

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Modalism

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The heresy of Modalism is not as well known as Arianism. It has been called by many different names down through the centuries: Sabellianism, Patripassianism, Monarchianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, functionalism, Jesus Only, Father Only, and Oneness Pentecostalism. It was one of the earliest heresies to afflict the Christian Church.

Since most people have never heard of Modalism, the first thing we must do is explain what it teaches and how it relates to the doctrine of the Trinity. But this is not as easy as it seems. It is one of the most confusing and self-contradictory heresies in the history of the Christian Church.

ITS PAGAN ORIGINS

From the beginning, Modalism was based on the Platonic doctrine that God was an *indivisible* Monad and could not be divided into three separate Persons. Thus, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not to be viewed as three distinct Persons, but as three different manifestations, modes, administrations, disguises, roles, or offices of one and the same Person.

THE DIVINE ACTOR

When an actor puts on different masks or disguises in order to pretend to be several different characters during a play, he does not become more than one person. He is still one and the same person behind those masks. In the same way, according to Modalism, the "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit" are only three different masks or disguises which God puts on in the theater of history. There is only one Person behind the masks of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

TWO NATURES TALKING TO EACH OTHER

If this is true, then how can the Bible describe the Father speaking to the Son in such places as Matthew 3:17? If there is only one Person in the conversation, is He talking to Himself? the Modalist's typical answer is that the divine nature or the spirit of Jesus is talking to the human nature or the flesh of Jesus. Thus, the dual *natures* of Christ are talking to each other.

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Admittedly, this concept is quite confusing. How can two *natures* talk to each other? Doesn't a conversation require two *persons* interacting? How can one nature be the Master and the other nature the servant? How can one nature send the other nature to do a task for Him? the Modalist doctrine of the two natures of Christ talking to each other is a greater mystery than the trinity.

JESUS IS THE FATHER

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Who is this One Person? The first Modalists believed that the Father was the Person hiding behind the masks. Thus, if you removed the mask of the Son or the mask of the Holy Spirit, you would find the "Father only." It was, thus, the Father who was incarnate in the womb of the Virgin. It was the Father who lived on earth and died for our sins. It was even the Father who descended upon Jesus as the Holy Spirit at His baptism. It was the Father who was poured out on the day of Pentecost. The Son and the Holy Spirit are only the Father manifesting Himself in different disguises, ways, or modes.

THE FATHER IS JESUS

Instead of saying that "Jesus is the Father," most modern Modalists reverse the order and say that "the Father is Jesus." Jesus is the indivisible Person behind the masks of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And, once you remove those masks, you will see "Jesus only."

In the end, it does not really matter whether the one indivisible Person is the Father or Jesus because the trinity is destroyed either way. the main problem confronting both kinds of Modalists is that they begin with the *a priori* assumption that God is one *indivisible* Person and *cannot* be divided into more than one person. When they reject the trinity on this basis, they are simply arguing in a circle.

With these brief words of introduction, let us begin our study of Modalism with a historical analysis of its origins and ideas.

PRAXEAS

Modalism first made its appearance in the teachings of Praxeas (ca. 200).¹ All we know about him comes from those refuting him such as Tertullian. He believed that God was indivisible in nature and could only be one Person. Thus, the Son and the Holy Spirit were not separate persons from the Father. They were only the Father in different manifestations.

¹ Harold Brown, *Heresies*, 100.

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The two natures of Christ were reinterpreted by Praxeas to mean that; he Son of God is the human nature of Christ which had a beginning, while the divine nature or spirit of Christ is the Father who is eternal. Falling into the same error as the Gnostics, Praxeas made a distinction between the man Jesus and the Christ.

The only reason Praxeas gained a hearing for his strange doctrine was that he had suffered persecution for the faith in Asia. Using his status as a martyr, he gained a hearing in Rome for his new doctrine. When the Trinitarians began to confront him, he fled to North Africa and ended up in Carthage.

While in Carthage, Tertullian (a.d. 125–220) convinced Praxeas of the error of his ways and Praxeas gave a public recantation of his doctrines. But this was not to last. Praxeas eventually returned to his heresies and Tertullian responded by writing an entire volume against him. He introduced his discussion with these words:

In various ways has the devil rivaled and resisted the truth. Sometimes his aim has been to destroy the truth by defending it. He maintains that there is only one Lord, the Almighty Creator of the world, in order that out of this doctrine of the unity he may fabricate a heresy. He says that the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ.... By this Praxeas did a two-fold service for the devil at Rome: he drove away prophecy, and he brought in heresy; he put to flight the Paraclete, and crucified the Father. ... In the course of time, then, the Father forsooth was born, and the Father suffered, God Himself, the Lord Almighty, whom in their preaching they declare to be Jesus Christ.²

Tertullian's tough-minded Christianity seems out of place in this present age of latitudinarianism. But the early Fathers had to deal with many grave heresies which threatened the churches over which they had spiritual oversight (Acts 20:28–30). They knew that there was a Day of Judgment when they would have to give an account of their ministry (Heb. 13:17). They knew that part of the responsibility of being a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the task of refuting religious error, i.e., apologetics (Jude 3). According to Scripture, a presbyter must:

Titus 1:9–11 ... be able *both* to exhort in sound doctrine *and* to *refute those who contradict*. For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision *who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families; teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain.*

² *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:597.

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We must also keep in mind that Tertullian knew Praxeas personally and that he felt betrayed by his return to heresy.

PATRIPASSIANISM

Because the Modalists were saying that it was actually the Father who was born, lived, died on the cross, arose, and ascended into heaven, while *pretending* to the Son of God, the term Patripassianism was developed by combining the Latin words *pater* (father) and *passus* (from *pator* "to suffer"). This word patripassianism, this, refers to the suffering of the Father when He appeared on earth as the Son of God.



NOETUS

The second Modalist to arise was Noetus (ca. 190). He was probably a native of Smyrna who became a presbyter in Ephesus. He taught that the Father was the Son, and the Son was the Father. The other presbyters complained about his teachings and a council was called at Smyrna.

At the council, Noetus evaded all accusations by claiming that he was being taken out of context and that he was really orthodox in his views of the Trinity. But shortly afterwards, having gained a few disciples, he openly proclaimed what he had denied before the council.

Noetus was then called before a second council at Smyrna, but this time he did not hide his views, but openly defended them. He was excommunicated for heresy. But this did not stop Noetus. He alleged that he was Moses and that his brother was Aaron! He then set up his own school and continued to teach his doctrines. But he died shortly after and his school perished.

The third century church Father Hippolytus (a.d. 170–236), in his famous work *The Refutation of All Heresies*, dedicated book IX to Noetus:

There has appeared one, Noetus by name, and by birth a native of Smyrna. this person introduced a heresy from the tenets of Heraclitus. Now a certain man called Epigonus becomes his minister and pupil, and this person during his sojourn at Rome disseminated his godless opinion.³

³ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5:125.

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Hippolytus went on to name Cleomenes, Bishop Zephyrinus, and (Bishop Callistus as followers of Noetus. He then traced the heresy of Modalism back to its roots in the pagan Greek philosophy of Heraclitus (chap. III).

Heraclitus' concept of the Monad (God) as being *indivisible* in essence, but able to *manifest* itself in many different ways was the core concept underlying Noetus' as well as Praxeas' view of God. McClintock and Strong comment:

The Monarchian controversy arose from the intrusion into Christian doctrine of heathen philosophy; and the affiliation of Noetus to Heraclitus is a strong proof of the truth of this assertion.⁴

SABELLIUS

Although we do not know much about Sabellius, his name became so firmly connected with Modalism that it became known as "Sabellianism." He was more philosophically sophisticated than Noetus or Praxeas. He was condemned in Rome as a heretic in 263 a.d. by Bishop Dionysius.

Instead of saying that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are only manifestations or revelations of the one God:

Sabellius, who may have had some connection with the Roman bishop Callistus, allegedly taught that God was a monad with three energies that appeared in history for the purpose of creation and salvation as "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit."⁵

The influence of Sabellius can be seen later in the teachings of:

Marcellus of Ancyra, a critic of Arius, who was condemned in the east in 336 for holding to a form of Sabellianism but was acquitted in the west; he taught that God was a monad who became a triad only for the purpose of salvation. He and his pupil Photinus were condemned at the Council of Constantinople (381).⁶

THE JUDGMENT OF THE EARLY CHURCH

In whatever form Modalism appeared, it was universally condemned by both the Greek and Latin Church. Tertullian concludes his refutation of Modalism with these words:

⁴ McClintock and Strong, 7:156.

⁵ *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 611.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 612.

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Away, then, with those “Antichrists who deny the Father and the Son.” For they deny the Father, when they say that He is the same as the Son; and they deny the Son, when they suppose him to be the same as the Father, by assigning to Them things which are not *Theirs*, and taking away from them things which are *Theirs*. But “whosoever shall confess that (Jesus) Christ is the Son of God (not the Father), “God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”⁷

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Tertullian’s words may seem harsh to those who have never suffered for their faith. But the early Fathers were men of iron who had been forged in the fierce fires of persecution. Since they were willing to *die* for what they believed, they did not hesitate to defend it vigorously whenever it was attacked.

GNOSTICISM AND MODALISM

Modalism was a natural reaction to Gnosticism’s cold, abstract deity who never got involved with man or his salvation. The Modalist’s god came to earth where he suffered and died for our salvation. This is why they thought they were glorifying Christ when they said that he was a manifestation of the Father. But by denying His personhood, they actually reduced the birth, life and death of the Son of God to a mere charade.

ARIANISM AND MODALISM

Modalism’s adoption of Plato’s concept of the indivisibility of the divine Monad paved the way for the rise of Arianism. It was just as easy for Arius to conclude from the indivisibility of the Monad that the Son and the Holy Spirit were not God as it was for Sabellius to conclude that the Son and the Holy Spirit were not Persons. While Arius may have publicly rejected Sabellius, he was just as guilty of drinking from the same poisoned well of Greek philosophy.

SWEDENBORGIANISM AND MODALISM

Modalism disappeared for most of church history until we come to the Late 1700s. the great scientist, politician, and mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), was the founder of modern Modalism. As Colin Wilson points out in his history of the occult:

The greatest occultist of the eighteenth century ... Emanuel Swedenborg was a natural medium, although his powers developed late in life.⁸

⁷ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 3:627.

⁸ Colin Wilson, *The Occult* (New York: Random, 1971), 277.

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Swedenborg's occultic teachings were later adopted by Freemasonry and can still be found in some of its higher degrees. He also became known for his many strange beliefs. For example, he stated in his book *Conjugal Love*, that extra-marital affairs with mistresses and concubines were acceptable under the right circumstances!⁹ In 1784, he had a dream in which he saw snakes in his hair. When he awoke, he said that the snakes were the departed spirits of Quakers.¹⁰

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Beginning in 1744, Swedenborg had a series of dreams in which he supposedly received divine revelations. It was revealed to him that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity was wrong. God was not three Persons, but one Person, and this one Person was the Lord Jesus Christ:

Instead of a trinity of Persons there is a trinity of Person.... A trinity of Person is this: that the Lord's Divine [nature] is the Father, the Divine Humanity the Son and the proceeding Divine the Holy Spirit ... for the Divine is not divisible."¹¹

He had both a Divine [nature] and a human [nature] ... from the mother Mary in time.¹²

God is one in both Person and essence; that the trinity is in Him; and that this God is the Lord [Jesus]."¹³

God is one in person and essence in whom there is a trinity, and that this God is the Lord [Jesus]; and also that the trinity in Him is called the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and that the Divine from which, [Creative Divine] is called the Father; the Human Divine, the Son; and the proceeding Divine, the Holy Spirit ... it is not in accord with enlightened reason to recognize the proceeding Divine as a Divine, *per se*, and to call it God, and, thus, divide God.¹⁴

God is one in person and essence ... and the Lord [Jesus] is that God.... How can the Divine essence, which is infinite, be divided?¹⁵

Gather up the reasons, then, and consider whether there is any other God of the universe than the Lord [Jesus] alone, in whom the essential Divine, from which are all things, is that which we called the Father; the Divine Human is that which

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 278.

¹¹ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Four Doctrines* (New York: Swedenborg, 1914), 182.

¹² Ibid., 185.

¹³ Ibid., 188.

¹⁴ Emanuel Swedenborg, *Divine Lover and Wisdom* (New York: Swedenborg, 1914), 137–139.

¹⁵ Emanuel Swedenborg, *The Divine Providence* (New York: Swedenborg, 1914), 137–138.

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we called the Son” and the Divine going forth is called the Holy Spirit; thus that God is one in person and in essence, and that the Lord [Jesus] is that God.”¹⁶

From the citations above, it is clear that Swedenborg like Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius began by assuming the Platonic concept of the indivisibility of God. Thus, his rejection of the Trinity was certain from the outset.

His unique contribution was that he revived the ancient heresy that the two natures of Christ meant that the Divine nature was the Father and the human nature was the Son and the “proceeding” (even he admitted he did not know what that was) was the Holy Spirit. Jesus was, thus, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

One last point about Swedenborg: since he was an occultist and received his doctrine of Modalism from the spirit world, the warning of the Apostle Paul seems highly appropriate:

1 Tim. 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, *paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.*

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Swedenborg’s modalistic interpretation of the two natures of Christ was defended in 1874 by F. H. Burris in his book *The Trinity*.¹⁷ And then again in 1876 by John Miller in his book *Is The Trinity True*¹⁸ In the same year, Robert Weeks published his book *Jehovah Jesus*. In it he states:

The Lord Jesus Christ, in his divine nature, is not “God the Son” but the one only indivisible and undivided God, in all His fullness.”¹⁹

He [i.e. Jesus] is not God the Son, but God the Father.²⁰

He was, then, God the Father, or not God at all.²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 368–369.

¹⁷ F. H. Burns, *The Trinity* (Chicago: Griggs, 1874).

¹⁸ John Miller, *Is God a Trinity?* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1975 reprint of 1876 ed.)

¹⁹ Robert Weeks, *Jehovah Jesus* (New York: Meed, 1876), 49.

²⁰ Ibid., 50.

²¹ Ibid., 53.

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All the fullness of the Godhead" must include **God the Father**" God the Son and God the Holy Ghost.²²

The divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ was and is GOD THE FATHER, *not* "God the Son;" that he is the one only undivided and indivisible God, in all the perfection of his being and attributes.²³

Notice that Weeks like Swedenborg begins with the Platonic doctrine of the indivisibility of God as the *a priori* basis of his rejection of the Trinity. He also followed Swedenborg's interpretation of the two natures of Christ.

MODALISM TODAY

In 1913, a Pentecostal preacher (some say McAlister, while others say Schaefer) during a camp meeting in Arroyo Seco, California, had a "revelation" in which he was told that they should not use the Trinitarian baptismal formula given in Matthew 28:19. Instead, they should baptize "in Jesus name only."

In order to justify this new "revelation," it was not long before R.E. McAlister, John Schaefer, Frank Ewart, Glen Cook, and many others came to the conclusion that Jesus was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These events soon developed into a "Jesus Only" or "Oneness Pentecostal" movement. A great deal of controversy was created, until the Oneness people were cast out of the Assemblies of God.

The United Pentecostals, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Church of the Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Church of Jesus, and over a hundred other "Jesus Only" groups teach that Jesus is the Person who manifests Himself as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, they baptize in the name of "Jesus only" instead of in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In contrast to the above, there are "Father Only" Pentecostal churches which believe that it is the Father who manifested Himself as the Son and the Holy Spirit. They, likewise, reject the Trinitarian formula and baptize in the name of the "Father Only."²⁴

²² Ibid., 57.

²³ Ibid., 58.

²⁴ Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects in America* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 104–105.

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SWEDENBORGIANISM AND ONENESS PENTECOSTALS

The link between the occultist Swedenborg and modern “Oneness” Pentecostals is admitted by Dr. David Bernard, who is a leading United Pentecostal theologian. According to Bernard:

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 manifestations” and not a trinity of eternal persons. He used Col. 2:9 to prove that all the “trinity” was in Jesus Christ and he referred to Isa. 9:6 and John 10:30 to prove that Jesus was the Father ... He saw God (Jesus) as composed of Father, Son, and Spirit.... Swedenborg’s explanation of the Godhead is strikingly similar to that of modern Oneness believers.²⁵

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MODALISM AND GNOSTICISM

The Gnostics felt superior to everyone else because they were the recipients of private revelations, dreams, and visions. While the Christians were busy “examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11), the Gnostics obtained their doctrines directly through private revelation.

Modalism has always had a Gnostic dependence on private revelations, dreams and visions. The revelations supposedly received by Swedenborg, McAlister, Schaefer, and others produced the modern Oneness movement. One of their chief historians Frank J. Ewart states:

I consider the revelation of the Oneness of God to be fundamental to participation in the “faith once delivered to the saints.”²⁶

Ewart goes on to say that the *basis* of Oneness theology is:

an experience, and not some theological premise that had been developed after years of study and re-evaluation.²⁷

²⁵ David K. Bernard, *The Oneness of God* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1983), 243–244. The many other Oneness books we consulted are listed in the bibliography.

²⁶ Frank J. Ewart, *The Phenomenon of Pentecost* (Hazelwood, MO: World Aflame, 1947), 67.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

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The undue dependence on private revelation instead of the careful study of Scripture has always been the mother of heresy. This is why Scripture condemns those who depend upon private revelations for doctrinal truth:

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self abasement and the worship of the angels, *taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.* (Col. 2:18)

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The Renaissance New Testament translates the verse as follows:

Let no self-appointed umpire disqualify you because of affected humility and worship of angels, rationalizing about visions he has seen because he is puffed up with stupid theories which have their source in the rationalization of his depraved nature.²⁸

William Hendriksen comments:

This man *pretends* (perhaps even *believed*) to have seen something, and he presumes on this experience he has had. He makes the most of it. If any one ventures to contradict him or to question the truth of his theories, he will answer, "But I have seen such and such a vision." In saying this and in relating the vision he will, of course, assume an air of deep insight into divinely revealed mysteries. He prides himself on what he regards as his superior knowledge.... He is, continues Paul, **without cause puffed up by his fleshly mind.** Note, "without cause," that is, though he is filled with an exalted opinion of himself, he has no good reason to feel this way. His mind, moreover, is distinctly *the mind of the flesh*, the attitude or disposition of heart and mind *apart from regenerating grace.*²⁹

Instead of being proud over their visions, dreams, and revelations, the Modalists should be ashamed. They need to search the Scriptures instead of following the erroneous revelations of pretended modern day visionaries.

THE ARGUMENTS OF MODALISTS

The arguments advanced by modern Modalists are usually borrowed from the 19th century Unitarians or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Dr. David Bernard is one of the best teachers the United Pentecostals ever produced. We will use his book *The Oneness of God* as an example of the standard Oneness arguments against the Trinity.

²⁸ Ibid., 15:74.

²⁹ Hendriksen, *Colossians*, 145–146.

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TEN BASIC ARGUMENTS

Dr. Bernard gives ten basic arguments against the Trinity:

1. Trinitarians are guilty of polytheism in that they actually believe in three gods.³⁰ This is why he spends a great deal of time proving monotheism, as if it disproved the Trinity.
2. "The terminology of trinitarianism is not biblical."³¹ It is very important to Oneness people that the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible. This is one of Dr. Bernard's "big" arguments. Yet, their own theological words such as "Oneness," "modes" "manifestations," etc., are not found in the Bible *either*.
3. The Trinity was a 4th century invention.³²
4. "Trinitarianism has its roots in paganism."³³
5. It was borrowed from Greek philosophy.³⁴
6. "It is not logical."³⁵
7. "It contradicts many specific verses of Scripture."³⁶
8. "No one can understand or explain it rationally, not even those who advocate it."³⁷
9. Since the doctrine of the Trinity is said to be a "mystery," this is proof that it is in error.³⁸
10. The Trinity doctrine is self-contradictory.³⁹ To prove this he gives 26 trick questions, most of which appeared long ago in *Watchtower* magazines and books.

³⁰ Bernard, *The Oneness of God*, 288.

³¹ Ibid., 286.

³² Ibid., 263.

³³ Ibid., 264–265.

³⁴ Ibid., 266–268.

³⁵ Ibid., 294.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 289.

³⁹ Ibid., 290.

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OUR ANALYSIS

Since we have already dealt with these arguments in our chapter on Arianism, we refer the reader to the previous chapter. The objections raised against the Trinity doctrine are usually self-refuting. For example, Dr. Bernard criticizes the doctrine of the Trinity because:

... the Trinity is a mystery our finite human minds cannot comprehend fully.⁴⁰

He then urges his readers to reject the Trinity on the basis of its admitted incomprehensibility. Yet, elsewhere in the same book, he admits that much of what he believes about God transcends human reason!⁴¹ In our chapter on the incomprehensibility of God, we demonstrated that both the Old and New Testaments teach that God exceeds the finite capacity of the human mind.

THE TWENTY-SIX LOGICAL FALLACIES

The 26 trick questions posed by Bernard would be a good exercise for a first year logic class when it comes to identifying logical fallacies. Each question is based upon one or more logical errors. For example, he asks:

If Father and Son are co-equal persons, why did Jesus pray to the Father?⁴²

This question is based on the categorical fallacy of confusing the ontological Trinity with the economical Trinity and the pre-existence of Christ with the Incarnation. It is also a straw man argument for what Trinitarian teaches that the historical, economical relationship of the Father to the Son *after* the Incarnation is the same as their eternal, ontological relationship *before* the Incarnation?

At the Incarnation, the Son of God humbled Himself and became a man (Phil. 2:2–7). As a man, he was dependent for all things upon the One who sent Him.

Another trick question raised by Bernard is:

If the Son is eternal and existed at creation, who was His mother at that time?⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid., 257.

⁴¹ Ibid., 26, 33, 63, 64, etc.

⁴² Ibid., 290.

⁴³ Ibid., 290.

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This is what is called in logic a “nonsense” question. It is as irrational as asking, “Can you draw a square circle?” An *eternal* Son by definition cannot have a mother.

Bernard then tries to pit the eternal immutability of the pre-Incarnate Son of God against the temporality of the Messianic kingdom He established when on earth:

If the Son is eternal and immutable (unchangeable), how can the reign of the Son have an end?⁴⁴

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This question is a straw man argument. Trinitarians do not believe that the Messianic kingdom is eternal. It *began* with the ministry of Christ on earth and was established when He was sat down at the right hand of the Father in heaven and will *end* when He returns in glory (1 Cor. 15:20–27). This question is also the categorical fallacy of confusing the ontological Trinity with the economical Trinity.

JESUS IS THE FATHER

Bernard believes that when the Bible speaks about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is actually talking about Jesus. Thus, he had to prove that Jesus is the Father. His first proof that Jesus is the Father is a logical syllogism:

If there is only one God and that God is the Father (Mal. 2:10), and if Jesus is God, then it logically follows that Jesus is the Father.⁴⁵

This syllogism is interesting. If A (there is only one X) is true and B (the Father is X) is true and C (Jesus is X) is true, then Jesus is the Father according to Bernard. But there is no way you can logically deduce that Jesus is the Father from this syllogism. The distributed term is X (God) and not Jesus. Thus, the only thing you can logically deduce from this syllogism is that, if there is only one God and the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each God, then the Three must be God. This deduction supports the Trinity.

THE BIBLICAL ARGUMENTS

Besides the sophomoric trick questions, Dr. Bernard puts forth a number of Scriptures which he feels proves that Jesus is the Father and the Holy Spirit. His basic working presupposition which guides his interpretation of the Bible is the Platonic doctrine of the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 291.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 66.

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indivisibility of God. He both begins and ends with the assumption that God is absolutely and indivisibly one in Person.⁴⁶

This is once again circular reasoning. If you *begin* by *defining* God in such a way that the Trinity is *not* possible, then it is no big surprise if you conclude that the Trinity is not possible! You are returning full circle to where you first began.

The vast majority of the biblical passages advanced by Dr. Bernard do not prove that Jesus is the Father. For example, proving that Jesus is God does not prove that He is the Father. Hence, Bernard needlessly spends many pages proving the deity of Christ, as if Trinitarians did not accept the doctrine.

THE NAME OF JESUS IS THE FATHER

Bernard first attempts to prove that the Jesus is the Father by pointing out that the name “Father” is one of the names of Jesus according to Isaiah 9:6. He assumes as an *a priori* given that if “Father” is a name of Jesus, then this must mean that Jesus is God the Father. But Bernard’s argument is not logically valid. He is guilty of the fallacy of equivocation because the name “Father” can have several different meanings. For example, I am called “Father” by my children. Does this mean that I am God the Father? Of course not.

In the same way, just because Jesus is called “Father” in Isaiah 9:6, this does not necessarily mean that He is God the Father. The name “Father” can have numerous meanings. It is not enough to quote Isaiah 9:6 as a “proof text” and then go merrily on your way as if you have proven that Jesus is God the Father.

In its context, Isaiah 9:6 calls Jesus “Father” in the sense of His being the Origin or Source of eternal life, i.e., salvation. It is the Messiah’s work of redemption that is in view.

Bernard then sets forth another passage in which he thinks that “Father” is a name of Jesus.

JOHN 5:43

“I have come *in My Father’s name*, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him.”

Dr. Bernard believes that in this verse “Father” is the name of Jesus:

⁴⁶ David K. Bernard, *Essential Doctrines of the Bible* (Hazelwood, MO World Aflame, 1988), 7.

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It is important to note that the name of the Father is Jesus, for this name fully reveals and expresses the Father. In John 5:43, Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name."⁴⁷

If the phrase "coming in the name of" means that you are the person in whose name you are coming, then we are all in big trouble! David said to the Philistines:

"You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but *I come to you in the name of [Yahweh] of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted.*" (1 Sam. 17:45)

If Bernard's reasoning is correct, then David's name is "Yahweh of Hosts" and "the God of the armies of Israel." Of course, such an idea is ridiculous. The phrase "in the name of" means "by the authority of." Jesus did things by the *authority* of the Father.

JESUS IS THE FATHER

Bernard now attempts to demonstrate that there are passages in the Bible where Jesus is the Father. One of the favorite passages of Modalists down through the ages is Zechariah 12:10

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him" as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born."

וְשִׁפְכִי עַל־בֵּית דָּוִיד וְעַל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם רוּחַ חֵן וְתַחֲנוּנִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקְרוּ וְסָפְדוּ עָלַי כְּמִסְפָּד
עַל־הַיָּחִיד וְהָמַר עָלַי כְּהָמַר עַל־הַבְּכוֹר:

The Oneness argument is quite simple. Since it is Jesus who died on the cross and the Father is pictured in Zechariah 12:10 as the One who died on the cross, then Jesus is the Father.

This verse has been a battle ground for many centuries. David Cooper comments:

This passage, though very plain, has been a storm-center of ceaseless controversy and has been translated differently, according to theological bias, by different ones.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *The Oneness of God*, 126.

⁴⁸ Cooper, 201.

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Thomas Moore supplies us with the reason *why* it is so controversial:

This passage has always been regarded as one of no small difficulty; at least, the expositors have found no small difficulty with it, from the fact that *if its obvious meaning be admitted, a real prophecy and a suffering and yet divine Messiah must also be admitted ... so that if it refers to the Messiah, he cannot be a mere man, but must be divine.*

Hence, the only meaning that the text will bear is, that Jehovah is the speaker, and that he is speaking of himself, and the manner in which he has been treated by his people and will be hereafter.⁴⁹

In his commentary on Zechariah, David Baron introduces the verse by pointing out that “there is not another scripture in the Old Testament around which more controversy has raged.”⁵⁰

The problem arises because the One who is pierced is clearly Yahweh according to verse 1:

Zech 12:1 The burden of the word of [Yahweh] (יְהוָה) concerning Israel. Thus declares [Yahweh] (יְהוָה) who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him.

To the dismay of Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, rationalists, and Arians, this passage reveals that the Speaker who is pierced is Yahweh. But a “pierced God” is too close to the Christian doctrine of the death of Christ. Thus, they go to extreme lengths in order to avoid the obvious meaning of the text. But the Hebrew text is as clear as the English:

וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקְדְּקוּ

And they will look on Me whom they have pierced. (Zec 12:10).

Several comments are in order.

First, there are no textual difficulties with the word אֵלַי (to Me). There are no variant readings in the Hebrew Text or in the Septuagint, Talmud, Targum, or even in the Latin Vulgate. Thus, the attempt of some modern Jews to change אֵלַי (to me) to אֵלָיו (to him) is

⁴⁹ Thomas V. Moore, *Zechariah* (London: Banner of Truth, 1968), 198–200.

⁵⁰ David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962), 437.

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without justification.⁵¹ That some English translations have changed the wording to “him” instead of “me” is abominable.⁵²

Second, neither is there any doubt that the word דָּקְרוּ should be translated “they have pierced.” The word דָּקְרוּ means to be “pierced.”⁵³ It is used eleven times in the Old Testament and has no other meaning.⁵⁴

Third, there is no justification whatsoever for moving the verse from its position in 12:10 to 13:3, as Lowe suggests.⁵⁵ Such a “scissors and paste” approach to the Hebrew text is simply outrageous.

The history of the interpretation of Zechariah 12:10 is interesting. The Babylonian Talmud gives the interpretation that the One pierced was the Messiah:

What is the cause of the mourning? R. Dosa and the Rabbis differ on this point. One explained, The cause is the slaying of Messiah the son of Joseph, and the other explained, The cause is the slaying of the Evil Inclination. It is well according to him who explains that the cause is the slaying of the Messiah the son of Joseph” since that well agrees with the Scriptural verse, *And they shall look upon me because they have thrust him through” and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.*⁵⁶

The Rabbis correctly translated לִי as “to me” but then violated the grammar of the Hebrew text by making the verb “pierced” modify “him” instead of “me.” In this way, they made it clear that the Messiah was the One pierced.

From this passage and many other rabbinic references, it is clear that the majority of the Rabbis viewed Zechariah 12:10 as prophesying that the Messiah would be pierced. this is important to point out because some modern Jews claim that this Messianic interpretation is a “Christian” error.⁵⁷

⁵¹ See Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, II:438 for a discussion of this point.

⁵² For example, *The New Berkley Version* reads, “they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.”

⁵³ BDB, 201.

⁵⁴ (i.e., Num. 25:8; Judg., 9:54; 1 Sam. 31:4, etc.) Some have tried to argue that in Lamentations 4:9 the word does not mean “pierce.” But the words “pierced by the sword” and “pierced by hunger” are examples of Hebrew parallelism and mean that while hunger will kill you just as surely as a sword, hunger takes longer and hence means more suffering. Thus, being pierced through by hunger is the same thing as being pierced through by a sword. Either way you end up dead.

⁵⁵ Ellicott, 5:588–589.

⁵⁶ *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Socino, 1938) MO'ED 3, Sukkah, p. 246, see also 247.

⁵⁷ For a listing of rabbinic comments see David Cooper, 200–208 and David Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1962), 437–455.

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The Christian Church has always interpreted the One pierced as the Son and not the Father. This is why the early Christians rejected Praxeas who was the father of “patripassianism” which taught that:

the Father Himself came down into the Virgin, was Himself born of her, Himself suffered, indeed was Himself Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

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Modern patripassianists, such as the United Pentecostals, have interpreted Zechariah 12:10 to mean that the Father is Jesus who is pierced. But this is not how the New Testament interprets it. In John’s Gospel, we find that Zechariah 12:10 was fulfilled when the Son of God was pierced by a spear while He hung on the cross:

John 19:32–34, 36–37 The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.... For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “Not A Bone Of Him Shall Be Broken.” And again another Scripture says, “They Shall Look On Him Whom They Have Pierced.”

The apostle John clearly viewed Zechariah 12:10 as being fulfilled when the soldier pierced the crucified body of the Son on the cross. In the book of Revelation, he gives this same interpretation again:

Rev. 1:7 Behold, He Is Coming With The Clouds, and every eye will see Him, *even those who pierced Him*; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.

The Messiah is the One who is pierced as well as the Son who is mourned. Zechariah 12:10, therefore, does not refer to all three Persons of the Trinity, but only to the Son and to the Spirit. This interpretation is the only one which does justice to the other messianic prophecies, such as Zechariah 13:7, which also refer to the Messiah (Matt. 26:31).

PHILIPPIANS 2:9–11

Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him *the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus Every Knee Should Bow*, of those who are

⁵⁸ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 3:597. For a discussion of this heresy, see Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 2:576f.

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in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

διὸ καὶ ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ὑπερύψωσε, καὶ ἔχαρίσατο αὐτῷ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα· ἵνα ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ πᾶν γόνυ κάμψῃ ἐπουρανίων καὶ ἐπιγείων καὶ καταχθονίων, καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἐξομολογήσῃται ὅτι Κύριος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ πατρὸς

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It is argued by Oneness preachers that since “the name above all names” (ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα) is Jesus, then Jesus must be the Father. The fatal problem with this argument is that the “Name above all names” is *not* Jesus but (Ἰησοῦ) but “Lord,” (Κύριος) i.e., Yahweh.

The text does not say “at the name Jesus,” but “at the name OF Jesus,” i.e., the name which *belongs to* Jesus. In terms of Greek grammar, it is the genitive of possession, not identification. The “Name” is revealed in verse 11 as “Lord,” i.e., Yahweh.

THE NAME “JESUS”

We must remember that the name “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) was a common, ordinary, everyday name like John or Peter. In the first century, many men bore the name “Jesus.” The average Christian does not know this because he or she is ignorant of the original languages and the Old Testament usage of the name “Joshua.”

In the Hebrew Old Testament, we find that the successor of Moses was named יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. This name is translated in our English versions as “Joshua,” but it could have just as easily been translated as “Jesus.”

In the Septuagint, the Jews rendered יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (Joshua) in the Greek as Ἰησοῦς (Jesus). The word Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) is translated in the NASB 101 times as “Joshua” and once as “Joshua” (Ezra 2:6).

The Greek New Testament followed the Septuagint in using the word Ἰησοῦς (Jesus) as its name for Joshua.

For if Joshua (Ἰησοῦς) had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. (Heb. 4:8)

The reader may be asking himself, “Why do our English versions translate the same word Ἰησοῦς as ‘Joshua’ in one place and ‘Jesus’ in another? Why weren’t they consistent and just use ‘Joshua’ or ‘Jesus’ wherever the word is found?”

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The translators assumed that, if they called the successor of Moses “Jesus” or the Son of God “Joshua,” the average person would soon confuse the two. If they translated Ἰησοῦς as “Jesus” in the Old Testament, people might think that it was the Son of God who succeeded Moses. And, if they translated Ἰησοῦς as “Joshua” in the New Testament, they might think He was the same Joshua who succeeded Moses.

But the translators were not consistent on this point. For example, at the beginning of Paul’s first missionary journey, he encountered a Jewish magician and false prophet by the name of Elymas (Acts 13:8):

And when they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was *Bar-Jesus* (Βαρῖησοῦς). (Acts 13:6–7)

The full name of the false prophet was “Elymas Bar-Jesus,” i.e., his father’s name was Ἰησοῦς (Jesus or Joshua). This does not mean that the Son of God while on earth slept with a woman and procreated a child by the name of Elymas. It simply means that the name Ἰησοῦς was a common name among first century Jews.

THE GREEK SCHOLARS

Dr. Kenneth Wuest translates the passage as follows:

Because of which voluntary act of supreme self-renunciation God also supereminently exalted Him to the highest rank and power, and graciously bestowed upon Him the Name, the Name which is above every name, in order that in recognition of the Name which Jesus possesses. (Phil. 2:9–10, *Wuest Expanded Translation*)

Dr. Wuest explains why he emphasized that it is “the Name which Jesus possesses” and not the name Jesus *per se*:

Paul says, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him THE NAME [the definite article is used in the Greek], that at THE NAME of Jesus every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:9). That name is not Jesus. The later designate was given Him at His birth. Paul is speaking here of His exaltation consequent upon His humiliation.⁵⁹

J.B. Lightfoot, whose commentary on Philippians is still regarded as the best, comments:

⁵⁹ Wuest, *Expanded Translation*, 15.

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“In the name,” i.e., the majesty, the manifestation to man, as an object of worship and praise. It is not “the name Jesus,” but “the name of Jesus.” The name here must be the same with the name in the preceding verse. And the personal name Jesus cannot there be meant; for the bestowal of the name is represented as following upon the humiliation and death of the Son of Man.⁶⁰

Prof. H. C. G. Moule points out in his commentary that it is:

Not “the name Jesus,” but “The name of, belonging to, to Jesus.” ... “the Name” is still the Supreme Name, Jehovah, as just above.⁶¹

This interpretation is also supported by Dr. Kennedy in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*:

To what does ὄνομα refer? It is only necessary to read on, and the answer presents itself. The universal outburst of worship proclaims that Jesus Christ is Κύριος, Lord, the equiv. of O.T. Jehovah, the highest name that can be uttered.⁶²

The same is stated by Barry in *Ellicott's Commentary*:

“The Name” (for this seems to be the best reading) is clearly “the Name” of God. It is properly the name Jehovah, held in the extremist literal reverence by the Jews, and it came to signify (almost like “the Word”) the revelation of the presence of God.⁶³

The “name above all names” is not Jesus but Yahweh. Even many Trinitarians have failed to understand this point.

JESUS IS THE HOLY SPIRIT

Dr. Bernard is just as unsuccessful in proving that Jesus is the Holy Spirit as he was at proving that Jesus is the Father. He uses the same basic arguments once again.

THE NAME OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS JESUS

His first argument is that the name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus:

The Spirit is revealed and received through the name Jesus. He is not a separate person with a separate identity who comes in another name. Jesus said, “The

⁶⁰ Lightfoot, *Philippians*, 114.

⁶¹ H.C.G. Moule, *Philippians Studies*, 95–96, n.3.

⁶² *Expositors Greek New Testament*, 3:438.

⁶³ *Ellicott's Commentary*, 8:74–75. See also Johnstone, 156.

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Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name.... " (John 14:26). So the Holy Ghost comes in the name of Jesus.⁶⁴

Once again he misunderstands the meaning of the phrase "in the name of." The passage does not say that the name of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. Jesus was saying that He has given *authority* to the Spirit to minister to the saints.

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THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST

His next argument is based on the phrases "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11) and "the Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7; Phil. 1:19). Bernard argues that these phrases mean "the Spirit *who* is Jesus."⁶⁵

We agree that the word "Spirit" refers to the Holy Spirit. But we do not agree with Bernard that the Holy Spirit is the "spirit" of Jesus in the same way that we have a spirit or soul.

Bernard once again fails to understand the grammar and syntax of the Greek text. the word "of" in the phrase "the Spirit of Jesus" must be understood as the *genitive of origin*, i.e., not the Spirit who is Jesus, but the Spirit *who comes from or proceeds forth from* the Father and the Son⁶⁶:

"When the Helper comes, *whom I will send to you from the Father*, that is the Spirit of truth, *who proceeds from the Father*, He will bear witness of Me." (John 15:26)

When Jesus is called "the Son of David," it obviously does not mean that Jesus is David, anymore than "the Spirit of Jesus" means that He is the Spirit! Jesus proceeds from or has His origin in the seed of David.

The other texts Bernard presents such as 2 Corinthians 3:17 have already been examined in our chapter on the Holy Spirit.

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST MODALISM

We will now summarize some of the chief arguments against Modalism:

⁶⁴ *Oneness*, 129.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁶⁶ Books and Winberry give an excellent discussion of the "genitive of origin" in *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, 8f.

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1. Philosophically, Modalism has its roots in the Platonic concept of the indivisibility of the Monad. We have documented this fact from the third century to the present day. Thus Modalism or Oneness theology is a product of pagan philosophy.
2. Logically, we have seen that its main arguments are based on simple fallacies such as circular reasoning. When we took their arguments and applied them to their own theology, they refuted themselves.
3. Practically, since there are dozens of “manifestations” of God recorded in Scripture, would this not reduce the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to irrelevance? Dr. Bernard clearly states:

In this chapter, we have discussed three prominent manifestations of God. Does this mean that God is limited to these three roles? Do the terms *Father, Son and Holy Ghost* encompass all that God is? Despite the prominence these manifestations have in the New Testament plan of redemption and salvation, it does not appear that God can be limited to these roles, titles, or manifestations. God manifested Himself in many ways in the Old Testament.... For example, He is King, Lord, Bridegroom, Husband, Brother, Apostle, High Priest, Lamb, Shepherd, and the Word. While Father, Son, and Holy Ghost represent three important roles, titles, or manifestations, God is not limited to these three, nor does the number three have a special significance with respect to God.⁶⁷

What this means is that Modalism does not believe in the trinity in any sense whatsoever. In the passage cited above, Dr. Bernard lists an additional *ten* manifestations besides the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Of course, the Bible uses many figures of speech to describe God such as the “cloud” and the “pillar of fire” (Exod. 13:21). Bernard has reduced the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to irrelevance.

4. Their Old Testament arguments either ignore or violate the rules of Hebrew grammar and syntax. The multi-personal nature of God is revealed by the use of plural nouns, verbs, pronouns, and adjectives in the Hebrew text. See our discussion of Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:22; 11:7; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 6:8; etc.

Modalism contradicts the clear teaching of such passages as Isaiah 48:16:

“And now the Lord god has sent Me, and His Spirit.”

⁶⁷ *Oneness*, 142.

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In our exegesis of this passages in a previous chapter, we demonstrated that in the context three Persons are in view:

The Lord God = the Father (the Sender)

Me = the Son (Sent by the Father)

His Spirit = the Holy Spirit (Sent by the Father)

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Bernard's attempt to avoid this fact is not very convincing.⁶⁸ The same holds true for his treatment of Daniel 7:9–28, where the Father and the Son are seen as two distinct Persons or Zechariah 13:7, where the Messiah is called the "Fellow of Yahweh."

In the Old Testament, the pre-existence of the Son is clearly stated in Proverbs 30:4. It is not a prophecy as Bernard pretends.⁶⁹ The Father talks to the Son in such passages as Psalms 45:6; 110:1–2; 102:25.

5. In the New Testament, Modalists consistently violate the rules of Greek grammar and syntax. The Granville Sharp rule reveals that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are grammatically viewed as separate Persons in baptism (Matt. 28:19), the benedictions (i.e., 2 Cor. 13:14) and other passages, such as Romans 15:30.

There are dozens of passages in the New Testament where we have already seen that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinguished from each other by what role they play in the plan of salvation. We are chosen by the Father, purchased by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit, blessed God Three in One (Eph. 1:3–13). Also, the Virgin birth (Luke 1:35), the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:15–17), and many other passages refer to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as three Persons.

The New Testament clearly teaches the doctrine of eternal Sonship in John 3:16; Romans 8:3, and Hebrews 1:6; 10:5–7.

6. In John 8:13, the Jews challenged Jesus:

The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."

⁶⁸ Ibid., 159–160.

⁶⁹ *Word Pictures*, 5:252.

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Jesus responded by stating that according to Deuteronomy 19:15, the testimony of two or three witnesses is sufficient to establish truth. In this case, He was one witness and the Father was the second witness:

My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent Me. Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me. (John 8:16–18)

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This passage is definitive. Jesus states that He is not the only witness, but the Father is a second witness who can bear witness to the truth. If Modalism were true, then Jesus was a liar, for there was no second witness because He and the Father were one and the same person. If the personhood of the Father is denied, then the witness of Jesus is invalidated.

7. Modalism has never been able to answer such questions as: How can Jesus be seated “at the right hand of God” the Father if He is the Father? How can Jesus be both the Sender and the Sent; the One who prays and the One to whom the prayer is directed; the sacrifice and the One to whom the sacrifice is given? etc.
8. If Modalism were true, then we should not expect to find plural pronouns such as we, our, etc., used in reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. But this is exactly what we find in John 14:23–26:

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves *Me*, he will keep *My* word; and *My Father* will love him, and *We* will come to him, and make *Our* abode with him. He who does not love *Me* does not keep *My* words; and *the word which you hear is not Mine*, but *the Father’s who sent Me* These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But *the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name*, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that *I* said to you.”

Jesus states the word He spoke was not His word, but the Father’s. Thus, He cannot be the Father. He and the Father were a “We” and “Our” relationship. The Holy Spirit would come from the Father and abide with the believer.

Notice also, that the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter or Helper. In John 14:16, Jesus says:

ἐγὼ ἐρωτήσω τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ἄλλον παρακλήτοιν δώσει ὑμῖν, μένη ἵνα μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα

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The translated “another” is ἄλλον. This little Greek word is sufficient, in and of itself, to refute the idea that Jesus is the Holy Spirit. A.T. Robertson comments:

Another Comforter (ἄλλον παρακλητον) Another of like kind (ἄλλον, not ἕτερον), besides Jesus who becomes our Paraclete, Helper, Advocate, with the Father (1 2John 2:1, Cf. Rom. 8:26f.). This old word (Demosthenes), from παρακαλεω, was used for legal assistant, pleader, advocate, one who pleads another’s cause (Josephus, Philo, in illiterate papyrus), in N.T. only in John’s writings, though the idea of it is in Rom. 8:26–34. Cf. Deissmann, *Light, etc.*, p. 336. So the Christian has Christ as his Paraclete with the Father, the Holy Spirit as the Father’s Paraclete with us (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1).⁶⁹

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Obviously, if the Spirit is “another” Helper, He cannot be the *same* Helper. There is simply no rational way to avoid the truth that Jesus cannot be the Holy Spirit in this passage.

9. Lastly, like the Greek philosophers of old, the Modalists end up with an unknowable God. All we find in Scripture is a record of the different masks and disguises donned by this unknowable God.

Since Bernard describes the God behind the masks as “invisible” and then goes on to describe Jesus of Nazareth as just one *visible manifestation* of this invisible God, then Jesus *per se* is not the invisible God.⁷⁰ He is only a mask God put on at the Incarnation.

What God then lies behind all the roles, masks, disguises, titles, modes, and manifestations? No one knows.

CONCLUSION

The Trinity is reduced to a mere charade in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are only masks worn by an unknowable god. Such a deity is not worthy of our worship, praise or love. It is a “Christianized” version of the unknowable, indivisible Monad of Greek philosophy and is intrinsically inferior to the Holy Trinity.⁷¹

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⁶⁹ *Word Pictures*, 5:252.

⁷⁰ *Oneness*, 24–25.

⁷¹ Morey, R. A. (1996). *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*. Iowa Falls: World Bible Publishers, 502-533.