**Christian Worship (3)**

**Did early Christians use the Lord’s Supper in their worship?**

By Victor Beshir

In the last article, we examined evidences for using the Lord’s Supper as the corner stone of worship in the apostolic era, in the first century. Now, we need to find out whether Christians in the following centuries continued to use the Lord’s Supper in their worship or not.

**First Century**:

**The Didache** or "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles" in "Let no one eat and drink of your Eucharist[[1]](#footnote-1) but those baptized in the name of the Lord.” (Chapter 9:5)

"On the Lord's own day, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks; but first confess your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure. However, no one quarreling with his brother may join your meeting until they are reconciled; your sacrifice must not be defiled. For here we have the saying of the Lord: 'In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a mighty King, says the Lord; and my name spreads terror among the nations'" (Chapter 14).

**Justin Martyr** wrote a letter to the emperor Titus Adrianus Antoninus in 160 AD, defending the Christian faith and Christians and describing the Christian worship in details. He wrote:

“Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought 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. 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.

And this food is called among us Eucharist of which one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things, which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.” [[2]](#footnote-2)

**Ignatius** in his letter to the Ephesians, around 80-100 A.D., he wrote:

"Come together in common, one and all without exception in love, in one faith and in one Jesus Christ, who is of the race of David according to the flesh, the son of man, and the Son of God, so that with undivided mind you break one Bread which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ."

**Second Century**:

**Irenaeus** is the second bishop of Lyons in 177 A.D. Considered, one of the greatest theologians of the 2nd century and his famous book is “*Against Heresies*. “

"So then, if the mixed cup and the manufactured bread receive the Word of God and become the Eucharist, that is to say, the Blood and Body of Christ, which fortify and build up the substance of our flesh, how can these people claim that the flesh is incapable of receiving God's gift of eternal life, when it is nourished by Christ's Blood and Body and is His member? As the blessed apostle says in his letter to the Ephesians, 'For we are members of His Body, of His flesh and of His bones' (Eph. 5:30). He is not talking about some kind of 'spiritual' and 'invisible' man, 'for a spirit does not have flesh an bones' (Luke 24:39). No, he is talking of the organism possessed by a real human being, composed of flesh and nerves and bones. It is this which is nourished by the cup which is His Blood, and is fortified by the bread which is His Body. The stem of the vine takes root in the earth and eventually bears fruit, and 'the grain of wheat falls into the earth' (John 12:24), dissolves, rises again, multiplied by the all-containing Spirit of God, and finally after skilled processing, is put to human use. These two then receive the Word of God and become the Eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ."

(To be continued)

1. The word "Eucharist" derives from the Greek term meaning "thanksgiving." [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Justin Martyr, The First Apology, chapters 65 & 66, page 185, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc. Massachusetts, 1994 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)