

Did the Trinity Come from Paganism?

Unitarians and modalists often directly affirm that Trinitarianism is derived from paganism. They commonly quote various publications as well to support such affirmations. For example, the Watchtower society, representative of modern Bible-affirming Arianism, states, “‘New Testament research has been leading an increasing number of scholars to the conclusion that Jesus certainly never believed himself to be God.’—*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*.”¹ In fact, as “Yale University professor E. Washburn Hopkins affirmed: ‘To Jesus and Paul the doctrine of the trinity was apparently unknown; . . . they say nothing about it.’—*Origin and Evolution of Religion*.”² Why? “*The Encyclopedia of Religion* admits: ‘Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity.’ . . . *The Encyclopedia of Religion* says: ‘Theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.’”³ If, as Arians affirm, Trinitarianism does not come from the Bible, where does it come from? The Watchtower references the book “*The Paganism in Our Christianity* [which] declares: ‘The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan.’”⁴ In fact, these Unitarians affirm in “the book *A Statement of Reasons*, Andrews Norton says of the Trinity: ‘We can trace the history of this doctrine, and discover its source, not in the Christian revelation, but in the Platonic philosophy . . . The Trinity is not a doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, but a fiction of the school of the later Platonists.’”⁵ Similarly, the modalist leader David Bernard writes, “[T]he idea of a trinity did not originate with Christendom. It was a significant feature of pagan religions and philosophies before the Christian era, and its existence today in various forms suggests an ancient, pagan origin. . . . The Scriptures do not teach the doctrine of the trinity, but trinitarianism has its roots in paganism.”⁶ However, the allegation that Trinitarian

¹ *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 19, 20.

² *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* pg. 6.

³ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* pg. 6, in the section, “Is It Clearly a Bible Teaching?”

⁴ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* in the section, “How Did The Trinity Doctrine Develop?” pg.

11. The Watchtower makes the same quotation on pg. 3, since the organization likes it so much.

⁵ Pg. 11-12, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

⁶ See *The Oneness of God*, David K. Bernard. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame Press, Chapter 11, sections “Pagan roots and parallels” and “Post-apostolic developments.”

doctrine comes from paganism, rather than from Scripture, is entirely false. This notion has several severe problems.

First, since the word “Trinity” is not found in pre-Christian pagan writings, this objection to the Trinity contradicts another common anti-Trinitarian retort, namely, that Trinitarianism is unbiblical because the word “Trinity” is not in the Bible. If the fact that the word is not present means that the idea is not present, then the fact that the word “Trinity” is not in pre-Christian pagan authors means the idea is not found in paganism. The two objections are contradictory. Anti-Trinitarians should make up their minds to stick to the one or the other, but not employ them both. However, despite their contradictory nature, Unitarians and modalists generally do advance both allegations. For example, the Unitarian and modalist compositions quoted in the previous paragraph both employ the “the word ‘Trinity’ is not in the Bible” attack.⁷ Anti-Trinitarian compositions often do not worry about the logical consistency of their allegations, but simply employ whatever attacks sound good at the time, even if they are contradictory.

Second, the affirmation that Trinitarianism came from paganism is not sustainable historically. As demonstrated in *The Triune God of the Bible*,⁸ Trinitarianism is taught from Genesis to Revelation. The idea that, centuries after the inspiration of the New Testament, paganism somehow crept in and brought forth the idea of the Trinity is impossible in light of the clear Biblical evidence for Trinitarianism and the testimony of post-Biblical Christianity from even the earliest period.

Furthermore, the writers quoted in anti-Trinitarian literature to support their affirmations of the non-Biblical, pagan origin of the Trinity are usually extremely suspect. While, since “of making many books *there is no end*” (Ecclesiastes 12:12), it is not possible to trace and evaluate every single quotation in every anti-Trinitarian composition, an evaluation of some of the sources employed in the Watchtower’s *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* quoted above will be evaluated as representative of much of the distortion and misinformation advanced in the anti-Trinitarian cause.

⁷ ““The word ‘Trinity’ is not found in the Bible” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pg. 6), “The Bible does not mention the word *trinity*, nor does it mention the word *persons* in reference to God.” *The Oneness of God*, Bernard, Chapter 12, sec. “Nonbiblical Terminology.”). Note, though, that the word “person” IS explicitly used of the Father as contrast with the Son, Heb 1:3! So this is a quibble about the “s” on “person(s)”!

⁸ see <http://faithalonesaves.googlepages.com/salvation>.

The Arian Watchtower Society, as referenced above, states, ““New Testament research has been leading an increasing number of scholars to the conclusion that Jesus certainly never believed himself to be God.” —Bulletin of the John Rylands Library.” The quote is prominently displayed in the exact middle of the page, set off in bold print within a special box.⁹ No author of the article, page number, or other information is provided. The quotation was deemed important enough to be made twice in this Arian publication, once in a special box on the side of a page highlighting its importance. One can with difficulty discover the very poorly referenced source of the quotation.¹⁰ Upon acquiring the periodical, one notices that the Watchtower left out, without any indication of the removal, the underlined words in the quotation: “New Testament research over, say, the last thirty or forty years has been leading an increasing number of reputable New Testament scholars to the conclusion that Jesus himself may not have claimed any of the Christological titles which the Gospels ascribe to him, not even the functional designation ‘Christ,’ and certainly never believed himself to be God.” The author of the article, G. H. Boobyer, is a radical Bible-rejector who denies that the Lord Jesus ever claimed to be the Christ, and thus rejected the idea of Scripture that He was God as well. While Boobyer will deny that Jesus is the Christ and that He is God, he will in his article reference the conclusion of another writer with approval that early “Christians might, in certain senses, have been willing to recognize the deity of the emperor.” Why such egregious misrepresentation of Boobyer’s claim—leaving out his claim that Jesus never said He was the Christ to quote only his rejection of the Scriptural testimony to His Deity? Is this the kind of “scholarship” that the Arians in the Watchtower society will employ—people who will say that Christians were willing to recognize the deity of the emperor, but will say that Jesus never said He was the Christ, and thus not God? And why will they rip the

⁹ Pgs. 19, 20. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* The second time, when not in a big, prominently displayed box, the quote reads, “The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be. This is being recognized by an increasing number of scholars. As the Rylands Bulletin states: ‘The fact has to be faced that New Testament research over, say, the last thirty or forty years has been leading an increasing number of reputable New Testament scholars to the conclusion that Jesus . . . certainly never believed himself to be God.’” Here, while the extremely misleading omission that this same article said Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah or Christ is retained, at least elipses were included. It should be mentioned that someone who did not acquire the actual article would have no way of knowing that the two quotations are of the same sentence, since the first one is even more significantly corrupted and altered than the second quotation, and neither quote gives any information that makes it at all easy to determine the actual source of the quotation.

¹⁰ It is found in the article “‘Jesus As “Theos” In The New Testament,’ by G. H. Boobyer, *Bulletin of The John Rylands Library*, Vol. 50, (1967-68) pgs. 247-261.

actual quotation of Boobyer into pieces, and leave out the parts that radically change his meaning?

The Watchtower also attempts to support its anti-Trinitarianism by affirming that “Yale University professor E. Washburn Hopkins affirmed: ‘To Jesus and Paul¹¹ the doctrine of the trinity was apparently unknown; . . . they say nothing about it.’—*Origin and Evolution of Religion*. . . . [Therefore] the Christian Greek Scriptures provide . . . [no] teaching of the Trinity.”¹² Again, no publisher, page number, or other information is provided for the quotation. With considerable effort, one can discover the location of the quotation.¹³ One begins to see why such incredibly poor citation of the source is made when one discovers that Hopkins, in the very sentence before the one reproduced by the Watchtower Society, states that “The beginning of the doctrine of the trinity appears already in John,” thus demonstrating that Hopkins recognized that Trinitarianism was found in the New Testament, and on the same page affirmed that “The early Church taught that Christ was the Logos and that the Logos was God,” while two pages after the quotation made by the Watchtower Hopkins affirms that “[T]he plain faith of the early church members . . . was just this and nothing more. Jesus is God. So proclaimed the first hymns, sung by the early Church.”¹⁴ Hopkins thus believed that early Christianity agreed with the New Testament in teaching the Deity of Jesus Christ. Of course, since these are exactly the opposite of the conclusion drawn by the Watchtower from its quotation from Hopkins’ book, it is clear why there was no great desire by this Arian organization for someone to look up the quotation and see what was on the very same page, and in the immediate context of the sentence from Hopkins so grossly taken out of context by the Watchtower.

¹¹ While Hopkins also said on the same page that the Watchtower took their quotation from that Paul did not specifically use the word *God* for Christ (an affirmation for which he provided no evidence, and which he is wrong about, Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13, etc.) and in his rejection of the inspiration of the Bible Hopkins claimed Paul confused Christ and the Holy Spirit, he nevertheless also stated that “Paul . . . applies to . . . Christ . . . words of the Old Testament used of God: ‘I am God and . . . unto me every knee shall bow’ (Is. 45:22, 23; Phil. 2:10),” an affirmation that modern Arians would generally be extremely uncomfortable with and one that is only consistent with a recognition of the absolute and full Deity of Christ.

¹² Pg. 6, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

¹³ Pg. 336, *Origin and Evolution of Religion*, E. Washburn Hopkins. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1924.

¹⁴ Pg. 338, *ibid.*

In any case, Hopkins' book is not filled with Scriptural exegesis refuting the many passages in the gospels and Pauline epistles that teach Trinitarianism—nothing remotely like this is found anywhere in his book. Rather, Hopkins, because of his anti-Bible evolutionary philosophy, believed that the New Testament writings of the apostle John evolved a Trinitarianism that was not known to the Lord Jesus (who was not, Hopkins believed, the Son of God) or Paul (whose writings, Hopkins affirmed, were not inspired). Hopkins believed that “[e]very religion is a product of human evolution and has been conditioned by a social environment. Since man has developed from a state even lower than savagery and was once intellectually a mere animal, it is reasonable to attribute to him in that state no more religious consciousness than is possessed by an animal. What then, the historian must ask, are the factors and what the means whereby humanity has encased itself in this shell of religion, which almost everywhere has been raised as a protective growth about the social body? . . . [T]he principles of religion [are like the principles of human evolution]. . . . [Man] once had a brain like that of a fish, then like that of a reptile, and so on through the types of bird and marsupial, upward to the brain of the higher mammals. . . . Man then was not suddenly created.”¹⁵ From Hopkins' belief that all religion, including Christianity, is a mere product of evolution, like man himself, he describes what he believes is a progression from “the worship of stones, hills, trees, and plants” to “the worship of animals” to “the worship of elements and heavenly phenomena” to “the worship of the sun,” to the worship of man, of ancestors, and eventually the alleged evolutionary development of Christianity. From this evolutionary, atheistic viewpoint, Hopkins wrote:

Christianity . . . utilized . . . much pagan material . . . [such as] baptism . . . the hope of immortality and resurrection, miraculous cures [and] water turned into wine[.] . . . The religions of the divine Mother and of Mithra had already taught the doctrine of a redeeming god . . . man through the death and resurrection of the god became . . . a partaker also in the divine nature . . . the pagan gods were still remembered under a new form . . . [whether of] demons . . . [or] angels . . . to whom man still prayed. . . . It makes no difference whether union be felt with Brahma or God, with Vishnu Krishna or with Jesus Christ . . . the realization of union, not the special object of faith, [is] what matters. . . . God is one with Vishnu . . . Christ and Buddha and Krishna represent the same idea . . . [When someone is] bowing down before Buddha . . . let us not cry out, “Ah, the wretched

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Pgs. 1, 352, 353, *ibid.*

idolator!”

Hopkins’ presupposition that religion evolved and that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God led him to conclude that the “evolved” idea of the Trinity must have not been believed by this “Jesus” who was not God’s Son, that Paul only gradually evolved it, and that the apostle John and early Christianity then saw it evolve. Unless one accepts Hopkins’ evolutionary philosophy, the quotation made by the Watchtower from his book is worthless, as Hopkins assumes without any evidence or argument that the Lord Jesus saw Himself as simply a man, rather than as than God incarnate, equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The fact that even a radical religious skeptic and Christ-rejector like Hopkins admitted, in extremely close proximity to the sentence wrenched from its context by the Watchtower, that the New Testament teaches Trinitarianism and the earliest Christianity knew Jesus was God, illuminates the extremely deceitful manipulation of sources by the Arians in the Watchtower society.

The Watchtower also, as quoted above, wrote: “*The Encyclopedia of Religion* admits: ‘Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity.’ . . . *The Encyclopedia of Religion* says: ‘Theologians agree that the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.’” The very vague references, without author, page number, volume number, publisher, or any other source information besides the title, can with diligence be traced to the many-volumed *Encyclopedia of Religion*, and found within the article on the Trinity in that set. There the article in the *Encyclopedia* does indeed declare, “Theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity . . . the New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity.” However, the article goes on to say “the exclusively masculine imagery [that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] of trinitarian doctrine [is a problem]. The fatherhood of God should be rethought in light of the critique of feminist theologies and also in view of the nonpatriarchal understanding of divine paternity . . . the Christian doctrine of God must be developed also within the wider purview of other world religions . . . [it] cannot be christomonistic, excluding persons of other faiths from salvation.” The reason the author of this article in the encyclopedia, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, denies that the Trinity is a Biblical doctrine is the same reason she thinks the “fatherhood of God should be rethought” and asserts that

non-Christians are going to heaven—she is an radically liberal, anti-Bible “feminist theologian” who believes that much of the doctrine of the “Trinity is metaphysical speculation that must be rejected because it has given rise to ‘sexist and patriarchal’ outcomes [Her] approach [has] almost no reference to the biblical text and [manifests a] disdain for church history, [while it also] does not allow for the notion of truth or revelation outside of personal subjective experience.”¹⁶ “LaCugna argues that early Christian history and dogma took an improper approach by defining God’s inner life, the self-relatedness of the Father, Son and Spirit . . . she believes that valid criticisms have been made by liberation and feminist theologians about the Christian doctrine of God as sexist and oppressive . . . [she argues for a doctrine of God that will] allow oppressed persons (women and the poor) to be able to restructure the human community . . . [she believes that] the doctrine of monotheism . . . must be discarded . . . [while the inspiration of the Bible is also rejected, to affirm that] God can only reveal to people what they experience.”¹⁷ The Arians in the Watchtower society wish to convey the idea that rational scholarship, as evidenced in a weighty Encyclopedia, knows that the Trinity is not a Biblical doctrine—one who discovers that the quotations made are actually the raving of a far-left radical feminist who rejects Scripture, monotheism, and the Fatherhood of God, but believes that people can become deified, are not very likely to be impressed. The reason the Watchtower makes the reference hard to look up becomes clear.

To prove that Trinitarianism developed from Platonic philosophy, the Watchtower does not quote Plato, but rather mentions that in “the book *A Statement of Reasons*, Andrews Norton says of the Trinity: ‘We can trace the history of this doctrine, and discover its source, not in the Christian revelation, but in the Platonic philosophy . . . The Trinity is not a doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, but a fiction of the school of the later

¹⁶ “The Revamping Of The Trinity And Women’s Roles In The Church” in “Egalitarians Revamp Doctrine of the Trinity,” Stephen D. Kovach, *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 2:1 (Dec 1996). Compare Lacugna’s book, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), in which she argues that “feminist and liberationist perspectives are valuable for living life triunely. Salvation must lead to deification [people becoming gods] . . . For promoting a relational metaphysics, some may [also] think her a pantheist” (Roderick T. Leupp, book review of *God for Us: The Trinity & Christian Life*, by Catherine Mowry LaCugna. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 39:2 (June 1996) p. 317).

¹⁷ “A Defense Of The Doctrine Of The Eternal Subordination Of The Son,” Stephen D. Kovach & Peter R. Schemm, Jr., *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42:3 (September 1999), pgs. 473-476.

Platonists.’”¹⁸ No further information is offered for the quotations, such as the publisher the pages in the book, or even more than a fragment of the title—not to mention the qualification of the author to comment on the subject. One can, through labor intensive research that the great majority of people who read *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* will not undertake, as the Arians who introduced the quotation are aware, discover the source of the quotation in a rare book written over 150 years ago.¹⁹ The powerful bias against the Trinity manifested by the fact that its author, Andrews Norton, was a Unitarian, and his book was published by a Unitarian association, is conveniently omitted, as is the great majority of the title of his book; a work by an unknown Andrews Norton entitled *A Statement of Reasons* is going to be much less obviously biased than a work entitled *A Statement of Reasons for not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians concerning the Nature of God and the Person of Christ* published by a prominent member of an association of Arian Trinity-haters. But did Norton faithfully believe that the Bible was the Word of God, and did he write against the Trinity because it contradicted his unwavering faith in the infallible Scriptures? Elsewhere in his *Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*, he wrote:

Our Lord [Jesus Christ] . . . speaks of descending from heaven, conform[ing] his language to the conception of the Jews, that heaven was the peculiar abode of God. But we cannot receive this conception as true . . . there is no rational foundation for the opinion[.] . . . [T]he conceptions of the Apostle [Paul] respecting our Lord’s future coming were erroneous . . . There is so little reason to suppose that the Second Epistle ascribed to St. Peter was written by him, that it is not to be quoted as evidence of his opinions. . . . I do not refer to the Apocalypse as the work of St. John, for I do not believe it to be so. . . . [The Apocalypse contains a large degree of] imperfection [in] its language[.] . . . [T]he Apostles . . . all appear to have expected [Christ’s] personal and visible return to earth . . . to exercise judgment, to reward his faithful followers, to punish the disobedient, and to destroy his foes . . . [t]hese expectations were erroneous . . . they . . . adopted the errors of their age[.] . . . The Jews [believed that there were] . . . many supposed predictions and types of their Messiah [in their] . . . sacred books[.] . . . This mode of interpretation was adopted by some of the Apostles . . . this mistake was not corrected by Christ . . . this whole system of interpretation . . . so far as the supposed prophecies were applied to [Christ, was] erroneous. . . . [I]n [Christ’s] discourses . . . he speaks, according to the belief of the Jews, of Satan as

¹⁸ Pg. 11-12, *Should You Believe In the Trinity?*

¹⁹ The words are found on pgs. 94, 104 of *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing The Doctrines of Trinitarians, Concerning The Nature of God and the Person of Christ*, by Andrews Norton. (Boston, MA: American Unitarian Association, 1886; 14th ed.). The first edition was published in 1856.

if he were a real being . . . [but he is an] imagination [and a symbol for the] abstract idea of moral evil.²⁰

Norton's rejection of Scripture for rationalism led him to reject the Trinity as "a doctrine which among intelligent men has fallen into neglect and disbelief. . . . [R]eligion must become the study of philosophers, as the highest philosophy. . . . The proper modern doctrine of the Trinity . . . is to be rejected, because . . . it is incredible. . . . The doctrine of the Trinity, then, and that of the union of two natures in Christ, are doctrines which, when fairly understood, it is impossible, from the nature of the human mind, should be believed. . . . [T]hey are intrinsically incapable of any proof whatever . . . they are of such a character, that it is impossible to bring arguments in their support, and unnecessary to adduce arguments against them. Here, then, we might rest."²¹ Andrews Norton's fallen, sinful, mortal mind did not understand the revelation God had made of Himself as Triune. It did not meet his criteria of acceptable philosophy, and he thought it was impossible to believe, no matter what God said about it in the Bible. Norton did not reject the Trinity because he thought it was against the plain teaching of the Scripture and an import from paganism that was contrary to the infallible Word of God—he rejected the Trinity because he could not understand it perfectly and he idolatrously placed his mind above the all-knowing Lord.

The Watchtower quotation also conveniently left out devastating admissions the book itself states in between the two sections ten pages apart that are strung together to create the quote in *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*. Norton himself admitted that the idea "Plato . . . anticipated [the Trinity is an] error, for which there is no foundation. Nothing resembling the doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in the writings of Plato himself."²² Not only is there not a single quote from Plato in Norton's chapter which is to prove that "we can trace the history of [the Trinity], and discover its source, not in the Christian revelation, but in the Platonic philosophy," there is not a single quotation from a later pagan philosopher of the Platonic school. No pre-Christian writers are cited. Plato is not cited. Pagan Platonic philosophers are not cited. Why? Norton does not "adduce the facts on which [his assertion that the Trinity comes from Platonic philosophy

²⁰ Pgs. 388, 389, 397, 401, 402, 407, 409, 413, 418, 420, 421, Norton, *ibid.*

²¹ Pgs. 5, 37, 40, 61-62, Norton, *ibid.*

²² Pgs. 95-96, Norton, *ibid.*

is] founded, because the facts could not be satisfactorily stated and explained in a small compass.”²³ Norton tells his readers that, in the course of a chapter that is to prove that the Trinity came from Platonism, within a book written to oppose the Trinity, a book of 499 pages, not including forty-nine additional pages of numbered introductory material—and thus a massive volume of over 548 pages—he does not have any room to give even one quotation from Plato or a pagan Platonist to prove that the Trinity comes from Platonic paganism! The more modern Arians in the Watchtower Society will not, in their work *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, quote Plato or a pagan Platonist to show that the Trinity comes from paganism—they will quote an earlier Arian, Andrews Norton. Andrews Norton will not quote Plato or a later pagan Platonist to show that the Trinity comes from pagan Platonism—he has no room for that in his 548 page book. If Norton will not quote Plato or Platonists to prove that the Trinity came from Platonism, how will he attempt to do it? In between the pages the Watchtower quotes, Norton cites various “learned Trinitarians . . . [who] in admitting the influence of the Platonic doctrine upon the faith of the early Christians, of course do not regard the Platonic as the original source of the Orthodox doctrine, but many of them represent it as having occasioned errors and heresies, and in particular the Arian heresy.”²⁴ Norton quotes Trinitarians who say that Platonic philosophy influenced early Christianity to prove that the Trinity came from Platonism—but he admits that these same authors declare that the Platonic influence did not produce the doctrine of the Trinity, but was the source of many errors, principally the Arian doctrine. Thus, the support Norton gives for his affirmation that the Trinity is false because it comes from paganism comes from historians who affirm that Arianism is what actually comes from paganism! It should be clear why the Watchtower wishes to keep Norton’s character as a Unitarian obscured, and to make their quotation from him very hard to trace. Andrews Norton gives no evidence at all from Plato or Platonic philosophers for his contention. Norton admits that Plato did not teach the Trinity. Norton admits that the Trinitarian historians who he quotes to prove his point actually affirm the opposite of his position, that is, that Platonic philosophy was the source of the Unitarian heresy, not of the Trinity. Someone who read Norton’s chapter and believed it

²³ See pg. 100.

²⁴ See pg. 100.

was convincing would have to either have an extreme pre-formed bias against the Trinity or be amazingly gullible. But the Watchtower will leave out all these facts—culled from the pages between the first and second half of their own quotation—and thus reproduce a quotation that is not only entirely inaccurate but clearly intentionally misleading.

When the Unitarians in the Watchtower society wish to prove that the Trinity comes from paganism in general, they quote, more often than any other single reference book²⁵ in their *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* the work “*The Paganism in Our Christianity* [which] declares: ‘The origin of the [Trinity] is entirely pagan.’”²⁶ While the lack of context makes the quotation extremely difficult to trace,²⁷ one can with great diligence discover that it comes from pg. 197 of the book in question, written by one Arthur Wiegall²⁸ (New York, NY: Knickerbocker Press, 1928). An extensive quotation of Wiegall will demonstrate to all just how credible—or rather, incredible—he is:

[T]he miraculous . . . made [Christ] God incarnate to the thinkers of the First Century; all these marvels make Him a conventional myth to those of the Twentieth. Many of the most erudite critics are convinced that no such person [as Jesus Christ] ever lived. . . . [The] twelve disciples [were invented from] the twelve signs of the Zodiac. . . . [The gospels are] meagre and garbled accounts . . . borrowed from paganism . . . many of the details of the life of our Lord are too widely improbable to be accepted in these sober days. . . . [M]any gods and semi-divine heroes have mothers whose names are variations of “Mary” . . . the name of our Lord’s mother may have been forgotten and a stock name substituted. . . . The mythological origin of [the record of Jesus’ birth] is so obvious that the whole story must be abandoned. . . . [When] St. Luke says that when the child was born Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger . . . [the] author was here drawing upon Greek mythology. . . . The story of the Virgin Birth . . . is derived from pagan sources. . . . The story of the forty days in the

²⁵ See pgs. 3, 6, 11, *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*

²⁶ *Should You Believe In the Trinity?* in the section, “How Did The Trinity Doctrine Develop?” pg.

11. Weigall is also quoted with approval elsewhere in this Watchtower work (pgs. 3, 6).

²⁷ The publisher of the book is not cited. The page number the quote is from is not cited. The year the book was published is not cited. The ISBN number is not cited. The Watchtower work which quotes the book has no bibliography. Nothing is provided in the Watchtower composition that would enable the reader to access the book in question and discover if the author has any credibility is provided; the most basic conventions for quoted material are neglected. In light of the radically, ridiculously unhistorical and unscholarly nature of the book in question, a desire on the part of the Watchtower society to make the book inaccessible and so prevent readers from discovering the facts about it is understandable, though detestable. The lack of page numbers, publishers, year published, etc. is a common factor for all works cited in this Watchtower publication.

²⁸ Weigall is an individual of sufficient obscurity that his academic qualifications, or lack thereof, are nearly impossible to discover. It is not known if this great “historian” went to college, if he dropped out of high school (as did the majority of the New World “Translation” committee), etc.

wilderness and the temptation by Satan . . . [comes from] a pagan legend. . . . the account of the Crucifixion . . . parallels . . . rites of human sacrifice as practiced by the ancients. . . . In primitive days it was the custom in many lands for a king or ruler to put his own son to death as a sacrifice to the tribal god. . . . in the primitive Passover a human victim was probably sacrificed. . . . [T]he side of Jesus [being] pierced by a lance . . . [relates to] a widespread custom [like] . . . the primitive Albanians used to sacrifice a human being to the moon-goddess by piercing his side with a spear. . . . Nobody in his senses now believes that Jesus ascended into Heaven . . . His body must anyhow have died or been cast aside. . . . such an ascension into the sky was the usual end to the mythical legends of the lives of pagan gods . . . [T]he Christian expression “washed in the blood of the Lamb” is undoubtedly a reflection of . . . the rites of Mithra. . . . [T]he worshippers of Mithra practiced baptism by water. . . . There is no authentic evidence that Jesus ever intended to establish a Church . . . the Lord’s Supper has been changed . . . under Mithraic and other ancient influences. . . . The doctrine of the Atonement . . . nauseates the modern mind, and . . . is of pagan origin, being indeed the most obvious relic of heathendom in the Faith . . . it is not, of course, supported by anything known to have been said by Jesus. . . . this idea of a god dying for the benefit of mankind, and rising again, had its origin in the fact that nature seemed to die in winter and revive in spring. . . . [T]he *Logos* [the Greek term for “Word,” used of the Lord Jesus in John 1:1, 14; 1 John 5:7; Revelation 19:13] theory, which had been adopted by the author of the Gospel of St. John from the philosophy of Philo . . . went a long way towards establishing the identification of Jesus Christ with God . . . the idea of the *Logos* itself was pagan. . . . Sunday, too, was a pagan holy day . . . the Jewish Sabbath . . . is obviously derived from moon-worship. . . . Now Sunday . . . had been for long the holy day in the solar religions of Mithra . . . Christians . . . [worshipped on Sunday] by pagan custom. . . . in this Twentieth Century thoughtful men . . . [reject] the phantom crowd of savage and blood-stained old gods who have come into the Church, and, by immemorial right, have demanded the worship of habit-bound man.”²⁹

Weigall is obviously an irrational, Bible-hating wacko. He provides no documentation, no proof, nothing that even closely resembles a semblance at an argument for the claims in his book; they are nothing but the speculations and ridiculous accusations of his feverishly anti-Christian mind. The Watchtower quotes Weigall more than any other individual in their *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*—despite the fact that a quote from him on the origin of the Trinity has about equal weight with a quote from a supermarket tabloid about King Kong being sighted in Yosemite National Park or one of the Tooth Fairy opening up a dental practice in New York City.

The quotations made by Arians and Unitarians to affirm that the Trinity is derived

²⁹ Pgs. 17, 19, 20, 23-24, 50, 51, 60, 61-62, 68, 71, 85, 86, 87, 92, 105, 140, 141, 152, 155, 160, 163, 187-188, 229-230, 235-236, 277.

from paganism are regularly unreliable and untrustworthy, and they are all, in any case, false. The Scripture, which is superior to all uninspired historical evidence, manifests the Biblical origin of Trinitarianism. The Arian and Unitarian interpretation of post-Biblical history is also unscholarly and mythological. The idea that the Trinity is derived from paganism cannot be sustained.

Arians (and others) sometimes put together a variety of pictures of three pagan gods in a group³⁰ to scare people into thinking that the Trinity comes from paganism, and sometimes manufacture or find various further quotations that allege that the Trinity was derived from various pagan religions.³¹ However, there simply is no connection between pagans who worshipped many gods and sometimes put three of them together (as they would sometimes put two, four, or some other number of their gods together in a particular idolatrous image) and the tri-unity of the one God of the Bible.³²

Similarly, Unitarians and modalists may affirm that Trinitarianism was derived from Plato or Platonic philosophy. They offer as proof for their contention extremely questionable quotations of the sort examined above, by people like Norton, Lacugna, and Weigall. What they do not do is quote Plato. A rather severe problem for their position

³⁰ cf. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs 2, 10

³¹ cf. *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 11-12.

³² Robert Morey (pgs. 488-489, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*. Iowa Falls, IA: World Bible Publishers, 1996) writes, “The Watchtower . . . ‘proves’ [its] claim [that the Trinity comes from paganism] by pictures of three idols of various pagan deities standing together as if they represent the source of the Christian concept of the Trinity. For example, they point to Egyptian idols of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

This argument is based on two very basic logical fallacies. First, it commits the fallacy of equivocation in that the word ‘Trinity’ is being used with several different meanings. The word ‘Trinity’ according to Christian theology refers to one, infinite/personal God eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the word ‘Trinity’ is used by the Arians to refer to any grouping of three finite gods and goddesses. Obviously there is no logical relationship between three finite gods and the one true God of Christianity.

Second, the fallacy of equivocation leads to the categorical fallacy of trying to relate together concepts that have no relationship at all. The following diagram illustrates the radical difference between the Trinity and pagan triads:

The Trinity	Pagan triads
one God	three gods & goddesses
infinite in nature	finite in nature
omnipotent	impotent
omniscient	ignorant of some things
omnipresent	limited to one place
immutable	mutable
perfect	imperfect
good	good and evil

The Watchtower’s attempt to link the Trinity to pagan triads reveals either that [it does] not understand the Trinity, or that, if [it] does, [it] is being deliberately deceptive.”

is that the writings of Plato do not contain the doctrine of the Trinity.³³ Nor do the writings of Aristotle or other pre-Christian pagan philosophers. Similarities of language³⁴

³³ Morey (pg. 489-490, *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*) writes, “The same problem arises when [Arians—specifically the Watchtower in *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*] claims the doctrine of the Trinity came from Plato. They do not indicate where the Trinity can be found in the writings of Plato. They quote from Unitarians and other anti-Trinitarians who make the same claim, but nowhere do they quote Plato.

Since we are quite familiar with Plato and have translated some of his dialogues from the original Greek, we must go on record that we have never found in Plato anything even remotely resembling the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps this is why Arians never give a single reference to Plato’s works to back up their claims. . . .

[T]he Watchtower . . . [has] made [the] claim many times . . . that . . . [Trinitarians] borrowed their concept of the Trinity from Platonism and used Plato’s Demiurge as their concept of Christ . . . What they fail to tell their readers is that Plato’s Demiurge was a finite being created by God and, thus, not equal to God. The following diagram reveals whose Christ is patterned after the Demiurge:

The Demiurge	Two Views of Christ	
<i>Platonism</i>	<i>Arianism</i>	<i>Trinitarianism</i>
created	created	not created
finite	finite	infinite
not eternal	not eternal	eternal
not omnipresent	not omnipresent	omnipresent
not omniscient	not omniscient	omniscient
not omnipotent	not omnipotent	omnipotent
semi-divine	semi-divine	full deity

From the above chart, it is clear that it is Arianism that has patterned its view of Christ from Plato’s Demiurge.”

It is also noteworthy that many Roman Catholics (though not all—some were rabid enough to attempt to read into Plato’s works what was clearly not present, a practice followed even by some earlier writers) who adopted and promulgated much of the philosophy of Plato in the medieval and subsequent eras, and tried with all their might to Christianize the Greek philosopher, were honest enough to admit that there was no Trinity in Plato. For example, “Marsilio Ficino, 1433–1499, one of the circle who made the court of Lorenzo the Magnificent famous, was an ordained priest, rector of two churches and canon of the cathedral of Florence. He eloquently preached the Platonic gospel to his ‘brethren in Plato,’ and translated the Orphic hymns, the *Hermes Trismegistos*, and some works of Plato and Plotinus, — a colossal task for that age. He believed that the divine Plotinus had first revealed the theology of the divine Plato and “the mysteries of the ancients,” and that these were consistent with Christianity. Yet he was unable to find in Plato’s writings the mystery of the Trinity” (David Schaff, *The Middle Ages: From Boniface VIII, 1294, to the Protestant Reformation, 1517*, Vol. 6, Chap. 8:65 in Philip Schaff’s *History of the Christian Church*, elec. acc.).

³⁴ The evident fact that the requirements of language will lead to some overlap in terminology between God’s people and paganism as believers communicate the truths about God derived from revelation should be obvious from a simple consideration of the necessities of discourse in a language common to believers and unbelievers. The fact that a Christian who is explaining truth about the nature of God in modern America at a secular university to a philosophy major may use terminology familiar to his unsaved philosophical friend does not mean that the Christian’s view of God came from anti-God philosophy. Christian theological works that employ a precision of logic and terminology also employed by careful non-Christian philosophical works do not thereby prove that the Christian content was adopted from that of the pagans. Likewise, the use of a Trinitarian word such as *hupostasis* by both Christians and pagans is no more proof that the Christian concept came from pagan philosophy than the fact that the phrase “one God” was employed by Christians and pagan philosophy demonstrates that Christians derived their idea of the unity of God from heathenism. One might as well conclude that a church building is an evil derived from the ungodly world because structures owned by both Christians and non-Christians follow common standards required by law in building codes.

between post-Christian neo-Platonic philosophers and Christian Trinitarians are weak, and similarities of meaning are either nonexistent or very strained. If they were to indicate anything, they would demonstrate the influence of Christian theology upon the thought of post-Christian pagan philosophy, rather than the reverse.³⁵ Furthermore, even if one were to establish genuine and clear Trinitarian testimonial from pre-Christian pagan writings—which cannot be done—it would not demonstrate that Christians took pagan ideas into their theological system when they believed in the Trinity. The fact that the fundamentals of Trinitarian doctrine were given to Adam (Genesis 1:2, 26), recognized by righteous Gentiles in the Old Testament era (Job 19:25-27; 33:4, echoing Genesis 1:2) and believed by Israel in the Mosaic economy (Isaiah 48:16) makes the consideration that remnants of the original Trinitarian revelation might be present among those descendants of Adam that fell into paganism, or among those pagans influenced by Israel or righteous Gentiles in the Old Testament era, a definite possibility. In this case, Trinitarian ideas present in pre-Christian, non-Jewish writings would be evidence of influence from the God of Adam and of Israel.³⁶ What cannot in any wise be established historically is that Christian Trinitarianism was simply the influx of pagan thought into theological thinking.

Actually, unlike Trinitarianism, both Arian and Sabellian theology resulted in large measure from the influence of pagan thought upon Christianity. “[The system of] Sabellius . . . sprung out of Judaizing and Gnostic tendencies which were indigenous to Egypt. . . . [A] pantheistic tendency [also characterizes] Sabellianism as a whole. . . . Kindred ideas are also found in Pythagoreanism.”³⁷ “[O]pposition to the Incarnate Word,

³⁵ “The Socinian and rationalistic opinion, that the church doctrine of the Trinity sprang from Platonism and Neo-Platonism is . . . radically false. The Indian Trimurti, altogether pantheistic in spirit, is still further from the Christian Trinity. . . . [The post-Christian pagan writers] Plotinus (in *Enn.* V. 1) and Porphyry (in Cyril. Alex. 100 *Jul.*) who, however, were already unconsciously affected by Christian ideas, speak of τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις but in a sense altogether different from that of the church” (Philip Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, Vol. 2, Chap. 12:149 of his *History of the Christian Church*, elec. acc.).

³⁶ The affirmation of revelatory influence upon pagan philosophy is alleged, for example, by Justin Martyr, who asserts that Plato derived his idea that there was but one God from Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt (*Horatory Address to the Greeks*, Chapter 20).

³⁷ “Sabellius” in the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, John McClintock & James Strong, vol. 9. Rio, WI: AGES Digital Software Library, 2006, elec. acc.

Of course, this affirmation does not deny that Arius or Sabellius, added particular twists of their own to their pagan patrimony (so that, e. g., the article just quoted while affirming Sabellius’ pagan heritage, can also speak of his “originality.”)

when he really appeared, seemed to have predisposed [modalists, here discussed under the label of Monarchians] to accept a heathen philosophy, and to represent the Logos as Philo did as the manifest God not personally distinct from the concealed Deity. This error found its way into Christianity through the Gnostics, who were largely indebted to the Platonic school of Alexandria. . . . Sabellianism [in part is] found even in the later schools of gnostics, and the later Sabellianism approached to an emanation theory. . . . The leading tenet of the Monarchians [modalists] thus appears to have been introduced into Christianity principally through the Alexandrian Jews and the Gnostics. It may also have been derived immediately from heathen philosophers. . . . [T]he Monarchians who identified the Son with the Father and admitted at most only a modal trinity, a threefold mode of revelation . . . proceeded, at least in part, from pantheistic preconceptions, and approached the ground of Gnostic docetism.”³⁸ Modalism is a concept which mixes Christianity and paganism.

Similarly, “Arius . . . was following . . . a path inevitably traced for him by the Middle Platonist preconceptions he had inherited,”³⁹ since “the impact of Platonism reveals itself in . . . thoroughgoing subordinationism.”⁴⁰ The Arian view of the incarnation of Christ “took as its premis[e] [a] Platonic conception.”⁴¹

Examining the history of ancient Christianity, one notes that no physical evidence exists of Arius, Sabellius, or the disciples of either of these heretics affirming and disparaging Trinitarian doctrine as derived from paganism, while testimony from ancient Christianity affirms that modalist and Unitarian heretics derived their ideas from

³⁸ “Monarchianism,” *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, McClintock & Strong, vol. 6.

³⁹ pg. 231, *Early Christian Doctrines*, J. N. D. Kelly. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 1978 (5th rev. ed).

⁴⁰ pg. 131, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Kelly. The quote specifically speaks of the theology of the heretic and (less radical, but still) Arian precursor, Origin.

⁴¹ pg. 281, *Early Christian Doctrines*, Kelly. Other heretics also adopted a Platonized view of the incarnation.

paganism. The Trinitarian Tertullian spoke strongly against the adoption of pagan philosophy, mentioning that “Plato has been the caterer to all these heretics” and speaks of “doctrines which the heretics borrow from Plato.”⁴² He writes, “Indeed heresies are themselves instigated by [pagan] philosophy.”⁴³ Specifically speaking against the Unitarian heresy, Athanasius declared, “when the unsound nature of their phrases had been exposed at that time, and they were henceforth open to the charge of irreligion, that they proceeded to borrow of the Greeks [pagan philosophy] . . . so unblushing are they in their irreligion, so obstinate in their blasphemies against the Lord. . . . they are contentious, as elsewhere, for unscriptural positions . . . [their language, namely, adopting the term “Unoriginate” for God over “Father,” is] of the Greeks who know not the Son.”⁴⁴ Ambrose wrote, “Let us now see how far Arians and pagans do differ. . . . The pagans assert that their gods began to exist once upon a time; the Arians lyingly declare that Christ began to exist in the course of time. Have they not all dyed their impiety in the vats of philosophy?”⁴⁵ The evidence from patristic writers affirms that the doctrines of Arianism, Sabellianism, and other heresies were influenced by paganism. No extant ancient writer affirms that the Trinity was borrowed from pagan philosophy. Who is more likely to be correct on the development of Trinitarian theology—those who lived in the first centuries of Christianity, or the wackos quoted by modern Arians and Sabellians who lived a millenium and a half after the end of the ancient church period?

Representative Quotations from the Earliest Christian Writings— Are these men Trinitarians or Arians?

The allegation that Trinitarianism was invented in A. D. 325 at the Council of Nicaea, or even later,⁴⁶ is a historical monstrosity.⁴⁷ The doctrine that the Father, Son, and

⁴² Chapter 23, *A Treatise on the Soul*. (*Church Fathers — The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson. elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*, ver. 1.1. This is the edition employed for quotations from patristic writers unless otherwise specified.). It would be very strange for Tertullian to condemn various heretics for deriving their doctrines from Plato if he himself derived his Trinitarianism from Plato.

⁴³ Chapter 7, *The Prescription Against Heretics*.

⁴⁴ *Defence of the Nicene Definition (De Decretis)*, 28, 31.

⁴⁵ *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, Ambrose. Book 1:13:85.

⁴⁶ In truly astounding opposition to the facts, the Watchtower Society writes, “If the Trinity is not a Biblical teaching, how did it become a doctrine of Christendom? Many think that it was formulated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. That is not totally correct, however. The Council of Nicaea . . . did not establish the Trinity . . . [n]one of the bishops at Nicaea promoted a Trinity[.] . . . If a Trinity had been a

Holy Spirit were equally God (contra Arianism), and yet were distinct Persons (contra Sabellianism), was believed and confessed by Christians from the time of the composition of the New Testament onwards. There are no Arian statements such as “the Son of God was created out of nothing” or “the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force.” While this composition is not a detailed history of doctrine or of ancient Christianity, and thus does not attempt to evaluate the whole of what any of the following writers believed, the following ten quotations (which could have been greatly multiplied) from contemporaries of the apostle John and those only decades after him—and far, far before the Council of Nicea—make it painfully obvious just how wrong such Arian and Sabellian corruptions of history are.⁴⁸

Deity of the Son	
Ignatius (died c. A. D. 100)	“I glorify Jesus Christ, the God who made you so wise” ⁴⁹ (Smyrnaeans 1:1)

clear Bible truth, should they not have proposed it at that time? . . . [At]the Council of Constantinople in 381 C.E. . . . [for] the first time, Christendom’s Trinity began to come into focus. Yet, even after the Council of Constantinople, the Trinity did not become a widely accepted creed. . . . It was only in later centuries that the Trinity was formulated into set creeds” (*Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pgs. 7-9).

⁴⁷ “[T]he following particulars . . . which cannot be invalidated . . . prove conclusively that . . . [the] Ante-Nicene Fathers . . . held the same Trinitarianism with the Nicene and Post-Nicene divines. 1.) The Ante-Nicene Fathers employed the word *God* in the strict sense of signifying the Divine *substance*, and applied it to the Son in this sense. 2.) They admitted but one substance to be strictly Divine, and rejected with abhorrence the notion of inferior and secondary divinities. 3.) The confined worship to the one true God, and yet worshipped the Son. 4.) The attributed eternity, omnipotence, and uncreatedness to the Son, and held him to be the Creator and Preserver of the universe. 5.) Had the Ante-Nicene Fathers held that the Son was different from the Father in respect to substance, eternity, omnipotence, uncreatedness, [etc.], they would certainly have specified this difference in the Sabellian controversy; for this would have proved beyond all dispute that the Son and Father are not one Person or Hypostasis. But they never did” (pg. 153, William G. T. Shedd, *History of Christian Doctrine*, vol. 1, book III:2:3, elec. acc. AGES Digital Software).

⁴⁸ Since only the testimony of self-professed Christians is included below, testimony to Christian Trinitarianism from non-Christian sources is not included below. Testimonies from Roman officials and other non-Christians is, however, fascinating, such as the letter of Pliny the Younger to the the Roman emperor Trajan c. A. D. 112: “I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit this, I ask them the question again a second and third time, threatening them with the death sentence if they persist. . . . But they declared that their only crime or error was that they used to meet regularly before daybreak on an appointed day, and to sing a hymn to Christ as to God, and to bind themselves by an oath not to commit any crime, but to abstain from theft, robbery, adultery or breach of trust, and not to deny a deposit when this was required” (Pliny, *Letters* 10.96, in *The Letters of Pliny*, 2 vols., trans. William Melmoth. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915, 2:403ff.).

⁴⁹ Δοξάζω Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν θεὸν τὸν οὐτως ὑμᾶς σοφίσαντα.

Ignatius (died c. A. D. 100)	“Jesus Christ our God” ⁵⁰ (Ephesians 1:1)
Clement (c. A. D. 100-150) ⁵¹	“Brethren, we ought to conceive of Jesus Christ as of God, as the judge of the living and the dead.” (2 Clement 1:1) ⁵²
Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-165)	“Christ is called both God and Lord of hosts . . . reference is made . . . to Christ . . . [in] the Psalm[s] of David . . . [as] the God of Jacob . . . the Lord of hosts . . . the King of glory” (Dialogue with Trypho, 36) ⁵³
Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-165)	He existed formerly as Son of the Maker of all things, being God, and was born a man by the Virgin. (Dialogue with Trypho, 48) ⁵⁴
Justin Martyr (c. A. D. 100-165)	Now the Word of God is His Son[.] . . . From the writings of Moses also this will be manifest; for thus it is written in them, “And the [Messenger/Angel] of God spoke to Moses, in a flame of fire out of the bush, and said, I am that I am, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of your fathers; go down into Egypt, and bring forth My people.” . . . [P]roving that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God and His Apostle, being of old the Word, and appearing sometimes in the form of fire, and sometimes in the likeness of angels; but now, by the will of God, having become man for the human race . . . [T]hey who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the 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 . . .

⁵⁰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

⁵¹ If one wishes to maintain (as is likely) that 2 Clement was not written by that Clement of Rome who flourished c. A. D. 90-100, was the third pastor of the church at Rome, and composed 1 Clement, nevertheless “the controversies with which the writer deals are those of the early part of the 2nd century[.] . . . Internal evidence . . . assigns to the work a date not later than the 2nd century, and probably the first half of it” (“Clemens Romanus,” *A Dictionary of Early Christian Biography*, Henry Wace. elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*). “[If not by Clement of Rome himself, then it] appears to have been delivered about [A. D.] 140–50” (“Clement of Rome,” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, gen. ed. J. D. Douglas. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974. Elec. acc. *Accordance Bible Software*).

⁵² Ἀδελφοί, οὕτως δεῖ ἡμᾶς φρονεῖν περὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὡς περὶ θεοῦ, ὡς περὶ κριτοῦ ζώντων καὶ νεκρῶν.

⁵³ καὶ Θεὸς καὶ Κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων ὁ Χριστὸς . . . εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν εἰρήσθαι . . . Ἔστι δὲ ψαλμὸς τοῦ Δαβὶδ οὗτος . . . Θεοῦ Ἰακώβ . . . Κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων . . . Κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων . . . ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῆς δόξης.

⁵⁴ προὔπηρχεν Υἱὸς τοῦ Ποιητοῦ τῶν ὄλων, Θεὸς ὢν, καὶ γεγέννηται ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς Παρθένου.

	having . . . become Man by a virgin, according to the counsel of the Father, for the salvation of those who believe on Him, He endured both to be set at nought and to suffer, that by dying and rising again He might conquer death. (Apology of Justin 1:63) ⁵⁵
Martyrdom of Polycarp (c. A. D. 150)	[To] the Lord Jesus Christ . . . be the glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. (Martyrdom of Polycarp 22:3; cf. 14:3) ⁵⁶
Epistle to Diognatus (2nd century)	On the contrary, the omnipotent Creator of all, the invisible God himself, established among men the truth and the holy, incomprehensible word from heaven. . . not, as one might imagine, by sending to men some subordinate, or angel or ruler or one of those who manage earthly matters, or one of those entrusted with the administration of things in heaven, but the Designer and Creator of the universe himself, by whom he created the heavens, by whom he enclosed the sea within its proper bounds, whose mysteries all the elements faithfully observe, from whom the sun has received the measure of the daily courses to keep, whom the moon obeys as he commands it to shine by night, whom the stars obey as they follow the course of the moon, by whom all things have been ordered and determined and placed in subjection, including the heavens and the things in the heavens, the earth and the things in the earth, the sea and the things in the sea, fire, air, abyss, the things in the heights, the things in the depths, the things in between—this one he sent to them! . . . [H]e sent him in gentleness and meekness, as a king might send his son who is a king; he sent him as

⁵⁵ Ὁ Λόγος δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ Υἱὸς αὐτοῦ[.] . . . Καὶ ἐκ τῶν τοῦ Μωσέως δὲ συγγραμμάτων φανερόν τοῦτο γενήσεται. Λέλεκται δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς οὕτως: “Καὶ ἐλάλησε Μωϋσεὶ ἄγγελος Θεοῦ ἐν φλογὶ πυρὸς ἐκ τῆς βιάτου, καὶ εἶπεν Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν, Θεὸς Ἀβραάμ, Θεὸς Ἰσαάκ, Θεὸς Ἰακώβ, ὁ Θεὸς τῶν πατέρων σου. κάτελθε εἰς Αἴγυπτον, καὶ ἐξάγαγε τὸν λαόν μου.” . . . Ἄλλ’ εἰς ἀπόδειξιν γεγονάσιν οἶδε οἱ λόγοι, ὅτι Υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός ἐστι, πρότερον Λόγος ὢν, καὶ ἐν ἰδέᾳ πυρὸς ποτὲ φανείς, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ ἐν εἰκόνι ἀσωμάτων· νῦν δέ, διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου γένους ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος[.] . . . Οἱ γὰρ τὸν Υἱὸν Πατέρα φάσκοντες εἶναι ἐλέγχονται μήτε τὸν Πατέρα ἐπιστάμενοι, μηθ’ ὅτι ἐστὶν Υἱὸς τῷ Πατρὶ τῶν ὅλων γινώσκοντες· ὅς καὶ Λόγος πρωτότοκος ὢν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Θεὸς ὑπάρχει. Καὶ πρότερον διὰ τῆς τοῦ πυρὸς μορφῆς καὶ εἰκόνας ἀσωμάτου τῷ Μωϋσεὶ καὶ τοῖς ἐτέροις προφήταις ἐφάνη· νῦν δ’ . . . διὰ παρθένου ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς βουλήν, ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας τῶν πιστευόντων αὐτῷ, καὶ ἐξουθενηθῆναι καὶ παθεῖν ὑπέμεινεν, ἵνα ἀποθανὼν καὶ ἀναστὰς νικήσῃ τὸν θάνατον. It should be noted that the references by Justin to Christ as Ἄγγελος refers to Him as the Messenger or Angel of Jehovah, the Old Testament Person who is so far from being a created being that He is Jehovah Himself. This is apparent to anyone who reads the context of Justin’s declarations.

⁵⁶ ὁ κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς . . . ᾧ ἡ δόξα σὺν πατρὶ καὶ ἀγίῳ πνεύματι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, ἀμήν.

	God; he sent him as a man to men. (Epistle to Diognetus 7:2,4) ⁵⁷
Athenagoras (2 nd century)	Who, then, would not be astonished to hear men who speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declare both their power in union and their distinction in order, called atheists? (Plea for Christians, 10) ⁵⁸
Irenaeus (c. A. D. 120-203)	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[.] . . . Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord. [When] the Scripture says, “Then the Lord [Jehovah] rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven” [Genesis 19:24] . . . 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 scepter of Your kingdom is a right scepter. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You.” 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. . . . Therefore, 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

⁵⁷ Diog. 7:2 ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ἀληθῶς ὁ παντοκράτωρ καὶ παντοκτίστης καὶ ἀόρατος θεός, αὐτὸς ἀπ' οὐρανῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν ἅγιον καὶ ἀπερινόητον ἀνθρώποις ἐνίδρυσε . . . οὐ καθάπερ ἂν τις εἰκάσειεν ἀνθρώποις ὑπηρετήν τινά πέμψας ἢ ἄγγελον ἢ ἄρχοντα ἢ τινὰ τῶν διεπόντων τὰ ἐπίγεια ἢ τινὰ τῶν πεπιστευμένων τὰς ἐν οὐρανοῖς διοικήσεις, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην καὶ δημιουργὸν τῶν ὄλων, ὃ τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἔκτισεν, ὃ τὴν θάλασσαν ἰδίοις ὄροις ἐνέκλεισεν, οὗ τὰ μυστήρια πιστῶς πάντα φυλάσσει τὰ στοιχεῖα, παρ' οὗ τὰ μέτρα τῶν τῆς ἡμέρας δρόμων ἡλίου εἴληφε φυλάσσειν, ὃ πειθαρχεῖ σελήνῃ νυκτὶ φαίνειν κελεύοντι, ὃ πειθαρχεῖ τὰ ἄστρα τῷ τῆς σελήνης ἀκολουθοῦντα δρόμῳ, ὃ πάντα διατέτακται καὶ διάρριστα καὶ ὑποτέτακται, οὐρανοὶ καὶ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῆ, θάλασσα καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσσει, πῦρ, ἀήρ, ἄβυσσος, τὰ ἐν ὕψει, τὰ ἐν βάθει, τὰ ἐν τῷ μεταξύ· τοῦτον πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἀπέστειλεν. . . . ἐν ἐπιεικείᾳ καὶ πραύτητι ὡς βασιλεὺς πέμψων υἱὸν βασιλέα ἔπεμψεν, ὡς θεὸν ἔπεμψεν, ὡς ἄνθρωπον πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔπεμψεν, ὡς σῶζων ἔπεμψεν, ὡς πείθων, οὐ βιαζόμενος· βία γὰρ οὐ πρόσεστι τῷ θεῷ.

⁵⁸ Τίς οὖν οὐκ ἂν ἀπορήσαι, λέγοντας Θεὸν Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν Θεὸν καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, δεικνύντας αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει δύναμιν καὶ τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει διαίρεσιν, ἀκούσας ἀθέους καλουμένους;

	And thus shall you say to the children of Israel: He who is, has sent me to you;” and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who makes those that believe in His name the sons of God. (Against Heresies, III:6:1-2)
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The Trinitarian can agree with the earliest writers of Christianity: “[W]e confess . . . the Father of righteousness and temperance and the other virtues . . . [and] both Him, and the Son . . . and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore,⁵⁹ knowing them in reason and truth, and declaring without grudging to every one who wishes to learn, as we have been taught” (Justin Martyr, Apology 1:6).⁶⁰ The Arian and Sabellian cannot so confess, or so worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one true God.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Note also the composition “The Worship of the Son of God in Scripture and the Earliest Christianity” at <http://faithalonesaves.googlepages.com/salvation>.

⁶⁰ ὁμολογοῦμεν . . . πατρός δικαιοσύνης καὶ σωφροσύνης, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρετῶν . . . καὶ τὸν . . . Υἱὸν . . . καὶ τὸν . . . Πνεῦμά τε τὸ προφητικὸν σεβόμεθα, καὶ προσκυνοῦμεν, λόγῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ τιμῶντες, καὶ παντὶ βουλομένῳ μαθεῖν, ὡς ἐδιδάχθημεν, ἀφθόνως παραδιδόντες.

⁶¹ While this analysis did not especially focus upon the earliest patristic testimony to the Deity of the Spirit, it should be noted that “no apologetic writer of the second century spoke of the Spirit of God as one of the creatures” (pg. 49, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, Henry Barclay Swete. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1966 (reprint of 1912 ed).), but they did make statements such as “we acknowledge a God, and a Son his Logos, and a Holy Spirit, united in essence, — the Father, the Son, the Spirit” (Athenagoras, *Plea for Christians* 24; Ὡς γὰρ Θεὸν φαμεν, καὶ Υἱὸν τὸν Λόγον αὐτοῦ, καὶ Πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐνούμενα μὲν κατὰ δύναμιν, τὸν Πατέρα, τὸν Υἱόν, τὸ Πνεῦμα, ὅτι Νοῦς, Λόγος, Σοφία, Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρός). The affirmation that the Father, Son, and Spirit are united in essence (or, more literally, equal or one in power) requires that they are the one true God.