It is generally agreed that Justin’s exegesis (διηγηματική, 61:1) in Apology I. 61–67, focusing as it does upon the sacraments of baptism (61–65:1) and the Lord’s supper (65:2–66:4), and upon the observance of the Lord’s day (67), portrays a vivid and realistic account of second century Christian life and worship. Candidates for Christian baptism are first led to where there is water and are baptized (61:3). After baptism they are brought into the presence of the Christian congregation (65:1). Christians greet one another with the holy kiss (65:2). Bread and wine mingled with water are brought to the leader, and, after thanksgiving and participation by the baptized believers who are present (66:1), deacons take the eucharistic elements to those believers who are absent (65:3–5). In I. 66 the Eucharist is explained. As for the Lord’s day (67), at each local gathering one of the congregation reads the “memoirs” of the apostles and the writings of the prophets, the “president” instructs the congregation on the basis of the reading, the congregation stands to pray and then partakes of the Eucharist, and the deacons take the Eucharist to believers who are absent. Also, a voluntary offering is deposited with the president for distribution to those who are in need. In conclusion, Justin cites the significance of the Lord’s day. It is the day on which God brought light out of darkness (Gen. 1) and the day on which Jesus Christ arose from the dead. Such, in brief, is the content of I. 61–67, a writing generally accepted as a lucid account of the worship of the second century Christians — at least as far as Justin knew that worship.

It has been held, however, that in I. 62–64 Justin departs from his main topic. Except for the argument that demons counterfeited the baptismal rite after its prediction by Isaiah,
I. 62-64 has often been taken as a digression that has little connection with the theme of Christian baptism which is developed in I. 61 and resumed in 65:1. It must be admitted that the first few words of 65:1 (Ἡμεῖς δὲ μετὰ τὸ ὠφέλιμον τῶν πεπεσμένων) do leap back over the three preceding chapters and unite directly with the last three words of 61:13 (ὁ φωτιζόμενος λοῦεται). It is the opinion of this writer, however, that the intervening chapters (i.e. I. 62-64) contain no real digression but actually set forth an important continuation to Justin's argument. That argument is two-fold:

1. The rite of baptism both originates in, and rests on, the authority of the triune God, and relates the newly baptized to that authority, and

2. The rite of baptism bestows on the ones baptized the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of the forgiveness of sins as well as illumination or insight (φωτισμός) into the content of the Christian faith.

It is precisely these two emphases at baptism, i.e. the authority of God and the knowledge of new Christians, which underlie the argument in I. 62-64.

1 Cf. A. W. F. Blunt, The Apologies of Justin Martyr (Cambridge: The University Press, 1911), p. 94, “This [i.e. chap. 63] is a chapter of digression”. Earlier than Blunt, Carolus de Otto, Justini Philosophi et Martyris Opera (Jena: Prostat in Libraria Hermanni Dufft, 1876), Vol. I, Part I, p. 176, indicated, in reference to Apol. I, 64, that Justin has now returned to the subject of pagan counterfeits from which he digressed (unde digressus est, i.e. at I, 62). Otto’s text gives a somewhat different impression by its paragraph spacing placed immediately before I, 63 and immediately following I, 64. This spacing indicates that, in the editor’s view, neither chap. 63 nor chap. 64 has any close connection with Justin’s main argument.

2 The text followed here and throughout this article is that of G. Krüger, Die Apologieen Justins des Märtyrers (Tübingen und Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1904).

3 On an entirely different level, John 13:33-36 contains a similar literary feature. In v. 33 Jesus announces to His disciples that He is going away (ἐγὼ ὑπάγω). In view of His departure, in vs. 34-35, He announces the new commandment of love. In v. 36, however, the question of Peter “Where are you going” (ποῦ ὑπάγεις) leaps back over the commandment of love and connects directly with Jesus’ initial announcement (v. 33). Nevertheless, the intervening verses (34-35) certainly constitute no digression but actually form an important sequel to Jesus’ announcement (v. 33).