This question has often been discussed, usually with the chief emphasis on the value of the Dialogue as a source for Jewish belief in a suffering Messiah in the second century, and as a pointer to the possible existence of this belief in and before the time of Jesus. While necessarily taking account of this, the main purpose of the present study is to focus attention more on another aspect of Jewish conceptions according to Justin, namely, the Son of man and the two advents of the Messiah.

Although a discussion of this kind between a Christian and a Jew might seem rather improbable after the Bar Cochba revolt (A.D. 132-135), which resulted in a final estrangement between Jews and Christians owing to the refusal of the latter to participate in it, it is by no means ruled out as impossible. Trypho may or may not be Rabbi Tarphon ¹), a contemporary of Justin. If he is, then it was later Jewish tradition which made him a martyr in the war ²). But acceptance of the identification would not necessarily involve accepting all the statements attributed to Trypho as reliable expressions of contemporary Jewish beliefs. And even if Justin had a discussion ³) with this man, there would be no reason to regard the Dialogue as an accurate report of it. Harnack, in his important study, held it as of secondary importance whether Justin owed his

¹) The identification has been assumed by many scholars, e.g., E. Schürer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, II. i (1901), 377; II.ii (1901), 186, n. 94; B. Altaner, Patrology (1960), 122 f. It has been questioned by E. R. Goodenough, The Theology of Justin Martyr (1923), 90-92; A. L. Williams, Justin Martyr, The Dialogue with Trypho (1930), xxv; E. Sjöberg, Der verborgene Menschensohn in den Evangelien (1955), 81, n.1; N. Hyldahl, "Tryphon und Tarphon", Studia Theologica 10 (1957), 77-88; J. Jeremias, The Servant of God² (1965), 74, n. 314.


³) At Ephesus, according to Eusebius, H. E. iv. 18.6, towards the end of the war (Dialogue 1.3).
knowledge to a particular Jew like Tarphon or to tradition, but accepted the Jewish ideas and objections as authentic 1). He listed numerous agreements with Jewish scriptural exegesis 2), though a not inconsiderable number of divergences are also mentioned. There is no doubt that Justin knew very well what messianic beliefs were current among Jews in his day, and he sometimes states them correctly. But whenever the opportunity presents itself, his zeal as a Christian apologist gets the upper hand, and he attributes to his Jewish interlocutor ideas which he could not possibly have entertained 3).

In 49.1 Trypho declares: Εἰς ἐντελῶς Χριστὸν ἀνθρώπου ἐξ ἀνθρώπων προσδοκόμεν γενησόσθαι. This was in fact the prevalent Jewish expectation, and here the Dialogue is perfectly reliable. In opposition to Christian claims for Jesus, the tendency in post-Christian Judaism was to tone down messianic dogma and to emphasize the human nature of the Messiah 4). But even more important is the necessarily associated denial by Trypho of the pre-existence and the divinity of the Messiah. He asserts:

“For you utter many blasphemies, in that you seek to persuade us that this crucified man was with Moses and Aaron, and spoke to them in the pillar of the cloud; then that he became man, was crucified. . . ’’ (38.1); “For when you say that this Messiah existed as God before the ages, then that he submitted to be born and become man, yet that he is not man of men (Greek ἀνθρώπου), this appears to me to be not merely paradoxical, but also foolish’’ (48.1).

It is further in accordance with Jewish belief that Trypho declares:

1) A. von Harnack, Judentum und Judenchristentum in Justins Dialog mit Trypho, T U x x x x i x, 1 (1913), 53 f.; cf. 90: “Es ist ein sehr bedeutendes Material, welches wir für die Kenntnis des Judentums (und Judenchristentums) und seines Verhältnisses zum Christentum um das J. 160 aus dem Dialog gewonnen haben”.

