



The Early Church Fathers on Jesus

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When the Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) come to your door, if you get into a conversation with them on who Jesus is, you can expect them to leave a tract with you titled, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*^[1] At first look the tract seems well researched. It is when one begins to look more closely at it that it becomes obvious that the Watchtower is misleading its own followers and readers of the tract. In some places, the misleading appears intentional. In others, it is unclear whether deception is involved or scholarship is lacking. While this is not the place to critique the tract fully, since the topic of what the early Church Fathers said about Jesus has been raised, this is an appropriate time to answer what the tract states about their beliefs.

Ignatius and Polycarp

Two of the earliest Church Fathers, Polycarp and Ignatius taught the deity of Christ. The early Church father, Irenaeus (circa AD 120-190) wrote that Polycarp was "*instructed*" and "*appointed*" by the apostles, "*conversed with many who had seen Christ,*" "*having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles,*"^[2] "*the accounts which he gave of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord. And as he remembered their words, and what he heard from them concerning the Lord, and concerning his miracles and his teaching, having received them from eyewitnesses of the 'Word of life.'*"^[3] So his view of Jesus is very important. In *The Letter of Polycarp to the Philippians*, he mentions "*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*" and "*our Lord and God Jesus Christ.*"^[4]

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the eternal High Priest himself, the Son of God Jesus Christ, build you up in faith and truth and in all gentleness and in all freedom from anger and forbearance and steadfastness and patient endurance and purity, and may he give to you a share and a place among his saints, and to us with you, and to all those under heaven who will yet believe in our Lord and God Jesus Christ and in his Father who raised him from the dead.

Thus, Polycarp agrees with the teachings of the apostles that Jesus is God.^[5]

Ignatius was the Bishop of Antioch at the same time Polycarp was the Bishop of Smyrna. He wrote seven letters to the Churches while en route to his execution in Rome around the year AD 110. In Ignatius' *Letter to the Ephesians* 18:2 he states:

For our God, Jesus the Christ, was conceived by Mary according to God's plan...

In 19:3 he states:

Consequently all magic and every kind of spell were dissolved, the ignorance so characteristic of wickedness vanished, and the ancient kingdom was abolished, when God appeared in human form to bring the newness of eternal life...

In 7:2 he states:

There is only one physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord.

And in 1:1:

Being as you are imitators of God, once you took on new life through the blood of God you completed perfectly the task so natural to you.

In his letter to the Smyrnaeans 1:1 over whom Polycarp was Bishop he states:

I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise...

Thus, Ignatius and Polycarp both referred to Jesus as God.

The later Church Fathers also commented on who Jesus is. In the Watchtower tract we are considering, six major Church Fathers are cited in support of the view that the deity of Jesus was a heretical doctrine not taught until several centuries after Jesus. We have already seen that this is false, having considered Polycarp and Ignatius. Let's look at these other Church Fathers individually, viewing what the Watchtower claims they say, then looking at what the particular Church Father really said about Jesus.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr was a major defender of the Christian faith during the second century. The Watchtower tract says, "*Justin Martyr ... 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.'^[6] The Watchtower failed to provide any references documenting where Justin or any of the Church Fathers made the statements they attribute to them. However, today's technology has made it somewhat easy for us, since the entire works of the early Church Fathers are available on CD and search capabilities are present.^[7] The Watchtower has loosely translated what the Fathers said and it is sometimes difficult to find the particular quotes they cite. A search of the terms "created" and "angel" reveal that Justin nowhere referred to Jesus as a "created angel." Neither does he write anywhere that Jesus is "*other than the God who made all things.*" The closest reference is found in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, where he says, "*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.*"^[8] What did Justin mean by saying that Jesus is "*numerically distinct*" from the Father? This will become clearer as we see what else Justin wrote.

Did Justin claim that "*Jesus was inferior to God and 'never did anything except what the Creator ... willed him to do and say'*" as the tract claims? This reference is likewise from *Dialogue with Trypho*:

Then I replied, "Reverting to the Scriptures, I shall endeavor to persuade you, that 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."^[9]

It is striking to note that this statement by Justin falls within the 21 chapters in his *Dialogue* where he is setting out to prove that Jesus is God!^[10] Notice that Justin did not say that Jesus was inferior to God. Here he writes that the God who appeared to the patriarchs and prophets is distinct numerically from the Creator who is also God. But who was it whom Justin believed "*appeared to Abraham, and to Jacob, and to Moses, and who is called God...?*":

And that Christ being Lord, and God the Son of God, and appearing formerly in power as Man, and Angel, and in the glory of fire as at the bush, so also was manifested at the judgment executed on Sodom, has been demonstrated fully by what has been said.^[11]

[T]he Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God. And of old He appeared in the shape of fire and in the likeness of an angel to Moses and to the other prophets; but now in the times of your reign, having, as we before said, become Man by a virgin... ^[12]

Justin says that the person who appeared in the burning bush to Moses, to the prophets and patriarchs, and who is called "God" is the Son. Therefore, it is striking to note that the very passage that the Watchtower cites in order to support their claim that "*Justin said that Jesus was inferior to God*" comes immediately after Justin says that Jesus is God and is within his 21 chapters where he sets out to prove that Jesus is God!^[13] Notice what else Justin says concerning Jesus:

For if you had understood what has been written by the prophets, you would not have denied that He was God, Son of the only, unbegotten,

unutterable God.[14]

What about the numerical distinctness between God the Father and Jesus? It is clear that Justin believed that Jesus is God. Yet he viewed Jesus as distinct from God the Father in his person, but never distinguished Jesus and God in terms of their essence. Such fits in with the Christian view of the Trinity and not with the belief that Jesus was a created angel as the JW's believe.

Irenaeus

Next we go to Irenaeus who wrote around the year AD 185. The Watchtower tract says, "*Irenaeus ... 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.'*"[15] Now let's look at what Irenaeus really said about Jesus.

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.... 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.[16]

In the same writings, Irenaeus states:

... this God, the Creator, who formed the world, is the only God, and that there is no other God besides Him.[17]

Carefully, then, has the Holy Ghost pointed out, by what has been said, His birth from a virgin, and His essence, that He is God (for the name Emmanuel indicates this). And He shows that He is a man ... we should not understand that He is a mere man only, nor, on the other hand, from the name Emmanuel, should suspect Him to be God without flesh.[18]

It seems that Irenaeus, as with Justin, viewed Jesus as God, saw the Father and the Son as distinct persons, and yet as one God.

Clement of Alexandria

On to Clement of Alexandria who wrote around the year AD 200. The tract claims that Clement "*called Jesus in his prehuman existence 'a creature'*[19] *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.*"[20] Now let's look at what Clement wrote.

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 Savior, 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... [21]

Clement says that the Savior "*is truly most manifest Deity*" and that he is "*made equal to the Lord of the universe, because He was His Son.*" Therefore, it seems that Clement not only regarded Jesus as God but that he is equal to God, contrary to the tract's claim that Clement wrote that he was "*not equal to him.*"

Tertullian

Tertullian wrote around AD 200. The Watchtower cites Tertullian: "*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.'*"[22] Let us look at this first citation in its context.

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 so will you know in what sense this is said. Now, observe, my assertion is that the Father is one, and the Son one, and the Spirit one, and that They are distinct from Each Other. This statement is taken in a wrong sense by every uneducated as well as every perversely disposed person, as if it predicated a diversity, in such a sense as to imply a separation among the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit. I am, moreover, obliged to say this, when (extolling the Monarchy at the expense of the Economy[23]) they contend for the identity of the Father and Son and Spirit,

that it is not by way of diversity that the Son differs from the Father, but by distribution: it is not by division that He is different, but by distinction; because the Father is not the same as the Son, since they differ one from the other in the mode of their being. For the Father is the entire substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole, as He Himself acknowledges: "My Father is greater than I." In the Psalm His inferiority is described as being "a little lower than the angels." 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 [emphasis mine to note what the Watchtower cites]; and He, again, who makes is one, and He through whom the thing is made is another. Happily the Lord Himself employs this expression of the person of the Paraclete, so as to signify not a division or severance, but a disposition (of mutual relations in the Godhead); for He says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall send you another Comforter ... even the Spirit of truth," thus making the Paraclete distinct from Himself, even as we say that the Son is also distinct from the Father; so that He showed a third degree in the Paraclete, as we believe the second degree is in the Son, by reason of the order observed in the Economy. Besides, does not the very fact that they have the distinct names of Father and Son amount to a declaration that they are distinct in personality?";[24]

Notice what Tertullian says. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are "inseparable from each other." On the other hand, each are one and they are "distinct from each other" "in personality." In other words, they are different persons, but inseparable. The Father is the entire substance and the Son is a "portion of the whole." He adds that his statement is taken in a wrong sense by "uneducated" and perverse people, as if there is a "separation among the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit." [25] What is amazing is that Tertullian says this just four sentences before his statement which the Watchtower quotes in their attempt to claim that Tertullian believed that Jesus is separate from God [and] that he is not God! It becomes painfully obvious that the Watchtower with the heretics of Tertullian's time are the subjects of his rebuke. Tertullian adds that the Father is greater than the Son, yet there is not a "division or severance ... but mutual relations in

the Godhead." For Tertullian, the Father being greater than the Son is one of position, not of essence.

The second reference of Tertullian cited by the Watchtower comes from *Against Hermogenes*:

[Hermogenes] adds also another point: that as God was always God, there was never a time when God was not also Lord. But it was in no way possible for Him to be regarded as always Lord, in the same manner as He had been always God, if there had not been always, in the previous eternity, a something of which He could be regarded as evermore the Lord. So he concludes that God always had Matter co-existent with Himself as the Lord thereof. Now, this tissue of his I shall at once hasten to pull abroad. I have been willing to set it out in form to this length, for the information of those who are unacquainted with the subject, that they may know that his other arguments likewise need only be understood to be refuted. We affirm, then, that the name of God always existed with Himself and in Himself – but not eternally so the Lord. Because the condition of the one is not the same as that of the other. God is the designation of the substance itself, that is, of the Divinity; but Lord is (the name) not of substance, but of power. I maintain that the substance existed always with its own name, which is God; the title Lord was afterwards added, as the indication indeed of something accruing. For from the moment when those things began to exist, over which the power of a Lord was to act, God, by the accession of that power, both became Lord and received the name thereof. Because God is in like manner a Father, and He is also a Judge; 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 [emphasis mine to note what the Watchtower cites]; the former of which was to constitute the Lord a Judge, and the latter a Father. In this way He was not Lord previous to those things of which He was to be the Lord. But He was only to become Lord at some future time: just as He became the Father by the Son, and a Judge by sin, so also did He become Lord by means of those things which He had made, in order that they might serve Him.[26]

Notice that Tertullian does not also say in connection with "a time when the Son was not" that "Before all things, God was alone," as the Watchtower tract claims. That latter statement is found in *Against Praxeas*,[27] where Tertullian stated such to say that "matter" does not co-eternally exist with God as the heretic, Praxeas, held. But what about the statement that there was a time when the Son did not exist? Tertullian says that while God always was, He only became "Lord" when He created something to Lord over. You cannot be a "Judge" unless there is something you are judging. You cannot be a "Father" unless you have a "Son." Therefore, prior to the Son, He was not "Father." [28] For Tertullian, the essence of what we call Jesus and the Son of God always existed. However, there was a time when the "Economy" differed.

Let's look at what else Tertullian wrote concerning Jesus in terms of his being God:

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." [29]

Much more is (this true of) the Word of God, who has actually received as His own peculiar designation the name of Son. But still the tree is not severed from the root, nor the river from the fountain, nor the ray from the sun; nor, indeed, is the Word separated from God. Following, therefore, the form of these analogies, I confess that I call God and His Word – the Father and His Son – two. For the root and the tree are distinctly two things, but correlatively joined; the fountain and the river are also two forms, but indivisible; so likewise the sun and the ray are two forms, but coherent ones. Everything which proceeds from something else must needs be second to that from which it proceeds, without being on that account separated: Where, however, there is a second, there must be two; and where there is a third, there must be three. Now the Spirit indeed is third from God and the Son; just as the fruit of the tree is third from the root, or as the stream out of the river is third from the fountain, or as the apex of the ray is third from the sun. Nothing, however, is alien from that original source whence

it derives its own properties. In like manner the Trinity, flowing down from the Father through intertwined and connected steps, does not at all disturb the Monarchy, whilst it at the same time guards the state of the Economy.[30]

In the case of this heresy, which supposes itself to possess the pure truth, in thinking that one cannot believe in One Only God in any other way than by saying that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are the very selfsame Person.[31]

As if in this way also one were not All, in that 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.[32]

For Tertullian, Jesus was "never separate from the Father, or other than the Father" and part of the "Trinity." [33]

Hippolytus

We next visit Hippolytus, who was the spiritual son of Irenaeus and died in the early part of the third century. The Watchtower tract claims that he "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." [34] Here is the citation from Hippolytus:

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, nor 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.[35]

Notice that the comment, "*such as the created prehuman Jesus*" does not appear in the quote but is an added commentary by the Watchtower. What did Hippolytus mean when he wrote that God "*was One, alone in Himself?*" In the very next chapter he writes the following:

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 [i.e., the process of exact thinking] 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 ... The Logos alone of this God is from God himself; wherefore also the Logos is God, being the substance of God.[36]

Hippolytus would seem to agree with Tertullian that there was a time when the "Economy" or the mode of God's existence as three persons was different. However, Jesus was in God, was from God, is God, and is the substance of God. Elsewhere, Hippolytus writes:

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.[37]

For all, the righteous and the unrighteous alike, shall be brought before God the Word.[38]

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.... He now, coming forth into the world, was manifested as God in a body [italics mine], 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.[39]

Hippolytus' view of Jesus was that he is "God," "*being the substance of God,*" "*was in essential being with His Father,*" was "God the Word," and "*was manifested as God in a body.*"

Origen

We finally come to Origen who wrote around AD 200. The Watchtower tract claims that Origen "*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.'*"[40] Now let's see what Origen said.

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... How, then, can it be asserted that there once was a time when He was not the Son? For that is nothing else than to say that there was once a time when He was not the Truth, nor the Wisdom, nor the Life, although in all these He is judged to be the perfect essence of God the Father; for these things cannot be severed from Him, or even be separated from His essence.[41]

Origen did not say that the "*Father and Son are two substances ... two things as to their essence,*" as the Watchtower tract claims, but precisely the opposite; "*He is judged to be the perfect essence of God the Father...*" What about their statement that Origen wrote that "*compared with the Father, [the Son] is a very small light?*" That passage is

found in *Contra Celsus*:

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 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.[42]

Origen is speaking in reference to the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. He says that someone who sees the brilliance of these would not worship a spark which is small by comparison. Likewise, one who understands that "God is light" and that Jesus is "the light of the world" does not worship the sun, moon, and stars which are sparks in comparison. The Watchtower has completely misread Origen.

For we who say that the visible world is under the government to Him who created all things, do thereby declare that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but inferior to Him. And this belief we ground on the saying of Jesus Himself, "The Father who sent Me is greater than I." And none of us is so insane as to affirm that the Son of man is Lord over God. But when we regard the Savior as God the Word, and Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Truth, we certainly do say that He has dominion over all things which have been subjected to Him in this capacity, but not that His dominion extends over the God and Father who is Ruler over all.[43]

Origen writes here that the Savior is God, but inferior to the Father. Since he does not seem to embrace polytheism saying above that Jesus is inseparable from the Father and "the perfect essence of God the Father," Origen must mean

that Jesus, while God, is positionally inferior to the Father. Commenting on Proverbs 8, he writes:

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.[44]

For Origen, although Jesus derived His existence from God, He had no beginning. Commenting elsewhere on this matter, he states that to claim that the Son of God had a beginning to His existence implies that there was a time when God was not a Father.

John, however, with more sublimity and propriety, 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 [as the Watchtower does], 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.[45]

But it is monstrous and unlawful to compare God the Father, in the generation of His only-begotten Son, and in the substance of the same, to any man or other living thing engaged in such an act; for 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.[46]

But how is the Son of God generated or born, yet

without a beginning? This is a difficult question which Origen seemed to struggle with.

... 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... [47]

Nevertheless, Origen held that Jesus fully possessed deity and was as omnipotent as the Father:

... 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 fullness of His deity.[48]

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 Savior 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.[49]

Origen never made any of the claims attributed to him by the Watchtower who has misrepresented him.[50] Rather he recognized Jesus as deity, as one possessing two natures; deity and human.[51]

Conclusions

We have looked at the writings of the six major early Church fathers cited by the Watchtower. We found that none of them regarded Jesus as a created angel, inferior to God in His essence, contrary to Watchtower claims. Rather, all six embrace a very high view of Jesus.

1. Justin: "[He] who is called God," "God the Son of God," "is even God."
2. Irenaeus: "the Spirit designates both [Father and Son] by the name, of God," "His essence, that He is God."

3. Clement of Alexandria: "truly most manifest Deity," "made equal to the Lord of the universe."

4. Tertullian: "never separate from the Father, or other than the Father," of the same "substance" as the Father, "Trinity."

5. Hippolytus: "is God, being the substance of God," "God the Word," "in essential being with His Father."

6. Origen: not beyond the "substance" of the Father, "the great God," "we regard the Savior as God," "without any beginning," "fullness of His deity.";

Thus, all six of the Church fathers cited by the Watchtower in support of their conclusion that Jesus was a "created angel who is 'other than the God who made all things,'" has a "separate existence from God" and is "inferior to him" in essence, "not equal" to the Father in essence, "created prehuman Jesus," hold precisely just the opposite view. They held that Jesus was inferior to the Father in His position within the Godhead, but that He was God in His very essence and nature. Therefore, there is a continuity of belief in the deity of Christ which began with the New Testament writers and extended to the Apostolic Fathers who knew and succeeded the Apostles, as well as their subsequent successors who became the early Church Fathers.

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References:

- [1]. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* New York: Watchtower Bible And Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1989.
- [2]. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:3:4. In this passage, Irenaeus also claims to have spoken with Polycarp when he (ie. Irenaeus) was young. The first Church historian, Eusebius, quotes Irenaeus on Polycarp as someone he believed was a reliable source (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4:14). [For an online version of the writings of the Early Church Fathers, see the Christian Classic Ethereal Library.]
- [3]. This latter citation is from Irenaeus in a work no longer extant called *The Letter to Florinus*,

cited by the first Church historian, Eusebius, who regarded Irenaeus as a reliable source (*Ecclesiastical History*, 4:14).

[4]. Polycarp, *Philippians* 12:2.

[5]. For the teachings of the New Testament writers on the deity of Christ, see chapter 9 in the book by this author, *Behold, I Stand At The Door And Knock*. This book is currently self-published and available on the RisenJesus web site under the "Books and Tapes" tab.

[6]. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, p.7.

[7]. The most economical source is found in The Master Christian Library by AGES Software, Inc. and may be purchased for about \$60. See your local bookstore or call 1-800-297-4307 or visit www.ageslibrary.com. Another source is offered by the Logos Library System, *Early Church Fathers Protestant Edition* and is about \$230. See your local bookstore or call 1-360-679-6575 or visit www.logos.com. This author has both, finds only a negligible benefit of the Logos software over AGES, and actually finds the AGES software easier to work with. [As mentioned earlier, an online version of the writings of the Early Church Fathers can be found at the Christian Classic Ethereal Library.]

[8]. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 129.

[9]. *Ibid.*, Chapter 56.

[10]. *Ibid.*, Chapter 55-75.

[11]. *Ibid.*, Chapter 128.

[12]. Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Chapter 63.

[13]. It is also interesting to note that in the final of those 21 chapters (ch. 75), Justin says that the name of God is "Jesus."

[14]. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chapter 126.

[15]. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, p.7.

[16]. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 3, Chapter 6, Section 1.

[17]. *Ibid.*, Book 2, Chapter 16, Section 3.

[18]. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, Book 3, Chapter 21, Section 4.

[19]. Clement of Alexandria, *Who is the Rich Man that Shall be Saved?*, Section 12.

[20]. The author could not find this quote.

[21]. Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, Chapter 10.

[22]. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, p.7.

[23]. Economy: "The arrangement or mode of operation of something; ORGANIZATION" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1981, p. 357).

Tertullian here uses "Economy" in the sense of the arrangement or mode of the operation of God or how God is comprised. In other words, he says, "While I am clarifying what I mean by the 'sole government of God' (Tertullian's definition of "Monarchy" found in *Against Praxeas*, Chapter 3) and for the moment ignoring the mode of God's existence as three inseparable persons [which he clearly spells out at the end of this citation and the chapters that follow] ..."

[24]. Tertullian, Part Second, Section 7, *Against Praxeas*, Chapter 9.

[25]. One section earlier he makes a similar warning: "Because many persons are uneducated; still more are of faltering faith, and several are weak-minded: these will have to be instructed, directed, strengthened, inasmuch as the very oneness of the Godhead will be defended along with the maintenance of our doctrine" (Part Second, Section 6, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Chapter 2).

[26]. Tertullian, Part Second, Section 3, *Against Hermogenes*, Chapter 3.

[27]. Tertullian, Part Second, Section 7, *Against Praxeas*, Chapter 5.

[28]. Tertullian seems to differ from Origen on this point. See the citation below from *De Principiis*, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 24.

[29]. *Ibid.*, Chapter 8.

[30]. *Ibid.*

[31]. This is equivalent to saying, "I am a father to my children, a son to my parents, and a husband to my wife; one person with three roles." This is not the Christian view of God, Who is one God in three persons, each inseparable from the others and all of the same substance.

[32]. Tertullian, Part Second, Section 7, *Against Praxeas*, Chapter 2.

[33]. As Hippolytus was the spiritual son of Irenaeus, Cyprian was the spiritual son of Tertullian. He was not mentioned by the Watchtower tract. But his writings likewise strongly support the deity of Christ. See *The Twelve Treatises of Cyprian*, Treatise 12, Second Book, Testimonies, Section 6.

[34]. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, p.7.

[35]. Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Book 10, Chapter 28.

[36]. Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, Book 10, Chapter 29.

[37]. Hippolytus, *Exegetical Fragments from Commentaries*, On Luke, Chapter 23.

[38]. Hippolytus, *Against Plato*, Section 3.

[39]. Hippolytus, *Against the Heresy of one Noetus*, Section 17.

[40]. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, p.7.

[41]. Origen, *De Principiis*, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 28.

[42]. Origen, *Contra Celsus*, Book 5, Chapter 11.

[43]. *Ibid.*, Book 8, Chapter 15. Origen, *De Principiis*, Book 1, Chapter 2, Section 2.

[44]. *Ibid.*, Section 2.

[45]. *Ibid.*, Section 3.

[46]. *Ibid.*, Section 4.

[47]. *Ibid.*, Section 6. It is also interesting to note here that Origen's interpretation of Philippians 2:6 likewise differs from the Watchtower's (see p.25 of the tract). Origen held that Jesus emptied Himself of His glory, not His essence. Also notice on p.25 of the tract that the Watchtower, as it does with its comments on John 1:1 (see p.27), fails to note that the overwhelming majority of English translations render the verse in questions with a different meaning than the Watchtower does. For an in-depth critique of the Watchtower's reasons for translating the final clause in John 1:1 as "the Word was a god," please see by this author, *Behold, I Stand At The Door And Knock*.

[48]. *Ibid.*, Section 8.

[49]. *Ibid.*, Section 10.

[50]. Although our study is limited to the early Church Fathers on Jesus, it is noteworthy that Origen refers to the "divinity of the Holy Spirit" in *De Principiis*, Book 4, Chapter 1 "Continued From The Latin," Section 27.

[51]. See *Contra Celsus*, Book 2, Chapter 9.

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