

Reading, and Re-reading, Justin's Account of 'the Eucharist'

Thomas O'Loughlin⁴

The appeal of Justin

If there is one widely known passage from early Christian documents from outside the canonical collection, then it is surely the section from Justin's *First Apology* concerning the Eucharist. Many Christians, for whom a reference to the *Didache* or *The Apostolic Tradition* is but a pointer to an obscure text read by experts, show immediate signs of recognition at a mention of Justin: they remember reading it and that it made sense to them as the earliest detailed description of 'the Mass' or 'the Lord's Supper' or 'the Eucharist.' Indeed some details are remembered: there was a liturgy of readings and homily (just as now), there

⁴ Thomas O'Loughlin FRHistS, FSA (ORCID 0000-0002-6333-3991) is Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham and Director of *Studia Traditionis Theologiae*.

was a collection (just as now), and the people replied to the Eucharistic Prayer with 'Amen' (just as now). Justin appears, in contrast to so many other early texts, to describe a familiar scene with lucidity. Moreover, there is the reassurance of continuity – a value in all religions – that what we do now is in line with what they did then; and after reading Justin we are well disposed to read Dix's paeon to eucharistic fidelity with approval (Dix 1945, 744).

Justin also seems to give us a sure starting point for a developmental study of Christian liturgy. The scriptural evidence, often imported from those who are New Testament scholars, has been surveyed, the reference to worship in Pliny duly noted, and now a systematic study of the rites can begin (Jungmann 1950, 22-8 is an example). We have a clearly defined topic, the eucharist, known from experience, explained in catechesis, pondered in systematics, and studied as a ritual identifiable both then and now, and so can trace an evolution step by step up to the present. The present is, obviously, an outcome of the past – almost any detail of current eucharistic ritual can demonstrate this – but in the twinkling of an eye we alter this truism to the past being the source of the present. Does this make any difference? It is the contention of this paper that the difference is not only crucial, but prevents us hearing what Justin has to tell us aright, and so lessens his value in any.

discussion of the Eucharist where Justin's text is used as evidence of comparative Christian experience.

Put another way, we read Justin backwards: we assume that there is the same relationship between our situation today and his time as between an old oak and an acorn – but such a view denies the contingency of history in that while every present is the outcome of a past, it cannot be said to be the only or the necessary outcome. Human affairs are not determined in the way that a genetic code links an acorn and an oak (O'Loughlin 2015A). This backwards approach is facilitated by our tendency to read from the familiar to the unfamiliar: hence, knowing our liturgy, we latch onto those items that seem familiar and read the text as an earlier version, perhaps as an archetype, for what we do. The inappropriateness of this process, which is deeply anachronistic in vision (Brakke 2012), is obscured for many of us in that central to the literary training of many historians is the method of 'spot the source' and since we footnote to Justin for so many later liturgical elements, we acclimatize ourselves to his being a source for us rather than a witness to his own very different situation and which was itself an outcome of a past as distinct from his being a 'witness' to an unchanging tradition.

Another reading of Justin's account?

Before approaching Justin's text two major developments in scholarship need to be noted. The first, and most obvious, is the study of Greco-Roman meal customs that has taken place during the past thirty years. We can now imagine not only the role of meal gatherings in that society, focused on the *symposion*, but can draw detailed comparisons between the meal gatherings of followers of Jesus and the way meals were celebrated by any number of other groups (Smith 2003). It would be futile here to attempt to summarize this body of material, it suffices to note all our references to meals among the followers of Jesus whether it be to actual meals in Corinth in the late 50s, stories of suppers as found in records of anamnetic performances (e.g. in those texts we refer to as 'gospels'), material relating to the development of a *seder* within Judaism (Bokser 1984), or references to meals among religious groups (Justin is a case in point) need to be read within a meal culture whereby groups of people expressed their belonging, identity, mutuality, and also their exclusivity:

Put another way, when we confront ancient references to meals our modern almost universal distinction between 'a liturgy' and 'a community meal' – seen paradigmatically in wedding day distinction between 'going to the church' and 'going to the meal' or 'the afters' – is fundamentally misleading. The early gatherings of the followers of Jesus were actual meal

gatherings: a fact expressed in the statement that they 'broke the loaf in their homes' (Acts 2:46). Attempts to see the Eucharist as essentially distinct from the meal or to see the meal as but an original 'framework' (Ratzinger 2000, 78), owe more to modern doctrinal concerns than to engagement with the actual worship of Christians as seen in our texts (McGowan 1999; van de Sandt and Flusser 2002).

This group meal culture is the background presupposed by Justin in his audience, and so it must form the background to our reading. This shifts the burden of proof: if Justin was distinguishing his practice from the larger meal culture – such as to assert that it was not an actual meal but a ritual with the form of a meal – then we should expect to find that qualification in the evidence. Likewise, it warns us of the danger of seeing later 'developments' as positive progressions towards an ideal situation of revealed clarity. When, for example, the eucharistic supper was transferred to breakfast time and became a patron's breakfast for his clients we are dealing with a *de facto* rejection of some of the earlier claims for the Christian meal rather than a liberation of a sacramental 'core' from a possibly distracting matrix (Leonhard 2014).

The second significant development relating to our reading of Justin is very specific: the dating of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. Almost all modern studies of Ignatius have

followed the dating put forward by Eusebius of Caesarea and asserted that Ignatius was martyred in 110 CE or thereabouts. This dating meant that anyone reading a mid-second century text, such as Justin's *First Apology*, could do so against a background that the structure of bishops, presbyters, and deacons seen in those letters was long firmly established and, indeed, universal among the churches. Moreover, one could read any mid-second century work relating to the Eucharist as reflecting a development of what was found in Ignatius on the topic and most especially the link between the Eucharist and episcopal leadership (e.g. *Ad Smyrnaeos* 8). Thus, finding a reference to an 'altar' (*thusiastérion*) in Ignatius (*Ad Philadelphianos* 4), one could assume that this was accepted teaching among the orthodox when Justin wrote, at least one generation later. So while Pliny might supply a ritual background to Justin, Ignatius very clearly supplied a theological background especially with regard to those bitterly disputed Reformation questions: did one need a presbyter for a Eucharist (O'Loughlin 2013) and was the Eucharist based around 'an altar' or 'a table' (Pocknee 1963, 33-7). As one encountered Justin – including his silences – one had Ignatius in the background as assurance of what must have been by then the settled and universal practices and doctrine. Later datings for Ignatius have been suggested by several scholars since Joly's

work (1979), but the work of Barnes (2008), arguing for mid-150s, clearly shows that the traditional Eusebian dating must be abandoned. With such a date for Ignatius, and rejecting the notion that there is but a single linear progression in Christian structures: what Bradshaw and Johnson (2012) would observe as the variety of Christian liturgical forms, it becomes imperative that we read Justin without Ignatius as a backdrop unless we have other positive evidence showing that they share elements of practice.

The challenge is twofold: to read Justin as a mid-second century writer through whom we can form a picture of liturgical life in the period; and, secondly, to avoid concentrating on him as early evidence for later practices.

What, where and when?

The most striking feature of Justin's work is the lack of precise detail on the environment of the Christian gathering. His concern is not with liturgy, nor even with the eucharist, as such, but with demonstrating that Christians are not 'atheists,' and so, conversely, are good and responsible citizens: they are people who are not a threat to society, can be trusted, and behave in a reasonable, civic way (*First Apology* [hereafter 'A'] 65 – see appendix for texts). One of the ways any such group would act is that they would gather and eat together, and Justin's audience

are expected to see this gathering as no more nor less than parallel with their own gatherings for meals. The Eucharist is mentioned because it is at this meal that the Christians show themselves to be non-atheists in that their words, their 'prayers and thanksgivings,' are offered to the Creator and these serve the same purpose as 'blood [-drenched sacrifices], libations, and incense' (A 13). Significantly Justin does not see the loaf and cup, mentioned subsequently, as their sacrifices, rather the sacrifice consists in that which is most pure, most logical (i.e. in that which is the human share of 'logos' that is part of all that comes from the Creator), and most worthy of human beings: words (Lathrop 1990). Our words proceed from a knowing creature to God whose logos pervades the creation. In this 'logical' activity, an attunement of human logos, expressed as discourse (*logos*), with the Logos through whom the creation comes to be, the gathering becomes the expression of the human relationship with God. In this Justin's euchology can be seen as an expression of euchology of Philo (LaPorte 1983, 116-38).

This offering, this pure sacrifice of praise (*Dialogue with Trypho* [hereafter 'D'] 41), is done as 'best we can' (*hosé dunamis*) (A 13,1) which here –and we shall return to this below – is not a statement about whether or not an individual has a fixed formula for prayer or performs, what we would call, a Eucharistic Prayer spontaneously, but a statement about human capabilities to

engage in worship. Worship of the pure kind is higher than that found in rites such as libations and incense (both common at Greco-Roman meals), and the very opposite of the materialism of Mithras (D 70; A 66, 4), but it is still at the very limit of human capabilities. They are offering the most acceptable form of sacrifice, words of praise which express dependency (A 13, 2), but they still dare not claim it as a satisfactory activity: they are doing their best, and no more than that.

It is clear what is being described, but where it takes place is not mentioned. This omission is significant, for the audience is left to imagine it as gathering in a private house. Implicit in this is a rejection that it takes place in secret (as in a *mithraeum*) or in a temple that sets itself up as an alternative to the civic temples. It is also significant for us in other ways. Firstly, it reminds us that the notion of the Christian liturgy as separated within a *fanum* from the everyday world, the *profanum*, is alien to Justin and seems to have been alien to many Christians at the time who saw the birth of Jesus as the divine presence moving into the whole world rather than being concentrated within a temple (cf. Jn 1:14). Secondly, it reminds us that the notion that the liturgy's central agents being conceived as *sacerdotes* acting within a sanctuary, set apart in some way from others of the baptized, is one belonging to developments that took place after Justin's time.

That we are led to imagine the gathering as taking place within a domestic space means that Justin imagined it as quite a small gathering in that the number of participants must have been severely limited by size (Murphy-O'Connor 1976/1977). The non-Christian reader could easily imagine it as simply a variant on a dinner party. But how would they, and how should we, imagine the make-up of that party? Justin mentions 'the brothers' (A 65, 1), presenting the group as a fictive family where the brothers are equal, and that there is no mention of women/'sisters' is surely significant. Does this mean that the group with which Justin met was an all male group or did he simply not wish to mention the presence of women? If it were an all male dining group then it would parallel the discussion-meals we find in Plutarch, Justin's contemporary, and it would accommodate well to the dining practices of polite Greco-Roman society where it was most unusual for women to be present at a banquet (Smith 2003, 42-6).

Another possibility is that women were present, but Justin chose not to mention them either because it might detract from the logos-centred seriousness he wished to present – at those banquets at which women were present it was usually as lewd entertainment – or lest he suggest that this group was so socially revolutionary as to represent men and women as equals or debauched in that men and women kissed one another as he

admits the brothers did (A 65, 2). The only hint that Justin gives us towards answering this question is to the collection of widows, orphans, slaves, and strangers (A 67, 6), but this could just as easily be read as that it was for those who belonged to the group but were absent from the meal. We have to be agnostic as to whether women were present or not. It is clear, however, that Justin does not wish us to think of women being present; nor does he want us to think of this fictive family as extending to treating women as 'sisters.' While his euchology presents him as a successor of Philo, his vision of the gathering is very different from that given by Philo of the *therapeutae* where both men and women are present in the act of *eucharistia* although they were separated by a low wall (J.E. Taylor 2004).

We know that as early as 58 CE the notion of equality at the table was problematic for the Corinthian church – the presence of women might have appeared unseemly while that of patrons / slave owners being equal to clients and slaves was simply too exaggerated a claim – and hence we have Paul's criticisms there and similar concerns in Romans 14:1-6 (Jewett 2007, 846-7). We know that later it was this socially disruptive aspect of a common meal that was a major factor in displacing the actual meal and its substitution with a token one open to all (with a select few continuing to share a real meal apart) which was then imagined as the eucharistic 'core' event. Perhaps we have to think of

Justin's gathering lying within such a trajectory in which the dominant social mores of the larger society determined what was acceptable at the gathering, and that those gatherings with which he was personally familiar were those of like-minded men who imagined themselves as the Christian equivalent of philosophers' symposia.

One item of information is very clear: this gathering took place on Sunday/ the *Dies Solis* (A 67, 3 and 67, 8). But Justin wants to distinguish this from the gathering being perceived as one held in honour of the Sun: so he explains that for them it is the first day of creation, the day of resurrection (D 41, 4) and the day the risen Jesus appeared to his 'apostles and disciples' (A 67, 8). But at what time did this meal take place? Justin gives us no hint as to whether it was a supper (either on the Saturday evening, counting the days in the Jewish manner, or on the Sunday evening, counting the days in the Greco-Roman manner) or a breakfast on the Sunday morning. The balance of probabilities appears to favour an evening meal because any other time would differ from that of other symposia and be likely to evoke a comment. Similarly, the use of 'before Saturday' and 'after Saturday' (A 67, 8) seems to be Justin's attempt to avoid 'Parasceve' (cp., for example, Mk 15:42 and Jn 19:14) and 'Sabbath' (cp., for example, Lk 23:54) as these would be alien names to his Gentile audience and stress the divergence in social

practice: these Christians cannot even use the normal days' names! If that is the case, it would point to a group who among themselves used those very names; if so, it might further suggest that the gathering took place on the Saturday evening rather than on the Sunday evening. But these are no more than conjectures.

Distinctive activities at the Christian symposium

So how is this meal distinct from those of other groups who perform their identity with banquets? Justin seems to give us a detailed list. There are intercessory prayers (A 65, 1), then a mutual kiss of greeting (A 65, 2), then a thanksgiving over a loaf of bread and a cup of water mixed with wine (A 65, 3), the prayers and thanksgiving ended the group respond 'Amen' (A 65, 3), then 'deacons' arrange a sharing in the loaf and cup by those present and those absent (A 65, 4). This list is given as a sequence, all the parts are familiar from the later liturgy, and it is presented as the meal following the act of initiating a new brother. Justin a few sentences later gives almost an identical list – omitting only mention of the kiss – as that which takes place each Sunday, and again it has the character of a sequence of what happens when they gather from town and country (A 67, 2). The first distinctive element appears to be that a lector reads from the memoirs of the apostles and the writings of the prophets (A 67, 3), then the presider gives a speech of encouragement (A 67, 4),

then the group stand and offer prayers (A 67, 5), then there is the loaf and the wine-and-water, the prayer of thanksgiving and the group response of 'Amen' (A 67, 5), then the 'deacons' distribute shares to those present and absent (A 67, 5), and, finally, an element not already mentioned: a collection from the wealthy for needy groups such as widows and orphans, the sick, slaves, and strangers (A 67, 6-7).

Two questions come to mind at once: first, why does he bother to give us two almost identical lists; and, second, how were these distinctive activities fitted around the actual eating, drinking, and discussion among the brothers that constituted the symposium? The traditional answer to the first question was that these were two distinct rituals ('Eucharist when there was a baptism' and an ordinary 'Sunday Eucharist') but this assumes that both Justin and his audience heard the list with the precise ear for ritual differences of someone attuned to ceremonial distinctions between a 'Low Mass' and a 'Requiem.' However, the rationale for the repetition most probably lies in Justin's desire to lull his audience into a kind of uninterested boredom: is that *all* they do at an initiation? It seems little more than they do any other day? And, is that *all* they do when they gather? Read, talk, and then more talk and prayers, then some gestures over ordinary food, yet more talk and prayer, then sharing that ordinary food, and a collection for their needy? As such, this is

hardly worth interest and it is certainly most respectable: it is based in words and on words.

This interest in words, the manifestation of that 'slippery' and multi-faceted notion of *logos*, seems strange to us, but consider this statement: 'so we have been instructed that the food over which we have prayed the thanksgiving is made *by word* the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh' (A 66, 2). Many modern commentators concerned with causality of 'consecration' read this as 'the food over which we have prayed the thanksgiving is made by *God's* word the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.' But for Justin the concern is that the meal's religious significance arises not from magical rites, nor theurgy nor any of the exotic actions of such cults as Mithras, but from that highest expression of human rationality; words. The words of prayer form the sacrifice, bring about initiation, bring about the presence of Jesus, and bring about the liturgy of the Christians.

The second question hardly arose for older commentators: Justin simply revealed the Mass in an early form just as it was freeing itself from its encumbering ordinary-meal-shell. But if we assume that it was an actual meal at which these other activities took place, then how these were distributed over the period of the gathering is not apparent. At first sight we might think what is given as a sequence is an actual 'running order,' but again this

assumes that Justin is giving a description for which a liturgist is the ideal reader. It would appear very likely that the reading took place soon after they assembled, but were they eating during these readings? Were they eating while they listened to the words of encouragement? Likewise, it would appear that the collection took place at the conclusion of the assembly for the proceeds were left with the president. But beyond that we can say very little: we have been told about a succession of activities that makes this group's meal distinctive, we have not been given a moment by moment description.

We might observe some other points about what Justin tells us which are apt to be overlooked when we read his account as our liturgy *in embryo*. First, relating to the question of the unity of the loaf, it has often been pointed out that a whole, unbroken loaf was as profound a symbol for the first churches as its breaking or of 'the fragment' (*klasma*) of a loaf, and given that Justin does not mention a breaking, he may witness to an alternative liturgical practice regarding the loaf (Taylor 2009). However, the fact all eat from the very loaf which is presented to the presider makes this question of the unity/breaking a moot point. In the *Didache* we have both the stress on unity of the loaf (9:4; cf. Taylor 2009, 527-30; O'Loughlin 2015B, 135-7) and on its being broken so that each participant has a piece (9:5), and the same twin emphases can be seen in Justin in this same pattern:

the whole event of the action, seen as inherited from Jesus, is subject to on-going, and so varying, interpretation. However, this variety in verbal anamnesis does not form a sufficient basis to propose a variation in embodied anamnesis. Justin's account allows us to see a loaf presented, and 'the deacons' arranging for the whole group to eat from that loaf (A 65, 5) for the distribution is from the things offered (A 67, 5).

Second, what is in the cup? It is one of the unspoken 'facts' of Christian worship that the eucharistic elements are 'bread and wine' (with a justification for a small amount of water, 'the mixed chalice,' being accepted by most churches). Therefore, the phrases used by Justin (A 65, 5 and A 67, 5), especially 'a cup containing water with some wine added to it' (A 65, 3), have been seen as in need of explanation in order to preserve fundamental continuity of an element, wine, deemed essential to any eucharist. These explanations of the fact that Justin seems to give as much, if not more, attention to water as to wine usually take the form of either holding that the wine was of such a sticky consistency for convenience of transport that it needed to be thinned for actual drinking and so was mixed in a *krater* at this gathering just as at any other symposium (and his use of *kekramenon* [a word relating to *krater*: the mixing bowl] supports this interpretation) or else that the cultural preference of the group was for a 'lighter' beverage, both cheaper and less

alcoholic, of wine diluted with water (and 2 Macc 15:39 is sometimes adduced to witness to this taste). However, these explanations though valid, may miss the larger significance of what Justin is telling us about the churches of his time.

Justin shows an indifference to the content of the cup – at one moment it is water to which wine is added, at the next it is the reverse – and we know that until the end of the second century, if not later, there were some churches which used water for the Eucharist and others which used wine, and others which used a mixture (McGowan 1999); and there is no way of determining which was 'the norm' because the notion of a normative usage only begins to emerge in the later second century. However, what is clear from the way he gives his account is that the presider was presented with *a single cup* (*poterion*) of this liquid, and Justin assumes that is this very vessel of liquid that whole group partake of, for it is over that that the thanksgiving has been uttered, with the assistance of the deacons (A 65, 5 and 66, 5). It is this common partaking of this cup which has been presented and over which the prayers to which all assent have been offered, with the emphasis on the shared cup rather than a specific element or even a specific quantity of that element, that lies at the core of Justin's account. We have, rightly, noted the variety in church practices regarding *the content* of the cup in recent decades, and noting this plurality of ancient

practice has often had valuable results in modern ecumenical debates, but it has often resulted in diverting our attention to what appears to have been the most distinctive, and widespread, feature of Christian practice: that *they shared a single cup* – and Justin is yet another witness to this distinctive practice.

Third, we know that there was a variety of practice among the churches regarding the sequence of blessing the loaf and the cup (Taylor 2009) and that this diversity lasted into the time when the our gospels were attaining canonical status as the variations in Lk 22:16-22 attest (O'Loughlin 2018). It is significant that on the nine occasions Justin mentions the loaf – cup (A 65, 3; 65, 5; 66, 2; 66, 3; 67, 5; D 41, 3; 70, 4; 117, 1), one of them being a reference to mithraeic ritual (A 66, 4), it is always in the sequence of loaf followed by cup, and that he appears to accept this a universal. Does this mean that for him it was now normative or that he has not encountered variety or that he was simply universalizing his immediate experience? But at the very least, our knowing that there was variety should warn us off reading Justin as a witness to the whole of Christian experience at the time.

Fourth, was the prayer of thanksgiving a spontaneous creation by the presider? Since the Reformation one of the liturgical fault-lines between the churches has been the question of whether formulae or spontaneity should have priority within

the Christian response to God in prayer, and so the role of the Spirit in this activity (Abba 1969, 7-9), and Justin's use of 'he offers prayers and thanksgivings as best he can' has been seen as definite evidence in favour of spontaneity (Bouley 1981, 109-17). This choice of formula versus creativity has been further highlighted by appeal to the *Didache*, for having given a formula for a Eucharistic Prayer (O'Loughlin, 2012) it then adds: 'But, permit the prophets to give thanks in whatever manner they wish' (10, 7). So is Justin evidence that some were only capable of using a formula, others were more skilled and could be creative, and some few were real artists in prayer? The evidence does not permit us to answer this question with certainty. It could be the case that 'as best he can' refers to varying liturgical abilities of those members of the brotherhood who have been called up to preside and that this is no more than Justin's empirical observation that some did this very well using the freedom of a time before there were required formulae while others resorted – and note there is a theological value judgment implicit here – to fixed forms. However, this could be a complete misreading of *hosé dunamis*.

Justin uses the phrase *hosé dunamis* twice. The first occasion is with reference to the human ability to worship the Creator (A 13, 1) and has no practical implications regarding actual performance, and the second occasion is his comment on the

actual prayers that the presider has offered (A 65, 5) – and it is this use alone that has generated controversy. But what if we were to render it 'to the extent that it is within his power'? Now this more literal rendering takes the issue out of the domain of liturgical skill and places it within the more fundamental philosophical question of the human ability to be able to speak to God with meaningful words. Can we humans speak to the All-holy One? To answer 'yes' or 'no' to this question, as Justin well knew, produced paradoxes: if we can, then 'god' listens as another listener and each word has exact meaning – and so we have a theurgy; if we cannot speak to 'god,' then all cult with words becomes meaningless and we might as well just babble. The affirmation of the transcendence of the Creator and the seriousness of the need for humans to offer praise required a middle way, with the paradoxes answered paradoxically: the words are both meaning-full and they were inadequate. This was captured for Justin with the phrase *hosé dunamis*. Since a presider, whatever he did – using a formula or not – and whatever his personal level of skill or wisdom or holiness, was still operating within the human paradoxical situation, we cannot use Justin as a witness in our debates about relative value of formulae versus individual creativity.

Fifth, what is brought from the banquet? Some interpreters familiar with the notion of 'sick calls' – which can be either

regular visits to the housebound or surprise calls to bring *viaticum* to those near death – have long interpreted Justin's reference to the deacons bringing shares to those not present (A 65, 5 and 67, 5) as bringing the eucharistic elements, and have used this as the earliest witness to the a train of development that would lead to reservation (Freestone 1917, 17-8). And indeed, this passage has inspired some valuable pastoral initiatives in recent years whereby the sick are 'brought communion' directly from the Sunday Eucharist by members of the gathering. However, we should note that this is a very precise interpretation that follows from reading Justin's account as a description of simply an earlier version of what we do. Justin is thinking in terms of the whole experience of a group whose common identity is celebrated in their common meals – and it is to give those who cannot be present a share in that whole event that 'the deacons' bring a share of the whole meal. What they take to the absent is a portion of all its food and drink including a share in the loaf and the cup of blessing, and this actual eating and drinking, facilitated by 'the deacons,' links them, in their circumstances, with the gathering of the brothers.

And lastly, many have noted that Justin is explicit about an element, the collection, common in many later liturgies, but few have noted a key difference. The collection in later liturgies is to support the apparatus of the church, and, in particular, its

resident clergy, be they bishops, priests, or deacons. Justin makes no mention of any collection that is to be spent on any member or members of the assembled group. The collection is the whole group looking outwards, rather than one part of the assembly looking at a select sub-group of religious specials. So the collection is extending their own sense of being recipients of divine largesse to those whom they know are in need of their largesse: 'widows, orphans and anyone in need due to sickness or some other problem, and also those among us who are slaves' (A 67, 7). There is only one exception and that relates to 'strangers lodging with us' (A 67, 7) who, as we shall see, may be such travelling specialists in the *oikoumene* of churches as teachers or prophets: these require hospitality, and so Justin's community of brothers must look after them. In collecting for these travellers' support Justin's account can be read as in continuity with the *Didache* where there are details regulations, and cautions, on just this use of the community's resources (Milavec, 1994).

Who is active in the gathering?

Since the Reformation, one of the thorniest issues in reading Justin has been the issue of 'order': was the one who presides a validly ordained presbyter or simply one of the community fulfilling a function? For adherents of the first view that there

were such office holders, ordained presbyters, was a theological necessity because the chain of ordinations must be intact (for roughly a century before Justin) and reach back to one of 'the twelve apostles.' To the latter group, the absence of any mention of any person with specific powers, or a distinct status, was evidence of 'church order' in which there was no concentration of sacerdotality in any individual such that he was distinct from his brethren. This debate, along with the disputes over the dating of Ignatius (for he was used to supply what was deemed 'latent' in Justin), has received such interest that another aspect of what Justin says has hardly been noticed: Justin imagines the whole gathering as active at every state. The gathering is, to use a modern expression, 'wholly celebrant' (Hurley 1996).

It is the whole group that 'with thankful voices to offer to [the Creator] praises and hymns for our own creation, for keeping us in health, for the richness of life and the seasons, and to ask him in prayer that we come once more to incorruptible life because we have believed in him' (A13, 2); and it is as 'a group we all stand up and offer our prayers' (A 67, 5). It is 'the brothers [who] have gathered to offer in common sincere prayers' (A 65, 1) – and it is their collective action. The presider 'over the brothers ... then gives, in the name of those to whom [God] has bestowed such favours, a worthy thanksgiving ... all present, to declare their agreement, say "Amen"' (A 65, 3). The anaphora is

not the work of someone distinct but of all who have gathered, and the distinctiveness of the one who utters the words is that of giving voice to the group for whom he is the spokesman rather than 'the minister' in a causal duality of minister – ministered / agent – patient (much less priest – laity). And 'over everything that *we* have *we* bless him who made all things through his son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit' (A 67, 2).

This presider does, however, have two skills (assuming that we exclude the issue of an extempore anaphora). First, he is assumed to be able to 'encourage' the gathering 'with words' (A 67,4) and so has rhetorical skills. In a culture which placed high value on orality and skill in presenting arguments (as we see in the, roughly contemporary, statement of Papias that 'he preferred a living voice to a book' (Fragment 3, 4)) and skill in presenting arguments (as we see in Justin's own writing style) we should think of this leader as primarily someone trained in the communication skills of persuasion rather than someone whose skills are those of a teacher much less an exegete. The presider had the confidence to speak and the training to take an audience with him; more detailed examination of what Christian belief involved could be left to other such as the travelling experts we hear of in the *Didache* and the Deutero-Pauline letters (e.g. Eph 4:11-13). Giving priority to this skill in speaking may also help us to explain why when *episkopoi* become the dominant

church leaders, the single factor that makes them stand apart as a group is that they are products of Greco-Roman rhetorical education. The second skill is that this presider is trusted by the group to handle money, and so is probably their treasurer. The presider is not only allowed to make decisions as to doles for the poor, but is entrusted to make decisions regarding the support of 'the strangers' (A 67, 7). Since we know from other sources that the provision made for 'the strangers' was one that required care and diligence, and that apart from abuses of hospitality there were out and out charlatans (the *christemporoi* ['christmongers'] of *Didache* 12,5; or like Simon in Acts 8:9-24), this was no little authority that was delegated by the group to the presider – and presumably he acted on the behalf of the group, spending the common purse, throughout the week. When we note the combination of these two skills, along with the on-going duties of the presider to deal with matters of the purse, we see a figure who could well belong to a group who might start imagining themselves as belonging to an elite with privileges. Such a group would form, in the socially stratified language of the Roman empire, an *ordo*. Justin's text may well provide a key towards seeing that the *potestas ordinis* of later theology originated in 'the power of the purse' of these group delegates.

Justin mentions two other specific functions in his account. The first is the lector who turns marks on a page back into sound.

Recent decades has seen a massive growth in our understanding of the orality of the ancient world: it was not a culture of books but performances stored and transmitted through books (Czachesz 2007). Many in the gathering, such as Justin himself, could read, yet this was a task that was often left, especially if a group was present, to someone with this specific skill. Pliny the Younger tells us of reading but it is clear from the context that what he means is that he had a servant read the physical object in his presence (e.g., *Epistulae* 3, 1). However, if there are going to be books, and we can assume this means codices, then the question of their acquisition, storage, and care had to be entrusted to someone. In some churches this was the responsibility of the *hyperetes tou logou* (O'Loughlin, 2014) but such matters of practical detail are not a concern of Justin in a work of apology, and such omissions should alert us that we do not have a description for which liturgical scholars are the ideal audience but an outsider, a member of a social elite, who is suspicious of what goes on among imported sects behind closed doors. So why mention the detail of the lector? Probably because this made the reading at the gathering appear very like the readings that took place at the symposia of learned friends.

The second functionaries are those who 'arrange for everyone to have a share of the loaf and wine and water of the thanksgiving; and bring [shares] to those not present' (A 66,5;

and cp. 67,5). Traditionally, assuming that Ignatius predated Justin by about half a century and therefore the presider was a presbyter, this has appeared little more than a detail indicating that each church had a plurality of the third degree of order: deacons. Once this assurance is removed we notice that Justin does not label them 'deacons' but described them as those brothers 'whom we called among us "deacons"' (A 65, 5). So what is the significance of this strange phrase *hoi kaloumenoi par'emin diakonoi*? It could be read as if Justin is simply giving his listeners another item of what they would take to be the Christian argot: after all, he has just given the word 'amen' with a gloss on its meaning. But this will not explain this because *diakonos* is a perfectly normal and everyday word in his world and it means a servant, an assistant, or a functionary usually providing a lowly service. For us, the word belongs to the ecclesiastic register of language; for the intended audience all words, verbs or nouns, derived from *diakonos* belonged to the world of those who performed tasks for others (Matt. 20:28 illustrates this). But Justin wants to present the event as one of brothers, equals at a table, and so must point out that those who are designated to perform this service are not themselves actual servants, but are merely labeled 'servants' because they do this in relation to the needs of the group. We invariably translate this passage with the word 'deacons,' but it would be more precise

to use quotation-marks, indicating that the term is but a label, around words such as 'assistants' or 'helpers'. Just as the *Apology* does not provide evidence for an order of presbyters, neither does it witness to an order of deacons.

Given the importance of those, with a variety of names such as 'teachers,' 'prophets,' 'apostles' and 'evangelists,' who travelled between the churches not only bringing special gifts, but texts and news (Thompson, 1998), and whose activities were of such importance in developing the Christian sense of being an *oikoumene*, it is surprising that there is no explicit mention of any such people in Justin. However, we do have a reference to 'strangers who are staying with us' (A 67, 7) and while these are clearly not resident members of the group, they are welcome among them and are being supported by the group. So, who are these transient visitors? The most likely explanation is that they are those Christians who are seen to have special gifts (1 Cor 12:28-30) and who, with the support of the churches they visit, are engaged in full-time ministry among the churches. These travellers – limited according to the *Didache* (12, 2) to just three days' bed and board on the purse of the receiving church – may not only have brought with them a performance of 'the gospel' (evangelists) but more 'wondrous' gifts such as healing (healers) and performances of glossolalia (prophets) (Draper 2015). However, the *Apology* does not warrant detailed speculation as

to the details and, possibly, Justin did not want to draw attention to these travelling 'experts' lest it make the group appear to be a cell of a foreign network. That said, Justin is aware of the network and it was the effect of this network that created the sense of *oikoumene* among Christian: they were not just individual groups of believers but parts of a single 'great church.'

Conclusion

This paper has been an attempt to reconsider some aspects of Justin's account by seeing it as a witness to change in itself rather than as a warrant and background to our liturgy, but it has also barely scratched the surface of his wonderfully rich text. I have not, for reasons of space, looked upon what we can learn about the evolution of texts that were in the process of becoming 'the New Testament' at this time nor what he can tell us of the formation of the notion of a 'canon.' Similarly, I have not looked at what his writings, not just the *Apology*, can tell us of his views of what was becoming 'the Old Testament.' Justin also reflects on how he, and his group, explained the significance of the meal in terms of the presence and memory of Jesus, but this also is too large a topic to examine here. And alongside that question lies the issue of his notion of the community forming a priestly people. In terms of mid-second century theological understanding perhaps the greatest omission is a fuller

examination of how Justin imagined the nature of the relationship between the praying community and the Creator: what was prayer doing and how was it drawn 'to the Father of all through the name of the Son and of the holy Spirit' (A 65, 3). But no great text can be exhausted in any reading!

Appendix

Justin Martyr: Eucharistic Texts

This translation has been made for the purpose of this article and is based upon the Greek text of the First Apology found in Minns and Parvis 2009; that of the Dialogue with Trypho is based on that of Goodspeed 1914, 90-265. In transliterations é is used for 'eta' and ó is for 'omega'; accents have been ignored.

First Apology

[13] (1) Could any sensible person call us 'atheists'? We worship the Creator of this world and declare, as we have been taught, that he has no need of blood [-drenched sacrifices], libations, nor incense. We praise him to the best of our ability (*hosé dunamis*) by a word of prayer and thanksgivings (*euché kai eucharistias*) for everything we eat. We have been taught that the only praise worthy of him is not that which consumes with fire what he has created for our sustenance, but to use them for our good and that of those in need, (2) and then with thankful (*eucharistous*) voices to offer to him praises and hymns (*pompas kai humnous*) for our own creation, for keeping us in health, for the richness of life and the seasons, and to ask him in prayer that we come once more to incorruptible life because we have believed in him.

[65] (1) After the washing of the one who has joined us, we take

him to where those we call 'the brothers' have gathered to offer in common sincere prayers (*euchas*) for ourselves, the person who has been enlightened, and for everyone else wherever they are. We do this so that, having found the truth, our actions might show us to be good citizens and observers of the law, and so attain to eternal salvation (*tén aiónion soterian*). (2) The prayers ended, we greet one another with a kiss.

(3) Then a loaf (*artos*) and a cup (*poterion*) containing water with some wine added to it (*hudati kekramenon*) are given to the person presiding over the brothers. He takes them and gives praise and glory to the Father of all through the name of the Son and of the holy Spirit. He then gives, in the name of those to whom [God] has bestowed such favours, a worthy thanksgiving (*eucharistian*). When the prayers and the act of giving thanks (*euchas kai ténn eucharistian*) are finished, all present, to declare their agreement, say 'Amen.' (4) This is a Hebrew word meaning 'may it be so.'

(5) And when the thanksgiving (*eucharistéasantos*) of the presider has finished and the whole group (*laos*) has assented, those who, among us, are called (*kaloumenai*) 'deacons' arrange for everyone to have a share (*metalabein*) of the loaf and wine and water of the thanksgiving (*tou eucharistéthentos*); and bring [shares] to those not present (*kai tois ou parousin apopherousi*).

[66] (1) Among ourselves we call this food 'eucharist' (*eucharistia*) and only those who have accepted the truth of our teachings and

been cleansed of their sins and reborn by [baptism] and who order their lives by Christ's teaching can share in it. (2) The reason is that this is not an ordinary loaf or drink, but just as through God's word our saviour Jesus Christ became flesh ([i.e.] taking our flesh and blood) for our salvation, so we have been instructed that the food over which we have prayed the thanksgiving is made by word the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh: this food is nourishment by which our flesh and blood are transformed.

(3) The memoirs of the apostles (which we call 'gospels') have transmitted to us what is enjoined on us. That Jesus took a loaf and giving thanks (*eucharistésanta*) said 'Do this in memory of me, this is my body.' Similarly, he took the cup and giving thanks (*eucharistésanta*) [Some recent translations attempt to render this rather awkward phrase as 'he eucharistized it' (e.g. Minns and Parvis, 2009, 257/15) but this assumes that the object of the activity of thanking is something material rather than the one thanked (i.e. God)] said 'This is my blood' and gave it to them. (Goodspeed's edition (1914, 75/8) reads 'gave it to them *only*'; the argument in Minns and Parvis, 2009, 257, n. 6 for omitting *monois* as a gloss are compelling.)

(4) This is what the wicked demons have imitated when they commanded the same thing to be done in the mysteries of Mithras – for (as you either already know or else can easily

discover) a loaf and a cup of water are used in their initiation rites. (This sentence, 66, 4, contrasting Christian initiation with that of Mithras, is silently omitted in the liturgical use of this passage in the Roman Catholic Office of Readings, Sunday 3 of Easter, reading 2. [67] (1) Note that Minns and Parvis, 2009, 259, omit 67, 1 as an interpolation; that it is such can be seen by reading it as a preamble to 67, 2: 'Since then we are constantly reminding each other of these things; and the wealthy among us help those who are poor; and we always stay together.'

(2) Over everything that we have we bless (*eulougoumen*) him who made all things through his son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

(3) Now on the day called 'the day of the sun' all who live in cities or in the country assemble in one place and the memoirs of the apostles the writings of the prophets are read for as long as time allows. (4) When the lector has stopped, the one presiding encourages us with words to imitate these good things [we have heard]. (5) Then as a group we all stand up and offer our prayers.

And, as I have already mentioned, after our prayers are over, a loaf and wine and water (*oinos kai hudór*) are presented, and the presider offers prayers and thanksgivings (*euchas ... kai eucharistias*) as best he can (*hosé dunamis*) and the assembly (*laos*) assent saying the 'Amen.' Then there is distribution and each shares in those things over which there was the thanksgiving (*apo tón eucharistéthentón*), and they are taken by the deacons to those

who are absent. (6) Then those who are wealthy, and willing, give whatever each thinks fit, and what is collected is left with the presider (7) who uses it to help widows and orphans and anyone else who is in need be that due to sickness or some other problem, and also those among us who are slaves, or for strangers (*xenoi*) who are staying with us (*parepidemois*); in short, he cares for all those who are in need.

(8) It is on the day of the sun that all gather for our common assembly: because that is [for us] the first day – on which God transforming the darkness and matter, made the universe; and on that day too our saviour, Jesus Christ, rose from the dead. He was crucified on the day before the day of Saturn, and on the day after the day of Saturn, that is the day of the Sun, he appeared to his apostles and disciples teaching them these things which we place before you for your consideration.

The Dialogue with Trypho the Jew

[41] (1) In a similar way my friends, I continued, the cereal offering which those cleansed of leprosy were order to present [at the tent of meeting] (Lev 14:1-32, especially vv. 10, 20-21, and 31) was a prototype of the loaf of the thanksgiving (*tou artou tēs eucharistias*) which our Lord, Jesus Christ, instructed us to offer in remembrance of the passion he suffered for all those souls who are cleansed of sin, and at the same time that we should give

thanks to God (*eucharistiómen tó theó*) for making the universe and everything in it for the sake of humanity, and for saving us from the sin in which we were born, and for the complete destruction of the evil powers and principalities through him who suffered in accordance with [God's] will. (2) Therefore, as I have already said, God speaks through the prophet Malachy, one of 'the twelve' [the minor prophets], regarding the sacrifices that are offered to himself:

I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord, and I will not accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering;

for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord, but you profane it. (Mal. 1:10-12) (Justin's text is based on the LXX, while his sectioning is his own, based on the argument he wishes to make.)

(3) In making a reference to the sacrifices which we gentiles offer to him in every place, that is the loaf of thanksgiving (*tou artou tés eucharistias*) and, likewise, the cup of thanksgiving (*tou potériou ... tés eucharistias*) he foretold that we should give glory to his name, but that you [Jews] should profane it.

(4) Likewise, the commandment about circumcision which

demands that you circumcise every one of your sons on the eighth day (Lev. 12: 1-3) was a type of the true circumcision by which we are circumcised from errors and wicked ways through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who rose from the dead on the first day of the week, for the first day of the week, remaining the first of all days, yet still is called 'the eighth' according to the number of all the days of the cycle, and still it remains the first.

[70] [In an argument against the priests of Mithras, Justin cites Isa 33:13-19 including v. 16: 'bread (*artos*) will be given to him and his water will be secure'; and this verse is the starting point of his comment:]

(4) It is obvious that this prophecy also alludes to the loaf that our Anointed One gave us to offer in remembrance of the body which he took for the sake of those who believe in him, for whom also he suffered, and, moreover, to the cup which he gave us as a remembrance of his blood when we are making thanksgiving (*eucharistountas poiein*).

[116] [Justin elaborates the identity of the baptised who have been won back from the devil, have put aside the filthy clothes of sin, been given new garments, and through the name of Jesus have 'as one person' praised God the creator of all.

This people] (3) have been set alight by the word of [God's] calling, so that we are now the true priestly family of God, as he himself bears witness when he says:

in every place among the nations pure and pleasing sacrifices are offered to him. (Cf. Mal. 1:11)

But God accepts sacrifices only through his priests.

[117] (1) God has declared in advance that all the sacrifices offered in his name, which Jesus Christ commanded us to offer, that is the thanksgiving of the loaf and the cup (*eucharistia tou artou kai tou potériou*) that we Christians offer in every place are pleasing to him. But, by contrast, he refuses to accept your sacrifices offered through your priests, as he says:

and I will not accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations ... but you profane it. (Mal. 1:10-12)

(2) [Justin continues his attack on Jewish practice] I accept that the prayers and thanksgivings (*euchai kai eucharistiai*) of worthy people are the only perfect and acceptable sacrifices to God. (3) Christians, therefore, have received a tradition that they are to make only such sacrifices in the recollection they make for their food, whether solid or liquid, and in which the sufferings of the Son of God are remembered.

Bibliography

- Abba, R., 1960. *Principles of Christian Worship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barnes, T.D., 2008. 'The Date of Ignatius, *The Expository Times* 120, 119-30.
- Bokser, B.M., 1984. *The Origins of the Seder: The Passover Rite and Early Rabbinic Judaism*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bouley, A., 1981. *From Freedom to Formula: The Evolution of the Eucharistic Prayer from Oral Improvisation to Written Texts*, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press.
- Bradshaw, P.F., and M.E. Johnson, 2012. *The Eucharistic Liturgies: Their evolution and interpretation*, London: SPCK.
- Brakke, D., 2012. 'Scriptural Practices in Early Christianity: Towards a New History of the New Testament Canon' in J. Ulrich, *et al.* eds, *Invention, Rewriting, Usurpation: Discursive Fights over Religious Traditions in Antiquity*, Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 263-80.
- Czachesz, I., 2007. 'The transmission of early Christian thought: Towards a cognitive psychological model,' *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 36, 65-83.

- Dix, G., 1945. *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London: Dacre Press.
- Draper, J.A., 2015. 'Performing the Cosmic Mystery of the Church in the Communities of the *Didache*' in J. Knight *et al.* eds, *The Open Mind: Essays in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, London: Bloomsbury, 37-57.
- Freestone, W.H., 1917. *The Sacrament Reserved*, Oxford: A.R. Mowbray.
- Goodspeed, E.G., 1914. *Die ältesten Apologeten*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.
- Hurley, R., 1996. 'The Eucharist Room at Carlow Liturgy Center: The Search for Meaning,' *Worship* 70/3, 238-51.
- Jewett, R., 2007. *Romans: A Commentary*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Joly, R., 1979. *Le dossier d'Ignace d'Antioche*, Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles.
- Jungmann, J.A., 1950. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, New York, NY, Benziger Brothers.
- LaPorte, J., 1983. *Eucharistia in Philo*, New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.
- Lathrop, G.W., 1990. 'Justin, Eucharist and "Sacrifice": A Case of Metaphor,' *Worship* 64, 30-48.

Leonhard, C., 2014. 'Morning *salutationes* and the Decline of Sympotic Eucharists in the Third Century,' *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 18, 420-42.

McGowan, A., 1999. *Ascetic Eucharists: Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Milavec, A., 1994. 'Distinguishing True and False Prophets: The Protective Wisdom of the *Didache*,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, 117-36.

Minns, D, and P. Parvis, 2009. *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Murphy-O'Connor, J., 1976 / 1977. 'Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians,' *Worship* 50, 370-85; 51, 56-69.

O'Loughlin, T., 2012. 'The Prayers of the Liturgy' in V. Boland and T. McCarthy eds, *The Word is Flesh and Blood: The Eucharist and Sacred Scripture - Festschrift for Prof. Wilfrid Harrington*, Dublin Dominican Publications, 113-22.

—, 2013, 'Reactions to the *Didache* in Early Twentieth-century Britain: A Dispute over the Relationship of History and Doctrine?' in S.J. Brown, et al., eds, *Religion, Identity and Conflict in Britain: From the Restoration to the Twentieth Century. Essays in Honour of Keith Robbins*, Farnham: Ashgate, 177-94.

—, 2014. 'Servants of the Word': does Luke 1:2 throw light on to the book practices of the late first-century churches?' in H.

- Houghton ed., *Early Readers, Scholars and Editors of the New Testament*, Piscataway, NJ, 1-15.
- , 2015A. 'The Tension between Theological Speculation and Historical Inquiry,' *The Japan Mission Journal* 69, 33-43.
- , 2015B. *The Eucharist: Origins and Contemporary Understandings*, London: Bloomsbury.
- , 2018. 'One or two cups? The Text of Luke 22:17-20 Again' in H.A.G. Houghton ed., *The Liturgy and the Living Text of the New Testament*, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 51-69.
- Pocknee, C.E., 1963. *The Christian Altar in History and Today*, London: The Alcuin Club.
- Ratzinger, J., 2000. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press.
- Smith, D.E., 2003. *From Symposium to Eucharist: The Banquet in the Early Christian World*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Taylor, J., 2009. 'Bread that is Broken – and Unbroken' in Z. Rodgers, et al., eds *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*, Leiden: Brill, 525-37.
- Taylor, J.E., 2004. 'The Women "Priests" of Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*' in J. Schaberg, et al. eds, *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, New York, NY: Continuum, 102-22.

Thompson, M.B., 1998. 'The Holy Internet: Communication Between Churches in the First Christian Generation' in Bauckham, R. ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking Gospel Audiences*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 49-70.

van de Sandt, H., and D. Flusser, 2002. *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity*, Assen: Royal Van Gorcum