

was the Father. There is no contradiction when we realize that God the Father and the Holy Ghost are one and the same Spirit. Matthew 10:20; Ephesians 4:4; I Corinthians 3:16.

47. When Paul asked the Lord who He was, what was the answer? "I am Jesus." Acts 9:5.

48. While Stephen was dying, did he call God Jesus? Yes. Acts 7:59.

49. Did Thomas ever call Jesus God? Yes. John 20:28.

50. How could Jesus be the Savior, when God the Father said in Isaiah 43:11, "Beside me there is no saviour"? Because "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." II Corinthians 5:19.

51. Does the Bible say that Jesus was God with us? Yes. Matthew 1:23.

52. Did Jesus ever say, "I and my Father are one"? Yes. John 10:30.

53. Can it be proved scripturally that Jesus and the Father are one in the same sense that husband and wife are one? No. The Godhead was never compared to the relationship of a husband and wife. Jesus identified Himself with the Father in a way that husband and wife cannot be identified with each other. John 14:9-11.

54. Does the Bible say that there is only one wise God? Yes. Jude 25.

55. Does the Bible call the Holy Ghost a second or third person in the Godhead? No. The Holy Ghost is the one Spirit of God, the one God Himself at work in our lives. John 4:24; I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 12:13.

56. Can trinitarians show that three divine persons were present when Jesus was baptized by John? Absolutely not. The one, omnipresent God used three simultaneous manifestations. Only one divine person was present—Jesus Christ the Lord.

57. Then what were the other two of whom trinitarians speak? One was a voice from heaven; the other was the Spirit of God in the form of a dove. Matthew 3:16-17.

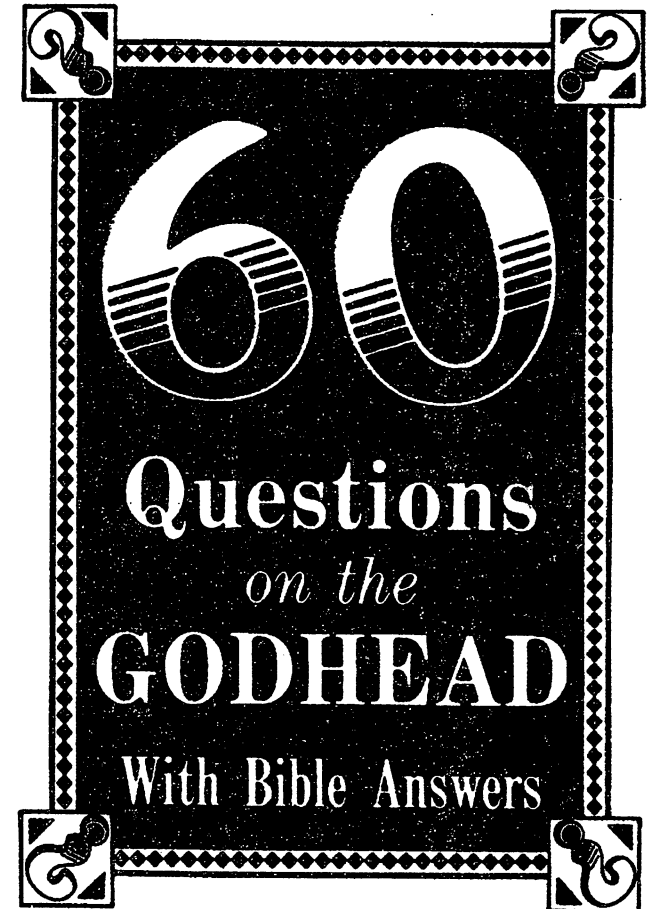
58. What did the voice say at Jesus' baptism? "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mark 1:11. As the Son of God, Jesus was the one God incarnate.

59. Does the Bible say that God shed His blood and that God laid down His life for us? Yes. Acts 20:28; I John 3:16. God was able to do this because He had taken upon Himself a human body.

60. The Bible says that God is coming back with all His saints (Zechariah 14:5) and also that Jesus is coming back with all His saints (I Thessalonians 3:13). Are two coming back? No. Only one is coming back—our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Titus 2:13.

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1. Is the word *trinity* in the Bible? No.
2. Does the Bible say that there are three persons in the Godhead? No.
3. Does the Bible speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Yes.

4. Do these titles as used in Matthew 28:19 mean that there are three separate and distinct persons in the Godhead? No, they refer to three offices, roles, or relationship to humanity.

5. Does the Bible use the word *three* in reference to God? Only one verse in the entire Bible does so—I John 5:7. It speaks of the Father, the Word (instead of Son), and the Holy Ghost, and it concludes by saying, "These three are one."

6. Does the Bible use the word *one* in reference to God? Yes, many times. For example, see Zechariah 14:9; Malachi 2:10; Matthew 23:9; Mark 12:29, 32; John 8:41; 10:30; Romans 3:30; I Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; I Timothy 2:5; James 2:19.

7. Can the mystery of the Godhead be understood? Yes. Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9; I Timothy 3:16.

8. Has the Christian only one Heavenly Father? Yes. Matthew 23:9.

9. Then why did Jesus say to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)? Because Jesus is the express image of God's person. Hebrews 1:3. The Greek word for *person* in this verse literally means "substance."

10. Does the Bible say that there are two persons in the Godhead? No.

11. Does the Bible say that all the Godhead is revealed in one person? Yes, in Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:19; 2:9; Hebrews 1:3.

12. Is the mystery of the Deity hidden from some people? Yes. Luke 10:21-22.

13. Who is the Father? The Father is the one God, particularly as revealed in parental relationship to humanity. Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10.

14. Where was God the Father while Jesus was on earth? The Father was in Christ. John 14:10; II Corinthians 5:19. He was also in heaven, for God is omnipresent.

15. Did the prophet Isaiah say that Jesus would be the Father? Yes. Isaiah 9:6; 63:16.

16. When God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26), was He speaking to another person in the Godhead? No. Isaiah 44:24; Malachi 2:10.

17. How many of God's qualities were in Christ? All. Colossians 2:9.

18. How may we see the God who sent Jesus into the world? By seeing Jesus. John 12:44-45; 14:9.

19. Does the Bible say that Jesus is the Almighty? Yes. Revelation 1:8.

20. Whom do some designate as the first person in the trinity? God the Father.

21. Whom do some designate as the last person in the trinity? The Holy Ghost. But Jesus said that *He* was the first and the last. Revelation 1:17-18.

22. How many persons did John see sitting on the throne in heaven? One. Revelation 4:2.

23. If Jesus is the first and the last, why did God say in Isaiah 44:6 that *He* was the first and the last? Because Jesus is the God of the Old Testament incarnate.

24. Did Jesus tell Satan that God alone should be worshiped? Yes. Matthew 4:10.

25. Does the devil believe in more than one God? No. James 2:19.

26. Does the Bible say that God, who is the Word, was made flesh? Yes. John 1:1, 14.

27. For what purpose was God manifested in the flesh? To save sinners. Hebrews 2:9, 14.

28. Was Jesus God manifested in the flesh? Yes. I Timothy 3:16.

29. Could Jesus have been on earth and in heaven at the same time? Yes. John 3:13.

30. Does the Bible say that there is but one Lord? Yes. Isaiah 45:18; Ephesians 4:5.

31. Does the Bible say that Christ is the Lord? Yes. Luke 2:11.

32. Does the Bible say that the Lord is God? Yes. I Kings 18:39; Zechariah 14:5; Acts 2:39; Revelation 19:1.

33. How could the church belong to Jesus (Matthew 16:18) and yet be the church of God (I Corinthians 10:32)? Because Jesus is God in the flesh.

34. Will God give His glory to another? No. Isaiah 42:8.

35. Was there a God formed before Jehovah, or will there be one formed after? No. Isaiah 43:10.

36. What is one thing that God does not know? Another God. Isaiah 44:8.

37. What is one thing that God cannot do? Lie. Titus 1:2.

38. How many Gods should we know? Only one. Hosea 13:4.

39. How many names has the Lord? One. Zechariah 14:9.

40. Is it good to think upon the name of the Lord? Yes. Malachi 3:16.

41. Does the Bible say that God alone treads upon the waves of the sea? Yes. Job 9:8.

42. Why, then, was Jesus able to walk upon the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:25)? Because He is God the Creator. Colossians 1:16.

43. Is God the only one who can forgive sin? Yes. Isaiah 43:25; Mark 2:7.

44. Why, then, could Jesus forgive sin in Mark 2:5-11? Because He is God the Savior.

45. Is Jesus the true God? Yes. I John 5:20.

46. If God and the Holy Ghost are two separate persons, which was the Father of Christ? Matthew 1:20 says that the Holy Ghost was the Father, while Romans 15:6, II Corinthians 11:31, and Ephesians 1:3 say that God

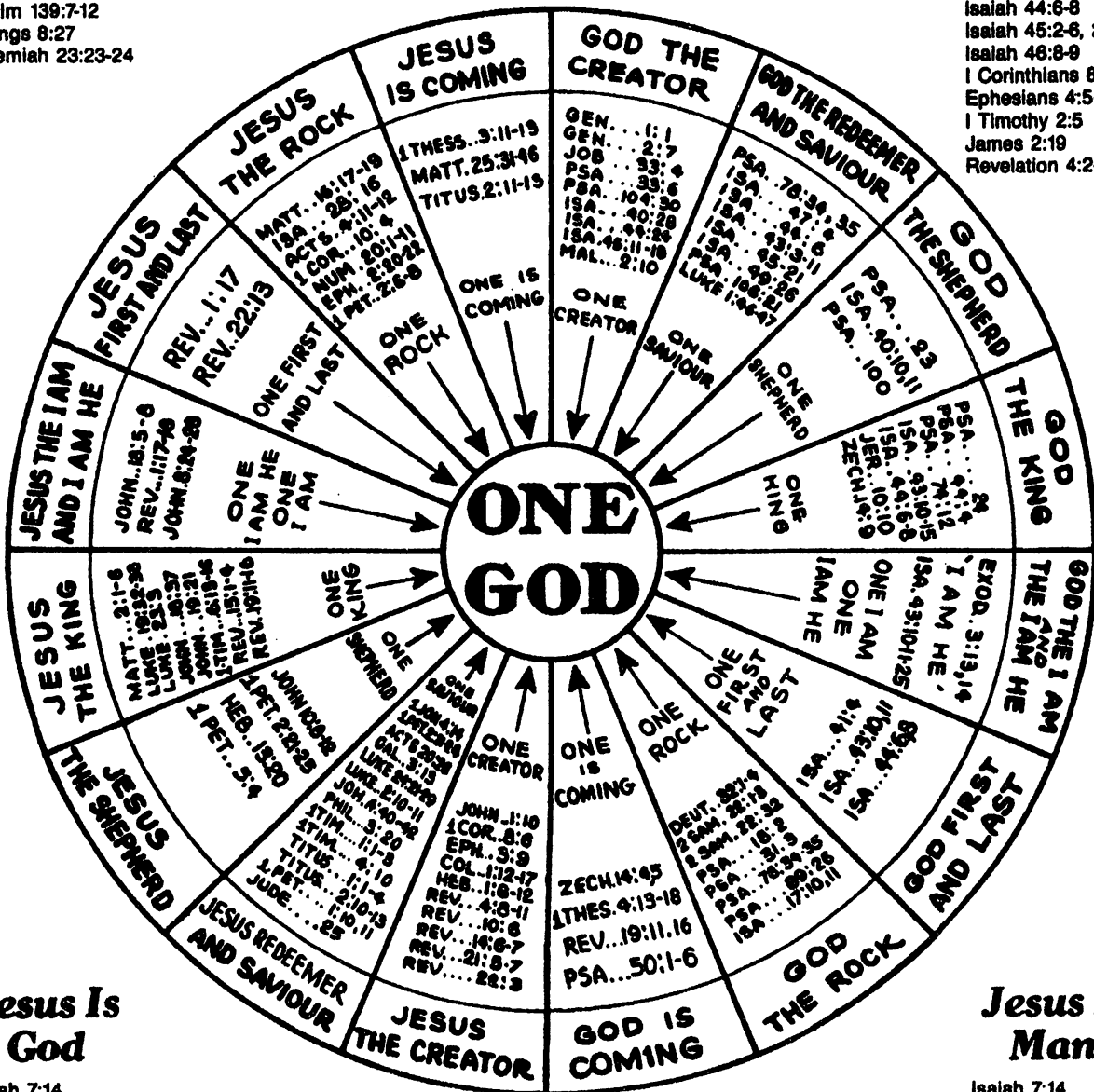
WHEEL OF PROPHECY WHO IS GOD?

God Is a Spirit

There Is But One God

John 4:23-24
Acts 7:48-49
Acts 17:24-28
Psalm 139:7-12
1 Kings 8:27
Jeremiah 23:23-24

Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Mark 12:28-34
Malachi 2:10
Isaiah 44:8-8
Isaiah 45:2-6, 21-23
Isaiah 48:8-9
1 Corinthians 8:4-6
Ephesians 4:5-6
1 Timothy 2:5
James 2:19
Revelation 4:2-3



Jesus Is God

Isaiah 7:14
Isaiah 9:6
Micah 5:2
John 1:1, 14
John 1:10
John 8:24, 58-59
John 14:6-11
1 Corinthians 5:19
1 Timothy 3:16

Jesus Is Man

Isaiah 7:14
Isaiah 9:6
Luke 1:31; 2:6-7
Acts 17:31
Galatians 4:4
Philippians 2:7-8
1 Timothy 2:5
Hebrews 4:15
Hebrews 7:24-25

Compiled by C. P. KILGORE
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Chapter 10. ONENESS BELIEVERS IN CHURCH HISTORY

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the Bible consistently teaches the oneness of God. However, the church world today would have us believe that throughout history the Christian church has accepted doctrine of the trinity. Is this really true? Were the church leaders in the post-apostolic age trinitarian? Were there any Oneness believers in church history?

From our research on this subject, we have come to three conclusions which we discuss in this chapter. 1. As far as we can tell, the early Christian leaders in the days immediately following the apostolic age were Oneness. It is certain that they did not teach the doctrine of the trinity as it later developed and as it exists today. 2. Even after the emergence of the trinitarian doctrine in the latter part of the second century, the doctrine of the trinity did not replace Oneness as the dominant belief until around 300 A.D., and it did not become universally established until late in the fourth century. 3. Even after trinitarianism became dominant, Oneness believers continued to exist throughout church history.

The Post-apostolic Age

Church historians agree that the doctrine of the trinity did not exist as we know it today in the immediate post-apostolic age. (See [Chapter 11 - TRINITARIANISM: DEFINITION AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT](#).) The Christian leaders following the apostles did not allude to a trinity, but rather they affirmed their belief in the monotheism of the Old Testament and accepted without question the deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ. [30] Since these leaders emphasized the doctrines associated with Oneness, it can be assumed that the post-apostolic church accepted the oneness of God.

The most prominent post-apostolic fathers were Hermas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Ignatius. Their ministries spanned the time from about 90 to 140 A.D.

Irenaeus, a prominent Christian leader who died around 200 A.D., had an intensely Christocentric theology and a firm belief that Jesus was God manifested in flesh. He held that the Logos which became incarnate in Jesus Christ was the mind of God, and was the Father Himself. [31]

Some scholars classify Irenaeus as a believer in the "economic trinity." This view holds that there is no eternal trinity but only a temporary one. It is very probable, therefore, that Irenaeus believed in a trinity of God's activities or roles rather than a trinity of eternal persons, and he expressed some Oneness concepts. He certainly did not articulate the later trinitarian dogma of three distinct co-equal persons.

We find no references to the trinity as such in the early post-apostolic writings; they refer only to one God and to Jesus as God. Possible references to an emerging trinitarian doctrine, however, appear in some second century writings, mainly in a few references that seem to point to a triune baptismal formula.

There are several possible explanations for these few apparent references to a trinitarian concept in these writings.

(1) Trinitarian readers and scholars may misunderstand these passages due to their own biases, just as they misinterpret Bible passages such as Matthew 28:19. (2) There is a strong possibility that later trinitarian copyists interpolated [added] passages of their own - a very common practice in church history. This is likely since the only existing copies of these early writings were written hundreds of years later than the originals. For example, an early writing called the *Didache* says communion should be administered only to those who are baptized in the name of the Lord, but it also mentions baptism in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. [32] However, the oldest existing copy of the *Didache* is dated 1056 A.D. [33] (3) No doubt false doctrine had already begun to creep into the church in some instances. In fact, false doctrines existed in apostolic days (Revelation 2-3), even false doctrine about Christ (II John 7; Jude 4). On balance, however, we conclude from historical evidence that the church leaders in the age immediately following the days of Christ's twelve apostles were Oneness believers.

Oneness the Dominant Belief In the Second and Third Centuries

We have indicated that Oneness was the only significant belief in the early second century with regard to the Godhead. Even when forms of binitarianism and trinitarianism began to develop they did not gain dominance until the latter part of the third century. During this time there were many notable Oneness leaders and teachers who opposed this shift in doctrine. (For

support of our assertion that Oneness was the predominant belief during the period immediately following the apostles, see the research paper entitled "Modalistic Monarchianism: Oneness in Early Church History" at the end of this chapter. This paper describes the major Oneness teachers and their doctrine at this period in church history.)

Modalistic Monarchianism

Modalistic monarchianism is the term most often used by church historians to refer to the Oneness view. *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines it as follows:

"Modalistic monarchianism, conceiving that the whole fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ, took exception to the 'subordination' of some church writers, and maintained that the names Father and Son were only different designations of the same subject, the one God, who 'with reference to the relations in which He had previously stood to the world is called the Father, but in reference to His appearance in humanity is called the Son.'" [34]

The most prominent modalist leaders were Noetus of Smyrna, Praxeas, and Sabellius. Noetus was Praxeas' teacher in Asia Minor, Praxeas preached in Rome about 190, and Sabellius preached in Rome about 215. [35] Since Sabellius was the best known modalist, historians often call the doctrine Sabellianism. Sabellius relied heavily upon Scripture, especially passages such as Exodus 20:3, Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 44:6, and John 10:38. [36] He said that God revealed Himself as Father in creation, Son in incarnation, and Holy Ghost in regeneration and sanctification. Some interpret this to mean that he believed these three manifestations were strictly successive in time. If so, he does not reflect the beliefs of older modalism or of modern Oneness.

Encyclopedia Britannica describes Sabellius' belief in this way: "His central proposition was to the effect that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the same person, three names thus being attached to one and the same being. What weighed most with Sabellius was the monotheistic interest." [37]

We get much of our information on the modalists from Tertullian (died c. 225), who wrote a treatise against Praxeas. In it he indicated that during his ministry "the majority of believers" adhered to the Oneness doctrine.

"The simple, indeed (I will not call them unwise and unlearned), who always constitute the majority of believers, are startled at the dispensation (of the Three in One), on the very ground that their very Rule of Faith withdraws them from the world's plurality of gods to the one only true God; not understanding that, although He is the one only God, He must yet be believed in with His own economy. The numerical order and distribution of the Trinity, they assume to be a division of the Unity." [38]

Oneness Believers from the Fourth Century to the Present

We have found evidence of many other Oneness believers throughout church history in addition to those described in the research paper presented in this chapter. We feel that the believers we have discovered represent only the tip of the iceberg. Some writers find evidence that the Oneness doctrine existed among the Priscillianists (c. 350 - c. 700), Euchites (c. 350 - c. 900), and Bogomils (c. 900 - c. 1400). [39] It appears that most Oneness believers did not leave a written record. Others had their written works destroyed by victorious opponents. Many were persecuted and martyred, and their movements were destroyed by official Christendom. We do not know how many Oneness believers and movements were not recorded in history, or how many so-called heretics were really Oneness believers. What we find, however, reveals that the Oneness belief survived in spite of its violent opposition.

In the Middle Ages, the prominent scholar and theologian Abelard (1079 - 1142) was accused of teaching Sabellian (Oneness) doctrine. [40] Eventually his enemies forced him to retire from teaching. He sought refuge at a monastery in Cluny, France, and there died.

The Reformation produced many who opposed the doctrine of the trinity in favor of the Oneness belief. One prominent antitrinitarian at the time of the Reformation was Michael Servetus (1511 - 1553), an eminent physician from Spain. He had only a few followers, although some historians consider him to be a motivating force for the development of Unitarianism. However, he definitely was not Unitarian, for he acknowledged Jesus as God. The following description of him clearly indicates he was a true Oneness believer: "The denial by Servetus of the tripersonality of the Godhead and the eternity of the Son, along with his anabaptism, made his system abhorrent to Catholics and Protestants alike, in spite of his intense Biblicism, his passionate devotion to the person of Christ, and his Christocentric scheme of the universe." [41]

Servetus wrote, "There is no other person of God but Christ... the entire Godhead of the Father is in him." [42] Servetus went so far as to call the doctrine of the trinity a three-headed monster. He believed it necessarily led to polytheism and was a delusion from the devil. He also believed that because the church accepted trinitarianism, God allowed it to come under the rule of the papacy and so to lose Christ. He could not understand why the Protestants would come out of Catholicism but still insist upon retaining the nonbiblical and man-made doctrine of the trinity.

Servetus was burned at the stake in 1553 for his Oneness belief, with the approval of John Calvin (although Calvin would have rather had him beheaded). [43]

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688 - 1772) was a Swedish philosopher and religious writer who expressed a good understanding of the oneness of God. He taught a number of other doctrines that are very different from what we believe, but he did have a revelation of who Jesus really is. He used the term *trinity* but said it was only "three modes of manifestation" and not a trinity of eternal persons. He used Colossians 2:9 to prove that all the "trinity" was in Jesus Christ, and he referred to Isaiah 9:6 and John 10:30 to prove that Jesus was the Father. He denied that the Son was begotten from eternity, holding the view that the Son of God was the humanity by which God sent Himself into the world. He also believed that Jesus was Jehovah God who assumed humanity in order to save mankind. Swedenborg wrote:

"Whoever does not approach the true God of heaven and earth, cannot have entrance into heaven, because heaven is heaven from that one only God, and that God is Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah the Lord, from eternity the Creator, in time the Redeemer, and to eternity the Regenerator: of consequence, who is at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and this is the Gospel which is to be preached." [44]

He saw God (Jesus) as composed of Father, Son, and Spirit just as man is composed of soul, body, and spirit - an analogy not particularly appropriate. However, Swedenborg's explanation of the Godhead is strikingly similar to that of modern Oneness believers.

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of Oneness writers. A Oneness believer in America was a Presbyterian minister named John Miller. In his book, *Is God a Trinity?* written in 1876, he used terminology slightly different from that of modern Oneness writers, but the beliefs he expressed are basically identical to those of Oneness believers today. It is amazing to read his book and see how closely he parallels modern Oneness teaching, including his treatment of Matthew 28:19. Miller believed that the doctrine of the trinity was not biblical and that it greatly hindered the church in reaching out to Jews and Moslems. He emphatically declared the full deity of Jesus Christ.

Oneness believers also existed in nineteenth century England. David Campbell reported finding a book written in 1828 that taught Oneness. [45] The author was John Clowes, pastor of St. John's Church in Manchester.

In the twentieth century, the most significant Oneness force has been the Oneness Pentecostals, although some scholars classify the noted neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth as modalist (Oneness). [46] Charles Parham, the first leader in the twentieth century Pentecostal movement, began to administer water baptism in Jesus' name, although he apparently did not link this practice with an explicit denial of trinitarianism. [47] After 1913, many Pentecostals rejected trinitarianism and the trinitarian baptismal formula, beginning the modern Oneness Pentecostal movement.

A number of Oneness Pentecostal organizations exist today. The major ones with headquarters in the United States of America are: The United Pentecostal Church International (by far the largest), The Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, The Bible Way Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide, The Assemblies of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, and The Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God. Oneness Pentecostal groups with headquarters in other countries include The United Pentecostal Church of Colombia, an indigenous church and the largest non Catholic church in the country; The Apostolic Church of the Faith in Christ Jesus, with headquarters in Mexico; the Oneness Pentecostal movement in the U.S.S.R.; and the True Jesus Church, an indigenous church founded by Chinese believers on the mainland but whose headquarters is now in Taiwan. There are many smaller organizations (approximately 130 worldwide), independent churches, and charismatic fellowships that are Oneness Pentecostal in doctrine.

In order to document further some of the statements made in this chapter we have reproduced below a research paper prepared in 1978 for a religion class at Rice University in Houston, Texas. In particular note two important conclusions in the first few paragraphs of this paper: (1) Trinitarianism was not solidly established prior to the end of the fourth century; (2) The vast majority of all Christians in the early post-apostolic church embraced Oneness, and it was the most powerful doctrine to oppose the views of trinitarianism as it gained acceptance among church leaders.

These conclusions and the information presented in the paper are not merely our own, but we have taken these from noted church historians and other reputable sources listed in the footnotes and bibliography.

MODALISTIC MONARCHIANISM: ONENESS IN EARLY CHURCH HISTORY

by David Bernard

What is the nature of God? What is the relationship of Jesus Christ to God? These two questions are fundamental to Christianity. The traditional answer of Christendom is given by its doctrine of the trinity. In the first few centuries of Christianity, however, this formulation was by no means the definitive one. In fact, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that in the second century A.D. "a Trinitarian solution was still in the future" and that Trinitarian dogma "was not solidly established... prior to the end of the 4th century." [48]

There were many explanations of the nature of God and Christ, several of which enjoyed widespread acceptance. One of the most important of these was *modalistic monarchianism*, which affirmed both the absolute oneness of the Godhead and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

According to the church historian Adolph Harnack, modalistic monarchianism was the most dangerous rival to trinitarianism in the period from 180 A.D. to 300 A.D. He concludes from passages in Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Origen that modalism was the official theory in Rome for almost a generation, and that it was at one time "embraced by the great majority of all Christians." [49]

Despite its evident importance, it is difficult to arrive at a complete description of what modalistic monarchianism really was. Some of the more prominent modalists were Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius, Epigonus, Cleomenes, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Commodian. At least two Roman bishops (later classified as popes), Callistus and Zephyrinus, were accused of being modalists by their opponents. It is difficult to obtain accurate information about these men and their beliefs because existing historical sources were all written by their trinitarian opponents who were intent upon disproving the doctrine of their antagonists.

Undoubtedly, the modalists' doctrine was misunderstood, misrepresented, and distorted in the process. It is impossible, therefore, to find a precise description of the beliefs of a particular modalist. However, by putting together different statements about these various men, it is possible to arrive at a fairly good understanding of modalism. For example, there were possibly some differences in the theologies of Noetus, Praxeas, Sabellius, and Marcellus; how serious is difficult to determine. It is certain, however, that each maintained the full deity of Jesus Christ while admitting of no distinction of persons in the Godhead.

The modalist doctrine is usually explained simply as the belief that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are only manifestations, or *modes*, of the one God (the *monarchia*), and not three distinct persons (*hypostases*). It should be distinguished from dynamic monarchianism which also upheld the oneness of God, but did so by claiming that Jesus was an inferior, subordinate being. More precisely, modalistic monarchianism is the belief that considers "Jesus as the incarnation of the Godhead" and "the Father incarnate." [50]

This view has the obvious advantage of upholding the strong Jewish monotheistic tradition while also asserting the early Christian belief in Jesus as God. At the same time it avoids the paradoxes and mysteries of the trinitarian dogma. However, the trinitarians argued that it did not adequately account for the Logos, the pre-existent Christ, or the biblical distinction between the Father and the Son. An analysis of modalism reveals how it answers these objections.

Not only did the modalistic monarchians have a different concept of God from that of the trinitarians, but they also had different definitions of the Logos and the Son. Their basic position was that the Logos (the *Word* in John 1) is not a distinct personal being but is united with God in much the same way as a man and his word. It is a power "indivisible and inseparable from the Father," as Justin Martyr described the belief. [51] For Marcellus, the Logos is God Himself, particularly as thought of in activity. [52] Thus, the trinitarian concept of the Logos as a separate being (based on the philosophy of Philo) was rejected. The modalists accepted the incarnation of the Logos in Christ, but for them that simply meant the extension of the Father in human form.

Closely allied with this idea is the modalistic definition of the Son. They maintained that the Son refers to the Father come in the flesh. Praxeas denied the pre-existence of the Son, using the term *Son* to apply only to the Incarnation. [53] The distinction between the Father and the Son is that *Father* refers to God in Himself, but *Son* refers to the Father as manifested in the flesh (in Jesus). The Spirit in Jesus was the Father, but *Son* refers specifically to the humanity of Jesus as well as deity. Plainly, then, the modalists did not mean that *Father* is interchangeable with *Son* in terminology. Rather, they meant that the two words do not imply separate hypostases (persons) of God but only different modes of the one God.

Putting the two concepts of Logos and Son together, we see how the modalists thought about Jesus. Noetus said that Jesus was the Son by reason of His birth, but He was also the Father. [54] The modalistic Logos doctrine identified the Spirit of Christ as the Father. The Incarnation was like a final theophany in which the Father is fully revealed. However, this was not Docetism (the belief that Jesus was a spirit being only), because both Praxeas and Noetus emphasized Jesus' human nature, especially his human frailties and sufferings. As in trinitarianism, Jesus was "very man and very God"; for the modalists, Jesus was the incarnation of the fulness of the Godhead and not just the incarnation of a separate person called the Son or Logos.

The most common objection made to modalistic monarchianism was that it was Patripassian; that is, it implied that the Father suffered and died. Tertullian was the first to so accuse the modalists. He interpreted modalism to mean that the Father is the same as the Son. But this would mean that the Father died, a clear impossibility. In this way, Tertullian sought to ridicule and refute modalism.

Later historians, taking Tertullian's argument as truth, have labelled the modalist doctrine as Patripassianism. However, Praxeas explained that while Jesus was the Father incarnate, Jesus died only as to His humanity, as the Son. Sabellius evidently answered the charge of Patripassianism in a similar way. [55]

The whole issue can easily be resolved by realizing that modalism did not teach, as Tertullian assumed, that the Father *is* the Son, but rather that the Father is *in* the Son. As Commodian said, "The Father went into the Son, one God everywhere." [56] Similarly, Sabellius explained that the Logos was not the Son but was clothed by the Son. [57] Other modalists in response to the charge explained that the Son suffered, while the Father sympathized or "suffered with." [58] By this they meant the Son, the man Jesus, suffered and died. The Father, the Spirit of God within Jesus, could not have suffered or died in any physical sense but yet He must have been affected by or have participated in the suffering of the flesh. Accordingly, Zephyrinus said, "I know only one God, Christ Jesus, and apart from Him no other who was born or could suffer... It was not the Father who died but the Son." [59]

From these statements, it seems clear that the modalists held that the Father was not flesh but was clothed or manifested in the flesh. The flesh died but the eternal Spirit did not. Therefore, Patripassianism is a misleading and inaccurate term to use for modalistic monarchianism.

Basically, then, modalistic monarchianism taught that God has no distinction of number but of name or mode only. The term *Son* refers to the Incarnation. This means that the Son is not an eternal nature, but a mode of God's activity made especially for the purpose of salvation of mankind. There is no pre-existent Son, but one can speak of the pre-existent Christ since the Spirit of Christ is God Himself. The Logos is seen as referring to God's activity. Jesus is therefore the Word or activity of the Father clothed in flesh. The Holy Spirit is not a separate being any more than the Logos. The term *Holy Spirit* describes what God is, and refers to God's power and action in the world. So, both the terms *Logos* and *Holy Spirit* refer to God Himself, in specific modes of activity.

The effect of modalistic monarchianism is to reaffirm the Old Testament concept of one, indivisible God who can and does manifest Himself and His power in many different ways. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is identified as that one God who has manifested Himself through incarnation in a human body. Modalism thus recognizes the full deity of Jesus, much more than trinitarianism does, which is exactly what the modalists claimed. [60] The fulness and completeness of God is in Jesus.

In summary, modalistic monarchianism can be defined as the belief that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifestations of the one God with no distinctions of person being possible. Furthermore, the one God is expressed fully in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Oneness of God