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## Different Views of the Christian Sacred Meal in the Early Church

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**DIDACHE 9**

And concerning the eucharist, hold thus:

- First concerning the cup, “We give thanks to you, our Father, for the holy vine of David, your child, which you made known to us through Jesus your child; to you be glory forever.
- And concerning the broken bread: “We give you thanks, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your child. To you be glory forever.
- As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom, for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ forever.
- But let none eat or drink of your eucharist except those who have been baptized in the Lord’s name.
- For concerning this the Lord said, “Give not that which is holy to the dogs.”

**Continued 14:** On the Lord’s (Day) of the Lord (*kata kuriaken de kuriou*) come together and break bread and hold eucharist, after confessing your transgressions that your offering may be pure.

But let none who has a quarrel with another join in your meeting until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice be not defiled.

**JUSTIN MARTYR, 1 Apology 66, ca. 165**

- And this food is called among us “eucharist,” of which no one is allowed to partake but the one 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. . .we have 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.
- For the apostles. . .delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, said, “this do in remembrance of me, this is my body;” and that, in the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, he said, “This is my blood,” and gave it to them alone.

**IRENÆUS, *Against Heresies*, 4.18.5, ca. 175**

- How can they (the Gnostics) say that the flesh, which is nourished with the body of the Lord and with His blood, goes to corruption and does not partake of life? Let them, therefore, either alter their opinion or cease from offering (the elements of the Eucharist).
- For the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, then they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.

**TERTULLIAN, *Apology* 39, ca. 200**

- Our feast explains itself by its name. The Greeks call it agapè, i.e., affection. Whatever it costs, our outlay in the name of piety is gain, since with the good things of the feast we benefit the needy; not as it is with you, do parasites aspire to the glory of satisfying their licentious propensities, selling themselves for a belly-feast to all disgraceful treatment—but as it is with God himself, a peculiar respect is shown to the lowly. If the object of our feast be good, in the light of that consider its further regulations.
- As it is an act of religious service, it permits no vileness or immodesty. The participants, before reclining, taste first of prayer to God. As much is eaten as satisfies the cravings of hunger; as much is drunk as befits the chaste. They say it is enough, as those who remember that even during the night they have to worship God; they talk as those who know that the Lord is one of their auditors. After manual ablution, and the bringing in of lights, each is asked to stand forth and sing, as he can, a hymn to God, either one from the holy Scriptures or one of his own composing—a proof of the measure of our drinking. As the feast commenced with prayer, so with prayer it is closed. We go from it, not like troops of mischief-doers, nor bands of vagabonds, nor to break out into licentious acts, but to have as much care of our modesty and chastity as if we had been at a school of virtue rather than a banquet.

**CYPRIAN of CARTHAGE, *Epistle* 63.14, ca. 250s**

If Christ our high priest offered himself as a sacrifice to the Father and directed that we should do this in remembrance of him, then without doubt that priest truly serves in Christ's place who imitates what Christ did and he offers up a true and complete sacrifice to God the Father in the church when he proceeds to offer it just as he sees Christ himself to have offered it.