direct appeal to the Book of Daniel (cf. Da. 8:11-14; 9:27; 12:11), and while traditional Jewish interpretation had regarded this sacrilege as occurring during the temple's defilement by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC (1 Maccabees 1:54-61; 2 Maccabees 6:1-11), Jesus indicated that the past event did not exhaust the scope of Daniel's prediction. Herod's temple, too, would be desecrated!

Perhaps even more telling is the fact that Jesus' words about the temple's destruction was remembered by early Christians, like Stephen, who also was accused of "speaking against the holy place" (Ac. 6:13). Stephen had preached (or at least some listeners believed he had said) that Jesus would destroy the temple and change the Mosaic customs (Ac. 6:14). Later, at his trial, Stephen would quote Isaiah in saying that God does not live in houses made by men (Ac. 7:47-50). Whatever else Jesus' original words "destroy this temple" may have meant, they seem to have included the idea that the temple era was about to close and a new era was on the horizon. A new temple "not made with hands" was a constituent part of this new future.

Conclusions

While in principle Jesus did not reject either synagogue or temple, he certainly anticipated a new era for worship. Though he participated in the synagogue (and probably the temple), his teachings about personal piety worked to raise the bar for a new level of devotion and spirituality that could not be subsumed under traditional categories. The susceptibility of the external forms of worship to hypocrisy and self-interest garnered especially searing criticisms from Jesus. Acts of piety and prayer, while legitimate expressions of true religion, must issue from true devotion to God and one's neighbor, not from a concern to impress others or even to impress God. External forms of worship without a deep concern for justice, mercy and faithfulness were empty.

Jesus consciously made Scripture central in his teaching. He appealed to it again and again with statements like "the Scripture cannot be broken"

(Jn. 10:35) and "until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen, will be any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Mt. 5:18). Jesus simply lived and breathed the written Scriptures.

Thus, while Jesus left no order for worship, his life and teachings contained factors that would continue to shape the ideals of worship for his followers ever after. Especially, his predictions about the destruction of the second temple, but also, the rebuilding of a temple "without human hands", points to an ongoing temple imagery suggesting the inauguration of something completely new. This new worship in "Spirit and truth" would not be tied to either Mt. Zion or Mt. Gerizim. Early in the apostolic church, Peter would be able to cite Psalm 118:22 and apply it directly to Jesus: *the stone you builders rejected…has become the capstone* (Ac. 4:11). Christ Jesus is himself the new temple in contrast to the old one![37] He is the new tabernacle in which God dwells among his people (Jn. 1:14).

The Church in the Early Apostolic Period

Jesus left a considerable number of unanswered questions for his followers after his resurrection and ascension. He did not leave them with a church order, a worship order, a succession order, or any number of other things that might have been expected. In fact, he did not leave them with a mandate to start a new religion. Instead, he left them with a promise about the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

On the night he was betrayed, in the context of a farewell meal and extended teaching about his departure, Jesus told the twelve that the Holy Spirit would be given to them in his absence, leading them into all truth (Jn. 16:13a), teaching them all things (Jn. 14:26a), and reminding them of all the things he had taught (Jn. 14:26b; 15:26). In their present circumstance, they were not ready to receive full instructions for the future (Jn. 16:12). It would remain for the Holy Spirit to teach them (Jn. 16:13), taking the things of Christ himself and revealing them to the disciples (Jn. 16:13b-15). Further, he told them that they were now being initiated into a new covenant (Mt. 26:28//Mk. 14:24//Lk. 22:20//1 Co. 11:25), the messianic covenant described by Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Je. 31:31-34; Eze. 16:59-63; 34:25-31; 37:26-28). What was most critical was that his disciples obey his teachings, for his teachings were the very teachings of God, the Father (Jn. 14:23-24). Like branches of a vine, they must remain profoundly connected to him (Jn. 15:4-8). In other words, their course for the future must never be severed

[37] G. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), pp. 216-244.

from their relationship to Christ, his teachings while on earth, and the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit that maintained this bond. He warned them that they could expect expulsion from the synagogue. He said that persecution would be so severe that some would even give their lives as martyrs (Jn. 16:2). Nonetheless, he assured them of his presence through the Spirit.

The disciples, for their part, did not understand all this at the time (Jn. 16:17-18). Still, they were assured that later they would receive "whatever they asked in Christ's name" (Jn. 16:23-28; cf. 14:13-14; 15:16). In this context such a word of assurance meant, at the very least, that their unanswered questions would be answered through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

The promise that the Holy Spirit would teach, guide and continually connect the disciples to the risen Lord is fundamental to the nature of Christian worship. While this promise did not cancel the emphases of the past, it made possible the further development of Christian worship under divine guidance.

With a final commission to go into the whole world and proclaim the good news (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:45-47; Jn. 20:21; Ac. 1:8), Jesus returned to the Father (Jn. 16:28). One of his last instructions was that his disciples should return to Jerusalem and wait for the promised Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5), which they did (Lk. 24:52-53; Ac. 1:12-14).

The Two Sacraments Enjoined by the Lord

Though he did not leave a formal order of worship, Jesus did leave for his disciples with two sacraments (rituals in which the outward form or visible sign expresses an inward or invisible reality).[38] One of these he instituted at the Last Supper, where he instructed his disciples to "do this in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19b; 1 Co. 11:24b). His words "whenever you do this" points to the future observance of the covenant meal by his followers (1 Co. 11:25b-26). The other ritual he gave in the great commission, instructing his disciples to baptize those who would come to faith in him (Mt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16). The one ritual was for converts at initiation, the other a repeating ritual for the community.

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[38] The word "sacrament" does not occur in the English Bible, but is derived from the Latin word *sacramentum* or "mystery" used in the Latin Vulgate. The equivalent term in Greek appears about 20 times in Paul's letters, and it refers to the belief that God's redemptive purposes were not fully known until they were revealed in Christ, who was the incarnation of God. Just as Jesus was/is the embodiment of God's redemptive purpose, the two practices he left his followers, baptism and Eucharist, embody the redemptive meaning of his work. They serve as signs pointing toward believers' participation in the new covenant, cf. G. Bromiley, *ISBE* (1988) 4.256-257.

Both rituals had precedents in Judaism, one as a Passover seder meal and the other as a ritual of purification.[39] By the late second temple period, the Passover seder typically included eating unleavened bread, roasted lamb and drinking wine (Jubilees 49), and it was observed not only by Jews but also by Samaritans and possibly the Qumran Community.[40] Both Josephus and Philo offer descriptions of 1st century practice. However, both rituals were transformed by Jesus and his followers into something more than they had been in Jewish practice. The Passover seder looked backward to the redemption from Egypt, while the Last Supper of Jesus (and the subsequent observance of the Lord's Table) looks to the redemption of the cross. The repetition of purifying immersions in Jewish *mikva'ot* (baptismal pools), which were performed for rectifying uncleanness,[41] were transformed into single instances of initiation for new believers.

Hence, whatever other features might occur in Christian worship, whether carried over from either temple or synagogue or developed in new forms by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these two sacraments were to remain as constituent parts. That Christians practiced them from the earliest period is apparent, both from the New Testament and from the writings of the post-apostolic church. Mentions of baptism as a rite of initiation appear frequently in the New Testament (cf. Ac. 2:4; 8:12-13, 36-39; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:14-15, 33; 18:8; 22:16; 19:3-5; 1 Co. 1:13-16; Ro. 6:3-4; Ga. 3:27). Luke's phrase "breaking bread" (Ac. 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11) probably denotes the celebration of the Lord's Table, and Paul's instructions to the Corinthians certainly do so (1 Co. 10:16-17, 21; 11:17-34). By the end of the 1st century, instructions for water baptism and the ongoing practice of the Eucharistic meal is attested widely.[42]

Jewish Christians and the Temple

Two major traditions for worship remained from which the disciples of Jesus could draw, and it should come as no surprise that they drew from

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[39] On the debate about whether or not the Last Supper was a Passover meal, see J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. N. Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), pp. 15-88.

[40] Animal bones that have been part of meals have been unearthed at Qumran, and some scholars have concluded that they are the remnants of Passover seders, cf. B. Bokser, *ABD* (1992) 6.761.

[41] Such Jewish immersions were performed before entering the Temple mount, before making sacrifice, before receiving the benefit of a priestly offering and for ritual impurity caused by nocturnal emissions, sexual intercourse, contact with a corpse, menstruation or childbirth, cf. W. LaSor, "Discovering What Jewish Mikva'ot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism," *BAR* (Jan/Feb 1987), p. 52.

[42] *Didache* VII, IX and X; Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* IV; Justin Martyr, *First Apology* LXV-LXVI; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* V.ii.2-3, etc. Even non-Christians recognized this typical element in Christian worship, for the Roman governor of Bithynia in about AD 112 also mentions the Christian sacred meal in a letter to the Roman Emperior, cf. Pliny, *Letters* X.96.

both. One was the temple, the other the synagogue. To be sure, Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple. Further, the universal finality of his sacrifice on the cross was understood by the early Christians to be a culmination of the sacrificial system itself (He. 9:24-28; 10:1-18; 1 Pe. 3:18). Still, while the temple remained the disciples of Jesus participated in at least some aspects of temple worship. In the first place, the temple was a holy place, a site that God had ordained many centuries earlier as a dwelling-place for his name. It probably was assumed that until God removed it (as he did the first temple in the exile), Jesus' followers would continue to regard it as sacred. We know that this is the place to which they returned after the ascension of the Lord (Lk. 24:53). Here in the temple precincts they remained as they awaited the promised Holy Spirit.[43] Perhaps the memories of the Holy Spirit's earlier movement upon Zechariah (Lk. 1:11), Simeon (Lk. 2:26-27) and Anna (Lk. 2:36-38), all of which happened in the temple, remained in their minds. In any case, it is apparent that they did not reject the temple as a place consecrated to the worship of God.

At Pentecost, the second of the three great *haggim* (pilgrim festivals), pilgrims to the temple were confronted with the phenomena of multiple languages, the miraculous sign that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been given (Ac. 2:4-12). Later Christian tradition placed this event in the "upper room", believed to be in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark.[44] However, in light of Luke 24:53 and the fact that the international observers were pilgrims visiting the temple, the temple courtyard itself seems more likely as a venue for such a large crowd, especially one that may have numbered in the thousands (Ac. 2:41). Further, if some 3000 were baptized, the most likely place for such baptisms would have been the temple *mikva'ot*, of which a number of examples have turned up in the excavations of second temple Jerusalem.[45] Luke's record clearly shows that the early Jerusalem church met regularly in the temple courts as well as private homes (Ac. 2:46). They seem to have observed the times of Jewish prayer in the temple (Ac. 3:1), and on one of these occasions, Peter and John healed a cripple who had staked out his place for begging at one of the temple gates (Ac. 3:2, 10). After his healing, he accompanied Peter and John into the temple courts

[43] Luke also tells us, of course, that they went to an "upper room" (Ac. 1:13). Whether this upper room was in the temple precincts itself or was in a private home, such as Mary's (the traditional view), is unclear. Perhaps they spent their daytimes in the temple area and their evenings in a private upper room.

[44] J. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles [AB]* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 213.

[45] Some 300 water installations are known from the archaeological record, and of them, about 150 are from Jerusalem with about 40 from the excavations near the southern gates of the Temple Mount, cf. R. Reich, "The Great Mikveh Debate," *BAR* (Mar/Apr 1993), p. 52.

for prayer in Solomon's Portico (Ac. 3:8).[46] Still later, this portico was used by the whole company of Christian believers for their meetings (Ac. 5:12). Here, the apostles not only spoke to their own Christian brothers and sisters, but they preached to the temple pilgrims (Ac. 4:1-2), and indeed, this very site was specifically designated by an angel as the place where they should preach (Ac. 5:19-21, 25-26). Using both temple and private homes, they continued to proclaim the gospel of Jesus, the Messiah (Ac. 5:42).

Obviously, God had not put a divine ban on the temple. Not only is this demonstrated by the angel's command that the apostles preach there, but also by the fact that Paul received a vision while praying there (Ac. 22:17-18). To be sure, God instructed Paul to leave Jerusalem, since he would not be accepted there, but later, he had no compunctions about going to the temple with other Jewish Christians to complete his Jewish Nazarite vow, including sacrifices (Ac. 18:18b; 21:23-24a, 26). He performed the necessary rites for ceremonial cleanness (Ac. 21:26; 24:18),[47] and he is very clear that in no way did he either desecrate or speak against the temple (Ac. 24:12, 18; 25:8). He wanted his trip to Jerusalem to be completed on the Feast of Pentecost (Ac. 20:16), the second of the great *haggim* (pilgrim festivals), when pilgrims visited the temple. That many priests had become Christians (Ac. 6:7) and that the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were "zealous for the Torah" (Ac. 21:20) seems compatible with a positive view of the temple as a sacred place and a sacred institution.

Altogether, these references seem to suggest that the early Jewish Christians continued, at least in some measure, to participate in temple worship. To be sure, we should expect that they may have omitted participation in the sacrificial system for atonement. Yom Kippur, the national day of atonement, likewise may have been passed over by Jewish Christians. However, other occasions of temple worship, and especially the occasions for praising God at the great festivals and holy days, were not incompatible with their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Each day began and ended with temple prayer. The end of the week was heralded by Sabbath services in the temple. Jewish time was liturgical time, and there is no reason to suppose that it was obsolete for Christians. If so, they also may have

[46] Located on the east side overlooking the Kidron Valley, this area of the temple was often used as a meeting place for individuals to discuss Scripture before and after various temple rituals. It featured double, white marble columns spanning some 49 feet with a ceiling of paneled cedar, cf. R. Smith, *ABD* (1992) 6.113.

[47] Assuming Paul followed the Torah instructions for completing Nazirite vows, he would have shaved his head and offered the appropriate sacrifices through the temple priests (Lv. 6:13-21).

participated in temple music, including the levitical musical traditions.[48] Certainly early Jewish Christians prayed at the Jewish hours of prayer in the temple. They took vows and completed them in the temple.

At the very least, this continuity/discontinuity with the temple helps explain the early Christian use of liturgy. Liturgy—the set use of music, prayers, psalms, blessings and so forth—was essentially a temple form going back to the time of David. Temple liturgy was replicated to some degree in the synagogue as well, but its origin was in the temple.

The Christian Transformation of Temple Ideas

One must also observed a decided trend toward transforming temple motifs. Stephen's speech to the Sanhedrin recalled Isaiah's words that God cannot be contained in any humanly constructed temple (Ac. 7:48-50; cf. Is. 66:1-2a). While we do not know Stephen's exact words recalling what Jesus said, some of his accusers understood him to say that Jesus would destroy the temple (Ac. 6:14). Paul, likewise, taught that God does not live in temples built by human hands (Ac. 17:24-25). Certainly the potent symbolism of the torn curtain fronting the Most Holy Place must have impressed the early Christians that significant change was coming (Mt. 27:51a//Mk. 15:38//Lk. 23:45b). Even more to the point, the composition of the Book of Hebrews, which is an extended commentary on the sacrificial system in general and Yom Kippur in particular, argues that sacrificial atonement had reached its climax in the "once for all" sacrifice of Jesus for sin. Because of this fulfillment, there remained no further place for temple sacrifices of atonement.

> *Now he [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.* (He. 9:26b)
>
> *Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.* (He. 9:28a)
>
> *The Torah is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.* (He. 10:1)

[48] While we know that such musical traditions existed in the second temple period (though they were immediately rescinded at the destruction of the temple in AD 70), we do not have much specific information. Presumably, the Levites of the second temple took their musical "trade secrets" with them to the grave, E. Werner, *IDB* (1962) 3.459. Their musical training was not insignificant, however, since the Talmud indicates that the training for a Levitical temple singer was an intensive five years, cf. *B. Hullin* 24a.

> *And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* (He. 10:10)
>
> *But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.* (He. 10:12)
>
> *And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.* (He. 10:18)

On this basis, the ideas of the temple and its worship rituals were transformed into a spiritual statement about God, his people, and ongoing Christian worship.

Already, Jesus had implied that he was the cornerstone of a new temple (Mt. 21:42//Mk. 12:10//Lk. 20:17; cf. Ps. 118:22). In the death and resurrection of Jesus, the apostles took seriously that this was the beginning of a new, spiritual sanctuary, and Jesus, himself, was the cornerstone (Ac. 4:10-12; 1 Pe. 2:4-7). The new temple was not built of quarried stone but of human believers, who altogether were constructed into a spiritual house where they served as spiritual priests offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (Phil. 4:18; 1 Pe. 2:5; He. 13:15-16). Just as the temple on Mt. Zion was a dwelling-place for God's Holy Spirit, so now the community of Christians had become the holy temple built up to become the residence of the Spirit (Ep. 2:20-22). In Jesus, the ancient tabernacle of David had been restored (Ac. 15:16-17; cf. Am. 9:11-12), but its inclusiveness was such that Gentiles, not merely Jews, were welcome![49] Whereas formerly the laws excluding various groups meant that temple participation was limited, now even Gentiles were welcomed as intimate members qualified for temple worship (Ep. 2:19; cf. Is. 56:3-8).

Paul, in describing the building of this spiritual temple, saw himself as a master-craftsman laying human "stones" on the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Co. 3:10-11). His language of "gold, silver, costly stones and wood" (1 Co. 3:12) seems to deliberately parallel the building materials used in Solomon's temple (1 Chr. 29:2, especially in the LXX). In the end, this human temple would arise to become "God's temple" in which God lives by

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[49] Interestingly, the Qumran community also interpreted Old Testament passages as referring to the Messiah and a new eschatological, international temple: *this 'place' is the house [they shall build for Him] in the Last Days, as it is written in the book of [Moses: 'A temple of] the LORD are you to prepare with your hands: the LORD will reign forever and ever. …surely his holiness shall be rev[eal]ed there; eternal glory shall ever be apparent there. Strangers shall not again defile it, as they formerly defiled the Temp[le of I]srael through their sins. To that end He has commanded that they build Him a Temple of Adam (or Temple of Humankind), and that in it they sacrifice to Him proper sacrifices.* (4Q174, Col. 3).

the Spirit (1 Co. 3:16). Directly he can say to the Corinthians, "You are that temple" (1 Co. 3:17).[50] Later, Paul adds that "we are the temple of the living God" (2 Co. 6:16-18), where just as in the ancient sanctuary, "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2 Co. 6:16; cf. Lv. 26:11-12; Eze. 37:26-27). As priests in this living temple, God's people are to be set apart as holy (2 Co. 6:17-18; cf. Is. 52:11; Eze. 11:17; 20:34, 41).

In coming to Jesus, believers have come to spiritual Mt. Zion, the holy city, and the full company of God's assembled saints in heaven and earth (He. 12:22-24). Jesus Christ is the great high priest who now ministers in this temple, not in the Most Holy Place of the second temple, but in the "true sanctuary" of heaven itself, where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.

> *The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.* (He. 8:1-2)

In the end, when human history has come to its climax, there will be no temple in the heavenly Jerusalem, because God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Rv. 21:22).

Especially in view of the destruction of the second temple in AD 70, the Christian understanding of the new, spiritual temple could only have taken on even greater meaning. The temple in Jerusalem had come to an end, just as Jesus had predicted. The climax of the sacrificial system implicit in the death of Jesus was finalized by the historical Roman demolition of the edifice for sacrifice. By the end of the 1st century, the temple imagery as the collective people of God was firmly in place.[51]

It is in this context that we should understand why the post-apostolic language of sacrifice and altar was applied to the Lord's Supper. There is a sense in which the Eucharist can be compared to sacrifice. Paul seems to do so when he contrasts the Eucharist with pagan sacrifices, urging the Corinthians that they cannot participate in both (1 Co. 10:18-22). There may be a similar allusion in the statement in Hebrews that Christians "have an

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[50] While it is not immediately apparent in most English translations, the Greek text clearly depicts this temple in corporate terms, since Paul's language, both verbs and pronouns, is plural.

[51] The Epistle of Barnabas (ca. AD 100) says concerning Isaiah's question, "What kind of house will you build for me?" (Is. 66:1), *this is happening now!* (16:1-3), and again, *How? Learn! By receiving the forgiveness of sins and setting our hope on the Name…he leads us into the incorruptible temple* (16:6-9). *This is the spiritual temple built up to the Lord* (16:19).

altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat" (He. 13:10). Later in the church, this language of sacrifice became more specific. Clement (ca. 30-100) could speak of "offerings" that Christ commanded to be offered at fixed times.[52] The *Didache* (ca AD 100) speaks of the Eucharist as "a sacrifice", and ties it directly to Malachi 1:11, 14, a passage that speaks of the sacrificial altar as "the Lord's table" (Mal. 1:7). Irenaeus (ca. 120-202) could speak of the communion elements as an "offering", though the altar and temple are in heaven.[53] Tertullian (ca. 160-230), likewise, could speak of Eucharistic prayers as "sacrificial prayers" and the Eucharist as "participation in the sacrifice".[54] Eventually, such language became common.[55] One should be careful, of course, not to extend this language beyond its proper boundaries. There is a spiritual sense in which the language of altar and sacrifice is applicable to Christian communion, *but not in the literal sense of an actual and repeating slaughter*. Rather, there has been one death, once for all—Christ who died for all men and women on the cross. In this sense, his sacrifice can never be repeated (He. 9:25-26; 10:1-3, 10-18). The Eucharist should never be considered a sacrifice in this sense. However, in a spiritual sense, the Eucharist is bread and wine consecrated by thanksgiving to God, after which it is eaten by the worshipper, just as were certain sacrifices in the Old Testament. So, while the Eucharist can never be a sacrifice in the literal sense, it serves as a symbol of the great, once-for-all sacrifice of Christ himself. Hence, the terms "sacrifice" and "altar" derived from temple worship are acceptable in this limited sense.

Christians and the Synagogue

At the outset, the relationship of Christians to the synagogue is somewhat broader than for the temple, both because synagogues were widely diffused in most parts of the ancient world and because Gentiles sometimes associated themselves with synagogues, even without taking the full step toward becoming circumcised proselytes.[56] Some Gentile Christians

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[52] *1st Clement* XL.

[53] *Against Heresies*, IV.xviii.5-6.

[54] *On Prayer*, xix.

[55] *The Divine Liturgy of James the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord* (throughout the liturgy is replete with the language of sacrifice, altar, etc.). In fact, J. N. D. Kelly, an Oxford University scholar and one of the foremost authorities in the world on patristic literature, can say, "The Eucharist was regarded as the distinctively Christian sacrifice from the closing decade of the first century, if not earlier," cf. J. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), p. 196.

[56] It is widely accepted on the basis of both inscriptional and literary evidence that throughout the Roman world there existed a large class of sympathizers to the Jewish faith (called *phoboumenoi* = those fearing; or *sebomenoi ton theon* = those reverencing God), cf. L. Feldman, "The Omnipresence of the God-Fearers," *BAR* (Sep/Oct 1986), pp. 58-63.

in the New Testament began their faith journey as "God-fearers" and passed directly into the Christian community (cf. Ac. 10:2; 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7).[57] Hence, while temple motifs were theologically transformed by Christians into spiritual categories (from the literal to the symbolic), elements of synagogue worship were to a significant degree borrowed without spiritualizing them. In fact, outward appearance seemed to suggest that Christians were simply another party within the Jewish diversity of religious perspectives (cf. Ac. 24:5).[58]

The pattern of synagogue worship set important precedents for Christian worship. Central to synagogue worship was the reading and exposition of Scripture, and this, in turn, became central for the Christian assemblies. Communal prayer, also, was easily transferred from the synagogues to the churches. Further, synagogues typically had *mikva'ot* for ceremonial water purification (or else were geographically located near some body of water), and Christians practiced baptism. While in general Christians called their meetings by the term *ekklesia* (= church, those called for assembly), on at least one occasion the New Testament itself uses the Greek term *synagoges* with reference to Christian assemblies (Ja. 2:2).[59]

In yet another aspect, the earliest Christian churches seemed to draw their approach to music from the synagogue. While instrumental music was used in temple worship, it was increasingly forbidden in the synagogues by the Pharisaic rabbis. Since instrumental music in Greek and Roman culture was closely associated with pagan religions and spectacles in the amphitheaters, it was banned from the synagogue altogether.[60] On the other hand, members of the Qumran community seemed to have had no inherent opposition to instrumental music. In the *Hodayot* (Thanksgiving Psalms), the poet exclaims, "I will sing praises on the lyre of salvation and to the harp of jo[y…] and the flute of praise without ceasing,"[61] and "With knowledge shall I sing out my music, only for the glory of God, my harp, my lyre for

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[57] In fact, the Jerusalem Bible translation contains a note explaining that the terms in these verses are technical words for admirers and followers of the Jewish nation who stopped short of circumcision, *JB*, 1966, NT).

[58] The term αἵρεσις was the normal word for a Jewish party, cf. *BDAG* (2000) pp. 27-28.

[59] New Testament English translations generally obscure the fact that the term in Ja. 2:2 is "synagogue". They offer renderings like "meeting" (NIV, TEV, Phillips, Weymouth), "assembly" (RSV, KJV, NAB, NASB, ESV), "place of worship" (NEB), "church" (Taylor), though a few retain the reading "synagogue" (JB, JNT, NASBmg, Rotherham).

[60] V. Matthews, *ABD* (1992) IV.934.

[61] 1QH, col. 19.23 in M. Wise, M. Abegg, Jr. & E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), p. 108. See also, T. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, 3rd ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 188.

His holiness established; the flute of my lips will I lift, His law its tuning fork."[62]

The earliest Christian churches seemed to follow the synagogue reluctance concerning instrumental music, preferring vocal music, though there is some ambivalence.[63] Some of this hesitance may have been due to the fact that many early Christians were themselves Pharisees whose provenance was the synagogue (cf. Ac. 15:5; 23:6). In time, considerable debate emerged among later Christians over whether or not instrumental music was acceptable.[64] In the visions of heaven in Revelation, instrumental music clearly has a positive assessment, since it is described in the context of heavenly worship (Rv. 5:8; 14:2; 15:2). Hence, while Paul could extol the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ep. 5:19; Col. 3:16), it is unclear whether or not he would have advocated following the instrumental musical notations in the Psalms. Some, on the basis of his statement that musical instruments were "lifeless" (1 Co. 14:7), would say "no", while others, because of temple practice and the instrumental musical notations in the Psalms themselves, which they feel it hardly likely that Paul would reject, would say "yes". At the very least, it should be assumed that the cognitive meaning of lyrics overshadowed any musical forms, whether vocalized or produced by instruments.

Yet another factor that is at least related to the synagogue is the use of the vernacular. Even in Jerusalem in the earliest period, synagogues were divided into those that used Hebrew/Aramaic (Targums) and those that used Greek (the Septuagint).[65] While Jewish Christians in Palestine might be found in both contexts, in the larger Greco-Roman world the Greek vernacular was nearly universal. The Septuagint became the Bible of Christians, and in fact, the term Septuagint may itself have been a Christian coinage.[66] Further, the extensive quotations of the Septuagint in the New

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[62] 1QS, col. 10.9 in M. Wise, M. Abegg, Jr. & E. Cook, p. 141.

[63] E. Werner, *IDB* (1962) 3.467-469.

[64] Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-220), for instance, says that musical instruments among the pagans were employed for war and pagan festivals and that Christians no longer used them. Instead, they had "one instrument of peace, the word alone by which we honor God." Paradoxically, at the same time he also seems to permit instrumental music based on the psalms of the Old Testament: "Even if you wish to sing and play to the harp or lyre, there is no blame," cf. *The Instructor*, II.iv. In general, however, it is fair to say that the early church fathers were generally negative toward instrumental music for Christian worship, cf. E. Ferguson, *Early Christians Speak: Faith and Life in the First Three Centuries*, 3rd ed. (Abilene, TX: ACU Press, 1999), p. 162, note #31.

[65] In Acts 6:1, the "Hebrews" are distinguished from the "Hellenists", even though both were Jewish. This distinction was probably linguistic and cultural. Hellenists would have had their roots in the dispersion, and while they may have been a minority in Jerusalem, they would have been a majority in most other countries, cf. F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 42.

[66] M. Hengel, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), pp. 25ff.

Testament books gave solid support to this version of the Bible. This, plus the fact that all the documents of the New Testament are themselves written in Greek, meant that Christian worship would follow in the vernacular. Quite early, in ways that were not characteristic of Judaism, the Christians began to translate their Scriptures into the various languages of the world.[67]

Early on, Christians seemed to have been reasonably comfortable worshipping in synagogues.[68] The association of Stephen with the Synagogue of Freedmen in Jerusalem and his subsequent debate with its members implies that he may have attended there (Ac. 6:9-10).[69] James, at the council in Jerusalem, could assume that Christians would be familiar with the Hebrew Bible, since it was "read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (Ac. 15:21). More particularly, Paul in his missionary travels regularly attended synagogue service (Ac. 13:14-15, 42; 14:1; 17:1-3, 10, 16-17; 18:1-4, 19; 19:8), and as a traveling Jew with impeccable credentials (Ac. 22:3; cf. Phil. 3:4-6), he often was called upon to speak. Similarly, Prisca and Aquila met Apollos in a synagogue, where they heard him expound the Scriptures (Ac. 18:26). They hardly would have done so if they had not already been attending the local synagogue in Corinth. Luke uses the identical expression for both Jesus and Paul to describe their regular synagogue attendance, κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς (= according to custom, Lk. 4:16; Ac. 17:2).[70] Even when Paul's message about Jesus caused sufficient tension that he no longer was welcome in the synagogue service, he did not move far away. In Corinth, he moved only as far as "next door" (Ac. 18:6-7). In Capernaum, where Peter had a home used by Christians for worship, it was close by the synagogue.[71]

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[67] The earliest translations were in Syriac, Latin and Coptic, and these versions were followed by translations into Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, and Ethiopic, cf. B. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University, 1968), pp. 67-86.

[68] While many have assumed that Christians immediately transferred worship from Saturday to Sunday and withdrew from the synagogues, David Aune is quite correct in saying that "there is no unambiguous evidence" to support this thesis, cf. *ABD* (1992) VI.979. In fact, there is considerable evidence to the contrary.

[69] This synagogue, judging by its name, probably describes an assembly of Jews originally from outside Palestine, possibly Italy as well as Asia and North Africa. The term "freedmen" implies emancipated slaves, and from Tacitus, we know of some 4000 such slaves that converted to Judaism, *Annals* 2.85.

[70] The Greek expression κατὰ το αὐτὸ in Acts 14:1 can be translated as "together" or as "in the same way" with the nuance of "as usual" (so NIV, Eugene Peterson). If the latter, then here, also, is a comment on the normative practice of synagogue attendance.

[71] Though all are not convinced, there are good reasons for believing that the excavated fisherman's house in Capernaum, modified in the mid-1st century for Christian worship, may have been the home of Simon Peter. Ancient graffiti suggests that the place was used for Christian worship as does the construction of an arch, a new roof, plastering and the disappearance of domestic pottery, cf. L. Hoppe, *The Synagogues and Churches of Ancient Palestine* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994), pp. 81-89 and J. Strange & H. Shanks, "Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?", *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1982), pp. 26-37.

However, though early Christians, particularly Jewish Christians, participated in synagogue worship, they also seemed to have begun exclusively Christian worship on Sunday as well (1 Co. 16:2; Ac. 20:7). The typical Jewish designation for Sunday was "the first day of the week", and Christians used the same vocabulary. In time, the expression "the Lord's Day", a Christian coinage, came to be the preferred designation, and while it is found only once in the New Testament (cf. Rv. 1:10), by the second century it had become the *de facto* term.[72]

The attendance of Christians to the synagogue continued, to greater or lesser degrees, until the aftermath of the 1st and 2nd Jewish revolts. Though the Romans may have considered Christianity to be merely another sect of Judaism,[73] increasingly this opinion was not shared by the mainstream Jewish constituency. During Jesus' own public ministry, some of the Jerusalem synagogues expelled members who accepted Jesus' messiahship (cf. Jn. 9:22; 12:42). Jesus warned his disciples that they could expect such rejection to become more hostile and widespread (cf. Mt. 10:17; 23:34; Mk. 13:9; Lk. 21:12; Jn. 16:2). Early on, several Christian leaders were killed because they were perceived as threats to the Jewish faith and way of life, including Stephen (Ac. 7:57-58; 22:20) and James bar Zebedee (Ac. 12:1-3). The Sanhedrin, using Saul of Tarsus as grand inquisitor, began arresting Jewish Christians (Ac. 8:3; Ga. 1:13), and some of them also were executed (Ac. 26:9-11). James, the brother of Jesus, though his devotion to the Torah and temple was emphasized both in the Bible and extra-biblical sources (Ac. 15:13-21; 21:17-26),[74] still was killed by the Scribes and Pharisees in the late 60s AD.[75] When the 1st Jewish Revolt against Rome broke out in AD 66, the Christians abandoned Jerusalem and the zealot cause, removing themselves to Pella in the Decapolis, thus indicating their lack of sympathy for the patriotic uprising.[76] The Romans, of course, crushed the Jewish revolt within three years, destroying Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70 and

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[72] *Didache* 14:1; Ignatius, *Magnesians* 9:1; cf. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67:7 and *Gospel of Peter* 9:35; 12:50.

[73] This seems to have been the thrust of the judgment of Gallio, Seneca's brother, when he threw out of court the charge of the synagogue against Paul, since it was "a question your law" (Ac. 18:15). As a leading jurist, Gallio's legal opinion was probably typical of Roman perception, cf. B. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 279-280.

[74] James is described in early Christian history as a Nazirite, priest, and constant intercessor in the temple, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.23.4-18.

[75] According to Josephus, James was accused of Torah-violation and delivered over with other Christians for stoning, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 20.9.1. Later, Eusebius said that for his allegiance to Jesus as the Messiah James was thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple Mount, then stoned, and clubbed to death, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.23.16-18.

[76] R. Smith, *ABD* (1992) V.220; Eusebius, *Ecclesicastical History*, III.5.3.

finishing off the last vestige of resistance at Masada within another couple years.

In the aftermath, the synagogue never forgave the Christians for abandoning the Jewish efforts at liberation. Gamaliel's grandson, Rabban Gamaliel II (active AD 80-120), made binding for all observant Jews the "tradition of the fathers", which Jesus had rejected (cf. Mk. 7:9). He introduced into the Eighteen Benedictions of the synagogue service a curse (the *Birkat ha-Minim*) aimed directly at Jewish loyalties other than the party of the Pharisees as well as at Christians: *Let the Nazarenes* [referring to Christians] *and the heretics* [other Jewish parties] *perish as in a moment, let them be blotted out of the book of the living and let them not be written with the righteous.*[77] This curse made it almost impossible for Christians to participate in the synagogue. As the first century closed and the new century began, Christian apologists wrote that the widespread defaming of their faith was to a large degree instigated by their Jewish opponents.[78] With the 2nd Jewish Revolt in the 130s AD, the Jewish constituency adopted Bar Kokhba as a political messiah,[79] and of course, the Christians could hardly have been expected to be supportive. By the close of the 2nd Jewish Revolt, Christian participation in the synagogue had effectively ended.

Biblical Descriptions of Distinctively Christian Worship

While to greater or lesser extent the earliest Christians still participated in both the temple (until its destruction) and the synagogue (until it became impossible to continue), they also began distinctively Christian worship. While such Christian worship was not directly connected to either temple or synagogue, it drew from temple motifs and synagogue patterns, as we have seen already.

Jesus left no formal order of worship, though he did leave two mandates for the sacramental practices of baptism and Eucharist. The earliest Christian worship services in Jerusalem seem to have been somewhat informal and convened on a daily basis:

> *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.* (Ac. 2:42)

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[77] L. Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, trans. R. Guelich (rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), pp. 118-119; Ferguson, pp. 390-391; *Babylonian Talmud Berakoth* XXIXa.
[78] Goppelt, pp. 119-120.
[79] Y. Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba* (New York: Random House, 1971), pp.17-27.

> *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.* (Ac. 2:46-47a)
>
> *They* [Sanhedrin] *were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.* (Ac. 4:2) *On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported… When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer… After they had prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly* (Ac. 4:23-24, 31)
>
> *All the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. …more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.* (Ac. 5:12, 14)
>
> *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.* (Ac. 5:42)

At this early juncture, it is probably fair to say that Christian worship was not yet normalized, that is, that there were as yet no formal principles regulating the service of worship. This is no more than would be expected of a group that had no formal mandate for a worship order. The expression "they broke bread" probably refers to the observance of the Eucharistic meal (Ac. 2:42, 46),[80] and of course, baptisms were conducted for converts (Ac. 2:41). The apostles taught and preached the message of Jesus (Ac. 2:42; 4:2), and communal prayer was offered (Ac. 2:42; 4:24). The fact that they met in the temple courts suggests that they retained the basic concept of sacred space set apart for the worship of God (cf. Ac. 2:46; 5:12, 19-21, 42a), but the fact that they also met in homes implies their confidence that the indwelling of the Spirit sanctified all places where they gathered (Ac. 2:46; 5:42). The fact that the early Christians followed the "teaching of the apostles" (Ac. 2:42) distinguishes Christian allegiance from the teaching of other groups (Pharisees, Essenes, etc.) and implies that Christians believed the Torah had been fulfilled in Jesus.[81] Only after the Christian circle expanded beyond the environs of Jerusalem do we find the nucleus of an order of Christian worship.

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[80] While not all scholars see these phrases as eucharistic (e.g., Haenchen, Conzelmann), most commentators, especially in light of Paul's language of "the bread we break" (cf. 1 Co. 10:16), believe they are eucharistic.

[81] All "teaching" for all Jewish groups presupposes the authoritative application of Scripture to life, especially with respect to the Torah and the traditions. That Christians had their own "teachers", the apostles, places them at variance with the perspective of any other group, cf. Goppelt, pp. 42-45.

Mostly what we find concerning early Christian worship services are bits and pieces. There exists in the New Testament no objective description of an early worship service. When Peter was arrested, "the church was earnestly praying to God for him" in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark (Ac. 12:5, 12). In a gathering of Christians for worship at Antioch, Syria, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned as missionaries (Ac. 13:1-3). At Troas in western Asia Minor, Christians gathered on Sunday evening "to break bread", which implies the eucharistic meal (Ac. 20:7, 11).[82] In this context, Paul taught at length in an upstairs room illuminated by oil lamps (Ac. 20:8-9). In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul could assume that his converts would gather for worship in the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Co. 5:4; 11:18). He also could assume that in their corporate worship they would observe the eucharistic meal (1 Co. 10:16-17; 11:17-34). Their meetings typically would be on Sunday, the first day of the week (1 Co. 16:2). During their worship gatherings, considerable room was afforded for congregational participation in song, instruction, and the expression of spiritual gifts (1 Co. 14:26). Both women and men were allowed to pray and address the congregation, though there were expected patterns of decorum (1 Co. 11:4-5; 14:39-40).

Some corporate, liturgical elements are clearly indicated, such as, "the Thanksgiving" (1 Co. 14:16), "the Amen" (1 Co. 14:16; 2 Co. 1:20), and the closing "Maranatha" (= "Our Lord, come!", 1 Co. 16:22).

> *And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God.* (2 Co. 1:20).

The references to "the thanksgiving" and "the amen" clearly have the definite article in the Greek text, which implies a formal element.[83] *Maranatha* is given in Aramaic. The fact that Paul would give a closing prayer in a language that ordinarily would hardly be understood by Corinthians in the Greek Peloponnesus almost certainly denotes a liturgical element, since otherwise it would have been incomprehensible unless it was a regular part of the service carried over from Palestine.[84] What is true for *Maranatha* is equally true of *Amen*, which is a Hebrew word transliterated

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[82] The genitive absolute in the Greek text almost certainly refers to a liturgical gathering, cf. Fitzmyer, p. 669.

[83] In other words, Paul refers not merely to some incidental or spontaneous "thanksgiving" and "amen," but rather to τὸ ἀμὴν (*the* amen) and τῇ εὐχαριστίᾳ (*the* thanksgiving). Unfortunately, the NIV omits the definite article, thus obscuring the liturgical framework.

[84] R. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 32. That the *maranatha* a liturgical element in the worship service is reinforced by the fact that it appears later as such about the turn of the century, cf. *Didache* 10, where it appears as part of the conclusion to the eucharistic meal.

into Greek (and eventually, into English). Similarly, the word *'Abba* in addressing God, the Aramaic word for father, goes back to Jesus' prayers and the Lord's Prayer (cf. Mk. 14:36; Ro. 8:15; Ga. 4:6). The most natural context in which a Greco-Roman Christian in Italy or Asia Minor would employ the Aramaic word *'Abba* would be in reciting the Lord's prayer.

The widespread use of doxologies in the New Testament—standardized formulae offering praise to God—may well have been taken from worship settings (Ro. 16:27; Ga. 1:5; 1 Ti. 1:17; 6:16; 1 Pe. 5:11; Jude 25; Rv. 1:6; 7:12; 19:1).[85] Doxologies typically begin with "Blessed be…" and are directed toward God. Typically they end with "Amen" (Ro. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Ga. 1:5; Ep. 3:21; Phi. 4:20; 1 Ti. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Ti. 4:18; He. 13:21; 1 Pe. 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pe. 3:18). Often they are consciously Trinitarian (Ep. 1:3; 3:21; Ro. 16:27; He. 13:21; Jude 25; Rv. 5:13). Most naturally, such doxologies would have come at the conclusion of prayer. Similarly, New Testament benedictions—parting words of blessing upon God's people—may also have been drawn from early Christian worship settings (e.g., 2 Co. 13:14).

Other bits and pieces of evidence highlight music and singing. While we have no direct evidence about the use of musical instruments one way or another, it is possible if not likely that the early Christians did not use them, following synagogue practice, where they were banned. Still, vocal music clearly held a prominent place in Christian worship. Paul can assume that in Corinthian worship one of the expressions offered to the church would be "a hymn" (1 Co. 14:26). In Ephesus and Colossae, he can refer to "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Ep. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Psalms would have included antiphonal singing (cf. Ezra 3:11; Ne. 12:24, 31), drawn from temple and synagogue, and hymns may have been original compositions, at least if Paul's reference to hymns is analogous to similar references by his contemporary Philo.[86] James can urge joyful Christians to "sing songs of praise" (Ja. 5:13), and while they were not exactly in a worship service, Paul and Silas sang in the midnight darkness of the Philippian jail (Ac. 16:25). Many scholars have suggested that the poetic forms of various New Testament passages may themselves have been derived from early Christians hymns. Luke's Gospel contains several: the *Magnificat* (Lk. 1:46-55), the

[85] In Jewish services, doxologies were recited at the end of hymns, at the end of prayers, and frequently, after the mention of God's name. They are associated with the cups of wine in the Passover seder and with the construction of booths for the Feast of Booths, cf. J. Hempel, *IDB* (1962) 1.867.

[86] Philo (died ca. AD 50) speaks of hymns among Jewish groups as occasions when one of the company stands up and "sings a hymn to God, either a new one which he has himself composed, or an old one by an earlier composer. The others follow one by one in fitting order, while all listen in complete silence, except when they have to sing the refrains and responses," *De vita contemplativa,* 80, cited in Martin, p. 40.

Benedictus (Lk. 1:68-79), the *Gloria in excelsis* (Lk. 2:14) and the *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk. 2:29-32). The Book of Revelation contains several more (Rv. 4:8, 11; 5:9-10, 12, 13; 7:10, 12; 11:15, 17-18; 15:3-4; 22:17). All these parallel very closely the ancient psalms, and most scholars agree that they follow to a large measure the style of the Eighteen Benedictions of the temple and synagogue service.[87] Later, these same compositions would be taken up in the liturgical use of the post-apostolic church.[88]

In addition to the poetic compositions more generally recognized as early Christian hymns, one should also recognize various passages in the Pauline literature that well may be fragments of early Christian hymns (Ep. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Ti. 1:17; 3:16; 6:15-16; 2 Ti. 2:11-13). In particular, Paul's citation in Ephesians 5:14 is prefaced with the words, "Wherefore he [or "it] says…"

> *Wake up, O sleeper,*
> *rise from the dead,*
> *and Christ will shine on you.*

We might suppose that Paul is here quoting from the Old Testament, but in fact, he is not. Most scholars agree with the ancient opinion of Origen (AD 185-254) and Theodoret (5th century) that this is a fragment of a Christian hymn, possibly sung in the context of Christian baptism.[89]

In general, it is fair to say that these fragments, if indeed they are from the hymnody of the apostolic church, focus upon the central issues of the gospel itself—deeply held truths like the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the messiahship and lordship of Jesus, the worthiness of God to be glorified, the Christian hope and so forth. None of them seem to give substantial attention to the psychological self of the worshipper. The center, just as with the ancient worshippers of the Old Testament, is the worth-ship of God, especially as mediated through his Son, Christ Jesus the Lord.

In his Corinthian correspondence, Paul addresses at length the free participation of worshippers in offering expressions of verbal spiritual gifts. While he mentions in passing a short list of possibilities ("a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation", cf. 1 Co. 14:26), his larger discussion focuses upon the gifts of tongues-speaking, the

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[87] M. Bichsel, *ABD* (1992) III.350.

[88] Such references occur in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, a compilation of directives concerning early church teaching and worship and derived from various sources and periods. Some of them probably go back to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, some perhaps even earlier, others later.

[89] M. Barth, *Ephesians 4-6 [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 574-575. The metaphors of sleep, death and light are particularly appropriate in a baptismal context, cf. Martin, p. 48.

interpretation of tongues-speaking and prophecy. Whether or not such free offerings were typical or atypical of 1st century churches is not immediately clear, since such expressions are not described in any of his other letters. However, there are indications by Luke that such expressions may have been more widespread than generally acknowledged (cf. Ac. 10:44-46; 11:27-28; 19:6; 20:23; 21:10-11).[90] Among the Corinthians, the gift of tongues-speaking seems to have been elevated as the supreme gift, and Paul is at some pains to show that it is only one among a number of spiritual gifts, not better than the others (1 Co. 12:4-31). Further, he points out that in public worship tongues-speaking requires special guidelines, since it is a gift that may not immediately be understood by the listeners (1 Co. 14:1-5). His guidelines proceed from the basic premise that what is unintelligible can hardly be edifying to the church (1 Co. 14:6-12, 14-19). Hence, any public use of tongues must be accompanied by an interpretation for the edification of the assembly (1 Co. 14:13, 27); otherwise, the one so gifted is required to remain silent in public. Further, there are limits for such expressions in a given worship service, "two—or at the most three" (1 Co. 14:27, 29). Also, under the rubric that things should be done "in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Co. 14:32-33, 40), Paul does not allow two people to be speaking at the same time, whether in intelligible or unintelligible language (1 Co. 14:27, 30). Speakers must be "one at a time" and "in turn". The basic rule that there should be no more than one person speaking at a time extends even to those who are not speaking in tongues, since Paul forbids women to interrupt the service of worship by calling out to their husbands (1 Co. 14:34-35).[91] Presumably, this basic approach also would apply to any other verbal expressions in the worship service other than those parts that may have been spoken collectively in unison (i.e., the Amen, etc.).

If the evidence of the New Testament letters is any indication, then the apostolic church was a preaching, teaching, believing and confessing community, that is to say, its very center was the content of its faith. It is likely that the reference to Timothy's "good confession in the presence of many witnesses" refers to his confession of faith at the time of his baptism

[90] This subject, of course, has been a lightning rod since the birth of Pentecostalism about a century ago. Pentecostals and charismatics, working against a perceived formalism in the traditional churches, tend to argue that such expressions are normal and should be regularly expected in public worship. Non-Pentecostals and non-charismatics, reacting against what they perceive to be extremism, tend to argue that such expressions are more exceptional. Some even go so far as to argue that such gifts necessarily disappeared with the fixing of the New Testament canon. It is beyond the scope of this study to follow these arguments here, but see the insightful approach of F. Bruner, *A Theology of the Holy Spirit: The Pentecostal Experience and the New Testament Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

[91] The assumption is often that women, as in the synagogue, were segregated from the men during worship.

(1 Ti. 6:12),[92] and Paul's reference to the Corinthians' confession of the gospel may be analogous (2 Co. 9:13).[93] The documents of the New Testament are filled with such confessions. Typical in this regard is the introductory clause of 1 Timothy 3:16, "And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness…" (NASB). Many such confessions are short:

> *Jesus is Lord!* (1 Co. 12:3; Romans 10:9)
>
> *There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.* (1 Co. 8:6).
>
> *Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, [and] he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures…* (1 Co. 15:3-4)
>
> *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Ro. 5:8b)

Such confessions define what it meant to be Christian, for as Paul said, "This is what we preach, and this is what you believed" (1 Co. 15:11). Peter spoke for them all when he declared the unique and exclusive Christian message: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved* (Ac. 4:12). The "truth of the gospel" was a standard consciously upheld and protected (Ro. 16:17; Ga. 1:8-9; 2:14; 1 Th. 2:13). Those who departed from this standard were sharply rebuked (2 Co. 11:3-4; Ga. 1:6-7; 1 Ti. 6:3-5), and those who touted another message were cut off (1 Co. 5:3-5; 2 Th. 3:6; 1 Ti. 1:19-20; 2 Jn 9-11).

This is not to say, of course, that there was no diversity among Christians. Rather, it is to say that the early Christians had a core of faith, they knew what it was, and they refused to allow it to be altered. Some Christians were Torah observant, while other Christians were not—and this diversity was permitted. Liberty was granted over various scruples concerning diet and the observance of holy days (Ro. 14). Paul could say that he "became all things to all men", whether they were Jews under the Torah or whether they were others not under Torah (1 Co. 9:19-23), but these areas were never the core. The core itself, on the other hand, had to remain intact, and there was a sacred duty to preserve it without change. It was the "pattern of sound teaching" (2 Ti. 1:13), "the faith that was once for

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[92] L. Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy [AB]* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2001), p. 307.
[93] V. Furnish, *II Corinthians [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 444-445.

all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). It was what was "received" and "passed on" (1 Co. 11:23; 15:1, 3; 2 Th. 2:15).

How was this core passed on? Primarily through the public reading of Scripture and through preaching, forms that passed from the synagogue into the churches.

> *Devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.* (1 Ti. 4:13)
>
> *The elders who direct the affairs of the church are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.* (1 Ti. 5:17)
>
> *After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea.* (Col. 4:16)
>
> *I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers.* (1 Th. 5:27)
>
> *Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it…* (Rv. 1:3, ESV)

Preaching could take the form of evangelism, where people were called to repent and believe the good news (Ac. 2:38; 3:19; 5:21, 42; 13:1; 1 Ti. 3:2). It could take the form of prophecy, that is, words for "strengthening, encouragement and comfort" (1 Co. 14:3). It could take the form of teaching, which doubtless included exposition, instruction and exhortation (Ac. 2:42; 18:11; 20:7, 11; Col. 1:28; 1 Ti. 4:13; 2 Ti. 3:16; Tit. 2:7-8). Behind apostles and prophets, teachers are ranked as the third most important leadership gift in the church (1 Co. 12:28).

Finally, there is the collection of gifts. While the Jewish system provided for a tithing structure to support the temple, the Levites and priests, and various charitable concerns, Christians had no such structure. Still, they were concerned to be stewards of their God-given resources. On more than one occasion, Christians helped support Paul in his missionary endeavors (Phil. 4:15-16), and other church leaders were supported as well (1 Co. 9:5-12a). Paul was not averse to tactfully asking for such support (Ro. 15:24, 28-29). Beyond this, relief efforts, especially during times of economic distress, were undertaken by Christians to help each other (Ac. 11:27-30). Paul urged his constituent churches to participate in such relief work (Ro. 15:25-27; Ac.

24:17; Ga. 2:10; 2 Co. 8-9). His advice to the Corinthians was probably typical in this regard:

> *Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.* (1 Co. 16:1-3)

Obviously, Paul could assume that the Corinthian Christians would be meeting together on Sunday, and during their worship service, a collection of funds would be made. His ethic was that Christians with means should be "generous and willing to share" (1 Ti. 6:18; Ga. 6:10).

In summary, the central elements of Christian worship that come to us from the New Testament are: the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist; public reading of Scripture, teaching and preaching; hymn-singing; communal prayer; opportunity for free expression of spiritual gifts; liturgical elements like the Thanksgiving, the Amen, the Maranatha, doxologies and blessings; the confession of faith; the collection of offerings. What did a 1st century worship service look like and how was it ordered? With no biblical description, it would be presumptuous to attempt precision or to assume that Christian worship in Italy, Greece, Asia Minor and Palestine was identical. Nonetheless, the above elements seem to be widely attested.

Times and Places of Christian Worship

The concepts of sacred time and sacred space, central to Old Testament worship, were carried over into Christian worship, yet with considerable development beyond what was practiced in the Second Temple Period. In the first place, as with Jewish worship, Christians worshipped weekly. While in the earliest period they also may have attended the synagogue on Saturday, rather quickly they developed worship times on Sunday, the day of Jesus' resurrection (Ac. 20:7; 1 Co. 16:1-2; Rv. 1:10). Following the pattern of the synagogue, Christians developed worshipping communities throughout the world rather than depending upon a single site, such as, the Jerusalem temple.

It is often assumed that Christians abandoned the Sabbath almost immediately, but this is hardly the case. As we already have seen, participation in the synagogue continued until around the turn of the century. Still, Christians also worshipped on Sunday in a service that was uniquely

their own. Several religious and social factors affected this "first day of the week". In the first place, all four gospels agree that it was the day Jesus rose from the dead (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1). Sunday also was the day the Spirit descended at Pentecost (Ac. 2:1). Only because Christians were perceived by the Romans to be a sect of Judaism did they have the liberty to meet as often as weekly. Pagan worship was largely the activity of individuals who did not worship together in a formal, community service, except on annual festivals in honor of a deified emperor. In any case, Rome did not permit regular meetings of voluntary associations more than once per month in the effort to control seditious groups. The Jews, because their religion was legally recognized by Rome, were granted an exception. Christians, so long as they were perceived as a sect of Judaism, benefited by this exception.[94] Still, the fact that they met in private homes rather than in a temple with a statue might raise suspicions, and Paul warned the Corinthians about expected decorum during Christian worship in deference to the empire's "messengers", the scouts who sniffed out seditious meetings and reported on them to the authorities (1 Co. 11:10).[95] Further, Sunday was not a day of rest in Rome, but a normal workday.[96] Hence, unlike for the Sabbath, Christians could only meet at awkward hours, either very early or very late. At Troas, Paul attended a service of Christian worship that lasted virtually all night long (Ac. 20:7, 11). Early in the 2nd century (about AD 112), Pliny's letter to Emperor Trajan says the Christian habit was to meet "on a certain fixed day before it was light".[97]

Other references from about the same period substantiate that Christian worship was regularly on Sunday. Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) writes, "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place…"[98] An even earlier work, the *Didache* (ca. AD 100), says, "And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks…"[99] Ignatius (died ca. AD 110), similarly, speaks of Christians as "no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him…"[100]

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[94] O. Robinson, *The Criminal Law of Ancient Rome* (London: Duckworth, 1995), p. 80.

[95] Traditionally, the word αγγελος (= messenger) in this passage has been translated "angels", leading to endless speculation about what Paul may have meant. Bruce Winter has offered good reason for interpreting this passage as referring to the imperial spies, who were called by the same name, cf. B. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 136-138.

[96] D. Aune, *ABD* (1992) VI.979.

[97] Pliny, *Letters,* x.96.7. That this reference is to Sunday is almost assured, since if it were referring to Saturday, which was a recognized Jewish day for worship, they would not have needed to meet so early.

[98] *First Apology*, LXVII.3.

[99] *Didache* 14.1.

[100] *Magnesians,* 9.1

Since the early 2nd century, almost all Christians have gathered for worship on Sunday.[101]

As to places for worship, the early Christians made use of a variety of venues. Already we have seen that in Jerusalem they gathered in the temple precincts, while in various parts of the world they attended the synagogues. What became even more common was the use of homes. Christians accommodated the social structure of the Greco-Roman *oikonomia* (household community) to worship settings. Such communities were large, socially cohesive units comprised of a number of families, usually under the authority of the senior male of the principal family. Often, such communities shared in common employment, either agriculture or mercantile enterprises, and lived on the same estate. The household consisted of families, friends, clients, free persons and slaves.[102] The conversion of entire households doubtless facilitated the use of such estates as venues for Christian worship (Ac. 10:1-48; 16:13-15, 31-34; 18:8; 1 Co. 1:16). By the time Paul was writing letters at the mid-century mark, already he could name several homes where Christians customarily gathered for worship (Ro. 16:4-5, 14, 15, 23; 1 Co. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2). Of course, Paul was creative enough to use other facilities if they were available. In Ephesus, he utilized a public lecture hall, for instance (Ac. 19:9), but this seems to have been more the exception than the rule.

Archaeologically, a most famous house church has surfaced in recent years, the fisherman's home in Capernaum. Near the synagogue, archaeologists examined three superimposed structures, an octagonal-shaped building (5th century AD), under it yet an earlier structure (late 4th century AD, and beneath it a fisherman's residence (1st century AD). Octagonal buildings in the Byzantine era were memorial churches, that is, built on sites to commemorate an ancient tradition.[103] This one was constructed as concentric octagon (an octagon within an octagon). The inner octagon

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[101] Primary exceptions are Jewish Christians (Messianic Jews) and Seventh Day Adventists. Jewish Christians may belong to a Jewish Christian synagogue and worship on Saturday following the traditional form of the synagogue service (with Christianizing elements) as well as observing the other holy days in the Jewish calendar (as fulfilled in Jesus), cf. R. Robinson, *The Messianic Movement: A Field Guide for Evangelical Christians* (San Francisco, CA: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2005), p. 25. Seventh Day Adventists, following the teachings of William Miller (1830s), Ellen G. White and others, advocate that sabbatarianism is the mark of the true church, cf. *EDT* (1984) pp. 15-16. In history, other sabbatarian movements have surfaced in the Eastern Church (4th century), the Irish Church (6th century) and some Reformation groups (7th Day Baptists, 17th century). Some Adventists go so far, on the basis of Rv. 14:9ff., to assert that the observance of Sunday is nothing less than the mark of the beast, *EDT* (1984) p. 963.

[102] D. Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament: A Sociological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), pp. 79-86.

[103] Another octagonal church is Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, constructed by Constantine in the 4th century.

featured an apse oriented toward the east and a baptistry on the east side of the apse dating to about the middle of the 5th century. Beneath this church was yet another building dating to the late 4th century, this one also a church, judging from the graffiti (e.g., "Lord Jesus Christ help thy servant…", "Christ have mercy", etched crosses on the walls, etc.). Some of the graffiti was in Greek, but one inscription was in Hebrew, possibly suggesting a Jewish-Christian community. This church had a central hall with an atrium and an arch over the center of the hall. In turn, it was constructed of yet an earlier existing house that dated to the Early Roman Period (ca. 63 BC and later). Sometime in the 1st century, the house was modified with plastered floors, ceiling and walls in a single room (very unusual for ancient Capernaum). At the time the room was plastered the pottery changed from domestic (cooking pots, bowls, pitchers, etc.) to only storage jars and oil lamps. Obviously, people were no longer using this room for preparing and eating food. In the Early Roman Period, the only houses that were so plastered were buildings intended for public gatherings (plaster aids in reflecting light from oil lamps and improves better illumination). Once again, graffiti marks the room as one used by Christians (e.g., "Lord", "Christ", etc.).[104] One particularly intriguing inscription may even contain the name of Peter, though this is not entirely clear.[105] In the end, the name of Peter notwithstanding, the house in Capernaum may be one of the oldest house churches in existence, and while certainty cannot be obtained, circumstantial evidence suggests that it may have been the home of the big fisherman.[106]

Buildings used for Christian worship continued to be built. According to Eusebius (ca. AD 260-340), a large Christian church existed in Jerusalem prior to the Second Jewish Revolt (AD 135).[107] In putting down the revolt, the Romans destroyed all significant buildings and rebuilt the city, so no remains are expected to be found. Mostly at this early period, Christians in the Mediterranean met in the large courtyards typical of the Greco-Roman *oikonomia* (household).[108] In Rome, Christians met in the catacombs, not only to celebrate memorial services for their dead, but to share in the

[104] Altogether, the inscriptions consist of 111 in Greek, 9 in Aramaic, 6 or more in a Syriac alphabet, 2 in Latin and 1 in Hebrew.
[105] Some excavators believe they have found the name "Peter" in two inscriptions, but the legibility of the inscriptions is poor, and at best this conclusion is marginal.
[106] J. Strange & H. Shanks, "Has the House Where Jesus Stayed in Capernaum Been Found?", *BAR* (Nov/Dec 1982) pp. 26-37 and J. McRay, *Archaeology & the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), p. 164-166.
[107] *Demonstratio evangelica*, 3, 5, 108 as cited in Hoppe, p. 62.
[108] Goppelt, p. 204.

Eucharist.[109] One of the earliest Christian churches outside Palestine has been discovered in Dura-Europos on the Euphrates River (ca. AD 232-3). It was adapted from a home, and the walls were painted with scenes from the Old Testament and the Gospels.[110] Another from about the same period is currently being excavated in Megiddo, Israel.[111] By the 3rd century, a veritable building boom of Christian churches occurred in most major Palestinian cities, and under Constantine, in the 4th century, even more were constructed, including the famous Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem.[112] Typically, such churches were oriented toward the east and took the basic form of the Roman basilica, which was patterned after the Roman patrician home. The single religious symbol at this early period was the cross, and it began appearing in Christian worship settings before the end of the 1st century.[113] In time, the addition of transepts made the basilica style into a cruciform shape, creating a distinctly Christian architecture. More than 130 of the churches in ancient Palestine were built with an apse for the communion altar. About a third of the excavated churches have a narthex, separating then interior holy space from the outside world. Hence, the first three centuries of Christianity saw Christian worship settings shift from caves, synagogues and private homes to structures built specifically for worship.[114]

Post-Apostolic Descriptions of Christian Worship

The earliest direct descriptions of a Christian worship service, paradoxically enough, come to us from early writings external to the New Testament.

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[109] K. Curtis and C. Thiede, eds., *From Christ to Constantine: the Trial and Testimony of the Early Church* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1991), p. 37.

[110] T. Dowley, ed., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,f 1977), p. 58.

[111] As of this writing, not too much can be concluded about this site other than it dates to about the mid-3rd century. Because it is from a period when Christianity was outlawed, excavators are reluctant to use the word "church", since Christians did not have public buildings as such at this time. However, mosaics of fish (an early Christian symbol) and an inscription that unambiguously refers to Jesus Christ as God places the building squarely within an early Christian context, cf. S. Wilson, "Site May Be 3rd-Century Place of Christian Worship," *washingtonpost.com* (www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/06/AR2005110600478….).

[112] Hoppe, p. 62.

[113] H. Dinkler, 'Zur Geschichte des Kreuzessymbols,' *ZThK*, 48 (1951), p. 148ff. as cited in Goppelt, p. 205. The famous acrostic from Pompeii (destroyed in the erruption of Mt. Vesuvius in AD 79) features the word *Paternoster* in Latin (= Our Father) in the form of a cross along with the symbols of alpha and omega, cf. K. Curtis and C. Thiede, p. 39.

[114] Hoppe, pp. 63-66.

The Didache

Probably the earliest of these descriptions is from the *Didache* (the longer title being *The Teachings of the Lord through the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles*), a compendium of various instructions by an unknown Christian from about AD 100.[115] Teachings about the general order of Christian worship are as follows:

> *And on the Lord's own day gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. And let no man, having his dispute with his fellow, join your assembly until they have been reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be defiled; for this sacrifice it is that was spoken of by the Lord: 'In every place and at every time offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the nations.'*[116]

Several noteworthy features are to be found in this short description. First, as we already have seen, Christian worship was on Sunday, "the Lord's own day". Central to this worship was the celebration of the Eucharist, which is described by the language of sacrifice. In fact, the writer in the *Didache* connects Paul's language of "the Lord's table" (1 Co. 10:21) with the Old Testament prophet's language of "the Lord's table" (Mal. 1:7).[117] He seems to suggest that the prediction by Malachi that this sacrifice was to be "among the nations" has its consummate fulfillment in the Christian Eucharist celebrated by Gentile Christians! Following Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount about reconciliation with one's fellow prior to approaching the altar of God (Mt. 5:23-24), he urges Christians to reconciliation prior to the eucharistic meal in order for their sacrifice to be "pure", the very thing urged by Malachi. Further, the Christian meal should be preceded by "first confessing your transgressions", in keeping with Paul's instruction to the Corinthians (1 Co. 11:28-32).

Though not described in the context of a worship service, the compiler of the *Didache* also offers additional instructions concerning baptism, the Eucharist and itinerant apostles and prophets. Baptism, in agreement with Matthew 28:19, is to be conducted "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". It is to be in "living (= running) water", language that draws both from Jewish tradition, in which *mikva'ot* were to be

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[115] Scholars offer dates for the *Didache* from as early as about AD 60 to AD 125, but the time about the turn of the century is generally accepted, cf. D. Aune, *ABD* (1992) VI.976.

[116] *Didache* 14 as cited in J. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (1891 rpt. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), p. 128.

[117] The language of Paul and the language of Malachi are identical in the LXX.

constructed so as to provide running water, and Christian tradition, where Jesus used a pun when he spoke of "living water" (Jn. 4:10). Water other than running water was acceptable for baptism if necessary, and baptism by pouring was acceptable if immersion was not convenient. A day or two of fasting was recommended for the baptismal candidate.[118]

The celebration of the Eucharist is attended with two liturgical prayers, one for the cup and the other for the bread (and curiously, the order of cup first and then bread is reversed from Paul's order in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26). They are:

> *We give thee thanks, O our Father, for thy holy vine of thy son David, which thou madest known unto us through thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory forever and ever.*
>
> *We give thee thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which thou didst make known unto us through thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory forever and ever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom; for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever and ever.*[119]

Once again, a collage of both Old and New Testament passages converge in these prayers, ranging from the pedigree of David to Jesus' claims, "I am the true vine" (Jn. 15:1, 5). The repeating phrase, "Thine is the glory forever and ever", is typical of several New Testament doxologies, while the reference to the gathering of the broken bread scattered upon the mountains is an oblique reference to the feeding of the 5000, when Jesus commanded his apostles to gather up the fragments (Mt. 14:20//Mk. 6:43//Lk. 9:17//Jn. 6:12-13). It is hardly to be doubted that the miracle of feeding the 5000 was firmly connected in the teachings of Jesus to eating the "bread from heaven" (Jn. 6:26-59). That Jesus commanded his apostles to "gather the pieces that are left over…[that] nothing be wasted" seems to symbolize the apostolic mission to the nations of the world. Here also, for the first time, is a requirement that the Eucharist is reserved for those who have been previously baptized. This description of the Eucharist, while it is couched in the language of sacrifice, clearly is marked in the *Didache* as "spiritual food and drink", just as Paul similarly spoke of "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink" (1 Co. 10:3-4). Even the ancient Israelites in the desert had received communion of a sort, for the rock from which the water gushed was a type of Christ.

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[118] *Didache* 7.
[119] *Didache* 9 as cited in Lightfoot, p. 126.

After the celebration of the Eucharist, yet another liturgical prayer is offered:

> *We give thee thanks, Holy Father, for thy holy name, which thou has made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which thou made known unto us through thy Son, Jesus; thine is the glory forever and ever. Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to thee; but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through thy Son. Before all things we give thee thanks that thou art powerful; thine is the glory forever and ever. Remember, Lord, thy church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in thy love; and gather it together from the four winds—even the church which has been sanctified—into thy kingdom which thou has prepared for it; for thine is the power and the glory forever and ever. May grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any man is holy, let him come; if any man is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen![120]*

Clearly, the major temple motif of the Old Testament—a dwellingplace for the holy name of God—has been fulfilled in a spiritual way in the community of Christian believers, who now have received God's name tabernacled in their hearts. The liturgical responses of *Hosanna*, *Maranatha* and *Amen* round off the prayer.

Finally, the instructions regarding itinerant apostles and prophets regulated their length of stay and any requests for money. Such traveling Christians must not stay more than two or three days, and any requests for money were signs of a false prophet. Itinerants deserved food, but they must not take advantage of their position.[121] They clearly were given the freedom to speak in the name of the Lord, but there were controls set in place to test their authenticity as well.

The Letter of Pliny, the Younger

Another very early description of Christian worship from nearly the same time as the *Didache* appears in a letter from Pliny, the Governor of Bithynia, to Trajan, the Roman Emperor.[122] The value of this description is partly because it was composed by an outsider. Pliny was concerned about his method of prosecuting Christians, whose religion was not legal (now that Christians were distinguished from Jews). His province along the south coast

[120] *Didache* 10 as cited in Lightfoot, pp. 126-127.
[121] *Didache* 11-13.
[122] Scholarly conclusions about the dates for the letters between Pliny and Trajan range from AD 108-112.

of the Black Sea had been exposed to the Christian message at least since the composition of 1 Peter in the New Testament (cf. 1 Pe. 1:1). He wrote to Emperor Trajan, explaining his methods of interrogation, torture and execution, to which the emperor replied that his course of action was proper. However, Trajan also set forth that Christians were not to be sought out, but only prosecuted if they were formally accused—and anonymous charges were not to be entertained.[123] In this correspondence, Pliny offered a brief description of Christian worship:

> *They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath* (sacramentum) *not to commit any wicked deed, but to abstain from all fraud, theft and adultery, never to break their word, or deny a trust when called upon to honor it; after which it was their custom to separate and then meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.*[124]

Once again, several features are prominent in this description. First, Christians met on a fixed day, probably Sunday. Because Sunday was an ordinary work day, they were compelled to meet in the pre-dawn darkness. The early morning service contained both hymn-singing and sacred commitment. The hymns were directed to Christ, recognizing him as divine. Possibly the *sacramentum* was a baptismal vow or possibly the Eucharist itself, or perhaps it simply refers to prayers in general.[125] Later, possibly that same evening after their days work was completed, they assembled again, this time more clearly to celebrate the Eucharist. From this suggestion, some have suggested that the morning worship was a "service of the Word", while the evening service was a "service of communion".

Services Described by Justin Martyr

A few decades later (ca. AD 155), Justin Martyr, a Christian apologist, offered two contributions concerning Christian worship. The first describes a baptismal service followed by the Eucharist. Here, after the baptism, the newly baptized convert joins the assembly of worshippers, where prayer is offered and commitments are made to be "keepers of the commandments". After the prayers, the kiss of peace is exchanged by congregational members, and the leader presents to the congregation the elements of the communion service.

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[123] Pliny, *Letters*, 10.97.
[124] Pliny, *Letters*, 10.96.
[125] D. Aune, *ABD* (1992) VI.977.

> *There is then brought up to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying, "Amen." This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to* ***γένοιτο*** [so be it]. *And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.*[126]

In explaining the communion, Justin says the food is called **Εὐχαριστία** (= the Eucharist, the thanksgiving), and only baptized believers are allowed to participate. The bread and wine signify the flesh and blood of Jesus following the explanation of the Lord at the last supper, "This is my body" and "This is my blood".[127]

Justin's second description of worship is similar in kind:

> *And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying, "Amen"; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows, and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it*

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[126] *1st Apology*, 65.

[127] *1st Apology*, 66. Justin's language that "…the food which is blessed…is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh" has been claimed by Roman Catholics to support transubstantiation, Lutherans to support consubstantiation, and the Reformed Church to support the real presence of Christ. The theology about the language of "flesh and blood" is beyond the scope of this study, but the insights in M. Thurian, *The Mystery of the Eucharist: an Ecumenical Approach*, trans. E. Chisholm (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) are helpful, where he argues for a profound reality of the presence of Christ that is more than symbolic, see especially pp. 62-63.

> *is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For he was crucified on the day before that of Saturn* [Saturday]*; and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun* [Sunday]*, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, he taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.*[128]

As with other post-apostolic references, the day of worship is Sunday. Prominent in the service are the readings of Scripture, where the writings of the apostles are listed alongside the writings from the Old Testament. The fact that the Scriptural readings are "as long as time permits" may be an intentional contrast with St. Paul's restrictions on spontaneous gifts of prophecy or tongues. Paul restricts these two gifts to "two, or at the most, three" times in a given worship service (1 Co. 14:27, 29). Scripture, however, clearly takes precedent. The leader bases his exhortation on the Scriptural passages read, and the sermon is followed by communion. In both Justin's descriptions, elements of the communion are carried by the deacons to brothers and sisters who were not able to attend. The service concludes with an offertory where gifts are given for the support of the poor or others in need. While the office of deacon is familiar from the New Testament, the title of "president" seems unusual. Perhaps this refers to the bishop or elder or pastor, since he presides over the communion.

Various other fragments pertaining to early Christian worship are scattered throughout the writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, but those given above are the most complete. Altogether, the surviving accounts describe the major components of Christian worship to be Scripture reading, preaching, singing, praying, the Eucharist and giving.[129]

Perspectives and Conclusions

One of the fundamental questions to be answered concerning the development of worship is whether later Christians were: 1) bound by what the early church said and did, or 2) free to follow directions the early church set. In other words, was the form of worship static or dynamic? *In a sense, both answers are possible at the same time.* With respect to the gospel itself and the theology of the apostolic church, there seems to be no room for development or innovation. The internal content of the Christian message was fixed. The "faith once delivered to the saints" must be maintained, upheld and unchanged. On the other hand, the external forms of worship

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[128] *1st Apology*, 68.
[129] E. Ferguson, *Early Christians Speak*, pp. 83-84.

show marked development, and both the history of this development from temple and synagogue to distinctively Christian worship as well as the teaching of Jesus concerning the guidance of the Holy Spirit seems to allow progress. Still, even if the possibility of development is permitted, it remains to ask what it was that could be changed and/or developed and what it was that should remain unchanged.

In general, Christians have maintained that the central elements dating from the earliest descriptions of Christian worship should remain: Scripture reading, preaching, singing, prayer, baptism, the Eucharist and giving. However, they have allowed development in the external form of each of these components so long as the internal content was protected. Scriptures originally read in Aramaic or Greek could be translated into the vernacular and read in other languages, for instance. The canon of Scripture controlled the content of what was read, but the translation of Scripture allowed freedom for cross-cultural communication. Baptisms, which originally were conducted by immersion in open water courses or in Jewish *miqva'ot* with running water, could also be conducted by pouring if necessary and in still water when running water was not available. Architecture could be adapted from existing domestic forms into ecclesiastical forms, and eventually, into structures that were exclusively and distinctively Christian. The use of symbols, both visual (*chi rho*, *paternoster*, cross, fish) and acted out (the sign of the cross), became cultural marks. The church calendar, in conscious imitation of the ancient Jewish liturgical calendar, was expanded by the 4th century from the earlier celebrations of Easter and Pentecost to include Good Friday, Maundy Thursday, Palm Sunday, and eventually, Lent, Christmas and Advent. The Eastern Church celebrated Epiphany, January 6th, as the anniversary of Christ's birth and baptism, and the Western Church eventually adopted Epiphany as well, though to commemorate the revealing of Jesus to the Gentiles symbolized in the visit of the magi. They fixed the date of Christmas on December 25th. After Constantine declared Sunday to be a holiday (holy day), Christians were increasingly free to develop the Sunday worship service to a degree that was not possible before.[130]

Church Music as a Window to Development

Clearly, the development Christian worship forms did not cease with the post-apostolic era. Various features of worship continued to be shaped by both internal and external forces. It is beyond the scope of this study to

[130] M. Smith, "Worship and the Christian Year," *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. T. Dowley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 146-147.

trace all these avenues of development through two millennia, but a brief survey of one will serve as a paradigm illustrating the trend. Church music is an excellent case in point.

The oldest notated Christian hymn is in Greek and dates to about the 2nd or 3rd century AD. Called the Oxyrhynchus Hymn, it is composed as a chant with allusions to Ps. 93:3-4; 148:4 (the waters praising God) and Ps. 19:1-2 (the heavens and the stars praising God). The direct references to Father, Son and Holy Ghost are clearly orthodox, and the punctuated "Amens" at the ends of the verses reflect a Hellenistic structure.

> (πρυ)πανηω σιγά τω μηδ' ἄστρα φαέσφορα λειπέσθων
> ποταμῶν ροθίων πᾶσαι υμνούντων δ'ημῶν
> πατέρα χ'υἱὸν χ'ἅγιον πνεῦμα πᾶσαι δυνάμεις ἐπιφωνούντων
> ἀμην, ἀμην
> κράτος αἶνος δωτῆρι νόνῳ πάντων ἀγαθῶν
> ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν
>
> …all splendid creations of God…must not keep silent, nor shall the light-bearing stars remain behind…
> All waves of thundering steams shall praise our Father and Son and Holy Ghost,all powers shall join in: Amen, Amen!
> Rule and Praise (and Glory) to the sole Giver of all good.
> Amen, Amen.[131]

How such hymns were performed is not entirely clear, though it is likely that they were offered as solos. In the earliest period, vocal music seems to have been generally preferred over instrumental music, and some of the church fathers show a decided negativity toward musical instruments, especially because instrumental music was typical of the pagan theater, circus and licentious female musical productions. (The modern idea of "crossover" music would quite definitely have been frowned upon.) Some Christians began to hold wild vigils using instrumental music to honor martyrs, and the church fathers were scandalized.[132] Also, it must be remembered that in this period literacy was not universal; there was no mechanism for the mass production of anything written, let alone music. Change came slowly.

In time, with the rise of monasticism, organized choral chants by the Christian monks in Palestine and Egypt developed and spread elsewhere. By the time of Constantine, some fixed formulae were in general use in the

[131] E. Werner, *IDB* (1962) 3.468.
[132] E. Werner, *IDB* (1962) 3.469.

churches, including the dialogue beginning with the words, "Lift up your hearts…" and the hymn beginning with "Holy, holy, holy."[133] The western church slowly continued to develop its music, while the eastern church did not. Ambrose of Milan (AD 339-397) was the first to introduce community hymn-singing within church worship.[134] He developed an antiphonal chant that would be used for several more centuries in the churches.[135] His best known hymn was *Veni, Redemptor Gentium*.

> *From God the Father He proceeds,*
> *To God the Father back He speeds:*
> *Proceeds—as far as very hell:*
> *Speeds back—to light ineffable.*
>
> *O equal to the Father, Thou!*
> *Gird on Thy fleshly mantle now*
> *The weakness of our mortal state*
> *With deathless might invigorate.*

The influential Augustine, who in turn was influenced by Ambrose and baptized by him in AD 387, was won over to the western perspective concerning church music. One account says that the two spontaneously composed and sang the *Te Deum Laudamus* ("We Praise Thee O God") at Augustine's baptism.

Over the years, the eastern church maintained its liturgical chant with little change, but the western church expanded music greatly.[136] The monastic communities, who practiced the seven periods of daily prayer,[137] included singing as part of daily worship, usually solos or chants sung in unison, but sometimes with the congregation repeating a refrain or singing in antiphony, where the congregation was divided into two choirs and sang alternate halves of a psalm.[138] Church music was the only written music, and it was generally performed by monks. (Popular music, by contrast, was

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[133] M. Smith, "Worship and the Christian Year," *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. T. Dowley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 144. These fixed phrases still occupy a prominent place in the liturgies of the *Book of Common Prayer* in such expressions as, "Lift up your hearts" (leader). "We lift them up to the Lord" (people), and "Holy, holy, holy, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory."

[134] M. Smith, "Ambrose of Milan," *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. T. Dowley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 140.

[135] D. Severance, "Ambrose: Potent Leader yet Servant of Christ," *Glimpses* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute), Issue #26.

[136] E. Werner, *IDB* (1962) 3.469.

[137] Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline.

[138] M. Smith, "Christian Ascetics and Monks," *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. T. Dowley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 216.

played by ear.) Church music was clearly sacred and easily distinguishable from the popular, secular music of the day. In fact, because some Byzantine, Syrian and Armenian churches began using "nonscriptural" texts for hymns (that is, free Christian compositions not taken directly from the Bible), Canon 59 of the Council of Laodecia (AD 360-381) proscribed nonscriptural texts (though this rule was frequently violated).

Plainsong, music without strict meter and with no accompaniment, dominated church music. Gregory I (AD 540-604) organized the so-called Gregorian chant, church music consisting of stately and solemn monotones without harmony or polyphony. The chants had no strict time values and no instrumentation (only males—priests and choir—were allowed to sing). By the 7th-10th centuries, the organ gradually was accepted.[139] By the 10th century, the custom arose of singing parallel melodies at different pitches (usually in parallel fifths). By the 12th century, church musicians were experimenting with counterpoint (two voices singing different melodies at the same time).[140] By the 13th century Christians were singing in canons or rounds, where the song was sung uniformly by different voices entering at different points. This, in turn, prepared the way for polyphonic music (music with many different voices in many parts). The tenor (*tenere*) sang the plainsong melody, a traditional tune of longstanding. Below him was a lower voice (*basus*), and above him was a higher voice (*altus*). In time, specially composed pieces were allowed that were not based upon a traditional plainsong tune from the past.[141] For the most part, church music still was performed by choirs, the cultural descendants of the monks in the abbeys and monasteries of ancient times. Such choirs did not lead the congregation in singing, but rather, performed music to which the congregation listened. Still, church musicians on the eve of the Reformation had begun some daring innovations in which secular tunes were sometimes employed with Christian lyrics!

The Protestant Reformation ushered in a whole new set of dynamics. The pre-Reformation leader, Jan Hus (ca. 1372-1415), issued the first "Protestant" hymnbook in the Bohemian language.[142] Luther, who himself

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[139] D. Severance, "Sing and Made Melody to God," *Glimpses* (Worchester, PA: Christian History Institute), Issue #25.

[140] This singing of parallel melodies separated by fifths sometimes produced discordant sounds, such as, a diminished fifth (an E natural against a B flat). This discord was labeled by medieval musicians as the *diabolus* (= the devil's noise). In plainsong, musicians compensated for this discord by allowing a sharpened seventh and a flattened seventh in the same piece, cf. E. Routley, *Music Leadership in the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1967), pp. 17-19.

[141] Routley, pp. 20-21.

[142] Hus, the Czech reformer, predated Luther by about a century, so he was not a Protestant in the classical sense, though his theology was very much like what would come later.

was a musician, saw music as an avenue to express the Christian's direct access to God, an access that had been obscured by the medieval theology of church hierarchy.[143] Hence, he advocated hymn-singing, not merely by the clergy, but by the whole congregation, although he did not forbid choirs. As often as not, the melodies for Lutheran hymns were secular tunes adopted and adapted to church use.[144] Congregational singing was reborn in the Reformation.

In Geneva, John Calvin was neither a musician nor an artist. In contrast to Luther, who urged the flowering of music by both choir and congregation, Calvin was a disciplinarian who forbade choirs altogether and banned from Christian worship all music that could not be sung in unison by the entire congregation and without instrumental accompaniment. He allowed no hymns unless the lyrics were taken from the Bible (i.e., no free Christian compositions). However, when he permitted Louis Bourgeois and Clement Marot to collaborate on translating psalms into meter and music, they combined their skills to produce some enduring congregational hymns. The goal was to create a tune for each of the 150 Psalms, and the best known of these tunes is still sung from the *Old 100th*.[145] In the end, however, Calvin became disenfranchised with Bourgeois and Marot, and it was Lutheran church music that ended up with the most enduring quality.[146] Many Lutheran tunes still are well-known and widely sung.[147] In Germany, perhaps the most prolific composer of Christian music in the classical style was Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). Most of his works were explicitly biblical, and his stated goal was to produce "well-regulated church music to the glory of God." He set a personal goal (and accomplished it!) of producing a different cantata every week during one three year stretch, which included not only writing the music, but rehearsing it and performing it! Though many of his compositions have been lost, of those that remain there survives in Bach's own hand the abbreviations "J.J." at the beginning

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[143] Luther stated, "With all my heart I would extol the precious gift of God in the noble art of music… Music is to be praised as second only to the Word of God because by her all the emotions are swayed," cf. D. Severance, "Sing and Made Melody to God," *Glimpses* (Worchester, PA: Christian History Institute), Issue #25.

[144] Legend has it that Luther quipped, "Why should the devil have all the good tunes?" Whether he actually said it or not, certainly his approach was consonant with such a sentiment.

[145] In hymn books, designations such as *Old 30th* or *Old 100th* or *Old 124th*, etc., still refer to the mid-16th century hymns designed for the psalm of that number. Perhaps the most widely known of these tunes, the *Old 100th*, is still sung as the tune for the Doxology, which is taken from the Genevan Psalter of AD 1551.

[146] Routley, pp. 23-28.

[147] Examples include: *Nun danket* (Now Thank We All Our God), *Lobe den Herren* (Praise to the Lord, the Almighty), *Ein' feste Burg* (A Mighty Fortress) and *Herzlich tut mich Verlangen* (O Sacred Head Now Wounded).

and "S.D.G." at the end (Latin for *Jesu Juva* = Jesus Help Me! and *Soli Deo Gloria* = To the Glory of God Alone!).[148]

Post-Reformation church music continued to develop. When Christians from England visited Geneva and returned, they attempted to replicate the Genevan style of music at home, but found it too difficult for Englishmen. Hence, English hymnody tended to be simpler, shorter and more easily memorized. In Geneva, there were 150 psalms, each with its own "proper" tune. You either did or did not use them. But in England, new tunes were being written, and increasingly, they were being written with a regular beat, whereas Genevan hymns had avoided regular bars and metrical accents as a way of distinguishing between sacred and secular styles. In 1623, George Withers published *Hymnes and Songs of the Church*, the first attempt in England at a comprehensive hymnbook, but its success was marginal.[149] By the 18th century, the trend in England led to the Dissenters', Baptists' and Methodists' music that was decidedly more similar to secular music in that it featured regular rhythms and popular tunes, music similar to the contemporary opera. Of course, not all church music was in the style of popular tunes. Georg Frederick Handel in England (1685-1759), Franz Joseph Haydn in Austria (1732-1809) and Felix Mehelssohn in Germany (1809-1847) produced church music in the classical tradition.[150]

Isaac Watts (1674-1748) published his first edition of *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in 1707, and some of his best known compositions include *O God, Our Help in Ages Past* (based on Psalm 90) and the Advent anthem *Joy to the World* (based on Psalm 98).[151] In all, Watts composed more than 600 hymns.[152] John Newton (1725-1807), the former slave-trader turned preacher, often composed hymns for his Sunday services, and in 1779 they were collected and combined with hymns by a friend, William Cowper

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[148] In Germany, church music was deemed to have reached its peak with Bach, and few new tunes have been composed in German Protestantism since his time, cf. J. Andrews, "Hymns and Church Music," *Eerdmans Handbook to the History of Christianity*, ed. T. Dowley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 428. One of Bach's more well-known compositions that survives in many modern hymnals is "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." The lyrics are attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux (12th century).

[149] Andrews, p. 426.

[150] Probably Handel's most well-known piece is his oratorio *The Messiah*. However, his music for *Joy to the World*, using a text of Isaac Watts, is firmly embedded in the Christmas tradition as is *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.* Haydn's music coupled with a text by John Newton, *Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken,* still appears in many hymnals, and Mendelssohn's music became the traditional tune for Charles Wesley's *Hark! the Herald Angels Sing*. Another of Mendelssohn's tunes is well-known in the hymn *Now Thank We All Our God.*

[151] Other well-known hymns by Watts include *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, We're Marching to Zion, I Sing the Mighty Power of God* and *Alas! and Did My Savior Bleed?*

[152] Also, his music made it across the Atlantic to the colonies rather quickly. Benjamin Franklin published Watts' psalm paraphrases in 1729, and his hymns were published in Boston in 1739, cf. D. Severance, "The Father of English Hymnody," *Glimpses* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institutes), Issue #27.

(1731-1800), and published as the Olney Hymns. The most well-known was the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, based on 1 Chronicles 17:16-17.[153] Still, the most widely sung hymns of the period must surely belong to John Wesley's prolific brother, Charles (1707-1788). Virtually any modern hymn book will have a considerable selection of Wesley's compositions.[154] In his hymns, Wesley regularly paraphrased psalms as well as pieces from the *Book of Common Prayer*. The style of congregational singing was called "lining out". Many Christians could neither read nor write, so each line of the hymn was first read by a precentor ("lined out"), after which the congregation would slowly sing it.

By the 19th century, the trend toward hymn writing and hymn singing in the popular style reached its heyday. It was augmented by the founding of the house of Novello in 1811, an establishment that was the first to perfect the technology for printing inexpensive church music. The wide availability of cheap music was augmented by singing classes, where the *so-fa* system of notation (shaped notes) helped singers to follow easily the music without extensive musical training. Singing schools both in England and America entrenched popular hymn-singing in the culture, and it became a hallmark in the work of such evangelical leaders as General William Booth (Salvation Army) and Dwight L. Moody. Much of this music was produced by low-church musicians who borrowed from popular songs, ballads and music-hall tunes of the day.[155] Perhaps the most prolific hymn-writer of the period was the blind Fanny Crosby (1820-1915), whose musical style ranged from classical to ragtime. She had an agreement with Bigelow and Main to compose three hymns a week for use in their Sunday School publications, and sometimes she wrote as many as six or seven hymns in a single day! Altogether, she composed more than 6000 hymns in her lifetime![156]

Since the 19th century, Christian music has been dominated by popular styles. Though early on such styles were mostly characteristic of evangelical, low-church congregations, they have crossed virtually all denominational barriers, so that one can find popular gospel hymns and choruses in Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran circles as well as in

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[153] D. Severance, "John Newton, Servant of Slaves, Discovers Amazing Grace," *Glimpses* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institutes), Issue #28.

[154] D. Severance, "Charles Wesley: Heart of the Evangelical Revival," *Glimpses* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institutes), Issue #29. Among his most well-known hymns are: *O, For a Thousand Tongues*; *And Can It Be*; *Rejoice, the Lord is King*; *Jesus, Lover of My Soul*; and *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.*

[155] Routley, pp. 37-45.

[156] D. Severance, "Fanny Crosby: Queen of American Hymnwriters," *Glimpses* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institutes), Issue #30.

Methodist, Baptist and Pentecostal ones (the Eastern Orthodox Church is the principal exception).

Of course, pop Christian music has not been without its tensions. Whereas once the tension was between sacred and secular styles, and later, between classical and popular styles, by the mid-20th century there were tensions among evangelicals between 19th century hymnody and emerging contemporary styles. Two very important factors exacerbated this tension. One was the influx of African-American musical values, especially the use of percussion and syncopation. Some evangelicals resisted all African-American cultural forms, and it was hard not to perceive in this a stubborn element of latent racism. The other was the birth of the American youth culture, which engulfed the western world, but especially the United States, from the middle of the 20th century onward. By the late 20th century, seeker-sensitive values and postmodern expressions of music were vying for acceptance, and some evangelical churches, in the effort to be "hip", jettisoned the hymnal altogether in favor of the even simpler praise choruses (though the musical chord structures were often more complicated than for 19th century hymns). Complicated bass lines and complex percussion became prominent features in contemporary Christian music. By the early 21st century, music had become so dominant, particularly in evangelical congregations, that Philip Yancey, frequent writer for *Christianity Today* magazine, lamented, "How did it happen that the word *worship* became synonymous with music? …worship today means loudly filling every space of silence."[157]

Where Is the Center?

Our brief survey of Christian music as a window into the general development of Christian worship raises again the question posed earlier: if development is permitted, what is it that can be changed and what is it that should remain unchanged? *First and foremost, the definition of worship must itself retain its biblical integrity as an act that is God-centered, not human centered.* Worship is not human entertainment. It is not to be driven by human needs or human desires. It is about God, not about us. Worship is giving God his due! This means, at the very least, that the content of worship takes precedence over the form. It also means that the cognitive element must not be swallowed up by the experiential element.

Second, the basic structures of *sacred ritual*, *sacred time* and *sacred space* are so fundamental, both in the Old and the New Testaments, that they

[157] P. Yancey, "A Bow and a Kiss," *Christianity Today* (May 2005), p. 80.

can hardly be eliminated without endangering the whole idea of worship altogether. Yet, ritual, time and space never stand alone. *If the prophets of Israel tell us anything, they clearly say that ritual without a faithful relationship to God empties worship of its authenticity.* If the heart of the worshiper does not reach upward to God in sincerity, worship becomes hypocrisy. Jesus, especially, preached in concert with this message of the ancient prophets. Further, he announced an imminent change from the worship of the past—not merely in form, but more importantly, in devotion and spirituality. Though he left no order for worship, he clearly announced that the Holy Spirit would become the primary guide toward a new temple and a new era of worship.

Third, the two sacraments instituted by Christ, baptism and Eucharist, must surely remain central. While there will be continuing debates between Protestants and Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox about the full number of sacraments, no one disagrees about the two that Jesus himself gave to his followers. The basic worship components of the early church should continue as the bone structure for all subsequent Christian worship: public reading of Scripture, expository preaching, hymn-singing, community prayer, baptism of converts, the Eucharist for believers and free-will giving. Still, worship is not just about music: it consists of all these things, for all these elements are ways of giving God his due.

Can the external form of these elements be changed? The practice of the church for the past two millennia has been a guarded “yes”. However, through the centuries it has been the concern of Christians that any changes in form for the sake of communication and cultural conditioning are changes that must not alter the inner meaning itself. That inner meaning is fixed by the Word of God. It focuses upon the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and it carries the great redemptive themes of the Bible: the cross and resurrection of Jesus, sin and forgiveness, grace and faith, holiness and commitment, and what St. Paul calls “the blessed hope”. Anything less is a capitulation to Babel—the tower of religion that represents the preoccupation of humans with themselves.