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JESUS AS GOD IN THE SECOND CENTURY

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SYNOPSIS

Various cults claim that the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) inaugurated belief in Christ's deity. *The Da Vinci Code*, a fictional work on the *New York Times* "Best Sellers" list, has recently popularized this view. The New Testament, however, explicitly uses the Greek term *theos* ("God") in reference to Jesus Christ. Further, there was a consistent application of *theos* to Jesus Christ throughout the second century. Authors such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Melito, Athenagoras, and Irenaeus all spoke of Christ as "God." They were equally convinced of an indispensable monotheism inherited from Judaism and of the deity of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. Even though these second-century writers did not clarify the person and nature of Christ as precisely as subsequent theologians, their works demonstrate that the Council of Nicaea did not originate the doctrine of His deity. The early church witnessed developments in terminology and explanatory nuances regarding this doctrine, but a definite continuity of theology and worship related to it flowed throughout the first four centuries as well.

Many readers unwittingly have accepted the background data found in the fictional bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* as historical truth. Halfway through the novel, one of the characters, Sir Leigh Teabing, a former British Royal Historian, discusses the fourth-century Council of Nicaea. He explains, "Until that moment in history, Jesus was viewed by His followers as a mortal prophet...a great and powerful man, but a *man* nonetheless. A mortal." Teabing continues, "Jesus' establishment as 'the Son of God' was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicaea...Because Constantine upgraded Jesus' status almost four centuries *after* Jesus' death, thousands of documents already existed chronicling His life as a *mortal man*"¹ (emphases in original).

Certain cults also claim that the deity of Jesus Christ was "created" by the Council of Nicaea in AD 325. For instance, Restoration Fellowship (Church of God) publishes a tract entitled "Who Is Jesus? Do the Creeds Tell Us the Truth about Him?" This work asserts that belief in the deity of Jesus Christ is not found in the Scriptures, but was only instituted by the Nicene Council in the fourth century, "well after the New Testament apostolic times."² The Way International contends that pagan concepts entered Christianity at the Council of Nicaea and "if Jesus is God...we have not yet been redeemed."³ A Christadelphian pamphlet entitled "Jesus: God the Son or Son of God?" makes a similar case.⁴

Despite such claims, various New Testament texts do use the Greek term *theos* ("God") to refer to Jesus Christ. Murray J. Harris has written an important introduction to this topic, entitled *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus*. He lists the more probable uses of *theos* in reference to Jesus as John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; and 2 Peter 1:1.⁵ This explicit application of *theos* to Jesus Christ can be traced from the New Testament period into the second century without interruption. Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Melito, and Athenagoras frequently used the term *theos* of Jesus, as did the early biblical theologian, Irenaeus of Lyons.

IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Ignatius wrote seven *epistles*, or “letters,” on his way to martyrdom in Rome (probably between AD 110 and 117). Throughout his epistles, Ignatius repeatedly condemned the *Docetists*,⁶ who denied the reality of the human flesh of Jesus. Ignatius also stressed the true deity of the Son, however, and he referred to Jesus Christ as *theos* about a dozen times.⁷

His *Epistle to the Ephesians* contains the largest number of such references. For example, he reminds the Ephesian church that their sufferings came only by “the will of the Father, and Jesus Christ, our God.”⁸ In chapter 7, Ignatius clearly affirms that “Jesus Christ our Lord” is “God in the flesh” (*Ephesians* 7.2). Ignatius later refers to “our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God,” adding, “Whatever we do, then, let it be done as though He Himself were dwelling within us, we being as it were His temples and He within us as their God” (*Ephesians* 15.3). Ignatius refers to Jesus’ deity in relation to the incarnation in two other passages: “For our God, Jesus the Christ, was according to the appointment of God, conceived in the womb by Mary, of the seed of David, but by the Holy Ghost” (*Ephesians* 18.2), and “God Himself was manifested in human form for the renewal of eternal life” (*Ephesians* 19.3).

Ignatius also addressed an epistle to the Roman church, calling them “beloved and enlightened by the will of Him that willeth all things which are according to the love of Jesus Christ our God.” Ignatius wishes the Romans an “abundance of happiness unblameably, in Jesus Christ our God.”⁹ He conveys to them his desire to imitate the “suffering of my God,” and he asserts, “our God, Jesus Christ, now that He is with the Father, is all the more revealed (in glory)” (*Romans* 3.3; 6.3).

Ignatius tells the church of Smyrna, “I glorify God, even Jesus Christ, who has given you such wisdom” and refers to “Christ our God” (*Smyrnaeans* 1.1; 10.1).¹⁰ He exhorts the Trallians, “Continue in intimate union with Jesus Christ, our God” (*Trallians* 7). Ignatius also relates to Polycarp, “I pray for your happiness forever in our God, Jesus Christ” (*Polycarp* 8).

JUSTIN MARTYR

Justin Martyr explicitly describes the Son as *theos* in both his *First Apology* and in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a Jew (AD 150s and early 160s). In *Dialogue*, Justin designates Jesus Christ as “Lord and God” (129). The Son “as God” is “strong and to be worshipped” and is “deserving to be worshipped as God and as Christ.”¹¹ *Dialogue* 71 asserts, “This very man who was crucified is proved to have been set forth expressly as God and man.” Christ should be recognized “as God coming forth from above, and man living among men” (64). Justin later tells Trypho, “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” (126). Jesus Christ is “Lord, and God the Son of God,” since the “prophetic word” calls Him “God” (128; 60). Trypho readily recognizes Justin’s unmistakable application of *theos* to Christ (48; 64; 87; 128).

Justin identifies the Son with the “Angel of the Lord” who appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18, and he specifically notes that this angel is called “God” in the biblical text (*Dialogue* 56; 58; 126). According to Justin, it was also the *Logos* (“Word”) who spoke to Moses in the burning bush as the “Angel of the Lord,” saying: “I am that I am, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and the God of your Fathers” (*1 Apology* 59; 63; 75). This biblical account serves as a reminder that “the Father of the universe has a Son; who also, being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God” (*1 Apology* 63). *Dialogue* 61 states that “God begat before all creatures a Beginning, a certain rational power from Himself,” who is variously called, “the Glory of the Lord,” “Son,” “Wisdom,” “Angel,” “God,” “Lord,” “Captain,” and “Logos.”¹²

Justin repeatedly uses the Greek term *Logos* (“Word”) of the Son, so that his Christology has been labeled “Logos Christology.”¹³ Any attempt to systematize Justin’s *Logos Christology* is a difficult (and frustrating) task;¹⁴ nevertheless, a strand of pronounced *Subordinationism*¹⁵ seems to run through his Christology. A “Subordinationist” text in which Justin explicitly refers to the Son as “God” is found in *Dialogue* 55–56: The *Logos* is “another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things”...“above whom there is no other God.” *Dialogue* 60 similarly uses *theos* for the *Logos* and in marked contrast with the

“Father of all things” whom the Logos serves (cf. 61; 127). Justin asserts that the Logos is the “first power after God” (*1 Apology* 32), “numerically distinct” (*Dialogue* 56; 62; 128; 129), and to be worshiped “in second place” (*1 Apology* 13). The *Second Apology* relates, “For next to God, we worship and love the Word who is from the unbegotten and ineffable God, since also He became man for ourselves” (13.4).

According to historian J. N. D. Kelly, Justin’s “Word” remained immanent in God until being issued forth (“begotten”) before creation, or in the eternal mind of God until utterance.¹⁶ *Dialogue* 125 states that Christ “yet nevertheless is God, in that He is the first-begotten of all creatures.”¹⁷ The Logos then stands as the intermediary between God (from whom the preexistent Logos issued forth) and the material realm (which the Logos created).¹⁸ Justin shared the philosophical presupposition commonly held by his contemporaries that “God is so totally transcendent to created reality he needs an intermediary, his Word, to act for him and to mediate between himself and creation.”¹⁹ All divine self-communication and self-revelation, therefore, comes through the ministering Logos. Justin was endeavoring to retain the eternal unity of the Godhead, the proper designation of the divine Son as “God,” and a sharp distinction between the Son and “God,” “the Father and ineffable Lord of all” (*Dialogue* 126–28).²⁰ Justin’s philosophical tendencies led him to explanations that differed from the more precise formulations of later generations.²¹

MELITO OF SARDIS

One of the first sermons we have available outside the New Testament is *On the Passover* by Melito of Sardis, who flourished around AD 170. Melito proclaims that Jesus Christ is “by nature (Gk. *phusis*) God and man....This is Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (*On the Passover* 8–10).²² And again, “the almighty God has made His dwelling through Christ Jesus” (*On the Passover* 45).

Some statements in *On the Passover* 4 and 7 use *theos* of the Son but could be interpreted in an *Adoptionist*²³ manner: Christ was slain as a lamb “but resurrected as God”; “For indeed the law has become word,...and the Man God.” Furthermore, in *On the Passover* 8–9, Melito says of Christ, “He rose from the dead as God, being by nature God and Man....inasmuch as He begets, Father; inasmuch as He is begotten, Son; inasmuch as He is buried, Man; inasmuch as He is raised, God.” Elsewhere, however, Melito makes clear that the deity of the Son did not begin only at the resurrection: “He who fastened the universe has been fastened to a tree; the Sovereign has been insulted; the God has been murdered” (*On the Passover* 96).²⁴

Melito’s use of the term “Father” for Christ (*On the Passover* 9) raises another issue. Campbell Bonner characterized Melito’s theology as naïve *Modalism*,²⁵ since “Christ is equated with God with no serious considerations of the implications.”²⁶ Melito does, however, plainly differentiate the Father from the Son at times. For example, the Son through whom the Father created the cosmos now sits at the Father’s right hand (*On the Passover* 104–5).

Extant fragments of other sermons probably by Melito also label the Son as *theos*.²⁷ A later writer rhetorically could ask, “For who does not know the books of Irenaeus and Melito and the rest, which proclaim Christ as God and man?” (frag. 8a). In summary, Melito has a “Christocentric monotheism,” as seen also in all of his doxologies, which are all addressed to Christ, and never to the Father (*On the Passover* 10, 45, 65, 105; frag. 15; new frag. 2.23).²⁸

ATHENAGORAS

Athenagoras’s *Embassy for Christians* (c. AD 178) is an example of the Son being called *theos* within the context of an emerging Trinitarianism in the second century, even though the work never uses the term *Trinity*.²⁹ According to Athenagoras, Christians “speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” and “declare both their power in union and their distinction in order” (*Embassy* 10). Christians also know “what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, what is the communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these three: the Spirit, the Son, the Father, and their distinction in unity” (*Embassy* 2). Christians acknowledge “one God, uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable, who is apprehended by the understanding only and the reason...the Son being in the Father and the Father in the Son, in oneness and power of spirit” (*Embassy* 10).

Like Justin, Athenagoras stresses that the universe was created by the Logos (who is the “first-begotten” of the Father) who issued forth from God. This Logos, or “reason,” was eternally in the Father, since God is rational by eternal nature (*Embassy* 10).³⁰ In *Embassy* 6, Athenagoras repeatedly stresses the oneness of the Godhead, yet also describes the distinct roles of both the Logos and the Spirit. Athenagoras attempts to find a parallel in the Stoic philosophers who “multiply the Deity in name, yet in reality they consider God to be one” (6.4). Athenagoras concludes, “We say that there is God and the Son, his Word, and the Holy Spirit, united in power yet distinguished in rank as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, since the Son is mind, reason (word), and wisdom of the Father and the Spirit an effluence like light from fire” (*Embassy* 24).³¹ Winslow comments, “Here, we see intimations of Trinitarian thought, but as yet conceptually inchoate.”³²

IRENÆUS

The second century closed with Irenaeus, the first important biblical theologian. Not surprisingly, Irenaeus also used the term *theos* of the Son.³³ In *Against Heresies* 4.6.7, he proclaims that Christ “received testimony from all that He was very man, and that He was very God.” Irenaeus exhorts his readers to acknowledge both Christ’s “divinity” and His “human nature,” so that they might overturn “all those notions of the heretics which were concocted afterwards” (5.14.4). Jesus’ name *Emmanuel* (which means “God with us”) signifies “His essence, that He is God,” since the description of Emmanuel is “proper to God” (3.16.2; 3.21.4). Irenaeus interprets the titles “God over all, blessed for ever” (Rom. 9:5), “Mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), and “God” (Hab. 3:3) as references to Jesus Christ (3.16.3; 3.19.2; 3.20.4). Christ is rightfully called God, Lord, eternal King, and Word incarnate in Scripture, revealing that He is not a mere man (since no other descendant of Adam is ever called God or named Lord) (3.19.2).

Irenaeus emphasizes that Jesus Christ must have been fully God in order to accomplish His salvific work effectively. The Lord Himself became very man, so that He might save humans (3.20.4). God came in the flesh so that people might know Him and have fellowship with Him (4.20.4–5). “God, then, was made man, and the Lord did Himself save us, giving us the token of the Virgin” (3.21.1). “Unless it had been God who had freely given salvation, we could never have possessed it securely...For it was incumbent upon the Mediator between God and men, by His relationship to both, to bring both to friendship and concord, and present man to God, while He revealed God to man...God recapitulated in Himself the ancient form of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man” (3.18.7). Irenaeus wonders of the *Ebionites*,³⁴ “how can they be saved unless it was God who wrought out their salvation upon earth?” (4.33.4).

In his *Proof of Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus explains, “Therefore the Father is Lord, and the Son is Lord, and the Father is God and the Son is God; for He who is born of God is God. And thus God is shown to be one according to the essence of His being in power; but at the same time, as the administrator of the economy of our redemption, He is both Father and Son: since the Father of all is invisible and inaccessible to creatures, it is through the Son that those who are to approach God must have access to the Father” (47).³⁵ This text uses important phraseology in the development of Trinitarianism: “one according to the essence of His being and power.” The passage, however, also places the discussion within the context of Irenaeus’ characteristic interest in the economy of God’s redemptive plan and the role of the Son in revelation and salvation.

In fact, the Father, Son, and Spirit are especially united in the work of salvation: “The Spirit indeed working, and the Son ministering, while the Father was approving, and man’s salvation being accomplished” (*Against Heresies* 4.20.6). “Wherefore, then, in all things, and through all things, there is one God, the Father, and one Word, and one Son, and one Spirit, and one salvation to all who believe in Him” (4.6.7). Believers “ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father” (5.36.2). The Spirit prepares individuals, the Son leads them, and the Father grants eternal life (4.20.5).

OTHER SECOND-CENTURY WRITINGS

An assortment of other second-century writers also attest to the label “God” being applied to Jesus Christ. Pliny’s correspondence with the emperor Trajan (c. AD 112) relates how local Christians assembled before sunrise to sing “a hymn to Christ, as to a god” (*Letter* 10.96).³⁶ Taking into account Pliny’s pagan perspective, the passage provides secondhand evidence that Christians in the early second century were

worshipping Christ as a divine figure in their hymnody.³⁷ In some of the extant manuscripts, Polycarp's *Philippians* 12.2 (c. AD 115) refers to "our Lord and God Jesus Christ." A Syriac version of the *Apology* of Aristides (c. AD 125) states, "The Christians, then, trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah; and he is named the Son of God Most High. And it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh" (*Apology* 2). Tatian's *Address to the Greeks* 21 affirms that Christians "announce that God was born in the form of a man." The *Epistle to Diognetus* 7 echoes, "As a king sends his son, who is also a king, so God sent Him (Jesus Christ). He sent Him as God." So-called *Second Clement*, which some have labeled as "the oldest complete Christian sermon that has survived,"³⁸ exhorts, "Brethren, it is fitting that you should think of Jesus Christ as of God—as the Judge of the living and the dead....for if we think little of Him, we shall also hope but to obtain little (from Him)" (*2 Clement* 1). The Christian material in the *Sibylline Oracles*, book 6, proclaims, "O blessed tree, on which God was hung!"³⁹

CONTINUITY OF CHRISTOLOGY

These second-century works do not consistently use such theological terms as *Trinity*, *person*, *essence*,⁴⁰ *substance*,⁴¹ or *nature*,⁴² much less *consubstantiality* or *hypostatic union*;⁴³ nevertheless, the deity of Christ found a secure place in both the theology and worship of the early church. D. F. Wright notes the important role of early Christian worship of Christ as God: "From the outset, Father, Son, and Spirit were named together in baptism and in benediction. Christians at worship regularly expressed what theologians struggled to articulate satisfactorily."⁴⁴ There is a constant strand of tradition that refers to Jesus Christ as *theos* all the way from the New Testament throughout the second century. Larry Hurtado concludes, "Only a certain wishful thinking continues to attribute the reverence of Jesus as divine decisively to the influence of pagan religion and the influx of Gentile converts, characterizing it as developing late and incrementally."⁴⁵

Second-century authors often equated Jesus Christ with God without developing a full explanation or pursuing all the implications. Most of the second-century writers were "concerned with professing their beliefs, not with a philosophical discussion of them."⁴⁶ Their "testimony to their faith in Jesus as God is straightforward proclamation, with little consideration given to *how* this might be."⁴⁷ At times they even stated monotheism and the deity of the Son side-by-side without attempting a systematic harmonization.⁴⁸ They were bound, as it were, by two nonnegotiable theological presuppositions: the settled monotheism inherited from Judaism and the firm belief that the risen Christ is indeed the divine Lord. When they ventured to offer explanations, they found that their attempts were nuanced in various ways.

There is continuity nevertheless in the development between the New Testament and the later creeds of the councils.⁴⁹ The later credal statements were already present in the second century in basic form: Jesus was fully human (against the Docetists), but He was also frequently referred to as *theos*. Whatever their explanatory shortcomings, these second-century authors clearly and explicitly affirmed that Jesus was *theos*, "God." A third-century composition thus boldly could refer to a series of teachers from the second century, "in all of whose work Christ is spoken of as God."⁵⁰

NOTES

1. Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 233–34. See also Richard E. Rubenstein's misleadingly titled *When Jesus Became God: The Epic Fight over Christ's Divinity in the Last Days of Rome* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999).
2. Anthony Buzzard, "Who Is Jesus? Do the Creeds Tell Us the Truth about Him?" Restoration Fellowship, <http://www.mindspring.com/~anthonybuzzard/jesus.htm>.
3. Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Christ Is Not God* (New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1975), 1–20.
4. The Christadelphian Magazine and Publishing Association Ltd., "Jesus: God the Son or Son of God?" Christadelphia World Wide, <http://www.christadelphia.org/pamphlet/jesus.htm>.
5. Murray J. Harris, *Jesus As God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 271–73. See also Robert L. Reymond's *Jesus, Divine Messiah: The New Testament Witness* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1990).
6. These were early sects who denied the true humanity of Christ and taught that His corporeal (physical) body was only an "appearance" or disguise.
7. See Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 39.

8. *Ephesians* inscription; see also *Ephesians* 1. Except where otherwise noted, all quotations of Greek works in this article are from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, rev. ed. (1867; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
9. *Romans* inscription.
10. There is a textual question concerning the latter.
11. *Dialogue with Trypho* 56; 63; 68; 76; 126; 1 *Apology* 6.1–2; 13.3. Justin observes that Hebrews 1:8 applies *theos* to the Son.
12. Cf. *Dialogue with Trypho* 34.2; 59.1; 126.1.
13. Cf. John 1:1–3, 14–17.
14. Donald F. Winslow, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland, 1997), s.v. “Logos.”
15. This is a christological perspective that subordinates the Son to the Father. The term has been used of an estimation of the Son as either subject to the Father (especially in His redemptive role) or as essentially inferior to the Father. Theologians thus differentiate between a “functional subordination” in office or duty and an “ontological subordination” in nature or being.
16. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Black, 1958), 97–101.
17. Cf. *Dialogue* 61.1; 62.4; 129.4. Justin applied the description of “Wisdom” in Proverbs 8 to Christ (*Dialogue* 61; 129).
18. Louis Bouyer, *The Eternal Son* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978), 309.
19. John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 103.
20. See Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicaea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, trans. Conn O’Donovan (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 41.
21. Irenaeus is thought to have criticized Justin’s views (without naming him directly) in *Against Heresies* 4.20.5. See Behr, *Way to Nicaea*, 104–5. Cf. L. W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 100; Richard A. Burridge and Graham Gould, *Jesus Now and Then* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 161–62.
22. The translations of Melito’s works come from Stuart G. Hall, ed., *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha and Fragments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).
23. Adoptionism is the view that Jesus Christ was a mere human who was adopted as the Son of God, either at His baptism or after His resurrection.
24. Some might prefer to be more precise and say it was the “God-man” (Gk. *theanthropos*) who was murdered, being able to die in His humanity and not His deity.
25. This is the view that denies any permanent distinctions within the Godhead, believing that God has alternately revealed Himself through the temporary modes of Father, Son, and Spirit.
26. Campbell Bonner, *The Homily on the Passion by Melito Bishop of Sardis and Some Fragments of the Apocryphal Ezekiel* (London: Christophers, 1940), 27–28. See Hall, *Melito of Sardis*, xliii.
27. Fragment 15 Hall; new fragment 2.4 Hall. Other fragments of Melito also refer to Jesus Christ as “God” (frag. 6, 14), but Hall contests their authenticity (*Melito of Sardis*, xxviii–xxxix).
28. Hall, *Melito of Sardis*, xliii–xliv. See also Stuart G. Hall, “The Christology of Melito,” *Studia Patristica* 13 (1963):154–68.
29. Tertullian was the first writer to use the term *Trinity* (Latin *trinitatis*), around AD 212–13 (*Against Praxeas* 3). Prior to this, Theophilus of Antioch had used the term *triad* (Gk. *trias*), around AD 180 (*To Autolytus* 2.15). For examples of early tripartite formulas (outside the New Testament), see 1 *Clement* 46.6; 58.2; see also Ignatius, *Ephesians* 9.1; *Magnesians* 13.1.
30. Winslow speaks of Athenagoras’s “implicit subordination,” which is “even more deliberately stated in Justin Martyr” (Winslow, “Logos”).
31. Translation from William R. Schoedel, ed., *Athenagoras: Legatio and De Resurrectione* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1972).
32. Winslow, “Logos.”
33. For a good overview, see Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 79–92.
34. These were Jewish-Christian sects that lived according to the Jewish law and believed that Jesus was a nondivine prophet.
35. Quotations from Irenaeus’s *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* are taken from Joseph P. Smith, trans., *St. Irenaeus: Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1952).
36. Naturally, the Latin text would not contain the definite article.
37. Most likely the Latin text reflects a pagan concept of a divine figure, considering the author and recipient.
38. Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 102.
39. See note 26.
40. Melito’s fragment 6 speaks of Christ as having two “essences” (Gk. *ousiai*), one human and one divine, but this fragment may not be authentic. See Hall’s arguments against its authenticity in *Melito of Sardis*, xxx–xxxi; xliii–xliv.
41. Irenaeus uses both “essence” and “substance” (*Proof of Apostolic Preaching* 47).
42. Melito’s *On the Passover* 8 employs the word “nature” (Gk. *phusis*).
43. This refers to the doctrine that the fully divine Son of God was united to a perfect human nature, resulting in the union of two natures (divine and human) in one person. A fragment of an exposition of 2 Kings 6 attributed to Irenaeus speaks of the Logos “being united with the flesh, by a union natural and hypostatic.” But the fragment’s authenticity is frequently doubted.
44. D. F. Wright, *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. E. Ferguson, 2nd ed. (New York: Garland, 1997), s.v. “Trinity.” See Matt. 28:19–20 and 2 Cor. 13:14. Cf. Roch A. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ: Fundamentals of Christology*, rev. ed. (New York: Alba House, 2002), 189–90.
45. Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 650.
46. Brennan Hill, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1991), 211.
47. *Ibid.*, 211–12.
48. Kelly, 145–46.
49. Donald J. Goergen, *Jesus of Christian History* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 51. Cf. Kereszty, *Jesus Christ*, 222.
50. *The Little Labyrinth*, as found in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.28.