

Justin Martyr, First Apology,

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Christian Worship

61. How we dedicated ourselves to God when we were made new through Christ I will explain, since it might seem to be unfair if I left this out from my exposition. Those who are persuaded and believe that the things we teach and say are true, and promise that they can live accordingly, are instructed to pray and beseech God with fasting for the remission of their past sins, while we pray and fast along with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are reborn by the same manner of rebirth by which we ourselves were reborn; for they are then washed in the water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ said, "Unless you are born again you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."⁸⁰⁰ Now it is clear to all that those who have once come into being cannot enter the wombs of those who bore them. But as I quoted before, it was said through the prophet Isaiah how those who have sinned and repent shall escape from their sins. He said this: "Wash yourselves, be clean, take away wickednesses from your souls, learn to do good, give judgment for the orphan and defend the cause of the widow, and come and let us reason together, says the Lord. And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them as white as wool, and though they be as crimson, I will make them as white as snow. If you will not listen to me, the sword will devour you; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things."⁸⁰¹ And we learned from the apostles this reason for this [rite]. At our first birth we were born of necessity without our knowledge, from moist seed, by the intercourse of our parents with each other, and grew up in bad habits and wicked behavior. So that we should not remain children of necessity and ignorance, but [become sons] of free choice and knowledge, and obtain remission of the sins we have already committed,⁸⁰² there is named at the water, over him who has chosen to be born again and has repented of his sinful acts, the name of God the Father and Master of all. Those who lead to the washing the one who is to be washed call on [God by] this term only.⁸⁰³ For no one may give a proper ²⁸³name to the ineffable God, and if anyone should dare to say that there is one, he is hopelessly insane.⁸⁰⁴ This washing is called illumination, since those who learn these things are illumined within. The illuminand is also washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold everything about Jesus.

62. When the demons heard this washing proclaimed through the prophets, they arranged that those who go into their temples and are about to approach them to offer libations and burnt offerings should sprinkle themselves—and further they have them wash themselves completely as they pass on into the sanctuaries where they are enshrined. The order given by the priests to devotees to remove their shoes as they enter the temples and approach them⁸⁰⁵ [the demons] is an imitation devised by the demons when they learned what happened to Moses, the above-mentioned prophet. For at the time when Moses was ordered to go down to Egypt and bring out the people of the Israelites who were there, as he was pasturing in the land of Arabia the sheep of his maternal uncle, our Christ addressed him in the

form of fire out of a bush, and said, "Unloose your sandals and come near and hear." When he had taken them and approached, he heard [that he was] to go down into Egypt, and lead out the people of the Israelites there, and received great power from Christ, who spoke to him in the form of fire.⁸⁰⁶ He went down and led out the people after he had done great miracles—if you want to learn about them, you may learn in detail from his writings.

63. Even now the Jews all teach that the unnamed God himself spoke to Moses. Wherefore the prophetic Spirit said in condemnation of them through Isaiah the above-mentioned prophet, as was quoted before: "The ox knows his owner and [284](#)the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know me and my people does not understand."⁸⁰⁷ Likewise Jesus the Christ, because the Jews did not know what the Father is and what the Son, himself said in condemnation of them: "No one knows the Father except the Son, nor the Son except the Father and those to whom the Son will reveal it."⁸⁰⁸ Now the Word of God is his Son, as I said before. He is also called "Angel" and "Apostle," for [as Angel] he announces what it is necessary to know, and [as Apostle] is sent forth to testify to what is announced,⁸⁰⁹ as our Lord himself said, "He that hears me hears him that sent me."⁸¹⁰ This can be made clear from the writings of Moses, in which this is to be found: "And the Angel of God spoke to Moses in a flame of fire out of the bush and said, I am he who is, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, the God of your fathers; go down to Egypt and bring out my people."⁸¹¹ Those who wish to can learn what followed from this; for it is not possible to put down everything in these [pages]. But these words were uttered to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Apostle, who was first the Word, and appeared, now in the form of fire, now in the image of the bodiless creatures. Now, however, having become man by the will of God for the sake of the human race, he has endured whatever sufferings the demons managed to have brought upon him by the senseless Jews. For they have it clearly said in the writings of Moses, "And the Angel of God spoke to Moses in a flame of fire in the bush and said, I am he who is, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"⁸¹² yet they say that he who said these things was the Father and Fashioner of the universe. Jesus again, as we cited, when he was with them said, "No one knows the Father except the Son, nor the Son except the Father and those to whom the Son may reveal it."⁸¹³ So the Jews, continuing to think that the Father of the universe had spoken to Moses, when it was the Son of God, who is called both Angel and Apostle, who spoke to him, were rightly censured both by the prophetic Spirit and by Christ himself, since they knew neither the Father nor the Son. For those who identify the Son and the Father are condemned, as neither knowing the Father nor recognizing that the Father of the universe has a Son, [285](#)who being the Word and First-begotten of God is also divine. Formerly he appeared in the form of fire and the image of a bodiless being to Moses and the other prophets. But now in the time of your dominion he was, as I have said, made man of a virgin according to the will of the Father for the salvation of those who believe in him, and endured contempt and suffering so that by dying and rising again he might conquer death. What was said out of the bush to Moses, "I am he who is, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob and the God of your fathers," was an indication that they though dead still existed and were Christ's own men. For they were the first of all men to devote themselves to seeking after God,⁸¹⁴ Abraham being the father of Isaac, and Isaac of Jacob, as Moses also recorded.

64. From what has been said you can understand why the demons contrived to have the image of the so-called Kore erected at the springs of waters, saying that she was a daughter of Zeus, imitating what was said through Moses. For Moses said, as I have quoted: "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. And the earth was invisible and unfurnished, and the Spirit of God was borne over the waters."⁸¹⁵ In imitation of the Spirit of God, spoken of as borne over the water, they spoke of Kore, daughter of Zeus. With similar malice they spoke of Athena as a daughter of Zeus, but not as a result of intercourse—since they knew that God designed the creation of the world by the Word, they spoke of Athena as the first Concept. This we consider very ridiculous, to offer the female form as the image of an intellectual concept. And similarly the other so-called sons of Zeus are condemned by their actions.

65. We, however, after thus washing the one who has been convinced and signified his assent, lead him to those who are called brethren, where they are assembled. They then earnestly offer common prayers for themselves and the one who has been illuminated and all others everywhere, that we may be made worthy, having learned the truth, to be found in deed good citizens and keepers of what is commanded, so that we may be saved with eternal salvation. On finishing the prayers we ²⁸⁶greet each other with a kiss. Then bread and a cup of water and mixed wine are brought to the president of the brethren and he, taking them, sends up praise and glory to the Father of the universe through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and offers thanksgiving at some length that we have been deemed worthy to receive these things from him. When he has finished the prayers and the thanksgiving,⁸¹⁶ the whole congregation present⁸¹⁷ assents, saying, "Amen." "Amen" in the Hebrew language means, "So be it." When the president has given thanks and the whole congregation has assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the consecrated⁸¹⁸ bread and wine and water, and they take it to the absent.

66. This food we call Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake except one who believes that the things we teach are true, and has received the washing for forgiveness of sins and for rebirth, and who lives as Christ handed down to us. For we do not receive these things as common bread or common drink; but as Jesus Christ our Saviour being incarnate by God's word took flesh and blood for our salvation, so also we have been taught that the food consecrated by the word of prayer which comes from him, from which our flesh and blood are nourished by transformation, is the flesh and blood of that incarnate Jesus.⁸¹⁹ For the apostles in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, thus handed down what was commanded them: that Jesus, taking bread and having given thanks, said, "Do this for my memorial, this is my body"; and likewise taking the cup and giving thanks he said, "This is my blood"; and gave it to them alone.⁸²⁰ This also the wicked ²⁸⁷demons in imitation handed down as something to be done in the mysteries of Mithra; for bread and a cup of water are brought out in their secret rites of initiation, with certain invocations which you either know or can learn.

67. After these [services] we constantly remind each other of these things. Those who have more come to the aid of those who lack, and we are constantly together. Over all that we receive we bless the Maker of all things through his Son Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit.⁸²¹ And on the day called Sunday there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president in a discourse urges and invites [us] to the imitation of these noble things. Then we all

stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the Amen; the distribution, and reception of the consecrated [elements] by each one, takes place and they are sent to the absent by the deacons. Those who prosper, and who so wish, contribute, each one as much as he chooses to.⁸²² What is collected is deposited with the president, and he takes care of orphans and widows, and those who are in want on account of sickness or any other cause, and those who are in bonds, and the strangers who are sojourners among [us], and, briefly, he is the protector of all those in need. We all hold this common gathering on Sunday, since it is the first day, on which God transforming darkness and matter made the universe, and Jesus Christ our Saviour rose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturday, and on the day after Saturday,⁸²³ he appeared to his apostles and [288](#)disciples and taught them these things which I have passed on to you also for your serious consideration.

Conclusion

68. If what we say seems to you reasonable and true, treat it with respect—if it seems foolish to you, then despise us as foolish creatures and do not decree the death penalty, as against enemies, for those who do no wrong. I have said before that you will not escape the future judgment of God if you continue unjust, while we will cry out, What God desires, let that be done.⁸²⁴ On the ground of a letter of your father, the great and illustrious Caesar Hadrian, we could demand that you order judgment to be given as we have asked. Yet we do not ask [for this] on the basis of Hadrian's judgment, but since we know that what we ask is just, we have made this petition and explanation. I have subjoined a copy of the letter of Hadrian, so that you may know that I speak the truth in this matter. Here is the copy.⁸²⁵

Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus. I have received the letter addressed to me by your predecessor the Honorable Serenius Granianus, and it does not seem right to me to pass over this report in silence, lest innocent people should be molested and false accusers given the opportunity of doing harm. So if the people of your province can formally support their petition against the Christians by accusing them of something before [your] tribunal, I do not forbid their following this course; but I do not permit them to make use of mere requests and clamorous demands in this matter. It is much more proper, if anyone wishes to bring an accusation, for you to take cognizance of the matters brought forward. Therefore if anyone brings an accusation and proves that the men referred to have [289](#)done anything contrary to the laws, you will assign penalties in accordance with the character of the offenses. But you must certainly⁸²⁶ take the greatest care, that if anyone accuses any of these people merely for the sake of calumny, you will punish him with severe penalties for his offense.⁸²⁷