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CHRIST'S DIVINITY: Invented by Constantine? A Look at the Evidence for the Divinity of Christ

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The DaVinci Code repeats the old claim, by the Jehovah's Witnesses and Others, that no one believed in the Divinity of Christ in the early Church, but that this idea was invented and promulgated by the emperor Constantine who gained control of the Roman Empire in 312 AD. This historical claim in absolute nonsense. The following texts from Christian writers who lived between New Testament times and the reign of Constantine make abundantly clear that belief in Christ's divinity and equality with God the Father is an indisputable part of the Christian tradition from the beginning. These quotes are by no means exhaustive – they are just a very limited selection. Most or all of the direct quotes below come from the collection edited by Cyril Richardson entitled Early Christian Fathers (NY: Macmillan, 1970), abbreviated here as ECF.

I. Selected Ante-Nicene Patristic witnesses to Christ's Divinity

A. Ignatius of Antioch, on the Divinity of Christ, calls Jesus God 16x in 7 letters (ca. 110 AD)

1. "Jesus Christ our God" *Eph inscr, Eph 15:3, Eph 18:2, Tral 7, Ro inscr 2x, Ro 3:3, Smyr 10:1.*
2. He speaks of Christ's blood as "God's blood" *Eph 1:1*
3. He calls Jesus "God incarnate" *Eph 7:2*
4. In Jesus "God was revealing himself as a man" *Eph 19:3*



B. Epistle to Diognetus (ca. 125 AD) speaking of God the Father, he says:

1. *Diognetus 7:2* "he sent the Designer and Maker of the universe himself, by whom he created the heavens and confined the sea within its own bounds" (ca. 125 AD)
2. *Diognetus 7:4* "He sent him as God; he sent him as man to men."

C. Melito of Sardis on Christ's Divinity (d. ca. 190) *On the Pasch (Peri Pascha)*.

1. Translation in Lucien Deiss, ed., *Springtime of the Liturgy* (College-

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ville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1979), 97-110.

2. *Peri Pascha* was only discovered in 1940 and published in 1960.
3. he says Christ "rises from the dead as God, being by nature both God and man" (p. 100 in Deiss, *physei Theos n kai anthropos*).
4. he also has an anti-Gnostic insistence on Christ's true humanity.

D. **Justin Martyr on the Divinity of Christ**

(c. 155 AD)

1. says that Christians adore and worship the Son as well as the Father. *1st Apology* 6.
2. says Christ, the Word incarnate, is divine *1 Apol* 10 & 63

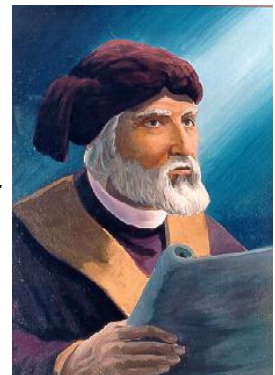


E. **Irenaeus on Christ's Divinity** (ca. 185) in his work *Adversus Haereses* (Against Heresies)

1. Of Jesus he says "He is the holy Lord, the Wonderful, the Counselor, the Beautiful in appearance, and the Mighty God, coming on the clouds as the Judge of all men; --all these things did the Scriptures prophesy of Him." *AH* III.19.2 (*Ante Nicene Fathers* 1: 449).
2. "He, therefore who was known, was not a different being from Him who declared, 'No man knoweth the Father,' but one and the same, the Father making all things subject to Him; while He received testimony from all that He was very [true] man, and that He was very [true] God, from the Father, from the Spirit, from angels, from the creation itself, from men, from apostate spirits and demons, from the enemy, and last of all, from death itself." *AH*, IV, 6,7 (*ANF*, 469).

F. **Tertullian on the Divinity of Christ** (ca. 200)

1. The first use of the Latin word *trinitas* with reference to God is in *Adversus Praxean* and *De pudicitia*. The first to use the term *persona* in a Trinitarian & christological context asserting in *Adv. Praxean* 12 that the Logos is distinct from the Father as person and that the HS is the "third person" in the Trinity."
2. *Adv. Praxean* 27 states that there are two natures, one human and one divine, which are joined in the one person Jesus Christ.
3. In his *Apology* 21, speaking of the Word, he says, "we have been taught that he proceeds forth from God, and in that procession He is generated; so that He is the Son of God, and is called God from unity of substance with God. . . . Thus Christ is Spirit of Spirit, and God of God, as light of light is kindled. . . . That which has come forth out of God is at once God and the Son of God, and the two are one. In this way also, as He is Spirit of Spirit and God of God, He is make a second in manner of existence--in position, not in nature. . . .in His birth God and man united."



4. In *On the Flesh of Christ* 5, he asks, "Was not God really crucified?"

G. **Clement of Alexandria on Christ's Divinity** (ca. 210 AD)

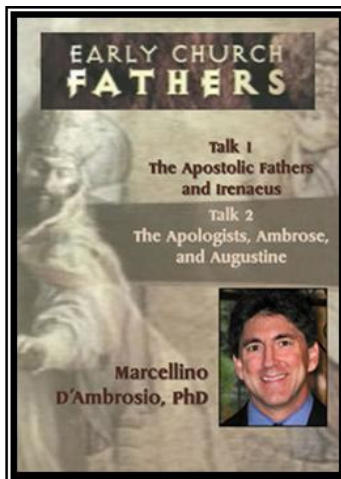
1. *Exhortation to the Heathen*, 1: "This Word, then, the Christ, the cause of both our being at first (for He was in God) and of our well-being, this very Word has now appeared as man, He alone being both, both God and man--that Author of all blessings to us. . . . This is the New Song, the manifestation of the Word that was in the beginning, and before the beginning."

II. **A few selected Trinitarian Texts from Ante-Nicene Fathers**

- A. Didache (ca. 125 AD) "then baptize in running water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (*Early Christian Fathers*, p. 7)
- B. Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 115 AD) exhorts the Christians at Magnesia to stand firm "in faith and love, in Son, Father, and Spirit." (Mag 13)
- C. Pope Dionysius to Dionysius of Alexandria, 262 AD. Uses the term Trinity and describes the unity of the three persons to prove that they are not three gods. Neunier-Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, #301-303.
- D. Origen (ca 230 AD), *On First Principles* 1.6.2 "For in the Trinity alone, which is the author of all things, does goodness exist in virtue of essential being; while others possess it as an accidental and perishable quality, and only then enjoy blessedness, when they participate in holiness and wisdom, and in divinity itself."



To read Carl E. Olson's article on the debunking of *The DaVinci Code*, "**The Cardinal and the Code**" – Visit www.dritaly.com.



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