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The Humanity of Jesus in Justin Martyr's Soteriology

by Craig M. Watts

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Justin Martyr's soteriological thought and his concept of the humanity of Jesus has received very little attention. In fact the prominent role which cosmology and the doctrine of the divine Logos play in Justin's writings seems to so overshadow his soteriology and the place of the history and humanity of Jesus that the latter virtually disappear. In view of this and other considerations certain scholars have suggested that these aspects of Justin's theology are relatively unimportant and are artificially attached to, rather than an intrinsic part of, the structure of his thought.¹ Consequently it seems that a study in Justin's understanding of the humanity of Jesus and the bearing it has on his soteriology is in order. Such a study may indicate to what extent Justin's soteriology is related to his thought as a whole.

I.

In order to understand better the humanity of Jesus in Justin's thought it must be seen in conjunction with his concept of the divine Logos. Justin stood between two views of God and was captive of both. On the one hand, through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ he saw God as the One who has drawn near to man, revealing his divine character, intention and will. A vision of God determined by Jesus Christ is that of a God deeply and actively involved in human affairs and compassionate in his dealings with humanity. However, the influence of Platonic thought persisted throughout Justin's career, hence he retained the belief in a God who is eternal, immovable, unutterable, immutable cause and ruler of the cosmos, and incapable of direct contact with the creation.² L. W. Barnard observed that 'it would be fair to say that this philosophic idea of God remained uppermost in his mind and threatened, at times, to overwhelm the more biblical and Christian idea which Justin knew as a fact of experience'.³ The doctrine of the divine Logos served to hold together, the two trends in his thought, and allowed him to affirm both the transcendence and the immanence of God.

For Justin the Logos, as the Reason of God, is 'indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as they say that the light of the sun on

¹ Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 406, 411-412.

² This is not, of course, to assume that his doctrine of God is strictly Platonic. Issues of this sort will be avoided as much as possible throughout this paper.

³ L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1967), 81.

earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens'.⁴ Though of one essence with the Father, as one 'begotten by the Father' the Logos is numerically distinct from the Father.⁵ Though he was 'truly brought forth from the Father, and was with the Father before all the creatures',⁶ he was not himself a creature, rather, he was the offspring of God⁷ who proceeds from God as a rational power begotten by the act of divine will and is himself a Beginning.⁸ It must be noted that the generation of the Logos from the Father does not refer to the ultimate origin of the Logos, but his emission for the purpose of creation and revelation. This emission is determined and enacted by the Father's will; nevertheless it does not entail a separation of the Father and Son or Logos.⁹ Rather it is as 'when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission so as to lessen the word'.¹⁰ As one who shares the essence of the Father the Logos is God,¹¹ though he be, as it were, 'a second God', and as such is worshipped and loved next to the Father only.¹² The Logos is subordinate to the Father not in regard to essence, but in origin, as that which is begotten he is distinguished from that which begets.¹³ Nonetheless in the relation to the creatures the Logos is 'not only the beginning but the principle of the vitality and form of everything that is to receive being'.¹⁴ Hence the Logos is united with the Father God, yet is distinct as a separate being; the Logos is not a creature, yet is the beginning of all creation.

By using the concept of the *logos spermatikos* to designate the universal activity of the Logos Justin brought Christianity into relationship with the broader spectrum of truth. Each person has a share of the Logos in himself, Justin maintained. Consequently each person can perceive the truth in proportion to the share of the Logos within himself.¹⁵ In this manner Justin could account for the truth found in philosophies and various pagan religions, while at the same time distinguishing between the inade-

⁴ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 128. All quotations from Justin's works are from the Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson translation (in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, I. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, N. D.) unless otherwise noted.

⁵ *Ibid.* 129.

⁶ *Ibid.* 62.

⁷ Justin, *I Apology*, ch. 21.

⁸ *Dialogue*, 61.

⁹ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1958, 1960), 97-98.

¹⁰ *Dialogue*, 61.

¹¹ *I Apol.* 63.

¹² *II Apol.* 13.

¹³ *Dial.* 129.

¹⁴ Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, II, trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Dover, 1961), 212.

¹⁵ *II Apol.* 13.

quate truths of the others and the full truth of Christianity, since only in Christ is the whole Logos present.¹⁶

Grillmeier outlines the function of the Logos in the thought of the Apologists as follows:

- (1). In its cosmological aspect the Logos is regarded as creative Word;
- (2). In its noetic aspect it is the basis of knowledge and truth;
- (3). In its moral aspect it serves as the basis and embodiment of the moral law;
- (4). In its psychological aspect it is the original form of thought;
- (5). In its saving historical aspect it is the Word of revelation and mediator of salvation.

Grillmeier observes that aspects (1). and (5). were particularly appropriate for interpreting the work of God external to himself, in the creation of the world and the incarnation of the Logos. Aspects (2). and (4). provide a suitable way of solving the relationship of Logos and Father within God. He concludes that 'all the aspects of the Logos doctrine together in any case show that the Fathers were concerned with the totality of God, the world and history'.¹⁸ However it is the very comprehensiveness of the doctrine of the Logos which led some, such as Hermann Bauke, to conclude that 'the consequence was that the idea of the incarnation, essential to any christology, fell completely into the background, or at least lost its essential importance and, in particular, was not incorporated into the whole theological structure'.¹⁹

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II.

If Justin sought to establish the rationality of the Christian faith through his use of the Logos principle he appears to have deserted the effort by making the unprecedented and paradoxical claim that the universal and absolutely reasonable Logos became fully present in a particular man and appeared bodily in Jesus of Nazareth.²⁰ While Justin does not attempt to explain *how* the Logos took on human being he does not hesitate to affirm that the Logos did in fact do so. He simply states that the Logos

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 6.

¹⁸ Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, I, 2nd ed. trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox, 1965, 1975), 109-110.

¹⁹ Hermann Bauke, 'The History of the Christological Doctrine', *Twentieth Century Theology in the Making*, II, ed. and trans. Jaroslav Pelikan (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 100.

²⁰ Bousset, 406.

was incarnate 'through the power of the Word, according to the will of God the Father'.²¹

Justin does not refrain from ascribing all which can be said of the Logos to the man Jesus. Yet he does not appear to want to minimize the humanity of Christ. Several different words and phrases are used by Justin to denote the incarnation. In the fifth chapter of *I Apology* and in the *Dialogue* Justin refers to the Logos as one who is 'to come' or to 'make appearance', indicating that the one who came as man was pre-existent and that his coming was foretold in prophecy.²² Justin also employs the term 'took flesh' to designate the incarnation. Within Christian literature Justin alone uses this term. It should be noted that whenever the verb occurs it is in its participle form. Demetrius Trakatellis concludes from this that the term may have belonged to some sort of a creedal formulation or that it was part of a liturgical text.²³ This suggestion is given support in *I Apology* 66 where the term occurs twice in a thoroughly eucharistic context. It is significant that this word is usually used in association with the phrase 'became man', the latter phrase being the most characteristic description of the incarnation employed by Justin. It appears over twenty times within his writings.²⁴ At times it is used in connection with the phrase 'born of a virgin'.²⁵ The phrase 'became man' nowhere appears within the New Testament though one may see a possible antecedent for this phrase in John 1:14. However in view of Justin's Christological use of the verb 'became flesh' and the noun 'flesh' there is reason to suppose that he would be hesitant to employ 'became flesh' as a synonym for 'became man', since in his writings the former is usually complemented by other expressions of Christological significance.²⁶ This suggests that Justin views becoming flesh only as an aspect or part of the incarnation, not an equivalent of it.²⁷

As the phrase 'became man' indicates, Justin does not understand the incarnation as being simply a matter of the Logos having assumed a human body. Perhaps the most important single passage pertaining to the humanity of the Christ is in *II Apology* chapter ten, in which Justin maintains that the whole of the Logos, which is 'Christ ... became the whole rational being, both body, and reason, and soul'. While all that

²¹ *I Apol.* 46; see Demetrius Trakatellis, *The Pre-Existence of Christ in the Writings of Justin Martyr* (Missoula, Mo.: Scholars Press, 1976), 140.

²² *I Apol.* 49; 53; 54; 57; *Dial.* 49; 52; 126.

²³ Trakatellis, 140.

²⁴ *I Apol.* 5; 23; 50; 53; 63; *II Apol.* 13; *Dial.* 38; 48; 57; 64; 67; 68; 76; 85; 98; 99; 100; 101; 105; 125.

²⁵ *Dial.* 57; 85; 101.

²⁶ *I Apol.* 32; *Dial.* 100 et. al.

²⁷ Trakatellis, 143.

Justin intends to convey in these words may not be clear, most scholars agree that this passage appears to be an affirmation that the pre-existent Logos became man not just in body, but in 'body, soul and spirit', in all three respects. This three-fold formula was the traditional division of human nature and was interchangeable for the entire constitution of man.²⁸ One might however, take this passage to mean that the Logos took the place in the man Jesus of the rational soul. If this is the case then Justin would stand as a forerunner of the 'Word-flesh' Christology later developed by the Alexandrian theologians. Yet, as J. N. D. Kelly has observed,²⁹ the point of the passage at hand is not that the difference between Christ and ordinary men is in any essential disparity of constitution; rather the difference between the two lies in the fact that in Christ the Logos as a whole is found, whereas the Logos works in ordinary men in a fragmentary manner, as a seed. If it was Justin's intention to teach that the Logos took the place of an ordinary human soul in the person of Jesus Christ then nothing could have been easier for him to say at this point. Nevertheless, this is not the course Justin chose to take. Hence it appears to be most reasonable to regard this passage as supportive of the view that Justin regarded the humanity of Jesus as complete, including not only a body, but also a soul enlightened and enlivened by the Logos. There is no indication within Justin's writings that Jesus was human in body, or in body and soul, but divine in some higher aspect of his constitution, replacing the ordinary fragment of the Logos with the whole Logos. As Goodenough has remarked, '(Jesus) was man entirely inasmuch as He was a being made up of body, soul, and spirit, but He was the Logos entirely inasmuch as this body, soul, and spirit was what the Logos Himself in His entirety has become'.³⁰ Still one must admit that there is insufficient evidence to make final conclusions in this matter though the amount of information which is available does seem supportive of the view that Justin conceived as Jesus as fully human.

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Nevertheless, though Christ may have been true man, a man among men,³¹ and a man for men,³² he was not a man of men: 'He appeared, and was man, but not of human seed'. Christ was not a product of humanity, rather the incarnation was wholly the work of the will of God. God alone brought him forth and humanity had no more to do with the formation of

²⁸ Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Verlag Frommannsche Buchhandlung, 1923), 240-241.

²⁹ Kelly, 146-147.

³⁰ Goodenough, 241.

³¹ *I Apol.* 23

³² *I Apol.* 23

³³ *Dial.* 76.

the blood of Jesus than it has in creating the 'blood of a grape'.³⁴ Justin seems to be affirming more than that Jesus was born of a virgin. The very humanity of Jesus was such that he was not finally derived from Mary; rather she was an instrument used by God. It appears that for Justin the incarnation is a new creation, discontinuous with the old creation of humanity. Jesus 'was man, but not of human seed'.³⁵ Thus Justin can refer to Jesus as 'one *like* unto the Son of man', a phrase he uses to indicate a certain dissimilarity of Jesus to ordinary humanity. Yet despite this distinction, Justin does not intend to deny the true humanity of Jesus. The Logos became a human being though he had no blood relationships with humanity. The difference of immediate origin does not for Justin constitute a denial of the true humanity of Jesus.³⁶

26 Justin does not speculate concerning the manner the humanity and divinity are related in Christ. His view of Jesus' humanity was such to allow him to maintain the paradoxical dual assertion that 'even at His birth He was in possession of His power', and 'He grew up like all other men'.³⁷ On the one hand, Justin maintains his doctrine of the divinity of Christ against those who would move towards a denial of the pre-existence of Christ. Hence he makes a point of denying the adoptionist notion that Jesus received his divine powers at his baptism.³⁸ On the other hand, Justin's emphasis on the humanity of Jesus stands in opposition to any docetic interpretations of the incarnation. Against docetic teachings he makes the claim that Jesus was 'flesh and blood for our salvation'.³⁹ The humanity of Jesus was such that he could be 'set forth as suffering, inglorious, dishonoured, and crucified'.⁴⁰ Only a truly human Christ could experience the intense anguish of the Garden of Gethsemane. Justin believed it to be the case that such suffering was the will of the Father so that the human race 'may not say that He, being the Son of God, did not feel what was happening to Him and inflicted on Him'.⁴¹ It seems reasonably clear that Justin affirms both the divinity and full humanity of Jesus Christ. However it is equally clear that he makes very little progress towards resolving the difficulties his Christological statements entail.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Goodenough, 243.

³⁷ *Dial.* 88.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *I Apol.* 66.

⁴⁰ *Dial.* 110.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 103.

III.

The movement in Justin's thought from Christology to soteriology is not always easy to follow, particularly insofar as this concerns the humanity of Jesus. This may be due in part to a rationalism which appears to dominate his doctrine of salvation.

Justin held that though persons do not have a choice in being born, by virtue of the rational power with which they have been blessed by God they are able to and responsible for choosing 'those things which please Him'.⁴² Thus there is no excuse for failing to do that which is right before God. Though Justin believes in a divine foreknowledge, he conceives this to be a foreknowing of that which is chosen freely, rather than that which 'happens by a fatal necessity'. Apart from freedom of choice there can be no human responsibility: 'unless the human race have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions, of whatever kind they be'.⁴³

If humans have the power to choose the good, why has the good not in fact been chosen? How is it that sin rather than righteousness prevail? Justin's answer is that in ignorance human existence is lived. He links this ignorance to demonic activity which has obscured the truth and has prompted various forms of evil and corruption. Justin believes the very foundation of paganism to be demonic in origin. He contends that it is demons that the pagans worship as gods.⁴⁴ The demons are behind the sacrificial rites and the image worship of the pagans, providing the miraculous powers which the images may manifest.⁴⁵ The demons are the authors of the persecution and slander directed against Christians.⁴⁶ They are the originators of heresy and all corrupt and unjust laws of humanity.⁴⁷ Their work has resulted in the loss of truth and the curse of death which is experienced by the whole human race.⁴⁸

It is noteworthy that Justin nowhere speaks of a fundamental corruption of human nature itself. The human dilemma is not something which either issues from or can be equated with a fallen nature. Rather the problem is largely external.⁴⁹ It is the demons which cloud the vision of truth and it is these demonic forces which must be opposed if enlightenment is to be attained. However, Justin does not intend to absolve humans

⁴² *I Apol.* 10; 28.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 43.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 5; 9.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 10; 12.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 26.

⁴⁸ *Dial.* 95.

⁴⁹ Bousset, 411-412.

of their responsibility for their fate by blaming the demons for the human condition. Ultimately man is accountable for his life and by virtue of the *logos spermatikos* which is given by God to each individual, truth can be found. Even though the demons deceive and corrupt the human race, Justin maintains that all persons are nevertheless endowed with free-will, yet have wilfully committed personal transgressions.⁵⁰ Because of the influence of demons persons are no longer sufficiently able to know the truth and do the will of God. The *logos spermatikos* which is shared by every person is not enough to enable humans to resist the delusion of demons. Hence the quest for truth and eternal life is inevitably frustrated.

28 In light of this Justin argues that revelation is necessary if truth is to be known and salvation attained. Even truth which humans gain by ordinary means, though it be a fragmented and incomplete truth, comes through the operation of divine reason, the *logos spermatikos*. But if the full truth is to be gained and the opposing demonic powers are to be prevailed against, the working of the whole *Logos* is essential. Thus the *Logos* became man in Jesus of Nazareth for the sake of the human race. The work of Christ in coming to earth was two-fold: to liberate humanity from the tyranny of the demonic powers, and to illuminate the lost race with the truth of God.⁵¹ This two-fold task is actually blended into one in Justin's thought, for it is by the word of revelation that the power of demons is broken: 'Our Jesus sent forth his word to all the nations where the demons held sway, summoning men to repent; and his powerful word persuaded a great number of them to abandon the demons whom they were serving, for these demons are the gods of the nations'.⁵² The soteriology of Justin is clearly didactic in its thrust, even when it touches those aspects which pertain to the demonic. This strongly didactic element is further indicated by the titles which Justin bestows upon Christ such as the New Law-giver,⁵³ Teacher, and everlasting law⁵⁵ or eternal and final law.⁵⁶

Justin was convinced that the message of Christ is capable of breaking

⁵⁰ *Dial.* 88. Justin does not make clear how freewill is preserved in spite of demonic activity. It would seem that freewill is preserved only if persons were capable of resisting the demonic influence. However if demonic powers can be resisted and overcome then it would seem that Justin's argument for the necessity of revelation would be greatly weakened if not frustrated entirely.

⁵¹ *Dial.* 88. Also see: Jean Daniélou, *A History of Early Christian Doctrine Before the Council of Nicaea*, Vol. 2, trans. John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 164.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Dial.* 18.

⁵⁴ *I Apol.* 13.

⁵⁵ *Dial.* 43.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 11.

the grip of the demons and providing the needed enlightenment so that salvation might again be possible. It was his conviction that the doctrine of the future as taught by the church was such that if it were believed it would enable one to resist evil and be saved: 'For if all men knew this, no one would choose wickedness even for a little'.⁵⁷ Human philosophy is incapable of inspiring such conviction because unaided by the whole Logos ordinary human reason is incapable of apprehending and conveying such truth. But the enabling truth revealed by Jesus Christ transcends these limitations so that salvation becomes a possibility.

One may argue that though Justin's soteriology is in fact Word-centred, and highly didactic it is not an exclusively rationalistic doctrine of salvation. Salvation does not come strictly through knowledge. The message of God is an active force, a power. The vitality of the message was demonstrated by the way it could overcome all opposition. The power it carried when Jesus confronted the Pharisees and Scribes was 'like a plentiful and strong spring'.⁵⁸ This power has not diminished nor has it been dulled by the passing of time. Justin asserts that even in the present 'the word of His truth and wisdom is more ardent and more light-giving than the rays of the sun, and sinks down into the depths of heart and mind'.⁵⁹ Goodenough accurately characterizes Justin's thought in saying, 'The Christian revelation is not a coldly convincing lecture on metaphysics or ethical theory. It is a burning force which sets the heart afire'.⁶⁰ This can be said equally of the message bore by the apostles for they too carry the 'rod of power', which is 'the mighty word'.⁶¹ Certainly Justin Martyr would agree with St. Paul that the gospel is the 'power of God for salvation'. One must be careful however, not to read too much mysticism into Justin's words.

29

Thus far the significance of the incarnation and the place of the cross is by no means obvious. Certainly it is through the Incarnate One that persons come to know the whole Logos, but the unique value of the incarnation is not yet clear. It would seem that it may not be particularly important that the Logos become a man so long as the Logos become a mouth. Likewise the place of the cross is unclear for though Justin speaks much of the cross, and though he makes the extravagant claim that he sees the presence of the cross in all the elements and in all forms of life,⁶² it is not clear where it fits in his scheme of thought. The question remains

⁵⁷ *I Apol.* 12.

⁵⁸ *Dial.* 102.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 121.

⁶⁰ Goodenough, 255.

⁶¹ *I Apol.* 45.

⁶² *Ibid.* 55.

whether the cross is important to Justin because it is essential to his soteriology, or whether it is essential only because of the central place it holds in the Christian tradition which he adopts, and, therefore, must be appended to his thought though it plays no integral part to its actual structure.

IV.

30 Before proceeding further it might be helpful to summarize what our study has indicated thus far regarding Justin's thought. Though Jesus is not 'true God' quite as the Chalcedonian definition would affirm it, nevertheless he is divine, a 'second God', in that he is to be identified with the whole Logos, as distinguished from the logos spermatikos which is present in all persons. As the whole Logos Jesus bears all truth in contrast to the fragmented limited truth to which humans have access through the logos spermatikos. Jesus is truly human, sharing the same constitution as ordinary humans, though he differs in respect to his origin. In Jesus Christ the whole Logos is incarnate, thus providing the revelatory word which is needed to free the human race from the ignorance and corruption which the demonic forces have bred. The power of this word enables persons to resist the demons and live in obedience to God.

While the unsystematic and incomplete nature of Justin's theology makes it difficult for us to be conclusive in our understanding of his thought, I believe the above to be a largely accurate representation. In this it becomes evident that the idea of liberation from ignorance is a central concern which runs throughout the various aspects of his theology which we have thus far examined, and to an extent holds them together. Certainly the liberation from ignorance is at the centre of Justin's soteriology. Thus since revelation has its very purpose in overcoming ignorance, then insofar as the revelation of the whole Logos to the human race requires that the Logos become truly man, the humanity of Jesus and his cross are seen as the means of breaking the power of the demons. Hence these matters are not only essential to Justin's soteriology, but also a significant factor in his thought as a whole.

Two questions will guide the remainder of this study: (1) Why is the full humanity of Jesus important in a soteriology in which the word of revelation plays the dominating role? (2) How is the death of Christ and its anti-demonic significance related to the didactic thrust of Justin's soteriology? In other words, why is the crucifixion necessary if the revelatory message is sufficient to overcome the demonic domination of humanity?

(1). In arguing that Christ as pre-existent Logos was present in Old

Testament theophanies Justin attempted to establish continuity with the Old Testament revelation and defend the reasonableness of the incarnation. Thus Justin asks, 'If we know that God revealed Himself in so many forms to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, how are we at a loss, and do not believe that, according to the will of the Father of all things, it was possible for him to be born man of the Virgin?'⁶³ Clearly Justin regarded the incarnation as the culmination of God's revelatory activity. One of the primary purposes of the Old Testament prophetic utterance was to point towards the coming of the Incarnate One.⁶⁴ The prophetic word was not an end in itself; rather it was directed to an end which was fulfilled in Christ.

This leads us to ask what distinguished Jesus Christ from the previous Old Testament theophanies? Wherein lies the uniqueness and significance of the incarnation? It appears that the answer is to be found in the fact that in contrast to previous theophanies in which the Logos *appeared* as a fire from a bush or an angel, in Christ the Logos *became* man; he did not merely appear as a man.⁶⁵ This answer urges upon us a further question: Why is the incarnation necessary for the Christian revelation? Could not the word of revelation have been spoken through burning bush or an appearance of a man? It would seem that if the liberating word of revelation is simply a message which is capable of being verbalized in a rationally coherent manner then the incarnation would not be essential in order for God to convey this message to humanity. But certainly Justin does not want to infer that the incarnation is expendable. Hence this suggests that the liberating power of the Logos does not lie altogether in the words and message of Jesus, but is also to be located in some aspect or aspects of the historical particularity of the man Jesus of Nazareth. Justin's often used phrase 'became man *for our salvation*' appears to support this supposition.

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(2). The crucifixion is that aspect of Jesus' life that Justin most often points to as being decisive in the victory of God against the demonic forces. Though Justin holds Jesus to have had complete power over the demons at his temptation,⁶⁶ in exorcisms,⁶⁷ even at his birth,⁶⁸ so much that he might be referred to as 'Lord of the demons',⁶⁹ nevertheless it remains the case that the cross is 'the greatest symbol of his power and

⁶³ *Dial.* 75.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *I Apol.* 63.

⁶⁶ *Dial.* 124.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 49.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 78.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 85.

rule'.⁷⁰ Beyond the mere mediation of the divine message, the Logos became incarnate so that through the concealed power of God in the crucified Christ the demonic forces could be overcome, and humanity could be freed from the grip of death.⁷¹ Through his suffering, death and resurrection Jesus took upon himself the curses of all so that these curses might be healed.⁷² Elsewhere, using the language of redemption, Justin declares that 'Christ served, even to the slavery of the cross, for the various and manyfomed races of mankind, acquiring them by the blood and mystery of the cross'.⁷³

32

Certainly the cross is ultimately a mystery for Justin. For though he often repeats that there is no other hope for salvation except through the passion and the cross,⁷⁴ that the death of Jesus stands as the only sacrifice for sin,⁷⁵ and that the old stains of sin are purified by the blood of Christ for all who repent,⁷⁶ still Justin fails to produce anything like a unified and systematic theory to explain the meaning of the cross and its salvific significance. Consequently it is difficult to relate the crucifixion to the apparent didactic thrust of Justin's soteriology. Still it would be unfair to conclude that the cross is in any way unimportant or artificially appended to Justin's doctrine of salvation. As noted above, if the demonic forces and the ignorance and error which they have encouraged could have been totally resolved by a revelatory word from God then the incarnation need not have occurred, for God has previously spoken to humans without the Logos becoming man.

The fact that Justin distinguishes the whole Logos in Christ from all prior theophanies suggests that the incarnation is more than a means of communicating a message, however important that message might be. The claims Justin makes for the crucifixion *i.e.*, forgiveness of sin, freedom from cursedness and death, indicates it is these things that distinguishes the revelation in Christ from all other theophanies. The didactic thrust of Justin's soteriology does not render the cross superfluous. In fact it is only through an artificial separation of the divine word from the divine act which makes this appear to be the case. It is extremely unlikely that Justin would condone such a separation. In Justin's thought both the revelatory word and the sacrificial deed are anti-demonic, but the distinguishing factor is that which provides the rationale for the incarnation — the crucifixion.

⁷⁰ *I Apol.* 55.

⁷¹ *Dial.* 45; 49.

⁷² *Ibid.* 95.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 134.

⁷⁴ *Dial.* 13; 17; 41; 43; *II Apol.* 13.

⁷⁵ *Dial.* 40; 89; 111.

⁷⁶ *I Apol.* 32; *Dial.* 13; 24; 44; 54.

While in Justin's thought the word of revelation is efficacious in regard to the problem of demon inspired ignorance, it is the cross which brings about forgiveness of past sins and the resulting hope of eternal life. Insofar as sin is a consequence of ignorance and insofar as death results from sin, soteriology is incomplete unless these matters are taken into account. Hence it appears that the incarnation and crucifixion are essential aspects of Justin's soteriology, and in as much as these aspects of Justin's thought entail the humanity of Jesus, this too must be regarded as an integral part of his doctrine of salvation.