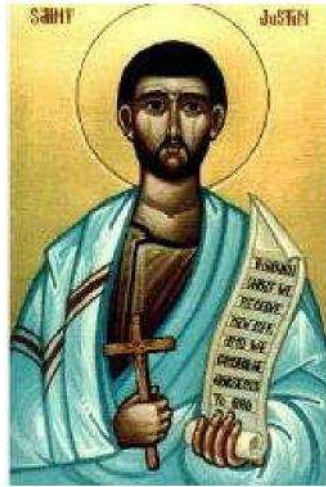


# The Watchtower And The Ante-Nicene Church Fathers

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by [Michael J. Partyka](#)

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## INTRODUCTION

*Jesus himself said: "Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." So our entire future hinges on our knowing the true nature of God, and that means getting to the root of the Trinity controversy.*

Various Trinitarian concepts exist. But generally the Trinity teaching is that in the Godhead there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; yet, together they are but one God. The doctrine says that the three are coequal, almighty, and uncreated, having existed eternally in the Godhead.

If the Trinity is true, it is degrading to Jesus to say that he was never equal to God as part of a Godhead. But if the Trinity is false, it is degrading to Almighty God to call anyone his equal. If the Trinity is false, it dishonors God to say, "We worship one God in Trinity."

The ante-Nicene Fathers were acknowledged to have been leading religious teachers in the early centuries after Christ's birth. What they taught is of interest.

Justin Martyr, who died about 165 C.E., called the prehuman Jesus a created angel who is "other than the God who made all things." He said that Jesus was inferior to God and "never did anything except what the Creator...willed him to do and say."

Irenaeus, who died about 200 C.E., said that the prehuman Jesus had a separate existence from God and was inferior to him. He showed that Jesus is not equal to the "One true and only God," who is "supreme over all, and besides whom there is no other." Clement of Alexandria, who died about 215 C.E., called Jesus in his prehuman existence "a creature" but called God "the uncreated and imperishable and only true God." He said that the Son "is next to the only omnipotent Father" but not equal to him.

Tertullian, who died about 230 C.E., taught the supremacy of God. He observed: "The Father is different from the Son (another), as he is greater; as he who begets is different from him who is begotten; he who sends, different from him who is sent." He also said: "There was a time when the Son was not....Before all things, God was alone." (The word "tri'as" appears in its Latin form of "trinitas" in Tertullian. While these words do translate to "Trinity," this is no proof in itself that Tertullian taught the doctrine of the Trinity.)

Hippolytus, who died about 235 C.E., said that God is "the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all," who "had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him....But he was One, alone by himself; who, willing it, called into being what had no being before," such as the created prehuman Jesus.

Origen, who died about 250 C.E., said that "the Father and Son are two substances...two things as to their essence," and that "compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light."

The testimony of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown for several centuries after biblical times. Thus, those who believe in the Trinity are not "holding God in accurate knowledge."

Soon, when God brings this present wicked system of things to its end, Trinitarian Christendom will be called to account. And she will be judged adversely for her God-dishonoring actions and doctrines. By honoring God as supreme and worshiping him on his terms, Jehovah's Witnesses can avoid the judgment that he will soon bring on apostate Christendom.

So says the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the official organization of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses subscribe to Arianism, a belief that Jesus Christ is not fully God (as the doctrine of the Trinity maintains) but is rather a created being, made of a different substance from that of the eternal, uncreated substance of God the Father.

While hopping around the Watchtower's official web site looking for articles supporting their rejection of the cross as a Christian symbol – Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was put to death on an upright torture stake, not a t-shaped cross – I stumbled across a series of pages (including the ones linked above) explaining the Jehovah's Witnesses' rejection of the Trinity. When I got to page three, I recall blinking several times furiously, because I literally couldn't believe what I was seeing: The Watchtower was actually quoting the early ante-Nicene Church Fathers, from Justin Martyr all the way to Origen, in an attempt to disprove that early Christians ever subscribed to the doctrine of the Trinity. Their final conclusion, as you can see for yourself, is an incredibly bold statement: "The testimony of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown for several centuries after biblical times."

Oh, really?

Well, speaking as somebody who's actually read all or most of the extant writings of every single one of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers cited, I can tell you with absolute certainty that these ante-Nicene writers knew the doctrine of the Trinity – or at least some of its key tenets – very well. In fact, some of the very first apologetic defenses of the Trinity were written by these same Church Fathers!

So, not being one to let such a challenge go by, I decided to take a look back through all I'd read before of the Fathers and see if I could find two things: (1) the source texts for the "anti-Trinity" quotes which the Watchtower used on its web site to support its anti-Trinity position, and (2) any evidence, preferably from the same texts used by the Watchtower, which would show each Church Father's support for the doctrine of the Trinity, or at least his support for that critical tenet of the Trinity doctrine which says that Jesus Christ is of the same substance as the Father (i.e., that Jesus is truly God).

Before getting into the material from the Fathers, however, I think it wise to say a little bit about the doctrine of the Trinity itself.

The Watchtower's basic definition of the Trinity doctrine is correct: "In the Godhead there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; yet, together they are but one God. The doctrine says that the three are coequal, almighty, and uncreated, having existed eternally in the Godhead."

However, the Watchtower's presentation and interpretation of the Church Fathers' quotes communicate to the reader a couple of implicit misunderstandings about the Trinity doctrine and about the language of the Fathers. It's extremely important to clear up these misunderstandings before diving into the writings of the Fathers, lest we enter into our study with false impressions.

First, whenever the Watchtower finds evidence in the Fathers suggesting that Jesus is inferior or subordinate to God, they take this as proof that Jesus is therefore not coequal with the Father. On the surface, this conclusion seems appropriate – after all, how can one be inferior to another and yet be equal to him? But let's rephrase the question properly – how can one equal be inferior to another? Answer: Easily! Consider the common, everyday relationship between employer and employee. Both are human beings, so employer and employee are equal in respect to their basic nature. However, the employee is under the authority of the employer, which makes the employee inferior to the employer by way of position. This same distinction exists within the Godhead: The three persons of the Godhead are equal according to nature, but when it comes to position, God the Father is superior to God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

So, it must be understood when reading the Fathers that whenever the Church Fathers refer to Jesus as being inferior or subordinate to God, they are speaking in terms of position only, not of nature. This squares just fine with the doctrine of the Trinity, which only maintains that God the Father and Jesus are equal in nature.

Second, whenever the Watchtower finds a Church Father speaking of Jesus as a "creature," the Watchtower immediately claims such a reference as a proof text for Jesus' being a created entity rather than an eternal person of the Godhead. Likewise, there are some rare instances, such as the quote from Origen about the Father and Son's being "two substances" or "two essences," in which the Fathers seem to clearly indicate a created nature for Jesus rather than a full sharing in the eternal, uncreated substance of the Godhead. In these cases I must remind the reader that the Council of Nicea, in which Christendom made its definitive stand against Arianism, was still 100 to 200 years away at the time of the Fathers' writings. Consequently, the language of the Fathers was not always primed for battle against the claims of Arianism, for Arianism had yet to make the scene. In those days, the prevalent heresies dealt more with the issue of whether Christ was truly man, not whether he was truly God, and thus the language of the Fathers can get a bit "loose" at times concerning the deity of Christ. This is why the quotes of the Fathers must be taken in context with the whole of their writings, lest we take a couple of choice quotes from one particular missal here or there and mistakenly base our whole conception of a particular Father's views on that one unfortunate selection.

With all this in mind, I have tried to provide as much information as I could from each of the Fathers cited by the Watchtower, along with the appropriate citations in case the reader would like to go back and look for himself or herself at the original texts.

One last note before diving in: I would like to say that I believe the Watchtower has gotten it right with regard to how high the stakes are in this matter. As they have appropriately put it, "Our entire future hinges on our knowing the true nature of God, and that means getting to the root of the Trinity controversy. If the Trinity is true, it is degrading to Jesus to say that he was never equal to God as part of a Godhead. But if the Trinity is false, it is degrading to Almighty God to call anyone his equal. If the Trinity is false, it dishonors God to say, 'We worship one God in Trinity.'"

Those who stand on the wrong side of the Trinity controversy will indeed “be called to account” and “will be judged adversely for her God-dishonoring actions and doctrines.” We must all strive to “avoid the judgment that God will soon bring on apostates.” It is with this warning in mind that I have prepared this collection of quotations.

## JUSTIN MARTYR

Justin Martyr, who died about 165 C.E., called the prehuman Jesus a created angel who is “other than the God who made all things.” He said that Jesus was inferior to God and “never did anything except what the Creator...willed him to do and say.

### Source Quotes:

“Moses, then, the blessed and faithful servant of God, declares that He who appeared to Abraham under the oak in Mamre is God, sent with the two angels in His company to judge Sodom by Another who remains ever in the super celestial places, invisible to all men, holding personal intercourse with none, whom we believe to be Maker and Father of all things; for he speaks thus: ‘God appeared to him under the oak in Mamre....’.... I shall attempt to persuade you, since you have understood the Scriptures, [of the truth] of what I say, that there is, and that there is said to be, another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel, because He announces to men whatsoever the Maker of all things – above whom there is no other God – wishes to announce to them....He who is said to have appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God, is distinct from Him who made all things – numerically, I mean, not [distinct] in will. For I affirm that He has never at any time done anything which He who made the world – above whom there is no other God – has not wished Him both to do and to engage Himself with....The Scripture just quoted by me will make this plain to you. It is thus: ‘The sun was risen on the earth, and Lot entered into Segor (Zoar); and the Lord rained on Sodom sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and overthrew these cities and all the neighbourhood.’...He is the Lord who received commission from the Lord who [remains] in the heavens, i.e., the Maker of all things, to inflict upon Sodom and Gomorrah the [judgments] which the Scripture describes in these terms: ‘The Lord rained down upon Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven.’” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 56)

### Further Quotations from Justin Martyr:

“God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He calls Himself Captain, when He appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nave (Nun). For He can be called by all those names, since He ministers to the Father’s will, and since He was begotten of the Father by an act of will; just as we see happening among ourselves: for when we give out some word, we beget the word; yet not by abscission, so as to lessen the word [which remains] in us, when we give it out: and just as we see also happening in the case of a fire, which is not lessened when it has kindled [another], but remains the same; and that which has been kindled by it likewise appears to exist by itself, not diminishing that from which it was kindled. The Word of Wisdom...is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things, and Word, and Wisdom, and Power, and the Glory of the Begetter....” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 61)

“...this Offspring, which was truly brought forth from the Father, was with the Father before all the creatures, and the Father communed with Him; even as the Scripture by Solomon has made clear, that He whom Solomon calls Wisdom, was begotten as a Beginning before all His creatures and as Offspring by God....He [is] God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God.” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 62)

“...you must not imagine that the unbegotten God Himself came down or went up from any place. For the ineffable Father and Lord of all neither has come to any place, nor walks, nor sleeps, nor rises up, but remains in His own place, wherever that is, quick to behold and quick to hear, having neither eyes nor ears, but being of indescribable might; and He sees all things, and knows all things, and none of us escapes His observation; and He is not moved or confined to a spot in the whole world, for He existed before the world was made. How, then, could He talk with any one, or be seen by any one, or appear on the smallest portion of the earth...? Therefore neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, nor any other man, saw the Father and ineffable Lord of all, and also of Christ, but [saw] Him who was according to His will His Son, being God, and the Angel because He ministered to His will; whom also it pleased Him to be born man by the Virgin; who also was fire when He conversed with Moses from the bush. Since, unless we thus comprehend the Scriptures, it must follow that the Father and Lord of all had not been in heaven when what Moses wrote took place: ‘And the Lord rained upon Sodom fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven;’ and again, when it is thus said by David: ‘Lift up your gates, ye rulers; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting gates; and the King of glory shall enter;’ and again, when He says: ‘The Lord says to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.’” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 127)

“Christ [is] Lord, and God the Son of God,...appearing formerly in power as Man, and Angel, and in the glory of fire as at the bush....they call Him the Word, because He carries tidings from the Father to men: but maintain that this power is indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as they say that the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the heavens; as when it sinks, the light sinks along with it; so the Father, when He chooses, say they, causes His power to spring forth, and when He chooses, He makes it return to Himself....And that this power which the prophetic word calls God, as has been also amply demonstrated, and Angel, is not numbered [as different] in name only like the light of the sun but is indeed something numerically distinct. I have discussed briefly in what has gone before; when I asserted that this power was begotten from the Father, by His power and will, but not by abscission, as if the essence of the Father were divided; as all other things partitioned and divided are not the same after as before they were divided: and, for the sake of example, I took the case of fires kindled from a fire, which we see to be distinct from it, and yet that from which many can be kindled is by no means made less, but remains the same.” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 128)

“When Scripture says, ‘The Lord rained fire from the Lord out of heaven,’ the prophetic word indicates that there were two in number: One upon the earth, who, it says, descended to behold the cry of Sodom; Another in heaven, who also is Lord of the Lord on earth, as He is Father and God; the cause of His power and of His being Lord and God. Again, when the Scripture records that God said in the beginning, ‘Behold, Adam has become like one of Us,’ this phrase, ‘like one of Us,’ is also indicative of number; and the words do not admit of a figurative meaning, as the sophists endeavour to affix on them, who are able neither to tell nor to understand the truth. And it is written in the book of Wisdom: ‘If I should tell you daily events, I would be mindful to enumerate them from the beginning. The Lord created me the beginning of His ways for His works. From everlasting He established me in the beginning, before He formed the earth, and before He made the depths, and before the springs of waters came forth, before the mountains were settled; He begets me before all the hills.’...the Scripture has declared that this Offspring was begotten by the Father before all things created; and that which is begotten is numerically distinct from that which begets, any one will admit.” (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 129)

## IRENÆUS

Irenaeus, who died about 200 C.E., said that the prehuman Jesus had a separate existence from God and was inferior to him. He showed that Jesus is not equal to the “One true and only God,” who is “supreme over all, and besides whom there is no other.”

### Source Quotes:

“Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation, as this passage has it: ‘The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.’ Here the [Scripture] represents to us the Father addressing the Son; He who gave Him the inheritance of the heathen, and subjected to Him all His enemies. Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord. And again, referring to the destruction of the Sodomites, the Scripture says, ‘Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven.’ For it here points out that the Son, who had also been talking with Abraham, had received power to judge the Sodomites for their wickedness. And this [text following] does declare the same truth: ‘Thy throne, O God; is for ever and ever; the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee.’ For the Spirit designates both [of them] by the name, of God – both Him who is anointed as Son, and Him who does anoint, that is, the Father. And again: ‘God stood in the congregation of the gods, He judges among the gods.’ He [here] refers to the Father and the Son, and those who have received the adoption; but these are the Church. For she is the synagogue of God, which God—that is, the Son Himself – has gathered by Himself. Of whom He again speaks: ‘The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken, and hath called the earth.’ Who is meant by God? He of whom He has said, “God shall come openly, our God, and shall not keep silence;’ that is, the Son, who came manifested to men who said, ‘I have openly appeared to those who seek Me not.’ But of what gods [does he speak]? [Of those] to whom He says, ‘I have said, Ye are gods, and all sons of the Most High.’ To those, no doubt, who have received the grace of the ‘adoption, by which we cry, Abba Father.’ Wherefore, as I have already stated, no other is named as God, or is called Lord, except Him who is God and Lord of all, who also said to Moses, ‘I AM That I AM. And thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He who is, hath sent me unto you;’ and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who makes those that believe in His name the sons of God. And again, when the Son speaks to Moses, He says, ‘I am come down to deliver this people.’ For it is He who descended and ascended for the salvation of men. Therefore God has been declared through the Son, who is in the Father, and has the Father in Himself – He who is, the Father bearing witness to the Son, and the Son announcing the Father...Wherefore I do also call upon thee, Lord God of Abraham, and God of Isaac, and God of Jacob and Israel, who art the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who, through the abundance of Thy mercy, hast had a favour towards us, that we should know Thee, who hast made heaven and earth, who rulest over all, who art the only and the true God, above whom there is none other God; grant, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the governing power of the Holy Spirit; give to every reader of this book to know Thee, that Thou art God alone, to be strengthened in Thee, and to avoid every heretical, and godless, and impious doctrine....it is clearly proved that neither the prophets nor the apostles did ever name another God, or call [him] Lord, except the true and only God....not one of created and subject things, shall ever be compared to the Word of God, by whom all

things were made, who is our Lord Jesus Christ. For that all things, whether Angels, or Archangels, or Thrones, or Dominions, were both established and created by Him who is God over all, through His Word, John has thus pointed out. For when he had spoken of the Word of God as having been in the Father, he added, 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.' David also, when he had enumerated [His] praises, subjoins by name all things whatsoever I have mentioned, both the heavens and all the powers therein: 'For He commanded, and they were created; He spake, and they were made.' Whom, therefore, did He command? The Word, no doubt, 'by whom,' he says, 'the heavens were established, and all their power by the breath of His mouth.' But that He did Himself make all things freely, and as He pleased, again David says, 'But our God is in the heavens above, and in the earth; He hath made all things whatsoever He pleased.' But the things established are distinct from Him who has established them, and what have been made from Him who has made them. For He is Himself uncreated, both without beginning and end, and lacking nothing. He is Himself sufficient for Himself; and still further, He grants to all others this very thing, existence; but the things which have been made by Him have received a beginning. But whatever things had a beginning, and are liable to dissolution, and are subject to and stand in need of Him who made them, must necessarily in all respects have a different term [applied to them], even by those who have but a moderate capacity for discerning such things; so that He indeed who made all things can alone, together with His Word, properly be termed God and Lord: but the things which have been made cannot have this term applied to them, neither should they justly assume that appellation which belongs to the Creator. This, therefore, having been clearly demonstrated here (and it shall yet be so still more clearly), that neither the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the Lord Christ in His own person, did acknowledge any other Lord or God, but the God and Lord supreme: the prophets and the apostles confessing the Father and the Son; but naming no other as God, and confessing no other as Lord: and the Lord Himself handing down to His disciples, that He, the Father, is the only God and Lord, who alone is God and ruler of all – it is incumbent on us to follow, if we are their disciples indeed, their testimonies to this effect....they who were the preachers of the truth and the apostles of liberty termed no one else God, or named him Lord, except the only true God the Father, and His Word, who has the pre-eminence in all things...." (Against Heresies 3:6:1-2,4;8:1-9:1;15:3)

"Impious indeed, beyond all impiety, are these men, who assert that the Maker of heaven and earth, the only God Almighty, besides whom there is no God, was produced by means of a defect...." (Against Heresies 1:16:3)

### **Further Quotations from Irenaeus:**

"God stands in need of nothing...He created and made all things by His Word, while He neither required angels to assist Him in the production of those things which are made, nor of any power greatly inferior to Himself...But He Himself in Himself, after a fashion which we can neither describe nor conceive, predestinating all things, formed them as He pleased, bestowing harmony on all things, and assigning them their own place, and the beginning of their creation. In this way He conferred on spiritual things a spiritual and invisible nature, on super-celestial things a celestial, on angels an angelical, on animals an animal, on beings that swim a nature suited to the water, and on those that live on the land one fitted for the land – on all, in short, a nature suitable to the character of the life assigned them – while He formed all things that were made by His Word that never wearies. For this is a peculiarity of the pre-eminence of God, not to stand in need of other instruments for the creation of those things which are summoned into existence. His own Word is both suitable and sufficient for the formation of all things, even as John, the disciple of the Lord, declares regarding Him: 'All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.' Now, among the 'all things' our world must be embraced. It too, therefore, was made by His Word, as Scripture tells us in the book of Genesis that He made all things connected with our world by His Word. David also expresses the same truth [when he says] 'For He spake, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created.'...Moses...narrated the formation of the world in these words: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' and all other things in succession; but neither gods nor angels [had any share in the work].'" (Against Heresies 2:2:4-5)

"Matthew says that the Magi, coming from the east, exclaimed, 'For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him;' and that, having been led by the star into the house of Jacob to Emmanuel, they showed, by these gifts which they offered, who it was that was worshipped; myrrh, because it was He who should die and be buried for the mortal human met; gold, because He was a King, 'of whose kingdom is no end;' and frankincense, because He was God, who also 'was made known in Judea,' and was 'declared to those who sought Him not.'" (Against Heresies 3:9:2)

"...the Word of God – who is the Saviour of all, and the ruler of heaven and earth, who is Jesus, as I have already pointed out, who did also take upon Him flesh, and was anointed by the Spirit from the Father – was made Jesus Christ...For inasmuch as the Word of God was man from the root of Jesse, and son of Abraham, in this respect did the Spirit of God rest upon Him, and anoint Him to preach the Gospel to the lowly. But inasmuch as He was God, He did not judge according to glory, nor reprove after the manner of speech." (Against Heresies 3:9:3)

"Thus, then, was the Word of God made man, as also Moses says: 'God, true are His works.' But if, not having been made flesh, He did appear as if flesh, His work was not a true one. But what He did appear, that He also was: God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man; and therefore His works are true." (Against Heresies 3:28:7)

“For I have shown from the Scriptures, that no one of the sons of Adam is as to everything, and absolutely, called God, or named Lord. But that He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word, proclaimed by all the prophets, the apostles, and by the Spirit Himself, may be seen by all who have attained to even a small portion of the truth. Now, the Scriptures would not have testified these things of Him, if, like others, He had been a mere man. But that He had, beyond all others, in Himself that pre-eminent birth which is from the Most High Father, and also experienced that pre-eminent generation which is from the Virgin, the divine Scriptures do in both respects testify of Him: also, that He was a man without comeliness, and liable to suffering; that He sat upon the foal of an ass; that He received for drink, vinegar and gall; that He was despised among the people, and humbled Himself even to death and that He is the holy Lord, the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Beautiful in appearance, and the Mighty God, coming on the clouds as the Judge of all men – all these things did the Scriptures prophesy of Him. For as He became man in order to undergo temptation, so also was He the Word that He might be glorified; the Word remaining quiescent, that He might be capable of being tempted, dishonoured, crucified, and of suffering death, but the human nature being swallowed up in it (the divine), when it conquered, and endured [without yielding], and performed acts of kindness, and rose again, and was received up [into heaven]. He therefore, the Son of God, our Lord, being the Word of the Father, and the Son of man, since He had a generation as to His human nature from Mary – who was descended from mankind, and who was herself a human being – was made the Son of man. Wherefore also the Lord Himself gave us a sign, in the depth below, and in the height above, which man did not ask for, because he never expected that a virgin could conceive, or that it was possible that one remaining a virgin could bring forth a son, and that what was thus born should be ‘God with us.’...” (Against Heresies 3:19:2-3)

“And that it is from that region which is towards the south of the inheritance of Judah that the Son of God shall come, who is God, and who was from Bethlehem, where the Lord was born [and] will send out His praise through all the earth, thus says the prophet Habakkuk: ‘God shall come from the south, and the Holy One from Mount, Effrem. His power covered the heavens over, and the earth is full of His praise. Before His face shall go forth the Word, and His feet shall advance in the plains.’ Thus he indicates in clear terms that He is God, and that His advent was [to take place] in Bethlehem, and from Mount Effrem, which is towards the south of the inheritance, and that [He is] man. For he says, ‘His feet shall advance in the plains,’ and this is an indication proper to man. God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, giving us the token of the Virgin.” (Against Heresies 3:20:4)

“...He received testimony from all that He was very man, and that He was very God, from the Father, from the Spirit, from angels, from the creation itself, from men, from apostate spirits and demons, from the enemy, and last of all, from death itself.” (Against Heresies 4:6:7)

“For the Son, who is the Word of God, arranged these things beforehand from the beginning, the Father being in no want of angels, in order that He might call the creation into being, and form man, for whom also the creation was made; nor, again, standing in need of any instrumentality for the framing of created things, or for the ordering of those things which had reference to man; while, [at the same time,] He has a vast and unspeakable number of servants. For His offspring and His similitude do minister to Him in every respect; that is, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Word and Wisdom; whom all the angels serve, and to whom they are subject.” (Against Heresies 4:7:4)

“For the true God did confess the commandment of the law as the word of God, and called no one else God besides His own Father.” (Against Heresies 4:9:3)

“It was not angels, therefore, who made us, nor who formed us, neither had angels power to make an image of God, nor any one else, except the Word of the Lord, nor any Power remotely distant from the Father of all things. For God did not stand in need of these [beings], in order to the accomplishing of what He had Himself determined with Himself beforehand should be done, as if He did not possess His own hands. For with Him were always present the Word and Wisdom, the Son and the Spirit, by whom and in whom, freely and spontaneously, He made all things, to whom also He speaks, saying, ‘Let Us make man after Our image and likeness....’” (Against Heresies 4:20:1)

“I have also largely demonstrated, that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation, He declares by Solomon: ‘God by Wisdom founded the earth, and by understanding hath He established the heaven. By His knowledge the depths burst forth, and the clouds dropped down the dew.’ And again: ‘The Lord created me the beginning of His ways in His work: He set me up from everlasting, in the beginning, before He made the earth, before He established the depths, and before the fountains of waters gushed forth; before the mountains were made strong, and before all the hills, He brought me forth.’ And again: ‘When He prepared the heaven, I was with Him, and when He established the fountains of the deep; when He made the foundations of the earth strong, I was with Him preparing [them]. I was He in whom He rejoiced, and throughout all time I was daily glad before His face, when He rejoiced at the completion of the world, and was delighted in the sons of men.’ There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom created and arranged all things....” (Against Heresies 4:20:3-4)

“Now this is His Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in the last times was made a man among men, that He might join the end to the beginning, that is, man to God. Wherefore the prophets, receiving the prophetic gift from the same Word, announced His advent according to the flesh, by which the blending and communion of God and man took place according to the good pleasure of the Father, the Word of God foretelling from the beginning that God should be seen by men, and hold converse with them upon earth, should confer with them, and should be present with His own creation, saving it, and becoming capable of being perceived by it, and freeing us from the hands of all that hate us, that is, from every spirit of wickedness; and causing us to serve Him in holiness and righteousness all our days, in order that man, having embraced the Spirit of God, might pass into the glory of the Father...” (Against Heresies 4:20:4)

“...the Lord thus has redeemed us through His own blood, giving His soul for our souls, and His flesh for our flesh, and has also poured out the Spirit of the Father for the union and communion of God and man, imparting indeed God to men by means of the Spirit, and, on the other hand, attaching man to God by His own incarnation, and bestowing upon us at His coming immortality durably and truly, by means of communion with God...” (Against Heresies 5:1:1)

“Therefore, by remitting sins, He did indeed heal man, while He also manifested Himself who He was. For if no one can forgive sins but God alone, while the Lord remitted them and healed men, it is plain that He was Himself the Word of God made the Son of man, receiving from the Father the power of remission of sins; since He was man, and since He was God, in order that since as man He suffered for us, so as God He might have compassion on us, and forgive us our debts, in which we were made debtors to God our Creator.” (Against Heresies 5:17:3)

“And thus one God the Father is declared, who is above all, and through all, and in all. The Father is indeed above all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church; while the Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water, which the Lord grants to those who rightly believe in Him, and love Him, and who know that ‘there is one Father, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.’ And to these things does John also, the disciple of the Lord, bear witness, when he speaks thus in the Gospel: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.’ And then he said of the Word Himself: ‘He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. To His own things He came, and His own people received Him not. However, as many as did receive Him, to these gave He power to become the sons of God, to those that believe in His name.’ And again, showing the dispensation with regard to His human nature, John said: ‘And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’ And in continuation he says, ‘And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten by the Father, full of grace and truth.’ He thus plainly points out to those willing to hear, that is, to those having ears, that there is one God, the Father over all, and one Word of God, who is through all, by whom all things have been made; and that this world belongs to Him, and was made by Him, according to the Father’s will, and not by angels....For the Creator of the world is truly the Word of God: and this is our Lord, who in the last times was made man, existing in this world, and who in an invisible manner contains all things created, and is inherent in the entire creation, since the Word of God governs and arranges all things; and therefore He came to His own in a visible manner, and was made flesh, and hung upon the tree, that He might sum up all things in Himself....For it is He who has power from the Father over all things, since He is the Word of God, and very man, communicating with invisible beings after the manner of the intellect, and appointing a law observable to the outward senses, that all things should continue each in its own order; and He reigns manifestly over things visible and pertaining to men; and brings in just judgment and worthy upon all; as David also, clearly pointing to this, says, ‘Our God shall openly come, and will not keep silence.’” (Against Heresies 5:18:2-3)

“The sacred books acknowledge with regard to Christ, that as He is the Son of man, so is the same Being not a [mere] man; and as He is flesh, so is He also spirit, and the Word of God, and God.” (Fragment 52)

“With regard to Christ, the law and the prophets and the evangelists have proclaimed that He was born of a virgin, that He suffered upon a beam of wood, and that He appeared from the dead; that He also ascended to the heavens, and was glorified by the Father, and is the Eternal King; that He is the perfect Intelligence, the Word of God, who was begotten before the light; that He was the Founder of the universe, along with it (light), and the Maker of man; that He is All in all: Patriarch among the patriarchs; Law in the laws; Chief Priest among priests; Ruler among kings; the Prophet among prophets; the Angel among angels; the Man among men; Son in the Father; God in God; King to all eternity. For it is He who sailed [in the ark] along with Noah, and who guided Abraham; who was bound along with Isaac, and was a Wanderer with Jacob; the Shepherd of those who are saved, and the Bridegroom of the Church; the Chief also of the cherubim, the Prince of the angelic powers; God of God; Son of the Father; Jesus Christ; King for ever and ever. Amen.” (Fragment 53)

“Hither the prophets...were made heralds of the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, announcing that...He would be, according to the flesh, son of David...while, according to the Spirit, Son of God, being at first with the Father, born before all creation...” (On the Apostolic Preaching 1:2:30)

“...He is the Word of God Almighty, who invisibly pervades the whole creation, and encompasses its length, breadth, height, and depth – for by the Word of God everything is administered....” (On the Apostolic Preaching 1:3:31)

“Therefore, the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, since he who is born of God is God, and in this way, according to His being and power and essence, one God is demonstrated: but according to the economy of our salvation, there is both Father and Son....” (On the Apostolic Preaching 2:1:47)

“...the Son, as He is God, receives from the Father, that is, from God, the throne of the everlasting kingdom....” (On the Apostolic Preaching 2:1:47)

“...He is...confessed and believed to be the Son of God and King...for when He was raised, then He was glorified as God.” (On the Apostolic Preaching 2:2:61)

## **CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA**

Clement of Alexandria, who died about 215 C.E., called Jesus in his prehuman existence “a creature” but called God “the uncreated and imperishable and only true God.” He said that the Son “is next to the only omnipotent Father” but not equal to him.

### **Source Quotes:**

“Wisdom...was the first of the creation of God.” (The Stromata, Book 5, Chapter 14)

“The second word [i.e., commandment] intimated that men ought not to take and confer the august power of God (which is the name, for this alone were many even yet capable of learning), and transfer His title to things created and vain, which human artificers have made, among which ‘He that is’ is not ranked. For in His uncreated identity, ‘He that is’ is absolutely alone.” (The Stromata, Book 6, Chapter 16)

“So the best thing on earth is the most pious man; and the best thing in heaven, the nearer in place and purer, is an angel, the partaker of the eternal and blessed life. But the nature of the Son, which is nearest to Him who is alone the Almighty One, is the most perfect, and most holy, and most potent, and most princely, and most kingly, and most beneficent. This is the highest excellence, which orders all things in accordance with the Father's will, and holds the helm of the universe in the best way, with unwearied and tireless power, working all things in which it operates, keeping in view its hidden designs. For from His own point of view the Son of God is never displaced; not being divided, not severed, not passing from place to place; being always everywhere, and being contained nowhere; complete mind, the complete paternal light; all eyes, seeing all things, hearing all things, knowing all things, by His power scrutinizing the powers. To Him is placed in subjection all the host of angels and gods; He, the paternal Word, exhibiting the holy administration for Him who put [all] in subjection to Him.” (The Stromata, Book 7, Chapter 2)

### **Further Quotations from Clement of Alexandria:**

“And the address in the Timæus calls the creator, Father, speaking thus: ‘Ye gods of gods, of whom I am Father; and the Creator of your works.’ So that when he says, ‘Around the king of all, all things are, and because of Him are all things; and he [or that] is the cause of all good things; and around the second are the things second in order; and around the third, the third,’ I understand nothing else than the Holy Trinity to be meant; for the third is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the second, by whom all things were made according to the will of the Father.” (The Stromata, Book 5, Chapter 14)

“For it was not without divine care that so great a work was accomplished in so brief a space by the Lord, who, though despised as to appearance, was in reality adored, the expiator of sin, the Saviour, the clement, the Divine Word, He that is truly most manifest Deity, He that is made equal to the Lord of the universe; because He was His Son, and the Word was in God, not disbelieved in by all when He was first preached, nor altogether unknown when, assuming the character of man, and fashioning Himself in flesh, He enacted the drama of human salvation: for He was a true champion and a fellow-champion with the creature.” (Exhortation to the Heathen, Chapter 10)

“If it is thy wish, be thou also initiated; and thou shall join the choir along with angels around the unbegotten and indestructible and the only true God, the Word of God, raising the hymn with us. This Jesus, who is eternal, the one great High Priest of the one God, and of His Father, prays for and exhorts men: ‘Hear, ye myriad tribes, rather whoever among men are endowed with reason, both barbarians and Greeks. I call on the whole race of men, whose Creator I am, by the will of the Father. Come to Me, that you may be put in your due rank under the one God and the one Word of God....’” (Exhortation to the Heathen, Chapter 12)



“...our Instructor is like His Father God, whose son He is, sinless, blameless, and with a soul devoid of passion; God in the form of man, stainless, the minister of His Father’s will, the Word who is God, who is in the Father, who is at the Father’s right hand, and with the form of God is God.” (The Instructor, Book 1, Chapter 2)

“The Lord ministers all good and all help, both as man and as God: as God, forgiving our sins; and as man, training us not to sin.” (The Instructor, Book 1, Chapter 3)

“For since Scripture calls the infant children lambs, it has also called Him – God the Word – who became man for our sakes, and who wished in all points to be made like to us – ‘the Lamb of God’ – Him, namely, that is the Son of God, the child of the Father.” (The Instructor, Book 1, Chapter 5)

“...our Instructor is the holy God Jesus, the Word, who is the guide of all humanity. The loving God Himself is our Instructor....Again, when He speaks in His own person, He confesses Himself to be the Instructor: ‘I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.’ Who, then, has the power of leading in and out? Is it not the Instructor? This was He who appeared to Abraham, and said to him, ‘I am thy God, be accepted before Me;’...This was the man who led, and brought, and wrestled with, and anointed the athlete Jacob against evil. Now that the Word was at once Jacob’s trainer and the Instructor of humanity [appears from this] – ‘He asked,’ it is said, ‘His name, and said to him, Tell me what is Thy name.’ And he said, ‘Why is it that thou askest My name?’ For He reserved the new name for the new people – the babe; and was as yet unnamed, the Lord God not having yet become man. Yet Jacob called the name of the place, ‘Face of God.’ ‘For I have seen,’ he says, ‘God face to face; and my life is preserved.’ The face of God is the Word by whom God is manifested and made known. Then also was he named Israel, because he saw God the Lord. It was God, the Word, the Instructor, who said to him again afterwards, ‘Fear not to go down into Egypt.’” (The Instructor, Book 1, Chapter 7)

“Nothing, then, is hated by God, nor yet by the Word. For both are one – that is, God. For He has said, ‘In the beginning the Word was in God, and the Word was God.’” (The Instructor, Book 1, Chapter 8)

“...it is clear, that one alone, true, good, just, in the image and likeness of the Father, His Son Jesus, the Word of God, is our Instructor; to whom God hath entrusted us, as an affectionate father commits his children to a worthy tutor, expressly charging us, ‘This is my beloved Son: hear Him.’ The divine Instructor is trustworthy, adorned as He is with three of the fairest ornament-knowledge, benevolence, and authority of utterance: with knowledge, for He is the paternal wisdom: ‘All Wisdom is from the Lord, and with Him for evermore;’ with authority of utterance, for He is God and Creator: ‘For all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made;’ and with benevolence, for He alone gave Himself a sacrifice for us....” (The Instructor, Book 1, Chapter 11)

“Be gracious, O Instructor, to us Thy children, Father, Charioteer of Israel, Son and Father, both in One, O Lord....And do Thou Thyself cause that all of us who have our conversation in Thy peace...may praise, and praising thank the Alone Father and Son, Son and Father, the Son, Instructor and Teacher, with the Holy Spirit, all in One....” (The Instructor, Book 3, Closing Prayer)

“O King, great Giver of good gifts to men, Lord of the good, Father, of all the Maker, Who heaven and heaven’s adornment, by Thy word Divine fitly disposed, alone didst make....Thee and Thy co-eternal Word, All-wise, From Thee proceeding, ever may I praise....” (The Instructor, Book 3, Closing Prayer)

“1 John 1:1. ‘That which was from the beginning; which we have seen with our eyes; which we have heard.’...What therefore he says, ‘from the beginning,’ the Presbyter explained to this effect, that the beginning of generation is not separated from the beginning of the Creator. For when he says, ‘That which was from the beginning,’ he touches upon the generation without beginning of the Son, who is co-existent with the Father. There was; then, a Word importing an unbeginning eternity; as also the Word itself, that is, the Son of God, who being, by equality of substance, one with the Father, is eternal and uncreated....‘And we show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto you.’ He signifies by the appellation of Father, that the Son also existed always, without beginning.” (Fragment, Comments on the First Epistle of John)

“Matthew 13:46. A pearl, and that pellucid and of purest ray, is Jesus, whom of the lightning flash of Divinity the Virgin bore. For as the pearl, produced in flesh and the oyster-shell and moisture, appears to be a body moist and transparent, full of light and spirit; so also God the Word, incarnate, is intellectual light, sending His rays, through a body luminous and moist.” (Fragment from Nicetas’ Catena on Matthew)

“Luke 3:22. God here assumed the ‘likeness’ not of a man, but ‘of a dove,’ because He wished, by a new apparition of the Spirit in the likeness of a dove, to declare His simplicity and majesty.” (Fragment from the Catena on Luke, Edited by Corderius; also Fragment from Macarius Chrysocephalus: Oration VIII On Matt. viii, and Book VII On Luke xiii)



are holding converse with your word, you are (by reciprocal action) producing thought by means of that converse with your word. Thus, in a certain sense, the word is a second person within you, through which in thinking you utter speech, and through which also, (by reciprocity of process,) in uttering speech you generate thought. The word is itself a different thing from yourself. Now how much more fully is all this transacted in God, whose image and likeness even you are regarded as being, inasmuch as He has reason within Himself even while He is silent, and involved in that Reason His Word! I may therefore without rashness first lay this down (as a fixed principle) that even then before the creation of the universe God was not alone, since He had within Himself both Reason, and, inherent in Reason, His Word, which He made second to Himself by agitating it within Himself.” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 5)

### **Further Quotations from Tertullian:**

“We...believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation...that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made. Him we believe to have been sent by the Father into the Virgin, and to have been born of her – being both Man and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God, and to have been called by the name of Jesus Christ; we believe Him to have suffered, died, and been buried, according to the Scriptures, and, after He had been raised again by the Father and taken back to heaven, to be sitting at the right hand of the Father, and that He will come to judge the quick and the dead; who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost.” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 2)

“...All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 2)

“The Son...acknowledges the Father, speaking in His own person, under the name of Wisdom: ‘The Lord formed Me as the beginning of His ways, with a view to His own works; before all the hills did He beget Me.’ For if indeed Wisdom in this passage seems to say that She was created by the Lord with a view to His works, and to accomplish His ways, yet proof is given in another Scripture that ‘all things were made by the Word, and without Him was there nothing made;’ as, again, in another place (it is said), ‘By His word were the heavens established, and all the powers thereof by His Spirit’ – that is to say, by the Spirit (or Divine Nature) which was in the Word: thus is it evident that it is one and the same power which is in one place described under the name of Wisdom, and in another passage under the appellation of the Word, which was initiated for the works of God which ‘strengthened the heavens;’ ‘by which all things were made,’ ‘and without which nothing was made.’ Nor need we dwell any longer on this point, as if it were not the very Word Himself, who is spoken of under the name both of Wisdom and of Reason, and of the entire Divine Soul and Spirit. He became also the Son of God, and was begotten when He proceeded forth from Him.” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 7)

“[The] Word of God, then...is called the Son, who Himself is designated God[.] ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ It is written, ‘Thou shalt not take God’s name in vain.’ This for certain is He ‘who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.’” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 7)

“The Word, therefore, is both always in the Father, as He says, ‘I am in the Father;’ and is always with God, according to what is written, ‘And the Word was with God;’ and never separate from the Father, or other than the Father, since ‘I and the Father are one.’” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 8)

“...the Father and the Son are demonstrated to be distinct; I say distinct, but not separate....” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 11)

“...all the Scriptures attest the clear existence of, and distinction in (the Persons of) the Trinity, and indeed furnish us with our Rule of faith....” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 11)

“...the Word of God [is he] ‘through whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made.’ Now if He too is God, according to John, (who says) ‘The Word was God,’ then you have two Beings – One that commands that the thing be made, and the Other that executes the order and creates. In what sense, however, you ought to understand Him to be another, I have already explained: on the ground of Personality, not of Substance – in the way of distinction, not of division....I must everywhere hold one only substance in three coherent and inseparable (Persons)....” (Against Praxeus, Chapter 12)

“...listen to the psalm in which Two are described as God: ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee or made Thee His Christ.’ Now, since He here speaks to God, and affirms that God is anointed by God, He must have affirmed that Two are God, by reason of the sceptre’s royal power. Accordingly, Isaiah also says to the Person of Christ: ‘The Sabians, men of stature, shall pass over to Thee; and they shall follow after Thee, bound in fetters; and they shall worship Thee, because God is in

Thee: for Thou art our God, yet we knew it not; Thou art the God of Israel.' For here too, by saying, 'God is in Thee', and 'Thou art God,' he sets forth Two who were God: (in the former expression in Thee, he means) in Christ, and (in the other he means) the Holy Ghost. That is a still grander statement which you will find expressly made in the Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' There was One 'who was,' and there was another 'with whom' He was. But I find in Scripture the name Lord also applied to them Both: 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand.' And Isaiah says this: 'Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?' Now he would most certainly have said Thine Arm, if he had not wished us to understand that the Father is Lord, and the Son also is Lord. A much more ancient testimony we have also in Genesis: 'Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.' Now, either deny that this is Scripture; or else (let me ask) what sort of man you are, that you do not think words ought to be taken and understood in the sense in which they are written, especially when they are not expressed in allegories and parables, but in determinate and simple declarations?" (Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

"...we, who by the grace of God possess an insight into both the times and the occasions of the Sacred Writings, especially we who are followers of the Paraclete, not of human teachers, do indeed definitively declare that Two Beings are God, the Father and the Son, and, with the addition of the Holy Spirit, even Three, according to the principle of the divine economy, which introduces number...." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

"That there are, however, two Gods or two Lords, is a statement which at no time proceeds out of our mouth: not as if it were untrue that the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and each is God; but because in earlier times Two were actually spoken of as God, and two as Lord, that when Christ should come He might be both acknowledged as God and designated as Lord, being the Son of Him who is both God and Lord. Now, if there were found in the Scriptures but one Personality of Him who is God and Lord, Christ would justly enough be inadmissible to the title of God and Lord: for (in the Scriptures) there was declared to be none other than One God and One Lord, and it must have followed that the Father should Himself seem to have come down (to earth), inasmuch as only One God and One Lord was ever read of (in the Scriptures)....As soon, however, as Christ came, and was recognised by us as the very Being who had from the beginning caused plurality (in the Divine Economy), being the second from the Father, and with the Spirit the third, and Himself declaring and manifesting the Father more fully (than He had ever been before), the title of Him who is God and Lord was at once restored to the Unity (of the Divine Nature)...." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

"...the title of God and Lord is suitable both to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost...." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

"I will therefore not speak of gods at all, nor of lords, but I shall follow the apostle; so that if the Father and the Son, are alike to be invoked, I shall call the Father 'God,' and invoke Jesus Christ as 'Lord.' But when Christ alone (is mentioned), I shall be able to call Him "God," as the same apostle says: 'Of whom is Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever.'" (Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

"I shall reckon [that] two things and two forms of one undivided substance [are] God and His Word, as the Father and the Son." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

"...although the Word was God, yet was He with God, because He is God of God; and being joined to the Father, is with the Father." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 15)

"[Paul] expressly called Christ God, saying: 'Of whom are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.'" (Against Praxeus, Chapter 15)

"And as for the Father's names, God Almighty, the Most High, the Lord of hosts, the King of Israel, the 'One that is,' we say (for so much do the Scriptures teach us) that they belonged suitably to the Son also, and that the Son came under these designations, and has always acted in them, and has thus manifested them in Himself to men. 'All things,' says He, 'which the Father hath are mine.' Then why not His names also? When, therefore, you read of Almighty God, and the Most High, and the God of hosts, and the King of Israel, the 'One that is,' consider whether the Son also be not indicated by these designations, who in His own right is God Almighty, in that He is the Word of Almighty God, and has received power over all; is the Most High, in that He is 'exalted at the right hand of God,' as Peter declares in the Acts; is the Lord of hosts, because all things are by the Father made subject to Him; is the King of Israel because to Him has especially been committed the destiny of that nation; and is likewise 'the One that is,' because there are many who are called Sons, but are not....even the Son of the Almighty is as much almighty as the Son of God is God." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 17)

"Now the Scripture is not in danger of requiring the aid of any one's argument, lest it should seem to be self-contradictory. It has a method of its own, both when it sets forth one only God, and also when it shows that there are Two, Father and Son; and is consistent with itself....Therefore 'there is one God,' the Father, 'and without Him there is none else.' And when He Himself makes this

declaration, He denies not the Son, but says that there is no other God; and the Son is not different from the Father. Indeed, if you only look carefully at the contexts which follow such statements as this, you will find that they nearly always have distinct reference to the makers of idols and the worshippers thereof, with a view to the multitude of false gods being expelled by the unity of the Godhead, which nevertheless has a Son; and inasmuch as this Son is undivided and inseparable from the Father, so is He to be reckoned as being in the Father, even when He is not named....He says, then, that there is no God besides Himself in respect of the idolatry both of the Gentiles as well as of Israel....When, therefore, He attested His own unity, the Father took care of the Son's interests, that Christ should not be supposed to have come from another God, but from Him who had already said, 'I am God and there is none other beside me,' who shows us that He is the only God, but in company with His Son, with whom 'He stretcheth out the heavens alone.'...By thus attaching the Son to Himself, He becomes His own interpreter in what sense He stretched out the heavens alone, meaning alone with His Son, even as He is one with His Son." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 18-19)

"...the unity of God, that unity of His is preserved intact; for He is one, and yet He has a Son, who is equally with Himself comprehended in the same Scriptures....we have shown above that Two are actually described in Scripture as God and Lord....they are not said to be two Gods and two Lords, but that they are two as Father and Son; and this not by severance of their substance, but from the dispensation wherein we declare the Son to be undivided and inseparable from the Father – distinct in degree, not in state. And although, when named apart, He is called God, He does not thereby constitute two Gods, but one; and that from the very circumstance that He is entitled to be called God, from His union with the Father." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 19)

"And first of all there comes at once to hand the preamble of John to his Gospel, which shows us what He previously was who had to become flesh. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God: all things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made.' Now, since these words may not be taken otherwise than as they are written, there is without doubt shown to be One who was from the beginning, and also One with whom He always was: one the Word of God, the other God although the Word is also God (but God regarded as the Son of God, not as the Father); One through whom were all things, Another by whom were all things. But in what sense we call Him Another we have already often described. In that we called Him Another, we must needs imply that He is not identical – not identical indeed, yet not as if separate; Other by dispensation, not by division." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 21)

"Then there is the Paraclete or Comforter, also....'He shall receive of mine,' says Christ, just as Christ Himself received of the Father's. Thus the connection of the Father in the Son, and of the Son in the Paraclete, produces three coherent Persons, who are yet distinct One from Another. These Three are one essence, not one Person, as it is said, 'I and my Father are One,' in respect of unity of substance not singularity of number." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 25)

"[Jesus] commands them to baptize into the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, not into a unipersonal God. And indeed it is not once only, but three times, that we are immersed into the Three Persons, at each several mention of Their names." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 26)

"The Word is God...the Word became flesh...the truth is, we find that He is expressly set forth as both God and Man; the very psalm which we have quoted intimating (of the flesh), that 'God became Man in the midst of it, He therefore established it by the will of the Father' – certainly in all respects as the Son of God and the Son of Man, being God and Man, differing no doubt according to each substance in its own especial property, inasmuch as the Word is nothing else but God, and the flesh nothing else but Man. Thus does the apostle also teach respecting His two substances, saying, 'who was made of the seed of David;' in which words He will be Man and Son of Man. 'Who was declared to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit;' in which words He will be God, and the Word – the Son of God. We see plainly the twofold state, which is not confounded, but conjoined in One Person – Jesus, God and Man." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 27)

"'God is a Spirit,' [so] also...there is 'the Spirit of God;' in the same manner as we find that as 'the Word was God,' so also there is 'the Word of God.'" (Against Praxeus, Chapter 27)

"[The Son] will come again on the clouds of heaven, just as He appeared when He ascended into heaven. Meanwhile He has received from the Father the promised gift, and has shed it forth, even the Holy Spirit – the Third Name in the Godhead, and the Third Degree of the Divine Majesty; the Declarer of the One Monarchy of God, but at the same time the Interpreter of the Economy, to every one who hears and receives the words of the new prophecy; and 'the Leader into all truth,' such as is in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, according to the mystery of the doctrine of Christ." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 30)

"God was pleased to renew His covenant with man in such a way as that His Unity might be believed in, after a new manner, through the Son and the Spirit, in order that God might now be known openly, in His proper Names and Persons, who in ancient times was not plainly understood, though declared through the Son and the Spirit." (Against Praxeus, Chapter 31)

"[Hermogenes] does not appear to acknowledge any other Christ as Lord, though he holds Him in a different way; but by this difference in his faith he really makes Him another being – nay, he takes from Him everything which is God, since he will not have it

that He made all things of nothing. For, turning away from Christians to the philosophers, from the Church to the Academy and the Porch, he learned there from the Stoics how to place Matter (on the same level) with the Lord, just as if it too had existed ever both unborn and unmade, having no beginning at all nor end, out of which, according to him, the Lord afterwards created all things.” (Against Hermogenes, Chapter 1)

“...the very Wisdom of God...from its being inherent in the Lord was of Him and in Him....this same Wisdom is the Word of God....” (Against Hermogenes, Chapter 18)

“...the Son is the Word, and ‘the Word is God,’ and ‘I and my Father are one.’” (Against Hermogenes, Chapter 18)

“We have already asserted that God made the world, and all which it contains, by His Word, and Reason, and Power....We have been taught that He proceeds forth from God, and in that procession He is generated; so that He is the Son of God, and is called God from unity of substance with God. For God, too, is a Spirit. Even when the ray is shot from the sun, it is still part of the parent mass; the sun will still be in the ray, because it is a ray of the sun—there is no division of substance, but merely an extension. Thus Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled. The material matrix remains entire and unimpaired, though you derive from it any number of shoots possessed of its qualities; so, too, that which has come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. In this way also, as He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God, He is made a second in manner of existence – in position, not in nature; and He did not withdraw from the original source, but went forth. This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient times, descending into a certain virgin, and made flesh in her womb, is in His birth God and man united.” (Apology, Chapter 21)

“...you must needs allow that those who have not acknowledged the Father have failed likewise to acknowledge the Son through the identity of their natural substance....” (Against Marcion, Book 3, Chapter 6)

“[Marcion’s] Christ, therefore, in order to avoid all such deceits and fallacies, and the imputation, if possible, of belonging to the Creator, was not what he appeared to be, and reigned himself to be what he was not – incarnate without being flesh, human without being man, and likewise a divine Christ without being God!” (Against Marcion, Book 3, Chapter 8)

“And surely I might venture to claim the Very Word also as of the Creator’s substance.” (Against Marcion, Book 4, Chapter 9)

“...the Jews, who looked at Him as merely man, and were not yet sure that He was God also, as being likewise the Son of God, rightly enough said that a man could not forgive sins, but God alone.... He who remitted sins was God and man....” (Against Marcion, Book 4, Chapter 10)

“There come to Him from Tyre, and from other districts even, a transmarine multitude. This fact the psalm had in view: ‘And behold tribes of foreign people, and Tyre, and the people of the Ethiopians; they were there. Sion is my mother, shall a man say; and in her was born a man’ (forasmuch as the God-man was born), and He built her by the Father’s will; that you may know how Gentiles then flocked to Him, because He was born the God-man who was to build the church according to the Father’s will – even of other races also.” (Against Marcion, Book 4, Chapter 13)

“Now, what is that ‘foolishness of God which is wiser than men,’ but the cross and death of Christ? What is that ‘weakness of God which is stronger than men,’ but the nativity and incarnation of God? (Against Marcion, Book 5, Chapter 5)

“Of course the Marcionites suppose that they have the apostle on their side in the following passage in the matter of Christ’s substance – that in Him there was nothing but a phantom of flesh. For he says of Christ, that, ‘being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant,’ not the reality, ‘and was made in the likeness of man,’ not a man, ‘and was found in fashion as a man,’ not in his substance, that is to say, his flesh; just as if to a substance there did not accrue both form and likeness and fashion. It is well for us that in another passage (the apostle) calls Christ ‘the image of the invisible God.’ For will it not follow with equal force from that passage, that Christ is not truly God, because the apostle places Him in the image of God, if, (as Marcion contends, ) He is not truly man because of His having taken on Him the form or image of a man? For in both cases the true substance will have to be excluded, if image (or ‘fashion’) and likeness and form shall be claimed for a phantom. But since he is truly God, as the Son of the Father, in His fashion and image, He has been already by the force of this conclusion determined to be truly man, as the Son of man, ‘found in the fashion’ and image ‘of a man.’ For when he propounded Him as thus ‘found’ in the manner of a man, he in fact affirmed Him to be most certainly human. For what is found, manifestly possesses existence. Therefore, as He was found to be God by His mighty power, so was He found to be man by reason of His flesh, because the apostle could not have pronounced Him to have ‘become obedient unto death,’ if He had not been constituted of a mortal substance.” (Against Marcion, Book 5, Chapter 20)

“...we ask the reason why you have formed the opinion that Christ was not born. Since you think that this lay within the competency of your own arbitrary choice, you must needs have supposed that being born was either impossible for God, or unbecoming to Him. With God, however, nothing is impossible but what He does not will....You cannot express any apprehension that, if He had been born and

truly clothed Himself with man's nature, He would have ceased to be God, losing what He was, while becoming what He was not. For God is in no danger of losing His own state and condition.” (On the Flesh of Christ, Chapter 2-3)

“You have sometimes read and believed that the Creator's angels have been changed into human form....Has it, then, been permitted to angels, which are inferior to God, after they have been changed into human bodily form, nevertheless to remain angels? And will you deprive God, their superior, of this faculty, as if Christ could not continue to be God, after His real assumption of the nature of man?” (On the Flesh of Christ, Chapter 3)

“There are, to be sure, other things also quite as foolish (as the birth of Christ), which have reference to the humiliations and sufferings of God....For which is more unworthy of God, which is more likely to raise a blush of shame, that God should be born, or that He should die? That He should bear the flesh, or the cross? Be circumcised, or be crucified? Be cradled, or be coffined? Be laid in a manger, or in a tomb?...Have you, then, cut away all sufferings from Christ, on the ground that, as a mere phantom, He was incapable of experiencing them?...answer me at once, you that murder truth: Was not God really crucified? And, having been really crucified, did He not really die? And, having indeed really died, did He not really rise again?...O thou most infamous of men, who acquittest of all guilt the murderers of God!” (On the Flesh of Christ, Chapter 5)

“...Christ could not be described as being...Son of man without any human parent...nor the Son of God without having God for His father. Thus the nature of the two substances displayed Him as man and God – in one respect born, in the other unborn....This property of the two states – the divine and the human – is distinctly asserted with equal truth of both natures alike....” (On the Flesh of Christ, Chapter 5) “Christ, then, was actuated by the motive which led Him to take human nature. Man's salvation was the motive, the restoration of that which had perished. Man had perished; his recovery had become necessary. No such cause, however, existed for Christ's taking on Him the nature of angels. For although there is assigned to angels also perdition in ‘the fire prepared for the devil and his angels,’ yet a restoration is never promised to them. No charge about the salvation of angels did Christ ever receive from the Father; and that which the Father neither promised nor commanded, Christ could not have undertaken....But was it His object indeed to deliver man by an angel? Why, then, come down to do that which He was about to expedite with an angel's help? If by an angel's aid, why come Himself also? If He meant to do all by Himself, why have an angel too? He has been, it is true, called ‘the Angel of great counsel,’ that is, a messenger, by a term expressive of official function, not of nature. For He had to announce to the world the mighty purpose of the Father, even that which ordained the restoration of man. But He is not on this account to be regarded as an angel, as a Gabriel or a Michael....He...is verily God, and the Son of God[.]” (On the Flesh of Christ, Chapter 14)

“Neither, indeed, was ever used by Christ that familiar phrase of all the prophets, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ For He was Himself the Lord, who openly spake by His own authority, prefacing His words with the formula, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you.’ What need is there of further argument? Hear what Isaiah says in emphatic words, ‘It was no angel, nor deputy, but the Lord Himself who saved them.’” (On the Flesh of Christ, Paragraph 14)

“And God made man, that is to say, the creature which He moulded and fashioned; after the image of God (in other words, of Christ) did He make him. And the Word was God also, who being in the image of God, ‘thought it not robbery to be equal to God.’” (On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Chapter 6)

“Jesus is still sitting there at the right hand of the Father, man, yet God – the last Adam, yet the primary Word – flesh and blood, yet purer than ours – who ‘shall descend in like manner as He ascended into heaven’ the same both in substance and form, as the angels affirmed, so as even to be recognised by those who pierced Him. Designated, as He is, ‘the Mediator between God and man,’ He keeps in His own self the deposit of the flesh which has been committed to Him by both parties – the pledge and security of its entire perfection. For as ‘He has given to us the earnest of the Spirit,’ so has He received from us the earnest of the flesh, and has carried it with Him into heaven as a pledge of that complete entirety which is one day to be restored to it.” (On the Resurrection of the Flesh, Chapter 51)

“God suffers Himself to be conceived in a mother's womb....” (On Patience, Chapter 3)

“...righteousness...was first in a rudimentary state, having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced...now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity. He will be, after Christ, the only one to be called and revered as Master; for He speaks not from Himself, but what is commanded by Christ. He is the only prelate, because He alone succeeds Christ. They who have received Him set truth before custom. They who have heard Him prophesying even to the present time, not of old, bid virgins be wholly covered.” (On the Veiling of Virgins, Chapter 1)

## HIPPOLYTUS

Hippolytus, who died about 235 C.E., said that God is “the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all,” who “had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him...But he was One, alone by himself; who, willing it, called into being what had no being before,” such as the created prehuman Jesus.

### Source Quotes:

“The first and only (one God), both Creator and Lord of all, had nothing coeval with Himself; not infinite chaos, nor measureless water, nor solid earth, nor dense air, not warm fire, nor refined spirit, nor the azure canopy of the stupendous firmament. But He was One, alone in Himself. By an exercise of His will He created things that are, which antecedently had no existence, except that He willed to make them....Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought forth the Logos first; not the word in the sense of being articulated by voice, but as a ratiocination of the universe, conceived and residing in the divine mind. Him alone He produced from existing things; for the Father Himself constituted existence, and the being born from Him was the cause of all things that are produced. The Logos was in the Father Himself, bearing the will of His progenitor, and not being unacquainted with the mind of the Father. For simultaneously with His procession from His Progenitor, inasmuch as He is this Progenitor's first-born, He has, as a voice in Himself, the ideas conceived in the Father. And so it was, that when the Father ordered the world to come into existence, the Logos one by one completed each object of creation, thus pleasing God....For as many things as He willed, God made from time to time. These things He created through the Logos, it not being possible for things to be generated otherwise than as they were produced....The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God. Now the world was made from nothing; wherefore it is not God; as also because this world admits of dissolution whenever the Creator so wishes it.” (Refutation of All Heresies, Book 10, Chapters 28-29)

### Further Quotations from Hippolytus:

“For the Son, being the power of God the Father, endued the temple of His own body again with life. Thus is He said to have been saved by the Father, as He stood in peril as a man, though by nature He is God, and Himself maintains the whole creation, visible and invisible, in a state of wellbeing.” (On Genesis, Gen 49:16-20)

“For though He endured the cross, yet as God He returned to life, having trampled upon death, as His God and Father addresses Him, and says, ‘Sit Thou at my right hand.’” (On Genesis, Gen 49:21-26)

“For as the only begotten Word of God, being God of God, emptied Himself, according to the Scriptures, humbling Himself of His own will to that which He was not before, and took unto Himself this vile flesh, and appeared in the ‘form of a servant,’ and ‘became obedient to God the Father, even unto death,’ so hereafter He is said to be ‘highly exalted;’ and as if well-nigh He had it not by reason of His humanity, and as if it were in the way of grace, He ‘receives the name which is above every name,’ according to the word of the blessed Paul. But the matter, in truth, was not a ‘giving,’ as for the first time, of what He had not by nature; far otherwise. But rather we must understand a return and restoration to that which existed in Him at the beginning, essentially and inseparably. And it is for this reason that, when He had assumed, by divine arrangement, the lowly estate of humanity, He said, ‘Father, glorify me with the glory which I had,’ etc. For He who was co-existent with His Father before all time, and before the foundation of the world, always had the glory proper to Godhead.” (On Genesis, Gen 49:21-26)

“Now, in order that He might be shown to have together in Himself at once the nature of God and that of man – as the apostle, too, says: ‘Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Now a mediator is not of one man, but two’ – it was therefore necessary that Christ, in becoming the Mediator between God and men, should receive from both an earnest of some kind, that He might appear as the Mediator between two distinct persons.” (On Numbers)

“‘There be three things which go well, and the fourth which is comely in going;’ that is, the angels in heaven, the saints upon earth, and the souls of the righteous under the earth. And the fourth, viz. God, the Word Incarnate, passed in honour through the Virgin's womb; and creating our Adam anew, he passed through the gates of heaven, and became the first-fruits of the resurrection and of the ascension for all.” (On Proverbs, Paragraph 25)

“Christ, he means, the wisdom and power of God the Father, hath builded His house, i.e., His nature in the flesh derived from the Virgin, even as he (John) hath said beforetime, ‘The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.’ As likewise the wise prophet testifies: Wisdom that was before the world, and is the source of life, the infinite ‘Wisdom of God, hath builded her house’ by a mother who knew no man – to wit, as He assumed the temple of the body....And again, ‘She hath mingled her wine’ in the bowl, by which is meant, that the Saviour, uniting his Godhead, like pure wine, with the flesh in the Virgin, was born of her at once God and man



without confusion of the one in the other. ‘And she hath furnished her table:’ that denotes the promised knowledge of the Holy Trinity....” (On Proverbs 9:1)

“For as the children of Israel were destined to see God in the world, and yet not to believe on Him, the Scripture showed beforehand that the Gentiles would recognise Him incarnate, whom, while not incarnate, Nebuchadnezzar saw and recognised of old in the furnace, and acknowledged to be the Son of God.” (Scholia on Daniel 3:92)

“For when the three beasts have finished their course, and been removed, and the one still stands in vigour – if this one, too, is removed, then finally earthly things (shall) end, and heavenly things begin; that the indissoluble and everlasting kingdom of the saints may be brought to view, and the heavenly King manifested to all, no longer in figure, like one seen in vision, or revealed in a pillar of cloud upon the top of a mountain, but amid the powers and armies of angels, as God incarnate and man, Son of God and Son of man – coming from heaven as the world's Judge.” (Scholia on Daniel 7:17)

“For this reason the warders of Hades trembled when they saw Him; and the gates of brass and the bolts of iron were broken. For, lo, the Only-begotten entered, a soul among souls, God the Word with a (human) soul. For His body lay in the tomb, not emptied of divinity; but as, while in Hades, He was in essential being with His Father, so was He also in the body and in Hades. For the Son is not contained in space, just as the Father; and He comprehends all things in Himself. But of His own will he dwelt in a body animated by a soul, in order that with His soul He might enter Hades, and not with His pure divinity.” (On Luke, Chapter 23)

“...our Lord Jesus Christ, who is also God, was prophesied of under the figure of a lion, on account of His royalty and glory....” (Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, Section 6)

“[John the Baptist], on hearing the salutation addressed to Elisabeth, leaped with joy in his mother's womb, recognising God the Word conceived in the womb of the Virgin.” (Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, Section 45)

“...the Church will not cease to bear from her heart the Word that is persecuted by the unbelieving in the world. ‘And she brought forth,’ he says, ‘a man-child, who is to rule all the nations;’ by which is meant that the Church, always bringing forth Christ, the perfect man-child of God, who is declared to be God and man, becomes the instructor of all the nations.” (Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, Section 61)

“Now Christ prayed all this economically as man; being, however, true God.” (Expository Treatise Against the Jews, Section 4)

“But why, O prophet, tell us, and for what reason, was the temple made desolate? Was it on account of that ancient fabrication of the calf? Was it on account of the idolatry of the people? Was it for the blood of the prophets? Was it for the adultery and fornication of Israel? By no means, he says; for in all these transgressions they always found pardon open to them, and benignity; but it was because they killed the Son of their Benefactor, for He is co-eternal with the Father.” (Expository Treatise against the Jews, Section 7)

“For all, the righteous and the unrighteous alike, shall be brought before God the Word. For the Father hath committed all judgment to Him; and in fulfilment of the Father's counsel, He cometh as Judge whom we call Christ.” (Against Plato, on the Cause of the Universe, Section 3)

“For the infinite cannot in any manner or by any account be susceptible of movement, inasmuch as it has nothing towards which and nothing around which it shall be moved. For in the case of that which is in its nature infinite, and so incapable of being moved, movement would be conversion. Wherefore also the Word of God being made truly man in our manner, yet without sin, and acting and enduring in man's way such sinless things as are proper to our nature, and assuming the circumscription of the flesh of our nature on our behalf sustained no conversion in that aspect in which He is one with the Father, being made in no respect one with the flesh through the eximiation. When He was without flesh, He remained without any circumscription. And through the flesh He wrought divinely those things which are proper to divinity, showing Himself to have both those natures in both of which He wrought, I mean the divine and the human, according to that veritable and real and natural subsistence, (showing Himself thus) as both being in reality and as being understood to be at one and the same time infinite God and finite man, having the nature of each in perfection, with the same activity, that is to say, the same natural properties; whence we know that their distinction abides always according to the nature of each, and without conversion....For the divine is just the same after the incarnation that it was before the incarnation; in its essence infinite, illimitable, impassible, incomparable, unchangeable, inconvertible, self-potent, and, in short, subsisting in essence alone the infinitely worthy good. The God of all things therefore became truly, according to the Scriptures, without conversion, sinless man, and that in a manner known to Himself alone, as He is the natural Artificer of things which are above our comprehension. And by that same saving act of the incarnation He introduced into the flesh the activity of His proper divinity, yet without having it (that activity) either circumscribed by the flesh through the exinanium, or growing naturally out of the flesh as it grew out of His divinity, but manifested through it in the things which He wrought in a divine manner in His incarnate state. For the flesh did not become divinity in nature by a transmutation of nature, as though it became essentially flesh of divinity. But what it was before, that also it continued to be in nature and activity when united with divinity, even as the Saviour said, ‘The spirit indeed

is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ And working and enduring in the flesh things which were proper to sinless flesh, He proved the evacuation of divinity (to be) for our sakes, confirmed as it was by wonders and by sufferings of the flesh naturally. For with this purpose did the God of all things become man, viz., in order that by suffering in the flesh, which is susceptible of suffering, He might redeem our whole race, which was sold to death; and that by working wondrous things by His divinity, which is unsusceptible of suffering, through the medium of the flesh He might restore it to that incorruptible and blessed life from which it fell away by yielding to the devil; and that He might establish the holy orders of intelligent existences in the heavens in immutability by the mystery of His incarnation, the doing of which is the recapitulation of all things in himself. He remained therefore, also, after His incarnation, according to nature, God infinite, and more, having the activity proper and suitable to Himself – an activity growing out of His divinity essentially, and manifested through His perfectly holy flesh by wondrous acts economically, to the intent that He might be believed in as God, while working out of Himself by the flesh, which by nature is weak, the salvation of the universe.” (Against Beron and Helix, Fragments 1-2)

“Now, to institute a comparison with that which is utterly beyond comparison, just as in us the power of thought that belongs by nature to the soul is brought to utterance by means of our bodily tongue without any change in itself, so, too, in the wondrous incarnation of God is the omnipotent and all-creating energy of the entire deity manifested without mutation in itself, by means of His perfectly holy flesh, and in the works which He wrought after a divine manner, (that energy of the deity) remaining in its essence free from all circumscription, although it shone through the flesh, which is itself essentially limited. For that which is in its nature unoriginated cannot be circumscribed by an originated nature....” (Against Beron and Helix, Fragment 3)

“For, in the view of apostles and prophets and teachers, the mystery of the divine incarnation has been distinguished as having two points of contemplation natural to it, distinct in all things, inasmuch as on the one hand it is the subsistence of perfect deity, and on the other is demonstrative of full humanity. As long, therefore, as the Word is acknowledged to be in substance one, of one energy, there shall never in any way be known a movement in the two. For while God, who is essentially ever-existent, became by His infinite power, according to His will, sinless man, He is what He was, in all wherein God is known; and what He became, He is in all wherein man is known and can be recognised. In both aspects of Himself He never falls out of Himself, in His divine activities and in His human alike, preserving in both relations His own essentially unchangeable perfection.” (Against Baron and Helix, Fragment 4)

“...Christ, in so far as He is apprehended as God, gave existence to the universe, and now maintains and governs it.” (Against Beron and Helix, Fragment 8)

“But the pious confession of the believer is that, with a view to our salvation, and in order to connect the universe with unchangeableness, the Creator of all things incorporated with Himself a rational soul and a sensible body from the all-holy Mary, ever-virgin, by an undefiled conception, without conversion, and was made man in nature, but separate from wickedness: the same was perfect God, and the same was perfect man; the same was in nature at once perfect God and man. In His deity He wrought divine things through His all-holy flesh – such things, namely, as did not pertain to the flesh by nature; and in His humanity He suffered human things – such things, namely, as did not pertain to deity by nature, by the upbearing of the deity. He wrought nothing divine without the body; nor did the same do anything human without the participation of deity. Thus He preserved for Himself a new and fitting method by which He wrought (according to the manner of) both, while that which was natural to both remained unchanged; to the accrediting of His perfect incarnation, which is really genuine, and has nothing lacking in it.” (Against Beron and Helix, Fragment 8)

“For he who comes down in faith to the laver of regeneration, and renounces the devil, and joins himself to Christ; who denies the enemy, and makes the confession that Christ is God; who puts off the bondage, and puts on the adoption – he comes up from the baptism brilliant as the sun, flashing forth the beams of righteousness, and, which is indeed the chief thing, he returns a son of God and joint-heir with Christ.” (Discourse on the Holy Theophany, Section 10)

“In the Passover season, so as to exhibit Himself as one destined to be sacrificed like a sheep, and to prove Himself the true Paschal-lamb, even as the apostle says, ‘Even Christ,’ who is God, ‘our passover was sacrificed for us.’” (Homily on the Paschal Supper)

“For who will not say that there is one God? Yet he will not on that account deny the economy (i.e., the number and disposition of persons in the Trinity).” (Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Section 3)

“Let us look next at the apostle’s word: ‘Whose are the fathers, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.’ This word declares the mystery of the truth rightly and clearly. He who is over all is God; for thus He speaks boldly, ‘All things are delivered unto me of my Father.’ He who is over all, God blessed, has been born; and having been made man, He is (yet) God for ever. For to this effect John also has said, ‘Which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.’ And well has he named Christ the Almighty.” (Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Section 6)

“A man, therefore, even though he will it not, is compelled to acknowledge God the Father Almighty, and Christ Jesus the Son of God, who, being God, became man, to whom also the Father made all things subject, Himself excepted, and the Holy Spirit; and that these, therefore, are three. But if he desires to learn how it is shown still that there is one God, let him know that His power is one. As far as regards the power, therefore, God is one. But as far as regards the economy there is a threefold manifestation, as shall be proved afterwards when we give account of the true doctrine. In these things, however, which are thus set forth by us, we are at one. For there is one God in whom we must believe, but unoriginated, impassible, immortal, doing all things as He wills, in the way He wills, and when He wills.” (Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Section 8)

“God, subsisting alone, and having nothing contemporaneous with Himself, determined to create the world. And conceiving the world in mind, and willing and uttering the word, He made it; and straightway it appeared, formed as it had pleased Him. For us, then, it is sufficient simply to know that there was nothing contemporaneous with God. Beside Him there was nothing; but He, while existing alone, yet existed in plurality. For He was neither without reason, nor wisdom....For all things that are made He forms by reason and wisdom – creating them in reason, and arranging them in wisdom....And as the Author, and fellow-Counsellor, and Framer of the things that are in formation, He begat the Word; and...He bears this Word in Himself...begetting Him as Light of Light....And thus there appeared another beside Himself. But when I say another, I do not mean that there are two Gods, but that it is only as light of light....Thus, then, was the Word made manifest, even as the blessed John says. For he sums up the things that were said by the prophets, and shows that this is the Word, by whom all things were made. For he speaks to this effect: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made.’” (Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Sections 10-12)

“And the blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. For the Father indeed is One, but there are two Persons, because there is also the Son; and then there is the third, the Holy Spirit....The economy of harmony is led back to one God; for God is One. It is the Father who commands, and the Son who obeys, and the Holy Spirit who gives understanding: the Father who is above all, and the Son who is through all, and the Holy Spirit who is in all. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit....The Father’s Word, therefore, knowing the economy (disposition) and the will of the Father, to wit, that the Father seeks to be worshipped in none other way than this, gave this charge to the disciples after He rose from the dead: ‘Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ And by this He showed, that whosoever omitted any one of these, failed in glorifying God perfectly. For it is through this Trinity that the Father is glorified. For the Father willed, the Son did, the Spirit manifested. The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this truth.” (Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Section 14)

“Let us believe then, dear brethren, according to the tradition of the apostles, that God the Word came down from heaven, (and entered) into the holy Virgin Mary, in order that, taking the flesh from her, and assuming also a human, by which I mean a rational soul, and becoming thus all that man is with the exception of sin, He might save fallen man, and confer immortality on men who believe on His name. In all, therefore, the word of truth is demonstrated to us, to wit, that the Father is One, whose word is present (with Him), by whom He made all things; whom also, as we have said above, the Father sent forth in later times for the salvation of men. This (Word) was preached by the law and the prophets as destined to come into the world. And even as He was preached then, in the same manner also did He come and manifest Himself, being by the Virgin and the Holy Spirit made a new man; for in that He had the heavenly (nature) of the Father, as the Word and the earthly (nature), as taking to Himself the flesh from the old Adam by the medium of the Virgin, He now, coming forth into the world, was manifested as God in a body, coming forth too as a perfect man. For it was not in mere appearance or by conversion, but in truth, that He became man. Thus then, too, though demonstrated as God, He does not refuse the conditions proper to Him as man, since He hungers and toils and thirsts in weariness, and flees in fear, and prays in trouble.

And He who as God has a sleepless nature, slumbers on a pillow. And He who for this end came into the world, begs off from the cup of suffering. And in an agony He sweats blood, and is strengthened by an angel, who Himself strengthens those who believe on Him, and taught men to despise death by His work. And He who knew what manner of man Judas was, is betrayed by Judas. And He, who formerly was honoured by him as God, is contemned by Caiaphas. And He is set at nought by Herod, who is Himself to judge the whole earth. And He is scourged by Pilate, who took upon Himself our infirmities. And by the soldiers He is mocked, at whose behest stand thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads of angels and archangels. And He who fixed the heavens like a vault is fastened to the cross by the Jews. And He who is inseparable from the Father cries to the Father, and commends to Him His spirit; and bowing His head, He gives up the ghost, who said, ‘I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again;’ and because He was not overmastered by death, as being Himself Life, He said this: ‘I lay it down of myself.’

And He who gives life bountifully to all, has His side pierced with a spear. And He who raises the dead is wrapped in linen and laid in a sepulchre, and on the third day He is raised again by the Father, though Himself the Resurrection and the Life. For all these things has He finished for us, who for our sakes was made as we are. For ‘Himself hath borne our infirmities, and carried our diseases; and for our sakes He was afflicted,’ as Isaiah the prophet has said. This is He who was hymned by the angels, and seen by the shepherds, and

waited for by Simeon, and witnessed to by Anna. This is He who was inquired after by the wise men, and indicated by the star; He who was engaged in His Father's house, and pointed to by John, and witnessed to by the Father from above in the voice, 'This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him.' He is crowned victor against the devil. This is Jesus of Nazareth, who was invited to the marriage-feast in Cana, and turned the water into wine, and rebuked the sea when agitated by the violence of the winds, and walked on the deep as on dry land, and caused the blind man from birth to see, and raised Lazarus to life after he had been dead four days, and did many mighty works, and forgave sins, and conferred power on the disciples, and had blood and water flowing from His sacred side when pierced with the spear. For His sake the sun is darkened, the day has no light, the rocks are shattered, the veil is rent, the foundations of the earth are shaken, the graves are opened, and the dead are raised, and the rulers are ashamed when they see the Director of the universe upon the cross closing His eye and giving up the ghost. Creation saw, and was troubled; and, unable to bear the sight of His exceeding glory, shrouded itself in darkness. This (is He who) breathes upon the disciples, and gives them the Spirit, and comes in among them when the doors are shut, and is taken up by a cloud into the heavens while the disciples gaze at Him, and is set down on the right hand of the Father, and comes again as the Judge of the living and the dead. This is the God who for our sakes became man, to whom also the Father hath put all things in subjection. To Him be the glory and the power, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church both now and ever, and even for evermore. Amen." (Against the Heresy of One Noetus, Sections 17-18)

## ORIGEN

Origen, who died about 250 C.E., said that "the Father and Son are two substances...two things as to their essence," and that "compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light."

### Source Quotes:

"We worship one God, the Father and the Son, therefore, as we have explained; and our argument against the worship of other gods still continues valid. And we do not 'reverence beyond measure one who has but lately appeared,' as though He did not exist before; for we believe Himself when He says, 'Before Abraham was, I am.' Again He says, 'I am the truth;' and surely none of us is so simple as to suppose that truth did not exist before the time when Christ appeared. We worship, therefore, the Father of truth, and the Son, who is the truth; and these, while they are two, considered as persons or subsistences, are one in unity of thought, in harmony and in identity of will. So entirely are they one, that he who has seen the Son, 'who is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of His person,' has seen in Him, who is the image of God, God Himself." (Against Celsus 8:12)

"...the Son is other than the Father in being and essence...." (On Prayer, Chapter 10)

"He is the invisible image of the invisible God....Now this image contains the unity of nature and substance belonging to Father and Son. For if the Son do, in like manner, all those things which the Father doth, then, in virtue of the Son doing all things like the Father, is the image of the Father formed in the Son, who is born of Him, like an act of His will proceeding from the mind. And I am therefore of opinion that the will of the Father ought alone to be sufficient for the existence of that which He wishes to exist. For in the exercise of His will He employs no other way than that which is made known by the counsel of His will. And thus also the existence of the Son is generated by Him. For this point must above all others be maintained by those who allow nothing to be unbegotten, i.e., unborn, save God the Father only. And we must be careful not to fall into the absurdities of those who picture to themselves certain emanations, so as to divide the divine nature into parts, and who divide God the Father as far as they can, since even to entertain the remotest suspicion of such a thing regarding an incorporeal being is not only the height of impiety, but a mark of the greatest folly, it being most remote from any intelligent conception that there should be any physical division of any incorporeal nature. Rather, therefore, as an act of the will proceeds from the understanding, and neither cuts off any part nor is separated or divided from it, so after some such fashion is the Father to be supposed as having begotten the Son, His own image....He is wisdom, and in wisdom there can be no suspicion of anything corporeal. He is the true light, which enlightens every man that cometh into this world; but He has nothing in common with the light of this sun. Our Saviour, therefore, is the image of the invisible God, inasmuch as compared with the Father Himself He is the truth: and as compared with us, to whom He reveals the Father, He is the image by which we come to the knowledge of the Father, whom no one knows save the Son, and he to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him....In order, however, to arrive at a fuller understanding of the manner in which the Saviour is the figure of the person or subsistence of God, let us take an instance, which, although it does not describe the subject of which we are treating either fully or appropriately, may nevertheless be seen to be employed for this purpose only, to show that the Son of God, who was in the form of God, divesting Himself (of His glory), makes it His object, by this very divesting of Himself, to demonstrate to us the fulness of His deity.

For instance, suppose that there were a statue of so enormous a size as to fill the whole world, and which on that account could be seen by no one; and that another statue were formed altogether resembling it in the shape of the limbs, and in the features of the countenance, and in form and material, but without the same immensity of size, so that those who were unable to behold the one of

enormous proportions, should, on seeing the latter, acknowledge that they had seen the former, because it preserved all the features of its limbs and countenance, and even the very form and material, so closely, as to be altogether undistinguishable from it; by some such similitude, the Son of God, divesting Himself of His equality with the Father, and showing to us the way to the knowledge of Him, is made the express image of His person: so that we, who were unable to look upon the glory of that marvellous light when placed in the greatness of His Godhead, may, by His being made to us brightness, obtain the means of beholding the divine light by looking upon the brightness. This comparison, of course, of statues, as belonging to material things, is employed for no other purpose than to show that the Son of God, though placed in the very insignificant form of a human body, in consequence of the resemblance of His works and power to the Father, showed that there was in Him an immense and invisible greatness, inasmuch as He said to His disciples, 'He who sees Me, sees the Father also;' and, 'I and the Father are one.' And to these belong also the similar expression, 'The Father is in Me, and I in the Father.'" (De Principiis 1:2:6,8)

"God [is] the Father of the true light – of whom it has been said, 'God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.' Those, indeed, who worship sun, moon, and stars because their light is visible and celestial, would not bow down to a spark of fire or a lamp upon earth, because they see the incomparable superiority of those objects which are deemed worthy of homage to the light of sparks and lamps. So those who understand that God is light, and who have apprehended that the Son of God is 'the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and who comprehend also how He says, 'I am the light of the world,' would not rationally offer worship to that which is, as it were, a spark in sun, moon, and stars, in comparison with God, who is light of the true light. Nor is it with a view to depreciate these great works of God's creative power, or to call them, after the fashion of Anaxagoras, 'fiery masses,' that we thus speak of sun, and moon, and stars; but because we perceive the inexpressible superiority of the divinity of God, and that of His only-begotten Son, which surpasses all other things. And being persuaded that the sun himself, and moon, and stars pray to the Supreme God through His only-begotten Son, we judge it improper to pray to those beings who themselves offer up prayers (to God), seeing even they themselves would prefer that we should send up our requests to the God to whom they pray, rather than send them downwards to themselves, or apportion our power of prayer between God and them. And here I may employ this illustration, as beating upon this point: Our Lord and Saviour, hearing Himself on one occasion addressed as 'Good Master,' referring him who used it to His own Father, said, 'Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God the Father.' And since it was in accordance with sound reason that this should be said by the Son of His Father's love, as being the image of the goodness of God, why should not the sun say with greater reason to those that bow down to him, 'Why do you worship me? For thou wilt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve;' for it is He whom I and all who are with me serve and worship. And although one may not be so exalted (as the sun), nevertheless let such an one pray to the Word of God (who is able to heal him), and still more to His Father, who also to the righteous of former times 'sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.' (Against Celsus 5:11)

"But since we quoted the language of Paul regarding Christ, where He says of Him that He is 'the brightness of the glory of God, and the express figure of His person,' let us see what idea we are to form of this. According to John, 'God is light.' The only-begotten Son, therefore, is the glory of this light, proceeding inseparably from (God) Himself, as brightness does from light, and illuminating the whole of creation. For, agreeably to what we have already explained as to the manner in which He is the Way, and conducts to the Father; and in which He is the Word, interpreting the secrets of wisdom, and the mysteries of knowledge, making them known to the rational creation; and is also the Truth, and the Life, and the Resurrection – in the same way ought we to understand also the meaning of His being the brightness: for it is by its splendour that we understand and feel what light itself is. And this splendour, presenting itself gently and softly to the frail and weak eyes of mortals, and gradually training, as it were, and accustoming them to bear the brightness of the light, when it has put away from them every hindrance and obstruction to vision, according to the Lord's own precept, 'Cast forth the beam out of thine eye,' renders them capable of enduring the splendour of the light, being made in this respect also a sort of mediator between men and the light....wisdom is called the splendour of eternal light....That is properly termed everlasting or eternal which neither had a beginning of existence, nor can ever cease to be what it is. And this is the idea conveyed by John when he says that 'God is light.' Now His wisdom is the splendour of that light, not only in respect of its being light, but also of being everlasting light, so that His wisdom is eternal and everlasting splendour. If this be fully understood, it clearly shows that the existence of the Son is derived from the Father but not in time, nor from any other beginning, except, as we have said, from God Himself." (De Principiis 1:2:7,11)

### **Further Quotations from Origen:**

"...what belongs to the nature of deity is common to the Father and the Son." (De Principiis 1:1:8)

"...we call Him the wisdom of God....the only-begotten Son of God is His wisdom hypostatically existing....And who that is capable of entertaining reverential thoughts or feelings regarding God, can suppose or believe that God the Father ever existed, even for a moment of time, without having generated this Wisdom? For in that case he must say either that God was unable to generate Wisdom before He produced her, so that He afterwards called into being her who formerly did not exist, or that He possessed the power indeed, but – what cannot be said of God without impiety – was unwilling to use it; both of which suppositions, it is patent to all, are alike absurd and impious: for they amount to this, either that God advanced from a condition of inability to one of ability, or that, although

possessed of the power, He concealed it, and delayed the generation of Wisdom. Wherefore we have always held that God is the Father of His only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him, and derives from Him what He is, but without any beginning, not only such as may be measured by any divisions of time, but even that which the mind alone can contemplate within itself, or behold, so to speak, with the naked powers of the understanding. And therefore we must believe that Wisdom was generated before any beginning that can be either comprehended or expressed.” (De Principiis 1:2:2)

“John...says in the beginning of his Gospel, when defining God by a special definition to be the Word, ‘And God was the Word, and this was in the beginning with God.’ Let him, then, who assigns a beginning to the Word or Wisdom of God, take care that he be not guilty of impiety against the unbegotten Father Himself, seeing he denies that He had always been a Father, and had generated the Word, and had possessed wisdom in all preceding periods, whether they be called times or ages, or anything else that can be so entitled.” (De Principiis 1:2:3)

“...we must of necessity hold that there is something exceptional and worthy of God which does not admit of any comparison at all, not merely in things, but which cannot even be conceived by thought or discovered by perception, so that a human mind should be able to apprehend how the unbegotten God is made the Father of the only-begotten Son. Because His generation is as eternal and everlasting as the brilliancy which is produced from the sun. For it is not by receiving the breath of life that He is made a Son, by any outward act, but by His own nature.” (De Principiis 1:2:4)

“Another power [i.e., the Son] accordingly is produced, which exists with properties of its own – a kind of breath, as Scripture says, of the primal and unbegotten power of God, deriving from Him its being, and never at any time non-existent. For if any one were to assert that it did not formerly exist, but came afterwards into existence, let him explain the reason why the Father, who gave it being, did not do so before. And if he shall grant that there was once a beginning, when that breath proceeded from the power of God, we shall ask him again, why not even before the beginning, which he has allowed; and in this way, ever demanding an earlier date, and going upwards with our interrogations, we shall arrive at this conclusion, that as God was always possessed of power and will, there never was any reason of propriety or otherwise, why He may not have always possessed that blessing which He desired. By which it is shown that that breath of God's power always existed, having no beginning save God Himself. Nor was it fitting that there should be any other beginning save God Himself, from whom it derives its birth.” (De Principiis 1:2:9)

“And that you may understand that the omnipotence of Father and Son is one and the same, as God and the Lord are one and the same with the Father, listen to the manner in which John speaks in the Apocalypse:

‘Thus saith the Lord God, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.’ For who else was ‘He which is to come’ than Christ? And as no one ought to be offended, seeing God is the Father, that the Saviour is also God; so also, since the Father is called omnipotent, no one ought to be offended that the Son of God is also called omnipotent.” (De Principiis 1:2:10)

“For as the image formed in a mirror unerringly reflects all the acts and movements of him who gazes on it, so would Wisdom have herself to be understood when she is called the stainless mirror of the power and working of the Father: as the Lord Jesus Christ also, who is the Wisdom of God, declares of Himself when He says, ‘The works which the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.’ And again He says, that the Son cannot do anything of Himself, save what He sees the Father do. As therefore the Son in no respect differs from the Father in the power of His works, and the work of the Son is not a different thing from that of the Father, but one and the same movement, so to speak, is in all things, He therefore named Him a stainless mirror, that by such an expression it might be understood that there is no dissimilarity whatever between the Son and the Father.” (De Principiis 1:2:12)

“It remains that we inquire what is the ‘image of His goodness;’ and here, I think, we must understand the same thing which we expressed a little ago, in speaking of the image formed by the mirror. For He is the primal goodness, doubtless, out of which the Son is born, who, being in all respects the image of the Father, may certainly also be called with propriety the image of His goodness. For there is no other second goodness existing in the Son, save that which is in the Father. And therefore also the Saviour Himself rightly says in the Gospel, ‘There is none good save one only, God the Father,’ that by such an expression it may be understood that the Son is not of a different goodness, but of that only which exists in the Father, of whom He is rightly termed the image, because He proceeds from no other source but from that primal goodness, lest there might appear to be in the Son a different goodness from that which is in the Father. Nor is there any dissimilarity or difference of goodness in the Son. And therefore it is not to be imagined that there is a kind of blasphemy, as it were, in the words, ‘There is none good save one only, God the Father,’ as if thereby it may be supposed to be denied that either Christ or the Holy Spirit was good. But, as we have already said, the primal goodness is to be understood as residing in God the Father, from whom both the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds, retaining within them, without any doubt, the nature of that goodness which is in the source whence they are derived. And if there be any other things which in Scripture are called good, whether angel, or man, or servant, or treasure, or a good heart, or a good tree, all these are so termed catachrestically, having in them an accidental, not an essential goodness.” (De Principiis 1:2:13)

“Now, what the Holy Spirit is, we are taught in many passages of Scripture....From all which we learn that the person of the Holy Spirit was of such authority and dignity, that saving baptism was not complete except by the authority of the most excellent Trinity of them all, i.e., by the naming of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by joining to the unbegotten God the Father, and to His only-begotten Son, the name also of the Holy Spirit. Who, then, is not amazed at the exceeding majesty of the Holy Spirit, when he hears that he who speaks a word against the Son of man may hope for forgiveness; but that he who is guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit has not forgiveness, either in the present world or in that which is to come!” (De Principiis 1:3:2)

“But up to the present time we have been able to find no statement in holy Scripture in which the Holy Spirit could be said to be made or created....” (De Principiis 1:3:3)

“...the Holy Spirit [is] reckoned in the Unity of the Trinity, i.e., along with the unchangeable Father and His Son....” (De Principiis 1:3:4)

“...he who is regenerated by God unto salvation has to do both with Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and does not obtain salvation unless with the co-operation of the entire Trinity; and...it is impossible to become partaker of the Father or the Son without the Holy Spirit.” (De Principiis 1:3:5)

“Let no one indeed suppose that we...give a preference to the Holy Spirit over the Father and the Son, or assert that His dignity is greater, which certainly would be a very illogical conclusion....nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less....there is no difference in the Trinity....” (De Principiis 1:3:7) “...the divine benefits [are] bestowed upon us by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which Trinity is the fountain of all holiness....” (De Principiis 1:4:2)

“...spotless purity exists in the essential being of none save the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but is an accidental quality in every created thing....” (De Principiis 1:5:5)

“...these are they who are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth....there was no goodness in them by essential being, as in God and His Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. For in the Trinity alone, which is the author of all things, does goodness exist in virtue of essential being; while others possess it as an accidental and perishable quality, and only then enjoy blessedness, when they participate in holiness and wisdom, and in divinity itself.” (De Principiis 1:6:2)

“...it is an attribute of the divine nature alone – i.e., of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – to exist without any material substance, and without partaking in any degree of a bodily adjunct.” (De Principiis 1:6:4)

“There is no nature, then, which may not admit of good or evil, except the nature of God – the fountain of all good things – and of Christ; for it is wisdom, and wisdom assuredly cannot admit folly; and it is righteousness, and righteousness will never certainly admit of unrighteousness; and it is the Word, or Reason, which certainly cannot be made irrational; nay, it is also the light, and it is certain that the darkness does not receive the light. In like manner, also, the nature of the Holy Spirit, being holy, does not admit of pollution; for it is holy by nature, or essential being. If there is any other nature which is holy, it possesses this property of being made holy by the reception or inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not having it by nature, but as an accidental quality....” (De Principiis 1:8:3)

“...the Father generates an uncreated Son, and brings forth a Holy Spirit, not as if He had no previous existence, but because the Father is the origin and source of the Son or Holy Spirit, and no anteriority or posteriority can be understood as existing in them....” (De Principiis 2:2:1)

“...there are certain things, the meaning of which cannot be unfolded at all by any words of human language, but which are made known more through simple apprehension than by any properties of words. And under this rule must be brought also the understanding of the sacred Scripture, in order that its statements may be judged not according to the worthlessness of the letter, but according to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration they were caused to be written.” (De Principiis 4:27)

“Seeing God the Father is invisible and inseparable from the Son, the Son is not generated from Him by ‘prolation,’ as some suppose. For if the Son be a ‘prolation’ of the Father (the term ‘prolation’ being used to signify such a generation as that of animals or men usually is), then, of necessity, both He who ‘prolated’ and He who was ‘prolated’ are corporeal. For we do not say, as the heretics suppose, that some part of the substance of God was converted into the Son, or that the Son was procreated by the Father out of things non-existent, i.e., beyond His own substance, so that there once was a time when He did not exist; but, putting away all corporeal conceptions, we say that the Word and Wisdom was begotten out of the invisible and incorporeal without any corporeal feeling, as if it were an act of the will proceeding from the understanding.” (De Principiis 4:28)

“Now this expression which we employ – ‘that there never was a time when He did not exist’ – is to be understood with an allowance. For these very words ‘when’ or ‘never’ have a meaning that relates to time, whereas the statements made regarding Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit are to be understood as transcending all time, all ages, and all eternity. For it is the Trinity alone which exceeds the comprehension not only of temporal but even of eternal intelligence; while other things which are not included in it are to be measured by times and ages.” (De Principiis 4:28)

“After these points we shall appropriately remind (the reader) of the bodily advent and incarnation of the only-begotten Son of God, with respect to whom we are not to suppose that all the majesty of His divinity is confined within the limits of His slender body, so that all the ‘word’ of God, and His ‘wisdom,’ and ‘essential truth,’ and ‘life,’ was either rent asunder from the Father, or restrained and confined within the narrowness of His bodily person, and is not to be considered to have operated anywhere besides; but the cautious acknowledgment of a religious man ought to be between the two, so that it ought neither to be believed that anything of divinity was wanting in Christ, nor that any separation at all was made from the essence of the Father, which is everywhere....Let no one, however, suppose that by this we affirm that some portion of the divinity of the Son of God was in Christ, and that the remaining portion was elsewhere or everywhere, which may be the opinion of those who are ignorant of the nature of an incorporeal and invisible essence. For it is impossible to speak of the parts of an incorporeal being, or to make any division of them; but He is in all things, and through all things, and above all things, in the manner in which we have spoken above, i.e., in the manner in which He is understood to be either ‘wisdom,’ or the ‘word,’ or the ‘life,’ or the ‘truth,’ by which method of understanding all confinement of a local kind is undoubtedly excluded.” (De Principiis 4:30-31)

“As now by participation in the Son of God one is adopted as a son, and by participating in that wisdom which is in God is rendered wise, so also by participation in the Holy Spirit is a man rendered holy and spiritual. For it is one and the same thing to have a share in the Holy Spirit, which is (the Spirit) of the Father and the Son, since the nature of the Trinity is one and incorporeal....every rational creature needs a participation in the Trinity.” (De Principiis 4:32)

“...all things which exist were made by God, and that there was nothing which was not made, save the nature of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit....For there is nothing before God without either limit or measure. For by His power He comprehends all things, and He Himself is comprehended by the strength of no created thing, because that nature is known to itself alone. For the Father alone knoweth the Son, and the Son alone knoweth the Father, and the Holy Spirit alone searcheth even the deep things of God.” (De Principiis 4:35)

“...we regard and believe [Jesus] to have been from the beginning God, and the Son of God...” (Against Celsus 3:41)

“...although the Word which was in the beginning with God, which is also God Himself, should come to us, He does not give His place or vacate His own seat, so that one place should be empty of Him, and another which did not formerly contain Him be filled.” (Against Celsus 4:5)

“...the Divine Word...is God...” (Against Celsus 4:18)

“...[we] carefully ascertain from the statements made regarding Jesus, and the prophecies uttered concerning Him, who it is that we are to consider as having come down to the human race as God, and the Son of God[.]” (Against Celsus 5:3)

“...we listen to the God who speaks in Moses, and have accepted Jesus, whom he testifies to be God, as the Son of God, in hope of receiving the best rewards if we regulate our lives according to His word.” (Against Celsus 5:51)

“And who else is able to save and conduct the soul of man to the God of all things, save God the Word, who, ‘being in the beginning with God,’ became flesh for the sake of those who had cleaved to the flesh, and had become as flesh, that He might be received by those who could not behold Him, inasmuch as He was the Word, and was with God, and was God?” (Against Celsus 6:68)

“But a Christian...prays for no trivial blessings, for he has learnt from Jesus to seek for nothing small or mean, that is, sensible objects, but to ask only for what is great and truly divine; and these things God grants to us, to lead us to that blessedness which is found only with Him through His Son, the Word, who is God.” (Against Celsus 7:44)

“For the Lord of those who are ‘ambassadors for Christ’ is Christ Himself, whose ambassadors they are, and who is ‘the Word, who was in the beginning, was with God, and was God.’” (Against Celsus 8:6)

“For we sing hymns to the Most High alone, and His Only-begotten, who is the Word and God; and we praise God and His Only-begotten, as do also the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the host of heaven.” (Against Celsus 8:67)

“Moreover, we are debtors to Christ who bought us with His own blood, just as every house slave is also debtor to his purchaser for the sum of money given for him. We have also a certain indebtedness to the Holy Spirit: we are paying it when we do not grieve Him in whom we were sealed unto a day of redemption, and when, without grieving Him, we bear the fruits demanded of us, He being present with us and quickening our soul.” (On Prayer, Chapter 18, Paragraph 5)



“We must not, however, forget that the sojourning of Christ with men took place before His bodily sojourn....And as before His manifest and bodily coming He came to those who were perfect, so also, after His coming has been announced to all, to those who are still children, since they are under pedagogues and governors and have not yet arrived at the fulness of the time, forerunners of Christ have come to sojourn....But the Son Himself, the glorified God, the Word, has not yet come; He waits for the preparation which must take place on the part of men of God who are to admit His deity.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 1:9)

“...the Word...is God after the Father of all.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 1:11)

“And one of the names applied to the Saviour is that which He Himself does not utter, but which John records – the Word who was in the beginning with God, God the Word.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 1:23)

“None of these testimonies, however, sets forth distinctly the Saviour's exalted birth; but when the words are addressed to Him, ‘Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,’ this is spoken to Him by God, with whom all time is to-day, for there is no evening with God, as I consider, and there is no morning, nothing but time that stretches out, along with His unbeginning and unseen life. The day is to-day with Him in which the Son was begotten, and thus the beginning of His birth is not found, as neither is the day of it.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 1:32)

“For as with us the word is a messenger of those things which the mind perceives, so the Word of God, knowing the Father, since no created being can approach Him without a guide, reveals the Father whom He knows.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 1:42)

“Now the Word comes to men who formerly could not receive the advent of the Son of God who is the Word; but to God it does not come, as if it had not been with Him before. The Word was always with the Father; and so it is said, ‘And the Word was with God.’ He did not come to God, and this same word ‘was’ is used of the Word because He was in the beginning at the same time when He was with God, neither being separated from the beginning nor being bereft of His Father. And again, neither did He come to be in the beginning after He had not been in it, nor did He come to be with God after not having been with Him. For before all time and the remotest age the Word was in the beginning, and the Word was with God.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 2:1)

“Now there are many who are sincerely concerned about religion, and who fall here into great perplexity. They are afraid that they may be proclaiming two Gods, and their fear drives them into doctrines which are false and wicked....they deny the divinity of the Son, giving Him a separate existence of His own, and making His sphere of essence fall outside that of the Father, so that they are separable from each other.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 2:2)

“‘He was in the beginning with God.’ By his three foregoing propositions the Evangelist has made us acquainted with three orders, and he now sums up the three in one, saying, ‘This (Logos) was in the beginning with God.’ In the first premise we learned where the Logos was: He was in the beginning; then we learned with whom He was, with God; and then who He was, that He was God. He now points out by this word ‘He,’ the Word who is God, and gathers up into a fourth proposition the three which went before, ‘In the beginning was the Word,’ ‘The Word was with God,’ and ‘The Word was God.’” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 2:4)

“The Word was not made in the beginning; there was no time when the beginning was devoid of the Word, and hence it is said, ‘In the beginning was the Word.’” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 2:13)

“To this we must say that as there are many causes which may lead men to believe, since men who are not moved by one argument may be by another, so God is able to provide for men a number of occasions, any of which may cause their minds to open to the truth that God, who is over all, has taken on Himself human nature.” (Commentary on the Gospel of John 2:28)

“But if a man rashly enters on the subject, and is not aware of the mystery of the wisdom of God and of the Word Who was in the beginning with God and was Himself God, and that if we are to seek and find these things we must follow the instructions of the Word Who was also God, and conform to His wisdom, he must of necessity fall into fables and frivolous conceits and inventions of his own, for he exposes himself to danger for his impiety.” (Philocalia 1:28)

## ANALYSIS

### Was The Trinity “Unknown” To The Church Fathers?

Now that you’ve had a chance to read the writings of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers for yourself, let’s recap the claims of the Watchtower concerning the Fathers’ beliefs about God and Jesus.

Justin Martyr, who died about 165 C.E., called the prehuman Jesus a created angel who is “other than the God who made all things.” He said that Jesus was inferior to God and “never did anything except what the Creator...willed him to do and say.”

Irenaeus, who died about 200 C.E., said that the prehuman Jesus had a separate existence from God and was inferior to him. He showed that Jesus is not equal to the “One true and only God,” who is “supreme over all, and besides whom there is no other.”

Clement of Alexandria, who died about 215 C.E., called Jesus in his prehuman existence “a creature” but called God “the uncreated and imperishable and only true God.” He said that the Son “is next to the only omnipotent Father” but not equal to him.

Tertullian, who died about 230 C.E., taught the supremacy of God. He observed: “The Father is different from the Son (another), as he is greater; as he who begets is different from him who is begotten; he who sends, different from him who is sent.” He also said: “There was a time when the Son was not....Before all things, God was alone.” (The word “tri’as” appears in its Latin form of “trinitas” in Tertullian. While these words do translate to “Trinity,” this is no proof in itself that Tertullian taught the doctrine of the Trinity.)

Hippolytus, who died about 235 C.E., said that God is “the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all,” who “had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him....But he was One, alone by himself; who, willing it, called into being what had no being before,” such as the created prehuman Jesus.

Origen, who died about 250 C.E., said that “the Father and Son are two substances...two things as to their essence,” and that “compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light.”

The testimony of history makes clear that the Trinity was unknown for several centuries after biblical times.

You’ve seen the evidence for yourself. What do you think?

Was the Trinity “unknown” to Justin Martyr? Justin says that “God begat before all creatures a Beginning, who was a certain rational power proceeding from Himself, which was truly brought forth from the Father, was with the Father before all the creatures, and the Father communed with Him.” This squares precisely with the Nicene Creed, which declares God the Son to be “begotten, not made.” Justin explains further that “this power is indivisible and inseparable from the Father,” and that the Son was “begotten from the Father, by His power and will, but not by abscission, as if the essence of the Father were divided,” which means that the Son is begotten from the very same essence which the Father himself possesses – not dividing the Godhead into parts, but rather allowing each divine person a full sharing in the Godhead – which is exactly what the doctrine of the Trinity maintains.

Was the Trinity “unknown” to Irenaeus? Irenaeus’ teaching that “the Father is Lord and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God, since he who is born of God is God, and in this way, according to His being and power and essence, one God is demonstrated: but according to the economy of our salvation, there is both Father and Son,” couldn’t be more Trinitarian. Moreover, Irenaeus distinguishes the Son and the Holy Spirit from created beings when he says, “The Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation....There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom created and arranged all things.” So, according to Irenaeus, the Son and the Spirit are co-eternal with the Father, just like the doctrine of the Trinity says.

Was the Trinity “unknown” to Clement of Alexandria? Clement calls Jesus “the Divine Word, He that is truly most manifest Deity, He that is made equal to the Lord of the universe” as well as “God in the form of man, stainless, the minister of His Father’s will, the Word who is God, who is in the Father, who is at the Father’s right hand, and with the form of God is God.” And Clement is decidedly adamant that “the Son of God, being, by equality of substance, one with the Father, is eternal and uncreated.” Jesus, according to Clement, wasn’t created, but “existed always, without beginning.” Rather than holding Jesus to be an inferior, created being, Clement clearly teaches that Jesus is “co-eternal” and “co-existent with the Father.” Isn’t this exactly what the doctrine of the Trinity teaches?

Was the Trinity “unknown” to Tertullian? On the contrary, Tertullian loudly proclaims, “Bear always in mind that this is the rule of faith which I profess; by it I testify that the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit are inseparable from each other, and that the Father is one, and the Son one, and the Spirit one, and that They are distinct from Each Other.” He continues, “All are of One, by unity of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God.” He finishes, “All the Scriptures attest the clear existence of, and distinction in, the Persons of the Trinity, and indeed furnish us with our Rule of faith,” and, “I must everywhere hold one only substance in three coherent and inseparable Persons.” To reproduce here all that Tertullian says in support of the Trinity would probably take up another page or two. Suffice it to say that in his declaration, “The Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God,” we have a nice, simply-rendered summary of the Trinity doctrine.

Was the Trinity “unknown” to Hippolytus? Hippolytus says, “The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God. Now the world was made from nothing; wherefore it is not God.” So Hippolytus, too, sets the Logos of God, a.k.a. Jesus, apart from all creation and all created beings. He further declares of Jesus that “by nature He is God,” and that Jesus, “who was co-existent with His Father before all time, and before the foundation of the world, always had the glory proper to Godhead.” According to Hippolytus, Jesus “was in essential being with His Father” and “is co-eternal with His Father,” just as the doctrine of the Trinity says. And, with regard to the Trinity as a whole, Hippolytus says, “We cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit,” and, “Whosoever omits any one of these, fails in glorifying God perfectly. For it is through this Trinity that the Father is glorified. For the Father willed, the Son did, the Spirit manifested. The whole Scriptures, then, proclaim this truth.” Clearly, Hippolytus is a Trinitarian.

Was the Trinity “unknown” to Origen? Origen teaches, “God is the Father of His only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him, and derives from Him what He is, but without any beginning, not only such as may be measured by any divisions of time, but even that which the mind alone can contemplate within itself, or behold, so to speak, with the naked powers of the understanding. And therefore we must believe that Wisdom was generated before any beginning that can be either comprehended or expressed.” Likewise, Origen says, “We have been able to find no statement in holy Scripture in which the Holy Spirit could be said to be made or created.” He therefore concludes that “all things which exist were made by God, and that there was nothing which was not made, save the nature of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and that “the Father generates an uncreated Son, and brings forth a Holy Spirit, not as if He had no previous existence, but because the Father is the origin and source of the Son or Holy Spirit, and no anteriority or posteriority can be understood as existing in them.” Accordingly, “the Holy Spirit is reckoned in the Unity of the Trinity along with the unchangeable Father and His Son.” In all of Origen’s teachings we have, once again, the doctrine of the Trinity proclaimed loud and clear.

So...was the Trinity “unknown” to the early Church Fathers, as the Watchtower would have us believe? Answer: **Absolutely**

**NOT!**

The truth is that every one of the Church Fathers cited by the Watchtower was a staunch defender of Trinitarian doctrine!

## THE CHURCH FATHERS’ INTERPRETATIONS

The Church Fathers, from Justin Martyr to Origen, were very knowledgeable about the Scriptures and quoted them frequently in their writings. While I was poring over their works, I noticed a couple of key verses that were being cited by them repeatedly. Before concluding this paper, I thought it would be a good idea to briefly discuss these key verses and why the Fathers’ interpretation of these verses is so important to the issue of the Trinity.

(Note: “KJV” means King James Version; “NWT” means New World Translation)

**Genesis 19:24 (KJV) – Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.**

**Genesis 19:24 (NWT) – Then Jehovah made it rain sulphur and fire from Jehovah, from the heavens, upon Sod’om and upon Go·mor’rah.**

“When Scripture says, ‘The Lord rained fire from the Lord out of heaven,’ the prophetic word indicates that there were two in number: One upon the earth, who, it says, descended to behold the cry of Sodom; Another in heaven, who also is Lord of the Lord on earth, as He is Father and God; the cause of His power and of His being Lord and God.” (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 129)

“Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord. And again, referring to the destruction of the Sodomites, the Scripture says, ‘Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven.’ For it here points out that the Son, who had also been talking with Abraham, had received power to judge the Sodomites for their wickedness.” (Irenaeus, Against Heresies 3:6:1)

“Two are described as God....But I find in Scripture the name Lord also applied to them Both:...‘Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven.’” (Tertullian, Against Praxeus, Chapter 13)

According to the Watchtower, “Jehovah” is the real name of God. Because the name essentially means “He Causes to Become,” the Watchtower insists that “only the true God could bear such a meaningful name.”\* Even Jesus, they say, cannot bear the name “Jehovah” (though Jesus’ name in Hebrew does mean, “Jehovah is Salvation”)\*\*. So, according to the Watchtower, whenever the name “Jehovah” is used in the Bible, it is always used in reference to God the Father and is never used to identify any other person, even Jesus.

However, consider what Justin Martyr says: “When Scripture says, ‘Jehovah rained fire from Jehovah out of heaven,’ the prophetic word indicates that there were two in number.” Tertullian confirms this: “Two are described as Jehovah. I find in Scripture the name Jehovah applied to them both.” So instead of reserving the name “Jehovah” to one person only – God the Father – the early Church Fathers had no reservations whatsoever about bestowing that name upon two persons (at least).

Justin Martyr concurs that one of these two persons to whom the name “Jehovah” is attributed is “Father and God.” But who is the other? “The Son,” says Irenaeus, since it was the Son “who had also been talking with Abraham” in the verses preceding the key verse.

So, according to the early Church Fathers, not only is the Father properly named “Jehovah”, but the Son is properly named “Jehovah” also, so one might actually translate Gen 19:24 as, “Then Jehovah the Son rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah the Father out of heaven.” Two persons. One God. Add in the Holy Spirit as the third person, and you have the doctrine of the Trinity.

**John 1:1 (KJV) – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**John 1:1 (NWT) – In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.**

As you can see, according to the Watchtower, the correct translation of John 1:1 ends with “the Word was a god” rather than “the Word was God”. After all, to say that the Word was both “with God” and “God” is blatantly Trinitarian, as it implies that two persons are both God, co-equal and co-eternal.

But how did the early Church Fathers read and interpret John 1:1? If one were to believe the Watchtower’s claims that none of the cited Church Fathers subscribed to the doctrine of the Trinity, then it would be logical to assume that none of them would have interpreted the last clause of John 1:1 to be “the Word was God,” either. Instead, each of these Church Fathers should have understood the last clause of John 1:1 to mean, “the Word was a god.”

So, what do the Church Fathers really say about John 1:1?

Justin Martyr is silent on the verse.

Irenaeus says nothing conclusive concerning the verse directly, though he does echo the verse’s Trinitarian interpretation with his own words when he says in one place, “The sacred books acknowledge with regard to Christ” that Jesus is “the Word of God, and God,” and in another place, “The Father is God and the Son is God, since he who is born of God is God, and in this way, according to His being and power and essence, one God is demonstrated: but according to the economy of our salvation, there is both Father and Son.”

Clement of Alexandria, however, sheds some light on the proper interpretation of John 1:1 when, speaking of God and the Word of God, he says, “Both are one – that is, God. For He has said, ‘In the beginning the Word was in God, and the Word was God.’ Like Irenaeus, Clement also echoes the Trinitarian interpretation of John 1:1 when he says, “Our Instructor is like His Father God, whose son He is, the Word who is God, who is in the Father, who is at the Father’s right hand, and with the form of God is God.” Moreover, Clement actually refers to Christ in one place as “God the Word.”

Now, if the preceding Church Fathers serve to shed some light on the proper interpretation of John 1:1, Tertullian shines upon the verse a brilliant spotlight of clarity, leaving no room for misunderstanding, for he says, “The Word of God is he ‘through whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made.’ The Word of God, then, is called the Son, who Himself is designated God. ‘The Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Now if He too is God, according to John, who says, ‘The Word was God,’ then you have two Beings – on the ground of Personality, not of Substance – for although the Word was God, yet was He with God, because He is God of God.” Consider indeed how strong Tertullian’s words are here, concerning the proper interpretation of John 1:1: “‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ Now, since these words may not be taken otherwise than as they are written, there is without doubt shown to be One who was from the beginning, and also One with whom He always was: one the Word of God, the other God although the Word is also God .”

Hippolytus, too, is crystal clear on the subject: “The blessed John, in the testimony of his Gospel, gives us an account of this economy (disposition) and acknowledges this Word as God, when he says, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’ If, then, the Word was with God, and was also God, what follows? Would one say that he speaks of two Gods? I shall not indeed speak of two Gods, but of one; of two Persons however, and of a third economy (disposition), viz., the grace of the Holy Ghost. And we cannot otherwise think of one God, but by believing in truth in Father and Son and Holy Spirit.”

Finally, Origen, who himself wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John, taught that “John says in the beginning of his Gospel, when defining God by a special definition to be the Word, ‘And God was the Word, and this was in the beginning with God.’” Speaking of John 1:2 in his commentary, Origen elaborates, “‘He was in the beginning with God.’ By his three foregoing propositions the Evangelist has made us acquainted with three orders, and he now sums up the three in one, saying, ‘This (Logos) was in the beginning with God.’ In the first premise we learned where the Logos was: He was in the beginning; then we learned with whom He was, with God; and then who He was, that He was God. He now points out by this word ‘He,’ the Word who is God, and gathers up into a fourth proposition the three which went before, ‘In the beginning was the Word,’ ‘The Word was with God,’ and ‘The Word was God.’”

Thus, it is clear that none of the Church Fathers, except perhaps Justin Martyr, understood the final clause of John 1:1 to say anything other than, “The Word was God.” (Of course, in Justin Martyr’s case we have his own declaration concerning Christ: “He is God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God.” So it’s fair to believe that Justin Martyr would have interpreted John 1:1 just like his colleagues did.)

## CONCLUSIONS

**Luke 16:10 (KJV) – He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.**

**Luke 16:10 (NWT) – The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much.**

Now that we've explored the testimony of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers concerning the Trinity, what can we conclude?

First, given the overwhelming evidence, we must conclude that the doctrine of the Trinity was not "unknown" for several centuries after biblical times, as the Watchtower would have us believe. We must additionally conclude that, contrary to the Watchtower's implications, the ante-Nicene Church Fathers cited by them – Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Origen – were all Trinitarians, as all of them believed that Jesus is of the same substance as God, thereby making him coequal and co-eternal with the Father.

Given these conclusions, it is now appropriate to ask a critical question: Why would the Watchtower attempt to use the writings of these Church Fathers to support their anti-Trinitarian views? Did they simply not know that these Fathers were Trinitarians – i.e., can the Watchtower claim ignorance for an excuse?

Let's look at some of the quotations selected by the Watchtower and see if the excuse of ignorance holds up.

Justin Martyr...called the prehuman Jesus a created angel who is "other than the God who made all things." He said that Jesus..."never did anything except what the Creator...willed him to do and say." These quotes are taken from Chapter 56 of Justin's Dialogue with Trypho, but, as we have shown above, this chapter is the exact same passage in which Justin Martyr interprets Gen 19:24 to assign the name "Jehovah" to both God the Father and Jesus! Moreover, just a few chapters from this one we see Justin say, "God begat before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself... this Offspring, which was truly brought forth from the Father, was with the Father before all the creatures, and the Father communed with Him; even as the Scripture by Solomon has made clear, that He whom Solomon calls Wisdom, was begotten as a Beginning before all His creatures and as Offspring by God....He [is] God, Son of the only, unbegotten, unutterable God."

Irenaeus...showed that Jesus is not equal to the "One true and only God."

This quote is taken from Section 3:8:1 of Irenaeus' Against Heresies, and the full quote is, "...it is clearly proved that neither the prophets nor the apostles did ever name another God, or call [him] Lord, except the true and only God." But just a couple chapters back Irenaeus says, "Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation...." And, within the very same chapter as that from which the quote was taken, leading into the chapter just following, he says, "He indeed who made all things can alone, together with His Word, properly be termed God and Lord: but the things which have been made cannot have this term applied to them, neither should they justly assume that appellation which belongs to the Creator. This, therefore, having been clearly demonstrated here (and it shall yet be so still more clearly), that neither the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the Lord Christ in His own person, did acknowledge any other Lord or God, but the God and Lord supreme: the prophets and the apostles confessing the Father and the Son; but naming no other as God, and confessing no other as Lord: and the Lord Himself handing down to His disciples, that He, the Father, is the only God and Lord, who alone is God and ruler of all;-it is incumbent on us to follow, if we are their disciples indeed, their testimonies to this effect." Finally, just a few chapters forward from this, we have Irenaeus saying, "...they who were the preachers of the truth and the apostles of liberty termed no one else God, or named him Lord, except the only true God the Father, and His Word, who has the pre-eminence in all things...."

Clement of Alexandria...called Jesus in his prehuman existence "a creature"....

I myself was not able to find any verbatim reference in all of Clement's writings in which he referred to Jesus as a creature. However, I did find that in Book 5, Chapter 14 of his work The Stromata he says, "Wisdom...was the first of the creation of God." But, if the Watchtower were to claim this particular reference as the source of their quotation, we would be obligated to ask them how they could have possibly missed Clement's words in the very same chapter: "And the address in the Timæus calls the creator, Father, speaking thus: 'Ye gods of gods, of whom I am Father; and the Creator of your works.' So that when he says, 'Around the king of all, all things are, and because of Him are all things; and he [or that] is the cause of all good things; and around the second are the things second in order; and around the third, the third,' I understand nothing else than the Holy Trinity to be meant; for the third is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the second, by whom all things were made according to the will of the Father."

Tertullian...observed: "The Father is different from the Son (another), as he is greater; as he who begets is different from him who is begotten; he who sends, different from him who is sent." He also said: "There was a time when the Son was not....Before all things, God was alone."

The first quote is taken from Chapter 9 of Tertullian's Against Praxeus: "Thus the Father is distinct from the Son, being greater than the Son, inasmuch as He who begets is one, and He who is begotten is another; He, too, who sends is one, and He who is sent is another; and He, again, who makes is one, and He through whom the thing is made is another." Ironically, Tertullian's Against Praxeus is one of the first comprehensive apologetic defenses of the Trinity in Christian literature, so it astounds me that the Watchtower would choose to quote from such a source, especially seeing as how in the very second chapter of the work we find Tertullian expounding, "We...believe that there is one only God, but under the following dispensation...that this one only God has also a Son, His Word, who proceeded from Himself, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made.... who sent also from heaven from the Father, according to His own promise, the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Ghost.... All are of One, by unity (that is) of substance; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded, which distributes the Unity into a Trinity, placing in their order the three Persons-the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: three, however, not in condition, but in degree; not in substance, but in form; not in power, but in aspect; yet of one substance, and of one condition, and of one power, inasmuch as He is one God, from whom these degrees and forms and aspects are reckoned, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The second quote is taken from Chapter 3 of Tertullian's Against Hermogenes, in which he says, "I maintain that the substance existed always with its own name, which is God...but He has not always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of His having always been God. For He could not have been the Father previous to the Son, nor a Judge previous to sin. There was, however, a time when neither sin existed with Him, nor the Son; the former of which was to constitute the Lord a Judge, and the latter a Father." A cursory reading of this quote, devoid of context, would appear to provide us with a clear-cut profession on Tertullian's part that there was a time that the second person of the Trinity did not exist. However, if we take this quote within the context of Tertullian's whole body of work, we find that the topic at hand in this particular quote is the names of God, not the existence of the Son. According to Tertullian, it was not until Jesus proceeded forth from God to create the world that Jesus properly took for himself the name "Son," and therefore it was not until the creation of the world that God could be properly termed "Father." In other words, the second person of the Trinity, according to Tertullian, has always existed, only under names other than "Son" (e.g., "Reason," "Word," "Wisdom.") That Tertullian believed in the eternal, uncreated existence of Christ is apparent from the opening chapter of Against Hermogenes, in which he criticizes the heretic Hermogenes: "[Hermogenes] does not appear to acknowledge any other Christ as Lord, though he holds Him in a different way; but by this difference in his faith he really makes Him another being – nay, he takes from Him everything which is God, since he will not have it that He made all things of nothing. For, turning away from Christians to the philosophers, from the Church to the Academy and the Porch, he learned there from the Stoics how to place Matter (on the same level) with the Lord, just as if it too had existed ever both unborn and unmade, having no beginning at all nor end, out of which, according to him, the Lord afterwards created all things." Here Tertullian holds that Jesus is "ever both unborn and unmade, having no beginning at all nor end."

The last quote from Tertullian selected by the Watchtower is perhaps the most damning against any excuse they might offer that their errors concerning the position of the Church Fathers on the Trinity are based in ignorance. For the source of this quote we return to Tertullian's Against Praxeus, Chapter 5 this time: "For before all things God was alone – being in Himself and for Himself universe, and space, and all things. Moreover, He was alone, because there was nothing external to Him but Himself. Yet even not then was He alone; for He had with Him that which He possessed in Himself, that is to say, His own Reason. For God is rational, and Reason was first in Him; and so all things were from Himself. This Reason is His own Thought (or Consciousness) which the Greeks call by a term which term we also designate Word...I may therefore without rashness first lay this down (as a fixed principle) that even then before the creation of the universe God was not alone, since He had within Himself...His Word, which He made second to Himself by agitating it within Himself." Now, given that the Watchtower use quotes from both Chapters 5 and 8 of Against Praxeus to attempt to support their anti-Trinitarian views, I would think it reasonable to presume that their researchers must have read Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8 in their entirety. How in the world, then, did these researchers miss these very Trinitarian propositions put forward by Tertullian a mere two sentences away from the words they judiciously selected to support their anti-Trinitarian views?

Hippolytus...said that God is "the one God, the first and the only One, the Maker and Lord of all," who "had nothing co-eval [of equal age] with him....But he was One, alone by himself; who, willing it, called into being what had no being before," such as the created prehuman Jesus.

Both quotes come from Chapter 28 of Hippolytus' Refutation of All Heresies: "The first and only (one God), both Creator and Lord of all, had nothing coeval with Himself; not infinite chaos, nor measureless water, nor solid earth, nor dense air, not warm fire, nor refined spirit, nor the azure canopy of the stupendous firmament. But He was One, alone in Himself. By an exercise of His will He created things that are, which antecedently had no existence, except that He willed to make them." Just one chapter following, however, we find Hippolytus adding, "Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought forth the Logos first; not the word in the sense of being articulated by voice, but as a ratiocination of the universe, conceived and residing in the divine mind. Him alone He produced from existing things; for the Father Himself constituted existence, and the being born from Him was the

cause of all things that are produced...The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God. Now the world was made from nothing; wherefore it is not God; as also because this world admits of dissolution whenever the Creator so wishes it.”

Origen...said that...“compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light.”

Again I could find no verbatim quotation for this particular reference. This may owe to the fact that Origen was an incredibly prolific writer, so I was only able to get access to a selection of his works. However, I did find a sort of parallel to the above quote in Book 1, Chapter 2, Section 7 of Origen’s De Principiis, which reads, “According to John, ‘God is light.’ The only-begotten Son, therefore, is the glory of this light, proceeding inseparably from (God) Himself, as brightness does from light, and illuminating the whole of creation. For, agreeably to what we have already explained as to the manner in which He is the Way, and conducts to the Father; and in which He is the Word, interpreting the secrets of wisdom, and the mysteries of knowledge, making them known to the rational creation; and is also the Truth, and the Life, and the Resurrection – in the same way ought we to understand also the meaning of His being the brightness: for it is by its splendour that we understand and feel what light itself is. And this splendour, presenting itself gently and softly to the frail and weak eyes of mortals, and gradually training, as it were, and accustoming them to bear the brightness of the light, when it has put away from them every hindrance and obstruction to vision, according to the Lord’s own precept, ‘Cast forth the beam out of thine eye,’ renders them capable of enduring the splendour of the light, being made in this respect also a sort of mediator between men and the light.” I suppose that one might look at this analogy and interpret it to mean that “compared with the Father, the Son is a very small light.” However, if one were to look a mere four sections ahead, one would also find Origen having some rather Trinitarian things to say about this “smaller light,” such as, “...wisdom is called the splendour of eternal light....That is properly termed everlasting or eternal which neither had a beginning of existence, nor can ever cease to be what it is. And this is the idea conveyed by John when he says that ‘God is light.’ Now His wisdom is the splendour of that light, not only in respect of its being light, but also of being everlasting light, so that His wisdom is eternal and everlasting splendour. If this be fully understood, it clearly shows that the existence of the Son is derived from the Father but not in time, nor from any other beginning, except, as we have said, from God Himself.”

So, what must we conclude from all this? We see that for almost every quotation judiciously selected by the Watchtower from the ante-Nicene Church Fathers, there is a wealth of material often within the same book, sometimes within the same chapter, and in some cases even within the same paragraph, which contradicts the Watchtower’s assertion that the doctrine of the Trinity was “unknown” to these Church Fathers.

What are we supposed to think? That the Watchtower’s researchers took Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho and read Chapter 56 but not Chapter 61? That they perused Chapter 28 of Hippolytus’ Refutation of All Heresies but skipped Chapter 29? That they read a mere five sentences into Chapter 5 of Tertullian’s Against Praxeus and stopped reading there, a mere two sentences before their anti-Trinitarian views could be refuted by Tertullian’s further teaching, miraculously choosing instead to skip to Chapter 8 and pull another quote out of context?

It is, unfortunately, impossible to ascribe either ignorance or carelessness to the Watchtower’s research – unfortunate, I say, because the only option left for us to believe is that the Watchtower has selected these quotes from the ante-Nicene Church Fathers and placed them on their web site in support of their anti-Trinitarian stance for the sole purpose of deliberately misleading visitors to their web site into thinking that the early Christians had no knowledge of the doctrine of the Trinity, when in fact the ante-Nicene Church Fathers were Trinitarian through and through.

You’ve seen the evidence. Now judge for yourself. Is the Watchtower being honest concerning the views of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers? And, if not, what else are they being dishonest about?

Remember, Jesus taught, “The person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much.” If we can’t trust the Watchtower to be honest in their presentation of the views of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers, can we trust them with matters of larger importance – for example, the translation of the Scriptures? We’ve already seen how, in the case of John 1:1, the Watchtower’s translating abilities have been called into question by none other than the very same ante-Nicene Church Fathers whose teachings the Watchtower deceptively attempted to claim for their own anti-Trinitarian cause! Now, if the Watchtower can be trusted with neither the writings of the early Church Fathers nor the translation of the Scriptures, is there any reason to trust them with the interpretation of the Scriptures, or with determining the rules for Christian living, or, most importantly, with the salvation of our very souls?

If you are a Jehovah’s Witness, I beg you to take this paper to your elders and ask them to explain the basis of the Watchtower’s misleading statements concerning the views of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers. Take it all the way to the governing body themselves if you have to. But please, please do not dismiss the evidence you have just seen. The Watchtower’s web site contains deliberate misinformation, and, if you are a person of good conscience, then you cannot allow this deliberate misinformation on the

Watchtower's part to continue. The ante-Nicene Church Fathers were not anti-Trinitarians, and the Watchtower web site should not attempt to mislead people into believing that they were.

## APPENDIX 1: EVIDENCES OF THE CROSS

### Part A: Textual Evidence

As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I stumbled across the Watchtower's misleading claims concerning the ante-Nicene Church Fathers because I was "hopping around the Watchtower's official web site looking for articles supporting their rejection of the cross as a Christian symbol – Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus was put to death on an upright torture stake, not a t-shaped cross." The reason I was looking for such articles was that, during my ongoing study of the writings of the Church Fathers, I had discovered several references to the cross that appeared to me to be far too early to support the Watchtower's claim that the cross is a pagan symbol which entered into Christianity only after much time had passed since the death of the apostles.

Actually, the matter of whether Jesus died on a t-shaped cross or an upright torture stake is utterly irrelevant to fundamental Christian doctrine. However, the Watchtower uses the argument of the torture stake over the cross to create feelings of uncertainty in people about mainstream Christianity. After all, if mainstream Christianity is wrong about the origin of their most cherished symbol, what else could they be wrong about? Although the "stake vs. cross" argument is shabby at best, it remains one of the Watchtower's primary points of attack on the Christian faith, and for this reason I have decided to include as an appendix the earliest evidences for the Christian cross which I have found in the Bible and in the literature of the ante-Nicene Church Fathers.

The Gospel According to John (New Testament):

John 20:25 (NWT) – "Consequently the other disciples would say to him: 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them: 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and stick my finger into the print of the nails and stick my hand into his side, I will certainly not believe.'" [Emphasis added]

Epistle of Barnabas (100 C.E.):

"...the cross was to express the grace [of our redemption] by the letter T..."

"Here again you have an intimation concerning the cross, and Him who should be crucified....in Moses, when Israel was attacked by strangers....the Spirit speaks to the heart of Moses, that he should make a figure of the cross, and of Him about to suffer thereon....Moses therefore placed one weapon above another in the midst of the hill, and standing upon it, so as to be higher than all the people, he stretched forth his hands...."

Justin Martyr (died 165 C.E.):

"[The cross], as the prophet foretold, is the greatest symbol of His power and role; as is also proved by the things which fall under our observation. For consider all the things in the world, whether without this form they could be administered or have any community. For the sea is not traversed except that trophy which is called a sail abide safe in the ship; and the earth is not ploughed without it: diggers and mechanics do not their work, except with tools which have this shape. And the human form differs from that of the irrational animals in nothing else than in its being erect and having the hands extended, and having on the face extending from the forehead what is called the nose, through which there is respiration for the living creature; and this shows no other form than that of the cross. And so it was said by the prophet, 'The breath before our face is the Lord Christ.' And the power of this form is shown by your own symbols on what are called 'vexilla' [banners] and trophies, with which all your state possessions are made, using these as the insignia of your power and government, even though you do so unwittingly. And with this form you consecrate the images of your emperors when they die, and you name them gods by inscriptions."

"...that lamb which was commanded to be wholly roasted was a symbol of the suffering of the cross which Christ would undergo. For the lamb, which is roasted, is roasted and dressed up in the form of the cross. For one spit is transfixed right through from the lower parts up to the head, and one across the back, to which are attached the legs of the lamb."

"Moses himself prayed to God, stretching out both hands.... if he gave up any part of this sign, which was an imitation of the cross, the people were beaten, as is recorded in the writings of Moses; but if he remained in this form, Amalek was proportionally defeated, and he who prevailed prevailed by the cross. For it was not because Moses so prayed that the people were stronger, but because, while one who bore the name of Jesus (Joshua) was in the forefront of the battle, he himself made the sign of the cross."



“And God by Moses shows in another way the force of the mystery of the cross, when He said in the blessing wherewith Joseph was blessed, ‘...Let him be glorified among his brethren; his beauty is [like] the firstling of a bullock; his horns the horns of an unicorn: with these shall he push the nations from one end of the earth to another.’ Now, no one could say or prove that the horns of an unicorn represent any other fact or figure than the type which portrays the cross. For the one beam is placed upright, from which the highest extremity is raised up into a horn, when the other beam is fitted on to it, and the ends appear on both sides as horns joined on to the one horn. And the part which is fixed in the centre, on which are suspended those who are crucified, also stands out like a horn; and it also looks like a horn conjoined and fixed with the other horns.”

Irenaeus of Lyons (died 200 C.E.):

“The very form of the cross, too, has five extremities, two in length, two in breadth, and one in the middle, on which [last] the person rests who is fixed by the nails.”

“And since He is the Word of God Almighty, who invisibly pervades the whole creation, and encompasses its length, breadth, height, and depth – for by the Word of God everything is administered – so too was the Son of God crucified in these fourfold dimensions...that He might demonstrate, by His visible form on the cross, His activity which is on the invisible level, for it is He who illumines the ‘heights’, that is, the things in heaven, and holds the ‘deeps’, which is beneath the earth, and stretches the ‘length’ from the East to the West, and who navigates the ‘breadth’ of the northern and southern regions, inviting the dispersed from all sides to the knowledge of the Father.”

“And again, concerning His cross, Isaiah says, ‘I stretched out my hands all the day to a disbelieving and contrary people,’ for this is a sign of the cross.”

Octavius of Minucius Felix (210 C.E.):

“Crosses, moreover, we neither worship nor wish for. You, indeed, who consecrate gods of wood, adore wooden crosses perhaps as parts of your gods. For your very standards, as well as your banners; and flags of your camp, what else are they but crosses glided and adorned? Your victorious trophies not only imitate the appearance of a simple cross, but also that of a man affixed to it. We assuredly see the sign of a cross, naturally, in the ship when it is carried along with swelling sails, when it glides forward with expanded oars; and when the military yoke is lifted up, it is the sign of a cross; and when a man adores God with a pure mind, with hands outstretched. Thus the sign of the cross either is sustained by a natural reason, or your own religion is formed with respect to it.” (Octavius, Chapter 29)

Tertullian (died 230 C.E.):

...it might be no slight solace to us in all our punishments, suffering as we do because of these same gods, that in their making they suffer as we do themselves. You put Christians on crosses and stakes: what image is not formed from the clay in the first instance, set on cross and stake? The body of your god is first consecrated on the gibbet.” (Apology, Chapter 12)

“Every stake fixed in an upright position is a portion of the cross; we render our adoration, if you will have it so, to a god entire and complete. We have shown before that your deities are derived from shapes modelled from the cross. But you also worship victories, for in your trophies the cross is the heart of the trophy. The camp religion of the Romans is all through a worship of the standards, a setting the standards above all gods. Well, as those images decking out the standards are ornaments of crosses. All those hangings of your standards and banners are robes of crosses. I praise your zeal: you would not consecrate crosses unclothed and unadorned.” (Apology, Chapter 16)

“Every piece of timber which is fixed in the ground in an erect position is a part of a cross, and indeed the greater portion of its mass. But an entire cross is attributed to us, with its transverse beam, of course, and its projecting seat. Now you have the less to excuse you, for you dedicate to religion only a mutilated imperfect piece of wood, while others consecrate to the sacred purpose a complete structure. The truth, however, after all is, that your religion is all cross, as I shall show. You are indeed unaware that your gods in their origin have proceeded from this hated cross. Now, every image, whether carved out of wood or stone, or molten in metal, or produced out of any other richer material, must needs have had plastic hands engaged in its formation. Well, then, this modeller, before he did anything else, hit upon the form of a wooden cross, because even our own body assumes as its natural position the latent and concealed outline of a cross. Since the head rises upwards, and the back takes a straight direction, and the shoulders project laterally, if you simply place a man with his arms and hands outstretched, you will make the general outline of a cross. Starting, then, from this rudimental form and prop, as it were, he applies a covering of clay, and so gradually completes the limbs, and forms the body, and covers the cross within with the shape which he meant to impress upon the clay; then from this design, with the help of compasses and leaden moulds, he has got all ready for his image which is to be brought out into marble, or clay, or whatever the material be of which he has determined to make his god. (This, then, is the process:) after the cross-shaped frame, the clay; after the clay, the god. In a well-understood routine, the cross passes into a god through the clayey medium. The cross then you consecrate, and from it the consecrated (deity) begins to derive his origin....Since, then, in the production of your gods, you worship the cross which originates them, here will be the original kernel and grain, from which are propagated the wooden materials of your idolatrous images. Examples are not far to seek. Your victories you celebrate with religious ceremony as deities; and they are the

more august in proportion to the joy they bring you. The frames on which you hang up your trophies must be crosses: these are, as it were, the very core of your pageants. Thus, in your victories, the religion of your camp makes even crosses objects of worship; your standards it adores, your standards are the sanction of its oaths; your standards it prefers before Jupiter himself, but all that parade of images, and that display of pure gold, are (as so many) necklaces of the crosses. in like manner also, in the banners and ensigns, which your soldiers guard with no less sacred care, you have the streamers (and) vestments of your crosses. You are ashamed, I suppose, to worship unadorned and simple crosses.” (Ad Nationes, Book 1, Chapter 12)

“Joseph, again, himself was made a figure of Christ....For Joseph is withal blest by his father after this form: ‘His glory (is that) of a bull; his horns, the horns of an unicorn; on them shall he toss nations alike unto the very extremity of the earth.’ Of course no one-horned rhinoceros was there pointed to, nor any two-horned minotaur. But Christ was therein signified: ‘bull,’ by reason of each of His two characters – to some fierce, as Judge; to others gentle, as Saviour; whose ‘horns’ were to be the extremities of the cross. For even in a ship's yard – which is part of a cross – this is the name by which the extremities are called; while the central pole of the mast is a ‘unicorn.’” (An Answer to the Jews, Chapter 10; repeated in Against Marcion, Book 3, Chapter 18)

“But, to come now to Moses, why, I wonder, did he merely at the time when Joshua was battling against Amalek, pray sitting with hands expanded, when, in circumstances so critical, he ought rather, surely, to have commended his prayer by knees bended, and hands beating his breast, and a face prostrate on the ground; except it was that there, where the name of the Lord Jesus was the theme of speech – destined as He was to enter the lists one day singly against the devil – the figure of the cross was also necessary, (that figure) through which Jesus was to win the victory?” (An Answer to the Jews, Chapter 10; repeated in Against Marcion, Book 3, Chapter 18)

“Premising, therefore, and likewise subjoining the fact that Christ suffered, He foretold that His just ones should suffer equally with Him – both the apostles and all the faithful in succession; and He signed them with that very seal of which Ezekiel spake: ‘The Lord said unto me, Go through the gate, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set the mark tau upon the foreheads of the men.’ Now the Greek letter tau and our own letter T is the very form of the cross, which He predicted would be the sign on our foreheads in the true Catholic Jerusalem, in which, according to the twenty-first Psalm, the brethren of Christ or children of God would ascribe glory to God the Father....” (Against Marcion, Book 3, Chapter 22)

## Part B: Archaeological Evidence

The archaeological evidence in favor of the early Christians’ usage of the cross is even stronger than the textual evidence.

From [www.geocities.com/faithinevidence/evidence.html](http://www.geocities.com/faithinevidence/evidence.html):

“Many ossuaries were discovered that date to the 1st century in a cave near Bethany. Inscribed in Greek and Hebrew with names of many Christians listed in the New testament (NT). Some had inscribed crosses, some not. Listed names in Hebrew include: Salome, wife of Judah (with a cross); Judah (with a cross); Simeon the Priest; Martha, daughter of Pasach; Eleazar, son of Nathalu; and Salamston, daughter of Simeon the Priest. In Greek: Jesus (twice repeated with a cross); Nathaniel (with a cross)....Another found several years ago: Inscribed with ‘Alexander, son of Simon of Cyrene,’ as well as a cross....In 1945, many more found with crosses, 2 inscribed with name of Jesus, and one had a coin minted in A.D. 41 for King Herod Agrippa I, indicating it was sealed by A.D. 42.”

From <http://www.leaderu.com/theology/burialcave.html>:

“The first century catacomb uncovered by archaeologist P. Bagatti on the Mount of Olives contains inscriptions clearly indicating its use, ‘by the very first Christians in Jerusalem.’ A ‘head stone’, found near the entrance to the first century catacomb, is inscribed with the sign of the cross.”

From <http://www.bible.ca/D-crucifyJesus.htm>:

“Historical findings have substantiated the traditional cross. One finding is a graffito dating to shortly after 200 A.D., taken from the walls of the Roman Palatine. It is a drawing of a crucified ass; a mockery of a Christian prisoner who worships Christ. The Romans were no doubt amused that Christians worshiped this Jesus whom they had crucified on a cross.” In 1873 a famous French scholar, Charles Clermont-Ganneau, reported the discovery of a burial chamber or cave on the Mount of Olives. Inside were some 30 ossuaries (rectangular chests made of stone) in which skeletal remains were preserved after their bodies had disintegrated....One (ossuary) had the name ‘Judah’ associated with a cross with arms of equal length. Further, the name ‘Jesus’ occurred three times, twice in association with a cross....In 1939 excavations at Herculaneum, the sister city of Pompeii (destroyed in 78 A.D. by volcano) produced a house where a wooden cross had been nailed to the wall of a room. According to Buried History, (Vol. 10, No. 1, March 1974 p. 15): ‘Below this (cross) was a cupboard with a step in front. This has considered to be in the shape of an ara or shrine, but could well

have been used as a place of prayer....If this interpretation is correct, and the excavators are strongly in favor of the Christian significance of symbol and furnishings, then here we have the example of an early house church.”

### **Part C: What does the Watchtower say?**

“Jesus did not die on a cross. He died on a pole, or a stake. The Greek word translated ‘cross’ in many Bibles meant just one piece of timber. The symbol of the cross comes from ancient false religions. The cross was not used or worshiped by the early Christians.” The Watchtower is correct in a couple of things.

First, the word *stauros* does generally mean “stake” rather than “cross”, but, according to every source I’ve come across, there was no Greek word for “cross”. Hence, the word for “stake” was used by Greek speakers as the closest approximation to “cross”, and it was understood by the first-century audience of the NT that “cross” was what was meant by *stauros*. (And, of course, anybody in the first century with access to either a living apostle or a witness to Jesus’ execution could have received clarification if they needed it.)

Second, it is true that the cross was not “worshipped” by the early Christians, but that’s because the cross has never been worshipped by any Christians at any time, even today. God alone is an appropriate object of Christian worship.

As for whether the early Christians used the cross, we have seen both archaeological and textual evidence that they did indeed. Interestingly, the archaeological evidence had been known both before the Watchtower’s ban on the cross in 1931 (with the 1873 discovery of cross-inscribed ossuaries in Bethany) and after the ban (with the 1939 discovery of a first-century Christian home church in Pompeii with a wooden cross hanging on the wall, and with the 1945 discovery of more cross-inscribed ossuaries definitively dated to 42 C.E. – a mere twelve years after Jesus’ crucifixion).

As for the textual evidence, the Apostle Thomas’ words in John 20:25 provide an indication of the cross, as he says in that verse, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and stick my finger into the print of the nails and stick my hand into his side, I will certainly not believe.” (In the depictions of Jesus’ death I’ve seen on the Watchtower web site, only one nail is used to fasten both of Jesus’ wrists to the stake, but Thomas indicates the use of more than one nail, which would be more reasonably expected if Jesus were nailed to a cross rather than a stake.) The Epistle of Barnabas, dated 100 C.E., demonstrates belief that the cross was the instrument of Jesus’ execution only a few years after the death of the Apostle John. And moving forward into the second and third centuries of Christianity, still more textual evidence supporting the cross can be found in the works of Justin Martyr – “For the lamb...is roasted and dressed up in the form of the cross. For one spit is transfixed right through from the lower parts up to the head, and one across the back, to which are attached the legs of the lamb” – Irenaeus of Lyons – “The very form of the cross...has five extremities, two in length, two in breadth, and one in the middle, on which [last] the person rests who is fixed by the nails” – and Tertullian – “Now the Greek letter tau and our own letter T is the very form of the cross.” (Ironically, all three of these ante-Nicene Church Fathers belong to that same group improperly cited by the Watchtower to support their anti-Trinitarian views!)

So, the notion that the symbol of the cross was not a part of Christianity until the fourth century (which is what the average Jehovah’s Witness believes) is easily disproved by textual and archaeological evidence that is not only readily available to us today but has also been available to Watchtower scholars and officials for over 100 years.

Given this, what rational basis does the Watchtower give its adherents for their rejection of the cross as a Christian symbol? It would be understandable if the Watchtower were to say, “Yes, Jesus died on a cross – the textual and archaeological evidence affirm this – but because Christendom has become so corrupt that the cross has lost its meaning, we’re going to discontinue the use of the cross in our worship and imagery.” That would be a plausible explanation. However, that’s not what the Watchtower professes to believe on its web site (and according to the home page <http://www.jw.org/>, “This is the authoritative web site about the beliefs, teachings, and activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses”). It professes instead:

- 1) Jesus did not die on a cross. He died on a pole, or a stake.
- 2) The cross was not used by the early Christians.

As we have seen, neither of these statements is true according to all the textual and archaeological evidence.

For the Watchtower to, in spite of all the readily-available textual and archaeological evidence, deny – and, moreover, force their adherents to deny – that (1) Jesus died on a cross and that (2) the early Christians used the cross as a symbol of Christianity is, frankly, both dishonest and wrong.

## APPENDIX 2: SUGGESTED READING

<http://www.ccel.org/> – Christian Classics Ethereal Library: contains a wealth of online resources, including an online copy of all 38 volumes of the Early Church Fathers, including works from the Ante-Nicene, Nicene, and Post-Nicene eras. All quotes from the Fathers which I pulled into this document came from CCEL.

[The Forgotten Trinity](#) by Dr. James White – An excellent, concise book which both explains and defends the doctrine of the Trinity.

[A Brief Description of the Trinity](#) – A short excerpt from [The Forgotten Trinity](#) which gives the basics of Trinitarian doctrine.

[Historical Dishonesty and the Watchtower Society](#) – One thing that caught my eye about the Watchtower's article is that it didn't attempt to reference any Church Fathers prior to Justin Martyr, although the writings of several – e.g., Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp, Mathetes, "Barnabas," Hermas, and Papias – are still extant. Apparently, the reason for this is that the Watchtower had tried appropriating the earlier Fathers for themselves once before and had been soundly trounced for it. This article tells the particular story of the Watchtower's mishandling of the works of Ignatius, a first century bishop of Antioch.

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