

Alfio Giovanni Cristaudo, *Giusitno e la protoortodossia Giovannea. Il superamento della cristologia pneumatologica e la nascita della teologia del Logos*, Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum – Nerbini International, Roma 2023, pp. 647

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Cristaudo's monograph constitutes an event of great importance for the study of the writings of Saint Justin Martyr. Since written in Italian and published in the prestigious series of the Patristic Institute "Augustinianum" of Rome by the Nerbini International publishing house, it will probably remain unknown to scholars of the English-speaking world. I therefore strongly encourage the Author to publish at least a summary of this book in English, in order to make the innovative conclusions of his research available to a wider group of readers around the world. I will begin my review of this valuable work with four general observations:

(1) In a monograph like this, not all the elements concerning the general assumptions of early Christian apologetics of the 2nd century or the historical context of Justin's theology are necessary. Such things are usually included in general studies on a given Christian author entitled, for example, "The theology of St. Justin", while in a monograph dedicated to a very specific theme as in this case, that is, the reception of the theology of the Logos of John in Justin's writings, it would be sufficient only briefly to present the results of the latest research in these areas. Tackling it all has expanded the book to 647 pages, which is a real challenge for even the most passionate researchers on Justin's theology. One can only admire the enormous effort made by the Author of the book in mastering such vast material, synthetically and critically presenting the results of previous research. And he succeeds fully in this task, even if at times the book is a bit "long-winded". The entire chapter I, except paragraph 3 "The fermented reception of Johannism and the birth of the first theological systems: Valentinian Gnosticism", is superfluous because these are the things commonly known to scholars of Justin's writings. The first doubts also appear immediately from the beginning: why does the term "Johannism" appear

and not “the theology of John?”. This change should at least be explained to the reader. The term “proto-Catholicism” is inappropriate for the 1st and 2nd Centuries; and from the Gnostic systems the Author focuses only on the system of Valentinus – why? I understand that he does this because he then wants to compare Justin’s theology with the Western Gnosticism of Valentinus’s Roman version, but perhaps Justin should not be considered a representative of Roman theology at all. I’ll come back to this later. Likewise, in my opinion, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of chapter II, which concern the works of Justin, their nature and the intellectual profile of their author, are also not necessary. It would have been enough briefly to present the results of previous research in these areas and begin the study with paragraph 4 of chapter II, “The reception of the Gospel of John in the works and theology of Justin”. Chapter III is very interesting and deserves special attention. All this work is obviously not a vain effort, because above all the readers of the book in Italian receive an excellent summary of the latest research on Justin and his writings, but the Author, like every young researcher, has become a victim of the desire to face all the elements of Justin’s life, works and theology.

(2) Secondly, the Author uses as a starting point for his analysis the hypothesis promoted by Prof. Simonetti, who was convinced, I still remember from my studies at the Augustinianum in the 1990s, that there was no monarchical episcopate in Rome, that is, the Roman Church was not led by a single bishop but by the college of presbyters, similar to ancient Judaism, and Roman theology of the 2nd century would be essentially Judeo-Christian. As we know, this belief is mainly based on sources like the *Shepherd of Hermas*, *1 Letter to the Corinthians* of Clement of Rome, on the lack of reference to the bishop of Rome in the *Letter to the Romans* of Ignatius of Antioch and on the fragment of S. Irenaeus in *Adversus Haereses*. The arguments regarding the *Shepherd of Hermas* and *1 Letter to the Corinthians* of Clement of Rome are not convincing, and especially in case of *1 Letter to the Corinthians* it’s Clement who is the one bishop giving the answer in name of the whole Church of Rome, not the college of presbyters. This should prove that the Church of Rome was guided in the 1st century by one bishop. More problematic is the lack of reference to the bishop of Rome in the *Letter to the Romans* of Ignatius of Antioch, but to conclude on the basis of this silence that there was not a single bishop in Rome in that time seems too hazardous. We know very well that argument *e silentio* alone is not enough to prove a hypothesis. In fact, it would be strange if after Clement’s episcopate which ended at the beginning of the 2nd century the

Church of Rome did not have a bishop and in the years 130-140 it had one again. The list of bishops of Rome transmitted to us by Irenaeus confirms the uninterrupted succession of the Roman episcopate in the 2nd century. Irenaeus himself in *Adv. Haer. III* 3, 2-4, when entering the controversy with the Gnostics, wrote on the succession of bishops (not presbyters) and presented the list of the bishops of Rome from Peter to Eleutherus and does not mention a college of presbyters at all. And if he called them presbyters, with this term he always meant the elderly, not the second level of the priestly hierarchy. In fact, subsequent research has shown that the Greek term πρεσβύτερος had a double meaning in the 1st-2nd centuries: as “an elder/superior of the community”, almost always identified with bishop, and “priest” as the second rank in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, between bishop and deacon. Therefore, the sources clearly speak of one bishop who, thanks to the principle of apostolic succession, led the Church in Rome, but we have no mention, even in a general sense, of the presbyters who would have led it. We have no written evidence of this period: neither a clear mention in the sources about the structure of the community, nor the names of these potential presbyters who would have led the Church in Rome, and the term πρεσβύτερος must be understood as “elder” which for Irenaeus was identical to a bishop. In my opinion this hypothesis should be abandoned because there is not enough textual evidence to support it. R. Brown in his book *Antioch and Rome* had attempted to resolve this problem by putting forward the hypothesis that these presbyters-bishops were several in Rome and would have led the different neighborhoods of the city. A brilliant hypothesis but without any basis in the sources.

As regards the Judeo-Christian character of Roman theology of the 1st-2nd centuries, the analysis of *1 Clement* and *the Shepherd* of Hermas conducted by the Author seem to confirm that it had this character. However, I think that some elements of what we call “Judeo-Christian theology” still need to be specified and refined, because, for example, monotheism was a characteristic feature not only of Judeo-Christianity, but also of the 2nd century Christians coming from the Hellenistic world who rejected pagan polytheism. If it is true, as the Author has convincingly demonstrated, that the Gospel of John and the so-called high Christology, that is, the Christology of the Logos, was not known in Rome until the mid-2nd century, one should conclude that the biblical basis of the Roman theology of that time was the Synoptic Gospels. However, it would be risky to say that the Christology based on the Synoptics is Judeo-Christian, while the Christology of the Logos based on the Gospel of John is not. Research in recent decades

has demonstrated how the Gospel of John is immersed in the Judaism of the time and is also Judeo-Christian. It is enough to cite, as an example, the light-dark scheme present in the Qumran texts or the studies on the Jewish background of the Fourth Gospel, such as the study by F. Manns, *L'Évangile de Jean à la lumière du judaïsme* (Jerusalem 1991), in which he shows many common threads between the Gospel of John and the Judaic theology of the time. In short, the criteria for defining Judeo-Christianity presented in the 19th and 20th centuries by German researchers, later supplemented by Danielou and Mimouni, are not sufficient and need to be further specified. The Author takes a step forward by referring to M. Pesce's studies, but these criteria still remain imprecise.

(3) Third, even if it is true that the Gospel of John and the so-called high Christology, that is, the Christology of the Logos, were not known in Rome in the mid-second century and must have been introduced there by the Gnostics and then by Justin, let us remember that in the case of Justin the situation is more complicated. It's true that in *1* and *2 Apology* he emphasizes Logos more as a mediator between God and the created world, but in the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, Logos is only one of the titles of the Son of God, apart from the others present in the Old Testament such as: "Glory", "Archistrategus", "Angel", "Wisdom", "second Lord" or "second God". It is generally accepted that not only pneumatic Christology, but even more angelic Christology, in which Christ, as the pre-existing Son of God, is referred to as a messenger (*angelos*), is perceived as so-called low Christology. In the *Dialogue* Justin dedicates much space to showing that during the theophany to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses, one of the messengers (*angels*) was Christ, the pre-existent Son of God. So, in the *Dialogue*, would Justin have left aside the high Christology of the Logos and returned to the so-called low Christology because of his Jewish interlocutors? I think that Justin's works are not so much a testimony of the transition made from pneumatic Christology to the theology of the Logos, but rather a record of the ongoing process in which both models are still present. In ethno-Christian environments educated in philosophy, for obvious reasons, the model of the theology of the Logos prevailed, while in discussions with the Jews, the so-called low Christology, although some of them, like Trypho himself, were also philosophically educated. It is interesting to note that in the *Dialogue* Justin does not put the Logos at the center, but rather refers to the titles of the Old Testament. It seems that the model of low Christology initially worked well not only in discussions with the Jews, but also in teaching philosophically people poorly educated, and gained

even more importance when the Gnostics constructed their erroneous theories using the Gospel of John and the Christology of the Logos, casting a shadow of doubt over them. Finally, the Author rightly notes that Justin was not mentioned at all in the Roman Church in the 2nd century and most likely remained an unknown figure there. How, then, to explain that the most important Christian theologian of the second century, who, as the Author has tried to demonstrate, was a key figure in the transition of Christian theology from pneumatic Christology to the theology of the Logos, was at the same time so ignored at the center of the Christian world? The answer to this question can differ: either the bishops of Rome at the time were wary of all theological speculations which, especially in the Gnostic version, distorted Christian doctrine, so that they would also be skeptical of the school of Justin, or today's researchers wrongly treat Justin as a Roman theologian only because he had his philosophical school in Rome. In his school, as in all philosophical schools of the time, various philosophical and theological questions were discussed, but it probably functioned entirely outside the structures of the Church of Rome. We know that in Alexandria things went differently, where the local bishop appointed director of the *Didaskaleion* first Clement and then Origen. We know nothing about the school of Justin in Rome from the sources of the local Roman Church, but only from Justin himself, and we cannot unconsciously transfer the model of the Alexandrian school to the Roman school of Justin. It was therefore a sort of original school of Justin operating outside the Roman ecclesiastical structures. If Justin had contact with local Christians, these were probably disciples of Christ from Asia Minor or philosophically educated people seeking the rational foundation for their faith. In the *Dialogue*, Justin himself admits to traveling the world in the guise of a philosopher, proclaiming the teachings of Christ as the only true philosophy, which shows that he stayed in Rome only periodically. From the *Acts of Justin and his friends* we know only two of his journeys to Rome. Therefore, both in the geographical sense and in the theology of the Logos, as the Author rightly pointed out, we must not consider him as a representative of the so-called high Roman theology, which argued with the so-called low theology and in Rome led the theology from pneumatic Christology to the theology of the Logos. The school of Justin has had the marginal followers in Rome and the theology of Logos will always be held in suspicion, which is confirmed by the author of Elenchus, Hippolytus and Novatian. This was also confirmed by the Author's analysis of the elements of *credo* present in Justin's writings, which have little in common with the Roman confessions of faith of the 2nd century (pp.

321-328). So, where should we place Justin's theology geographically? We cannot be fooled by the information about the school of Rome and consider him as a representative of Roman high theology, but rather must regard him still as an Asian theologian. The Author himself states on page 205 that "la teologia del Logos non viene considerata da Giustino come un articolo vincolante per tutti i cristiani: riferendo le concezioni dei giudeocristiani, egli si limita a dire di non condividere il loro parere" (*Dial.* 48, 4). I also doubt that heterodox groups of Judeo-Christians existed in Rome in the mid-second century, such as the Ebionites, the Elchasaites or the Cerinthians. The Author reconstructs their theology by referring to Epiphanius, but this is a late source and concerns more the East. Justin's relationship to the Judeo-Christians is unclear and requires further research. On the one hand he criticizes their opinions, when they continued to proclaim the possibility of achieving salvation by observing the Mosaic Law, but on the other hand he derives from them many interpretations of the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, which he uses in his discussion with Trypho (see my study, L. Misiarczyk, *Il Midrash nel Dialogo con Trifone di Giustino Martire*, Plock 1999).

(4) Fourth and finally, the Author, following his teacher prof. Simionetti, is of the opinion that the creators of the first Christian theology were the Gnostics and especially the Gnostics of Valentine who were the first to introduce the theology of the Logos based on the Gospel of John into the church of Rome, which was then joined by Justin. It is possible that this was indeed the case and the chronological argument seems to confirm this, but since few direct Gnostic and especially Valentinian sources from the 2nd century have survived to our times, and the indirect ones come second hand, for example from Irenaeus or Epiphanius, it is necessary to keep in mind that this hypothesis is extremely difficult to prove and conclusions in this area remain largely hypothetical. The short fragments preserved of the *Letter to Flora* are too few to prove such a hypothesis. Furthermore, the Author states that Ptolemy, a pupil of Valentinus, was the first to write a commentary on the prologue of the Gospel of John and this would have influenced Justin, but, as we know, this information comes to us from Irenaeus and Epiphanius. While one might have fewer doubts about Irenaeus, who lived not far from the time of Ptolemy, Epiphanius lived several centuries later, and the information he provided is much less reliable and does not necessarily reflect the situation in the mid-2nd century.

Since the above hypotheses, especially the second and fourth, are hypotheses made without sufficient evidence, they raise many detailed qu-

estions that are also very hypothetical. Since there are many of them, I will focus below only on some of them, also presenting the positive results of the author's research:

(1) The author convincingly demonstrated that Justin knew and referred to the Gospel of John, including it in the famous collection of "Memoirs of the Apostles".

(2) The Author's arguments regarding Justin's relationship with the apostle Paul are not entirely convincing. On page 197 we read: "Il motivo del silenzio di Giustino su Paolo potrebbe essere rintracciato plausibilmente su due fronti: in primo luogo, poiché l'insegnamento di Marcione aveva assunto la forma di un paolinismo estremo, l'appello diretto ai testi di Paolo e per di più a Roma, una comunità giudaizzante che, in nome del radicalismo paolino, aveva sperimentato una dolorosa scissione, poteva diventare rischioso. Per altri versi, lo stesso Giustino, apparteneva ad una tradizione differente rispetto a quella impetuosa teologia della grazia in quanto figlio del cristianesimo giovanneo o asiatico, Giustino, invece di attestarsi sul registro della grazia indebita, è più incline a ripensare la fede cristiana secondo il registro pedagogico della suavità del Logos". According to the Author, this Johannine sensitivity would have been based almost immediately on the Pauline exuberance of the first evangelization of Asia Minor until it absorbed it. The problem is that Justin is not silent about Paul at all; it is sufficient just to browse the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* to see that there are several dozen references to the thoughts of Pauline theology. For example in *Dial.* 84, 2 Justin directly quotes Col 1:15, calling Christ "the firstborn of all creation", a term which occurs only in Col 1:15. The Author is however right in saying that Justin never mentions Paul by name.

(3) There is no convincing evidence that the Ptolemy mentioned by Justin in *2 Apol.* 2, 14, is the Gnostic Ptolemy, a pupil of Valentinus, and Ptolemy's pupil would be the recipient of the *Letter to Flora*. Harnack himself, who proposed this interpretation, stated that "it is impossible" that there were two Christian teachers with the same name as Ptolemy at the same time and in the same place, which is a weak and clearly negative argument. However, positive argumentation is needed to prove any hypothesis.

(4) Regarding the expression $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\upsilon\epsilon\iota\delta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\alpha\iota$ in *confessio fidei* of Lucius, which we usually translate as "to give thanks" and of which according to the Author "l'autentico significato di questa confessione di fede potrebbe essere sfuggito persino allo stesso Giustino" (p. 306) then he proposes his interpretation: "si tratta dell'ingresso immediato degli spirituali nel Pleroma, con la consumazione delle nozze mistiche e la conseguente reintegra-

zione della natura pneumatica” (p. 309). It takes a lot of imagination to see in this short expression χάριν εἶδέναι these three elements: the immediate entry of the spirituals into the Pleroma; the consummation of the mystical marriage, and the reintegration of the pneumatic nature.

(5) “La categoria λόγος σπερματικός, sebbene desunta dallo stoicismo, presenta un ambito di applicazione analogo a quello che si riscontra nell’esegesi di Tolomeo al prologo del Vangelo di Giovanni” (p. 299 and 313-315). Let’s remember that the expression λόγος σπερματικός does not appear in Ptolemy’s teaching and the hypothesis is based only on a single fragment of the *Adv. Haer.* I 8, 5, where the term σπερματικῶς appears in the sense “seminally”, which the Author interprets as follows: “Padre volendo iniziare l’origine della realtà pneumatica, emanò seminalmente tutte le cose della sostanza riposte nel Figlio Unigenito poi, a sua volta, da questa sostanza pneumatica furono emanati non solo il Logos ma anche gli Eoni, costituiti mediante l’intervento del medesimo Logos (p. 314)”. This is too little to demonstrate Justin’s dependence on Ptolemy or, more generally, on the Valentinian Gnostics.

(6) I agree with the Author on the fact that there is no concrete evidence that Justin knew and directly quoted the works of Philo of Alexandria. Therefore, it can be doubted that he would have taken the term προὑπάρχω from Philo; but no less doubtful is the hypothesis of Trakatellis with which the Author seems to agree, which does not exclude the possibility of a direct contact of Justin with the themes of the preaching of Simon Magus, since the Simonian doctrines had also been refuted in the lost *Treatise against all heresies* (p. 355). This is a hypothesis impossible to verify, because *the Treatise against all heresies* has not been preserved, and postulating a direct contact of Justin with the teachings of Simon Magus is a useless multiplication of unverifiable hypotheses.

(7) The Author considers the sentences present in *Dial.* 61, 2 ἐν ἡμῖν λόγον and λόγον τινὰ προβάλλοντες as parallels to the expressions λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός. However, he himself admits that the terms λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός do not appear in Justin’s writings, so the parallelism indicated is very distant and unlikely.

(8) This monograph, as the Author himself says in the Introduction (p. 19), is a reworking of some sections of his doctoral thesis entitled *Nous, Logos e Pneuma: dalla filosofia greca alla teologia cristiana. Studio sulla ricezione dei termini ellenici e biblici in Giustino e Atenagora* defended at the Augustinianum in Rome in 2018. And unfortunately, in the Conclusion of the book, instead of a summary of his very interesting and stimulating

research on Justin presented in Chapter III, we strangely find the doctoral conclusions (p. 561-570) which do not directly concern the monograph. The Author has simply largely copied the conclusions of his doctorate and the final four pages of the Conclusion present only a very general summary of his research on Justin (570-573). We must say that there is simply no real Conclusion to the monograph from which the reader could have known the outcome of the research. The Author has forgotten that reading a book often begins with the Conclusion and if this strikes the reader in some way or arouses his interest, he is going to read the entire book.

Despite these small shortcomings which do not detract from the precious value of the book, the monograph is a very valid contribution to studies on Justin, it does honor to the Author, and for the next decades it will undoubtedly remain the absolutely obligatory point of reference for scholars of Christian theology of the 2nd century.

William Varner, *The Apostolic Fathers. An Introduction and Translation*, T&T Clark, London 2023, pp. 242

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William Varner, as he himself highlights in *Preface*, started his contact with the texts of the Apostolic Fathers as philologist using them as exercise material for translation from Greek into English. These texts interested him so much that he decided to deal with them in more detail and prepare a new English translation with introductions.

So we find at the beginning a General Introduction to the Apostolic Fathers, in which the Author presents a very synthetic history of discovering these works and their value, especially in the context of his evangelical tradition, in which, as he himself states, sometimes there is a belief that “evangelical friends they often seem to believe that church history stopped around 96 CE (the traditional date of the *Apocalypse*) and then resumed in 1517 (Luther) or maybe around 1540 (Calvin) (p. 3)”. In my opinion, the Introduction is too short and does not cover many points important for understanding the Apostolic Fathers, which have become the subject of numerous studies in recent decades. Then we find synthetic Introductions and new translations following texts: *The Didache* or *Teaching of the Two-*