



GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES

A Defense of the Apostolic
Christian Faith

Did Modalism Arise From Gnosticism?



Is there historical evidence to prove that Modalism sprang from Gnosticism? Or did Arian and later Trinitarian theologies spring from Platonic Gnosticism?

Some have suggested that early Modalistic Monarchian theology (known as Oneness Theology), developed from the early Gnostic idea of the “demiurge” of Platonic Greek Philosophy. Is there any historical evidence to substantiate this claim?

There are three main reasons why some Trinitarians are suggesting that Modalism was developed from Gnosticism.

1. Firstly, Simon Magus, the sorcerer who was converted in Samaria in Acts chapter eight, later taught that he himself was the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

For this reason, some Trinitarians have alleged that Simon Magus was the first to teach the idea of Modalism. However, it is more likely that Simon learned the theology of Oneness Modalism from the first century apostles and then later exalted himself as if he was the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one person. For if the apostles had taught the divinity of God to be One Individual as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, then Simon likely copied the theology of the apostles by alleging that he himself was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as one individual person.

It is hard to imagine that Simon would not have been somewhat influenced by the teachings of the apostles. If the apostles were teaching three divine persons of a Trinity in the first century, then Simon would likely have claimed that he was one of the alleged three persons rather than one person manifesting himself as all three.

Wikipedia says, “Justin Martyr (in his Apologies, and in a lost work against heresies, which Irenaeus used as his main source) and Irenaeus (Adversus Haereses) record that after being cast out by the Apostles, Simon Magus came to Rome where, having joined to himself a profligate woman of the name of Helen, he gave out that it was he who appeared among the Jews as the Son, in Samaria as the Father and among other nations as the Holy Spirit. He performed such miracles by magic acts during the reign of Claudius that he was regarded as a god and honored with a statue on the island in the Tiber which the two bridges cross, with the inscription (Simoni Deo Sancto), ‘To Simon the Holy God’ (Apologia, XXVI).”

In Justin's First Apology (xxvi, lvi; "Dialogus c. Tryphonem"), he describes Simon as a man who, at the instigation of demons, claimed to be a god. Justin says further that Simon came to Rome during the reign of the Emperor Claudius and by his magic arts won many followers so that these erected on the island in the Tiber a statue to him as a divinity with the inscription “Simon the Holy God.”

In my book entitled, “The Origin of the Trinity”, I presented a great deal of historical data showing pagan trinities worshiped together as one. For example, James Hastings wrote in the Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics:

“In Indian religion, e.g., we meet with the trinitarian group of Brahma, Siva, and Visnu; and in Egyptian religion with the trinitarian group of Osiris, Isis, and Horus ... Nor is it only in historical religions that we find God viewed as a Trinity. One recalls in particular the Neo-Platonic views of the Supreme or Ultimate Reality which is triadically represented.”

Some Trinitarians have responded to my allegations that the Trinity idea came from paganism, by alleging that Satan copied the Trinity by perverting it into three pagan gods. Now if Satan could have allegedly copied and perverted a so called Monotheistic Trinity, then it is equally possible for Satan to have copied and perverted Monotheistic Modalism through Simon Magus. Since Oneness Modalism does not teach that any man other than Jesus Christ is God, and since Modalism does not believe in practicing “magic arts,” Simon Magus obviously perverted the Oneness Theology of the Apostles by exalting himself as the God of the Bible.

2. Secondly, some Trinitarian Scholars Are Falsely Alleging That Sabellius Taught Gnosticism By Using The Sun And It's Rays As An Example Of The Father Sending The Son As A Ray Of Himself (like a “demiurge”).

On a YouTube Video, Mr R. C. Sproul purposefully misleads people into believing that there is a connection between Gnosticism and the teachings of Sabellius because Sabellius used the sun as an analogy for the Father sending out His own ray of light to the earth as the Son in the incarnation. Both Trinitarian and Oneness teachers have taught the poor example of water being in liquid form, vapour form, and as ice to explain God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Yet no one would allege that water emanating into vapour, or vapour emanating into water or ice shows that any of us believe in the emanations of early Gnosticism. The same is true with a ray of the sun as an example of the incarnation.

The only analogy that Sabellius gave was the analogy of the sun as an example of the Father and one of its rays as the son. Mr Sproul gave no historical data in his lecture to show that Sabellius taught pantheism. Nor did Mr Sproul submit any historical data to show that Sabellius ever used rocks as an example of the incarnation of God manifested in the flesh as the Son.

Moreover, Trinitarians often falsely allege that Sabellius (who ministered in the early to mid-third century) was the first to use the analogy of the sun as an illustration of the Father sending His Son as a ray of Himself in the incarnation as a man.

In Justin's First Apology 63 (written about 130-160 AD), Justin (a Semi Arian) referred to contemporary Christians who affirmed that the Son is the Father.

"For they who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the Father of the universe has a Son ..."

Justin further spoke of these Oneness believers within the second century in his Dialogue with Trypho 128. According to Justin, there were second century Christians who believed that the Son is inseparable from the Father, "just as the light of the sun (rays of the sun) on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the skies."

"But SOME TEACH (other Christians) that this power (the Son) is indivisible and inseparable from the Father, just as the light of the sun on earth is indivisible and inseparable from the sun in the skies; for, when the sun sets, its light disappears from the earth. SO THEY CLAIM (other Christians), the Father by His will, can cause His power to go forth and, whenever He wishes, to return again ..."

Here we find that early Oneness believing Christians had used the same analogy of the sun (130-160) that Sabellius used (200-250) about one hundred years later as an example of the Father and the Son.

The historical evidence proves that the concept of "the demiurge" was first taught in Platonic Greek Philosophy starting in about 310 BC. The Gnostics later borrowed the concept of "the demiurge" from Greek Philosophy as a "subordinate deity" emanating from a higher deity. Merriam Webster Defined "Demiurge" as: A) A Platonic subordinate deity who fashions the sensible world in the light of eternal ideas. B) A Gnostic subordinate deity who is the creator of the material world.

Everyone knows that the Modalists were not teaching that the Son was a "subordinate deity." Thus Hippolytus condemned himself when he accused the Modalists of teaching the same thing as "Heraclitus" because he and other "Semi-Arians" like him (such as Tertullian), were alleging that the Son is a subordinate divine person who was produced by the Father before the creation of the world. The Modalists taught that the Son is the same substance of the Father and that He who became the Son was always the eternal Father. In contradistinction, Hippolytus and the "Semi-Arians" believed in a subordinate Son who was formed before the world was made. Thus we can see that the teachings of Hippolytus and the Semi-Arians is linked with the idea of a "demiurge" (a subordinate divine person) employed by some of the Platonic Greek Philosophers, while "demiurge" has no connection with the teachings of Modalism!

The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge plainly documents the historical influence that Greek Philosophy had on the development of the Trinity:

"The doctrine of the Logos and the Trinity received their shape from Greek Fathers, who ... were much influenced, directly or indirectly, by the Platonic philosophy ... that errors and corruptions crept into the Church from this source cannot be denied."

The book entitled, The Church of the First Three Centuries says,

"The doctrine of the Trinity was of gradual and comparatively late formation ... it had its origin in a source entirely foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; ... it grew up, and was engrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers."

The historical evidence proves that the founding fathers of the Trinity doctrine were known as "Greek fathers" because they were "influenced" "by Platonic philosophy" from Plato and other Greek philosophers who were teaching the "demiurge" idea of a lesser deity emanating from a higher deity. It is no wonder that Paul gave a prophetic warning to the Greek city of Colossae to "beware lest any man cheat you through PHILOSOPHY (Colossians 2:8-12) ..."

It is blatant hypocrisy when Trinitarians claim that Modalism arose from the demiurge of pagan Greek Philosophy when all of the historical evidence proves that it was the Arian and Trinitarian doctrines came from that pagan philosophy. It amazes me that Trinitarians deny the clear documented historical evidence proving that Justin, Hippolytus, Origen, and to a lesser extent, Tertullian, were influenced by the "demiurge" "emanation" theory of Pagan Greek Philosophy. It is even more astonishing when Trinitarians not only deny the evidence, but they have the blind hypocrisy to falsely allege that it was the Modalists who received their doctrine from the "demiurge" of Greek Philosophy without presenting a shred of historical evidence to justify their claim. Therefore I challenge all Trinitarian historians, scholars, and apologists to cite a single early Christian Modalist who ever referenced or cited any of the Greek Philosophers.

Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Origen were the most influential men that sowed the Greek Philosophical seeds that developed the doctrine of the Trinity, but these men are known as "Semi-Arians" because they believed that the Son is a subordinate deity who was created by the Father. Although Origen later taught eternal Sonship, he nevertheless held onto the subordinate idea of the Son being the "demiurge" as taught by the Greek Philosophers. Wherefore, although the Trinitarian doctrine emerged from the "demiurge" concept of Greek Philosophy (a subordinate lesser deity springing from a higher Deity), Trinitarians have the hypocrisy to falsely accuse the early Modalists for the very thing that the early Catholic fathers did.

3. Thirdly, Some Trinitarians Scholars Cite Hippolytus's Book, Against All Heresies (Book 9, chapter 5) To Show That Modalism Originated From Heraclitus (A Pagan Greek Philosopher from 535-475 BC).

Hippolytus falsely charged that Noetus and other Monarchian teachers received their teachings from a fifth century BC Greek philosopher named Heraclitus.

The only legitimate historical connection that Trinitarians have to allege that Modalism sprang from Gnosticism is from Hippolytus' work, "Against All Heresies", book 9, Chapter 5 (early third century).

"But in this chapter Heraclitus simultaneously explains the entire peculiarity of his mode of thinking, but at the same time the (characteristic quality) of the heresy of Noetus. And I have briefly demonstrated **Noetus to be not a disciple of Christ, but of Heraclitus. For this philosopher asserts that the primal world is itself the Demiurge and creator of itself** in the following passage: 'God is day, night; winter, summer; war, peace; surfeit, famine.' All things are contraries--this appears his meaning--'but an alteration takes place, just as if incense were mixed with oilier sorts of incense, but denominated according to the pleasurable sensation produced by each sort.'"

Hippolytus had no evidence for his false accusation that the Modalists received their teaching from an ancient pagan philosopher named Heraclitus. None of the Modalists ever wrote or said that "God is day, night, winter ..." and so forth. Nor is there a record of Heraclitus or the Modalists ever using the word "demiurge" as the later Platonic philosophers and Gnostics had. Thus, there is no connection between the Gnostics and the Modalists, nor is there a shred of evidence to suggest that the Gnostics and Modalists were in fellowship with each other.

Irenaeus described the various Gnostic sects throughout the Roman Empire which flourished during the same time as Praxeus and Noetus (Modalists) and the early Modalistic bishops of Rome in the late second and early third century. Irenaeus appeared to regard the Modalistic Monarchians as orthodox because he visited the Roman Bishop Eleutherus in 178 AD. Tertullian admitted that the Roman Bishop Eleutherus gladly received the Modalistic theology of Praxeus (Against Praxeus chapter 1) in 178 AD. If Irenaeus believed that the Modalists were influenced by Gnostic beliefs, then

surely he would have included the Modalists in "Against Heresies." Since Irenaeus wrote nothing against the Modalists as a Gnostic group, there is no evidence to suggest that the Gnostics and Modalists held similar beliefs.

Furthermore, according to Wikipedia, "demiurge" was not employed by the Greek Philosophers until the Platonic period (310 BC), but Heraclitus lived from 535-475 BC which disconnects him from the use of the word "demiurge" among the Greek Philosophers.

Wikipedia says, "... the demiurge (was found) in the Platonic (period) (from 310–90 BC) and (in the) Middle Platonic (c. 90 BC – 300 AD) (in the) philosophical traditions. In the various branches of the Neoplatonic school (310 BC onwards), the demiurge is the fashioner of the real, perceptible world after the model of the Ideas, but (in most Neoplatonic systems) is still not itself "the One". In the arch-dualist ideology of the various Gnostic systems, the material universe is evil, while the non-material world is good. Accordingly, the demiurge is malevolent, as linked to the material world."

Merriam Webster Defined "Demiurge" as:

A) A Platonic subordinate deity who fashions the sensible world in the light of eternal ideas.

B) A Gnostic subordinate deity who is the creator of the material world.

Wherefore, the Gnostics borrowed the idea of the "demiurge" from Platonic Greek Philosophy in which a higher transcendent God produced a "subordinate deity" to create the material world. Everyone knows that the Modalists never taught that the Son was a "subordinate deity." Therefore Hippolytus condemned himself because he and other "Semi-Arians" like him (such as Tertullian), were alleging that the Son is a subordinate divine person who was produced by the Father before the creation of the world.

The early Modalists had taught that the Son is the same substance of the Father and that the God who became the Son was always the eternal Father. In contradistinction, Hippolytus believed in a Son who was formed as a "subordinate" Son before the world was made. Thus we can see that the teachings of Hippolytus and the Semi-Arians is linked with the idea of a "demiurge" (a subordinate divine person) employed by some of the Platonic Greek Philosophers, while the use of the word "demiurge" has no connection with the teachings of Modalism!

In Contra Noetus 10-11 Hippolytus wrote,

"God, subsisting alone, and having nothing contemporaneous with Himself, determined to create the world. And conceiving the world in mind, and willing and **uttering the Word, HE MADE IT; and straightway IT APPEARED, FORMED AS IT HAD PLEASSED HIM.** For us, then, it is sufficient to know that **THERE WAS NOTHING CONTEMPORANEOUS WITH GOD. BESIDE HIM THERE WAS NOTHING;** but He, while existing alone, yet existed in plurality. For He was neither without reason, nor wisdom, nor power, nor counsel. All things were in Him, and He was the **All ... He begat the Word [and] uttering the voice first, and begetting Him as Light of Light, He set Him forth to the world as its Lord ... And thus THERE APPEARED ANOTHER BESIDE HIMSELF.**" (Cited by Trinitarian historian Johannes Quasten, *Patrology Vol. 2, Page 200*)

The context of the above quote from Hippolytus proves that Hippolytus actually taught that the Word (logos) was "made" and "born" before "the word was made flesh" (John 1:14) which is clearly a created Arian Son. That is why even Johannes Quasten, an Eastern Orthodox Trinitarian historian sharply rejected Hippolytus' idea of the word (logos) being "made" and "born" before the incarnation. After citing Hippolytus, Quasten commented on the same page (*Page 200*),

Later Roman Catholic artwork which is supposed to resemble Callistus, the early third century Bishop of Rome who was later called a Pope in the line of succession through the apostle Peter. The only problem for Trinitarians is that the earliest Roman Bishops were Modalists before Trinitarianism developed.

"Thus Pope Callistus was correct in dubbing Hippolytus and his adherents DITHEISTS or worshipers of two gods, although Hippolytus resented this bitterly (*Refutation of all Heresies 9:12*)."

Under Arianism, The New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia cited Hippolytus and Tertullian among the "Semi-Arians". Then the New Advent Encyclopedia says,

"Semi-Arians ... affirmed the Word of God to be everlasting, they imagined Him as having become the Son to create the worlds and redeem mankind."

Hippolytus also wrote in "Against All Heresies" Book 9, Part 5,

"For in this manner he (Noetus) thinks to establish the sovereignty of God, alleging that Father and Son, so called, are one and the same (substance – "homousious"), NOT ONE INDIVIDUAL PRODUCED FROM A DIFFERENT ONE, but Himself from Himself; and that He is styled by name Father and Son, according to vicissitude of times."

The Nicene Creed says that Jesus is, "begotten (born) not made (not created), of one substance (homoousion) with the Father" but Tertullian and Hippolytus were teaching that Jesus was created as a Son before his virgin conception and birth as "one individual produced from a different one." Thus, the Oneness Modalists were teaching that the Father became the Son so that the Son was "begotten" (the human aspect of the son was made) while the Deity who became the Son had not been created because the deity of the Son is the Father's substance of Being ("hypostasis" – Heb. 1:3). In contradistinction to the Nicene Creed, Hippolytus actually taught that the Son was produced (created) and was not of the same "substance (homoousion)" of the Father. Therefore the early Modalistic Monarchian theology was in harmony with the early Nicene Creed of 325 while the theology of the "Semi-Arians" such as Hippolytus and Tertullian were diametrically opposed to that creed.

Since Hippolytus clearly taught that the Father and Son are not "the same (substance)" and that the Son was "produced", the Modalists were upholding the Nicene Creed of 325 AD before it was written, while the "Semi-Arians" like Hippolytus and Tertullian were teaching that the Son was produced as an inferior, subordinate person under the Father (an Arian concept).

Hippolytus, in "Refutation of all Heresies, Book 9, Chapter 5" condemns Noetus and the Modalists,

"Now it is evident to all that the silly successors of Noetus, and the champions of his heresy, even though they have not been hearers of the discourses of Heraclitus, nevertheless, at any rate when they adopt the opinions of Noetus, undisguisedly acknowledge these (Heraclitean) tenets. For they advance statements after this manner—that one and the same God is the Creator and Father of all things; and that when it pleased Him, He nevertheless appeared, (though invisible,) to just men of old. For when He is not seen He is invisible; and He is incomprehensible when He does not wish to be comprehended, but comprehensible when he is comprehended. Wherefore it is that, according to the same account, He is invisible and visible, unbegotten and begotten, immortal and mortal. How shall not persons holding this description of opinions be proved to be disciples of Heraclitus? Did not (Heraclitus) the obscure anticipate Noetus in framing a system of philosophy, according to identical modes of expression?" (*Hippolytus, in Against All Heresies, book 9, chapter 5*)

Can any Trinitarian scholar or historian prove the above assertions made by Hippolytus? What quote did Hippolytus submit from Heraclitus to show that Heraclitus believed that God became His own Son as a man? I find nothing at all in the fragments of writings that have survived from the ancient philosopher who predated the Platonic philosophers by about 200 years. Hippolytus himself admitted that the Modalists had "not been the hearers of the discourses of Heraclitus." Yet the historical evidence irrefutably proves that those who held Hippolytus' theology from 140 – 300 AD were those who were immersing themselves in the writings of Heraclitus and other Greek Philosophers. No Trinitarian scholar or historian can find a shred of evidence to suggest that the Modalists were avid readers of the Greek Philosophers such as Heraclitus and Plato. In contradistinction, it was the so called orthodox Semi-Arians and Semi-Trinitarians who believed that Greek Philosophy had something to offer Christianity.

Church Historian Jaroslav Pelikan wrote that “Neo-platonic elements were unmistakably present” in the Trinitarian definition of One God in ‘three persons.’”

“The doctrine of the Trinity ... must be interpreted in a manner that would be consistent with this a priori definition of the deity of God (One essence, three persons). Neoplatonic elements were unmistakably present in this definition ...” (Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, Vol. 1.)

The New Catholic Encyclopedia vol. 10, page 335 admits:

“From the middle of the 4th century onward, however, Christian thought was strongly influenced by Neo-platonic philosophy and mysticism.”

Church historian Edwin Hatch, wrote in “The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity”, Page 134,

“And Hippolytus ... is himself saturated with the philosophical conceptions and philosophical literature.”

This explains why Hippolytus could quote from Heraclitus in his polemic against the Modalists. If Hippolytus was not immersing himself in pagan Greek Philosophy, then how did he know what Heraclitus said?

Church historian, Edwin Hatch, referenced Clement of Alexandria (another Semi-Arian who held the same beliefs as Hippolytus) for believing in the tenets of “Heraclides” and “the Stoics in various forms” (*The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, Page 175 – Footnote 1, *Stromaties* 5:14). Clement of Alexandria was no Modalist. Clement had taught Origen before Origen succeeded him in Alexandria. The historical evidence proves that both Clement of Alexandria and Origen were steeped in Greek Philosophy.

Clement of Alexandria wrote in *Stromaties* 5:14,

“For there was always a natural manifestation of the one Almighty God, among all right-thinking men; and the most, who had not quite divested themselves of shame with respect to the truth, apprehended the eternal beneficence in divine providence. In fine, then, Xenocrates the Chalcedonian was not quite without hope that the notion of the Divinity existed even in the irrational creatures. And Democritus, though against his will, will make this avowal by the consequences of his dogmas; for he represents the same images as issuing, from the divine essence, on men and on the irrational animals. Far from destitute of a divine idea is man, who, it is written in Genesis, partook of inspiration, being endowed with a purer essence than the other animate creatures. Hence the **Pythagoreans say that mind comes to man by divine providence, as Plato and Aristotle avow**; but we assert that the Holy Spirit inspires him who has believed. The Platonists hold that mind is an effluence of divine dispensation in the soul, and they place the soul in the body. For it is expressly said by Joel, one of the twelve prophets, ‘And it shall come to pass after these things, I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.’ But it is not as a portion of God that the Spirit is in each of us. But how this dispensation takes place, and what the Holy Spirit is, shall be shown by us in the books on prophecy, and in those on the soul. But **‘incredulity is good at concealing the depths of knowledge,’ according to Heraclitus; ‘for incredulity escapes from ignorance.’**”

We know that Justin (who is also called Justin Martyr) ministered in Ephesus, Rome, and probably other parts of the Roman Empire from about 140-165. Justin continued to wear his philosophers garb after allegedly becoming a Christian, he was not ashamed to state that he read Heraclitus, as well as many other Greek philosophers, as did Clement and Origen of Alexandria, and to a lesser extent, Tertullian of Carthage, all of which were influential in the development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Justin praised “Heraclitus” as a man who lived “according to part ...of the word (logos of God) diffused among men ...” in his second Apology, chapter eight.

“And those of the Stoic school—since, so far as their moral teaching went, they were admirable, as were also the poets in some particulars, on account of the seed of reason [the Logos] implanted in every race of men—were, we know, hated and put to death,—**Heraclitus for instance, and, among those of our own time, Musonius and others ... who live not according to a part only of the word diffused [among men] but by the knowledge and contemplation of the whole Word, which is Christ.**” (Chapter 8)

Likewise, Tertullian spoke highly of Heraclitus in his *Treatise on the Soul*, Chapter 2,

“Heraclitus was quite right, when, observing the thick darkness which obscured the researches of the inquirers about the soul, and wearied with their interminable questions, he declared that he had certainly not explored the limits of the soul, although he had traversed every road in her domains.”

All Church Historians know that Clement of Alexandria was no Modalist. His theology was in harmony with Justin, Hippolytus, and Tertullian. He also was fond of Heraclitus,

“But ‘incredulity is good at concealing the depths of knowledge,’ according to Heraclitus; ‘for incredulity escapes from ignorance.’”

Hippolytus hypocritically condemned the Modalists for following the teachings of Heraclitus, while he and those within his Semi-Arian camp, were the one’s reading and incorporating the writings of Heraclitus and the subsequent Greek philosophers. No one has been able to cite a shred of evidence to show that any of the early Modalists were reading the Greek Philosophers. In contradistinction, the historical data proves that the Semi-Arians and emerging Semi-Trinitarians were the ones guilty of mixing Greek Philosophy with scripture, not the Modalists.

The true Christians would have followed Paul’s prophetic warning about the entrance of false doctrine through “philosophy” when Paul wrote his warning to the Greek city of Colossae.

“Beware lest any man cheat you through PHILOSOPHY and VAIN DECEIT, after the TRADITIONS OF MEN, AND RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND NOT AFTER CHRIST, for in him dwells all the fullness of the deity in bodily form ... (Colossians 2:8-12).”

In Justin’s second apology, chapter 10, he says,

“... For whatever either lawgivers or philosophers uttered well, they elaborated by finding and contemplating some part of the Word ... And Socrates, who was more zealous in this direction than all of them, was accused of the very same crimes as ourselves ... **Christ, who was partially known even by Socrates** (for He was and is the Word who is in every man, and who foretold the things that were to come to pass both through the prophets and in His own person when He was made of like passions, and taught these things: John 1:9), not only philosophers and scholars believed, but also artisans and people entirely uneducated, despising both glory, and fear, and death; since He is a power of the ineffable Father, not the mere instrument of human reason.”

Justin wrote in his first Apology, chapter 20, “**We teach the same as the Greeks ...**”

Justin wrote in his second Apology, 2:13, “**The teachings of Plato, are not alien to those of Christ, though not in all respects similar ... for all the writers of antiquity were able to have a dim vision of the realities by means of the seed of the implanted word.**”

Eusebius cited one of the early Modalistic Monarchian leaders in Rome who condemned the influence of Greek philosophy within the lifetimes of Hippolytus and Tertullian (likely from the Modalistic Monarchian Roman Bishop Callistus or Zephyrinus) but the original work was lost or destroyed.

“These men have fearlessly perverted the divine scriptures, and set aside the rule of the ancient faith, and have not known Christ ... And having deserted the holy scriptures of God, they study geometry, being of the earth and speaking of the earth, and ignoring Him who comes from above. Some of them, give their minds to Euclid; some of them are admiring disciples of Aristotle and Theophrastus (Greek Philosophers) ...” (Cited by Eusebius *H. E. 5. 28:13 / The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, Page 131)

It is interesting that almost all of the Modalistic Monarchian writings have been lost or destroyed while the Semi-Arian writings have survived. Could it be that the later Roman Catholic Church destroyed the writings of the Modalists because they contained damning evidence against their developed Trinitarian doctrine? The historical evidence proves that the Modalistic Monarchian congregations were faithful to the words of God while the Semi-Arian and Gnostic assemblies were immersing themselves in pagan Greek Philosophy.

In Justin's First Apology 63 (written about 140-165 AD), Justin (a Semi Arian) referred to contemporary Christians who affirmed that the Son was the Father.

"For they who affirm that the Son is the Father, are proved neither to have become acquainted with the Father, nor to know that the Father of the universe has a Son ..."

Trinitarian historians and scholars admit that Justin was one of the earliest Christian writers who held "subordinationist" Semi-Arian views. The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia, under "St. Justin Martyr," informs us what Justin actually believed.

According to Justin, "... The Word is God (I Apol., lxiii; Dial., xxxiv, xxxvi, xxxvii, lvi, lxiii, lxxvi, lxxxvi, lxxxvii, cxiii, cxv, cxxv, cxxvi, cxviii). His Divinity, however, seems subordinate, as does the worship which is rendered to Him (I Apol., vi; cf. lx, 13; Teder, "Justins des Märtyrers Lehre von Jesus Christus", Freiburg im Br., 1906, 103-19). **The Father engendered (produced) Him by a free and voluntary act** (Dial., lxi, c, cxxvii, cxxviii; cf. Teder, op. cit., 104), at the beginning of all His works (Dial., lxi, lxii, II Apol., vi, 3); ... Two influences are plainly discernible in the aforesaid body of doctrine. It is, of course, to Christian revelation that Justin owes his concept of the distinct personality of the Word, His Divinity and Incarnation; but **philosophic speculation is responsible for his unfortunate concepts of the TEMPORAL and voluntary GENERATION (begetting) of the Word, and for the SUBORDINATIONISM of Justin's theology.**"

Justin's First Apology Chapter 13 says, "... we reasonably worship Him, having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and **holding Him in the second place**, and the prophetic Spirit in the third, we will prove. For they proclaim our madness to consist in this, that **we give to a crucified man a place second to the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of all ...**"

Justin clearly taught that the Word (the Son) was produced or birthed by the Father before creation. Rather than having a timeless existence, Justin taught that he had a "temporal" existence by being "engendered (produced)" as a subordinate creation of the Father before his second birth in Bethlehem. Therefore Justin was an Arian rather than a Trinitarian who contended with the Modalist Christians who were the only Christians in the second century who were affirming the true deity of Jesus before Trinitarianism developed.

Tertullian was also somewhat influenced by Greek Philosophy. Tertullian wrote (*in De Testim Animae I.*) "Some of our number, who are versed in ancient literature, have composed books by means of which it may be clearly seen that we have embraced nothing new or monstrous, nothing in which we have not the support of common and public literature." (Cited in "*The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*", Edwin Hatch, Page 126)

Edwin Hatch then wrote that Tertullian believed that he was teaching the same thing as the Greek Philosophers.

"Elsewhere, the same writer (Tertullian) founds an argument for the toleration of Christianity on the fact that its opponents maintained it to be a kind of philosophy, teaching the very same doctrines as the philosophers ..." (*The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, Edwin Hatch, page 126 - Apol. 46)

On Page 134 of the same book, Edwin Hatch wrote, "Tertullian, though he asks, 'What resemblance is there between a philosopher and a Christian, between a disciple of Greece and a disciple of heaven?' expresses Christian truths in philosophical terms ..." (*The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, Edwin Hatch, page 134, footnote 1, Apol. 46)

Tertullian wrote in his Treatise on the Soul, Chapter 2,

"**Heraclitus was quite right**, when, observing the thick darkness which obscured the researches of the inquirers about the soul, and wearied with their interminable questions, he declared that he had certainly not explored the limits of the soul, although he had traversed every road in her domains."

Tertullian wrote in Against Praxeus, Chapter 7,

"Then, therefore, does **THE WORD also Himself ASSUME HIS OWN FORM AND GLORIOUS GARB, HIS OWN SOUND AND VOCAL UTTERANCE, WHEN GOD SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT (Genesis 1:3) This is the perfect NATIVITY OF THE WORD**, when He proceeds forth from God— **FORMED BY HIM FIRST** to devise and think out all things under the name of Wisdom ... or by proceeding from Himself **HE BECAME HIS FIRST BEGOTTEN SON**, because begotten before all things; Colossians 1:15 and **His only-begotten also, because alone begotten of God, in a way peculiar to Himself, FROM THE WOMB OF HIS OWN HEART [THE FATHER'S].**"

Tertullian clearly stated that the Son was BEGOTTEN "from the womb of the Father's heart" when God said, "Let there be light in" in Genesis 1:3. "THIS IS THE PERFECT NATIVITY OF THE WORD." The definition of "Nativity" is "the occasion of a person's birth" as "the place of my nativity." Hence, Tertullian taught a pre-incarnate created Son whose birth (nativity) occurred prior to the incarnation. Therefore the chief founding father of Trinitarian theology was really an Arian who wrote in Against Hermogenes chapter 3.

"God is in like manner a Father, and He is also a Judge; but He has not always been Father and Judge, merely on the ground of His having always been God. **FOR HE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN THE FATHER PREVIOUS TO THE SON, nor a judge previous to sin. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, A TIME WHEN NEITHER SIN EXISTED WITH HIM, NOR THE SON**; the former of which was to constitute the Lord a Judge, and the latter a Father. In this way He was not Lord previous to those things of which He was to be the Lord. But He was only to become Lord at some future time: just as HE BECAME THE FATHER BY THE SON, and a Judge by sin, so also did He become Lord by means of those things which He had made, in order that they might serve Him."

Tertullian clearly taught that God was not always a Father to the Son but became a Father when the Son was begotten. Therefore Tertullian did not believe in a timeless Eternal God the Son.

On page 199, Edwin Hatch wrote that Plato supposed that "... a single Creator and Ruler of the world who, in subordination to the transcendent God, fashioned the things that exist (*The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*, Edwin Hatch, page 199)." In footnote 1, Mr Hatch referenced Justin (Dialogue with Trypho 62), Irenaeus (1:24, 25), and Hippolytus (7. 16, 20) for being influenced by Greek Platonic thought about the Son creating all things as a subordinate Creator.

It is no secret that Origen loved to read the Greek Philosophers and required his students in his schools at Alexandria, and later at Caesaria, to regularly read the Greek Philosophers. It is therefore no surprise that some of the students of Origen's school in Caesaria were later called the Cappadocian fathers who were influential in developing the Trinity.

In the introduction to Origen of Alexandria, Looklex Encyclopedia informs us that Origen was influenced by Platonic philosophy and Gnosticism.

"As one of the earliest theologians, his non-Christian tools are most transparent in his work; both Platonic philosophy and Gnostic concepts came to play a central role in his understanding of Christian texts."

Under Theology, Looklex Encyclopedia states:

"Origen is considered the founder of the allegorical method of scriptural interpretation. He aimed at reconciling Greek philosophy with Christianity, himself mainly of the Platonist school."

Under Criticism And Influence, Looklex says:

"He had a background with Platonic philosophy with the belief in an eternal soul in contrast to the temporary, imperfect material world. Other controversial ideas were the preexistence of the soul, a universal salvation and a trinity as a hierarchy where Jesus inferior to God (corresponding with Arianism), defining the resurrection of the body as mainly spiritual and having removed the original concept of hell."

I challenge any Trinitarian apologist or scholar to prove that the early Modalists were actually teaching the philosophical speculations of Heraclitus. The evidence overwhelmingly proves that the Semi-Arians were the ones who were immersing themselves in the writings of Heraclitus and the subsequent Greek Philosophers while the Modalists were teaching a theology that was compatible with the later Nicene Creed.

Most people do not know that both Tertullian in the West and Origen in the East admitted that the Oneness Modalists greatly outnumbered the Semi-Arian congregations. Since most of the Oneness writings have been destroyed, many have falsely believed that the Semi-Arian form of Semi-Trinitarian theology was more prevalent, but the historical facts prove otherwise. By the time of the Council of Nicaea, it appears that there were four main camps of Christians: (1) The Modalists who were outnumbered by the (2) Semi-Arians, (3) Arians, and new (4) Semi-Trinitarian assemblies by 325 A.D.

The Nicene Creed says that the Deity who became the Son was "begotten (born) not made, of one substance with the Father ..." Modalism teaches that the Father became the Son and is the same substance and Person of the Divinity of the Father. Thus He who became the Son was "born" but not made.

Some early third century "Semi-Arian" Christian writers admitted that the Modalists were more prominent than the Semi-Arians. Tertullian, a Semi-Arian in the West wrote that the Modalists "always comprise the majority of believers" in the second and third centuries (Tertullian, Against Praxeus 3) and Origen, a Semi-Arian in the East wrote that the Modalists were "the general run of Christians" in the early to mid-third century (*Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 1, Chapter 23*). Therefore, the historical evidence reveals that the Semi-Arians (who were denying the full deity of Christ) were engaged in a heated debate with the Modalistic majority which were the only group of Christians on record to uphold the full deity of Christ within the first two and a half centuries of Christian history.

Origen's wrote in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 1, Chapter 23,

"... I WONDER AT THE STUPIDITY OF THE GENERAL RUN OF CHRISTIANS (the Christian majority) IN THIS MATTER. I do not mince matters; it is nothing but stupidity ... THEY PROCEED DIFFERENTLY AND ASK, WHAT IS THE SON OF GOD WHEN CALLED THE WORD? THE PASSAGE THEY EMPLOY IS THAT IN THE PSALMS, 'MY HEART HAS PRODUCED A GOOD WORD;' AND THEY IMAGINE THE SON TO BE THE UTTERANCE OF THE FATHER DEPOSITED, as it were, in syllables ... THEY DO NOT ALLOW HIM ... ANY INDEPENDENT HYPOSTASIS (substance of Being), nor are they clear about His essence. I do not mean that they confuse its qualities, but the fact of His having an essence of His own (Origen's view). For NO ONE CAN UNDERSTAND (among "the general run of Christians") HOW THAT WHICH IS SAID TO BE THE WORD CAN BE A SON. AND SUCH AN ANIMATED WORD, NOT BEING A SEPARATE ENTITY FROM THE FATHER (Origen's view) ... God the Word IS A SEPARATE BEING AND HAS AN ESSENCE (homoiouios) OF HIS OWN." (*Origen's Commentary on the Gospel of John, Book 1, Chapter 23*)

Thus Origen contrasted his theological teaching from "the general run of Christians (the Modalists)" by saying,

"God the Word IS A SEPARATE BEING AND HAS AN ESSENCE ('homoiouios') OF HIS OWN." Hence, Origen did not believe that the Son is the same "homoiouios" as the Father because Origen taught that the Son has a "homoiouios" of his own - as "a separate entity from the Father." Therefore Origen clearly taught against the later Nicene Creed of 325 while only the ancient Modalists were affirming the Nicene Creed in the centuries preceding the Council of Nicaea.

Furthermore, if I were to say that the Modalists were "the general run of Christians" in the twenty first century, my Trinitarian opponents would rightly laugh and ridicule me for lying. Yet even though Origen himself as an ardent opponent of Modalism, admitted that the Modalists were "the general run of Christians" in the third century, hard hearted Trinitarians always deny it!

The historical evidence proves that the Modalists were the original Christians affirming that the essence of being of the Son (homoiouios) was the same essence of being (homoiouios) of the Father, while the Semi-Arians denied Christ's true deity. It is no wonder why the latter Roman Catholic Church condemned the writings of Origen.

Origen wrote that the Modalists were among the multitudes of believers calling Jesus the Most High God while the Semi-Arian tendencies of Origen denied Christ's full deity.

"Grant that there may be some individuals among the multitudes of believers who are not in entire agreement with us, and who incautiously assert that the Saviour is the Most High God; however, we do not hold with them, but rather believe Him when He says, 'The Father who sent Me is greater than I.'" (*Origen, Contra Celsus 8:14*)

Origen and the other "Semi-Arians" like him did not believe like the modalists because the Modalists were saying that Jesus "is the Most High God."

According to Johannes Quasten, Origen's later doctrine of a timeless eternal Son was "a remarkable advance in the development of theology and had a far reaching influence on ecclesiastical teaching" (*Patrology Vol. 2, Page 78*). Although Origen was the first to clearly teach that the Son always existed as a Son throughout eternity past, he taught "that the Son is not mightier than the Father, but inferior to Him" (*Contra Celsus 8:15 - Patrology Vol. 2, Page 79*).

Although the doctrine of Eternal Sonship was first taught by Origen in the third century (*Patrology Vol. 2, Quasten, Pg. 79*), Origen vacillated in his teaching about an eternal son and a created son. Under the title, "Christ as Creature," Pelikan wrote, "In Origen's doctrine of the Logos, however, there were two sets of ideas ... In one sense, the logic of Origen's anti-Sabellian exegesis led to the insistence that the Logos was distinct from the Father, but eternal, so that none could 'dare lay down a beginning for the Son' (*Origen, Principis, 4 4:1*) ... But at the same time Origen interpreted the passages of derivation and distinction in such a way as to make the Logos A CREATURE and SUBORDINATE to God, 'the firstborn of all creation, a thing CREATED, wisdom (*Origen Princ. 4 4:1*). And in support of this latter interpretation his chief proof was Proverbs 8:22-31.'" (*The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, Vol. 1, Pg. 191 - Pelikan*)

Origen is the first Christian writer on record to come up with an eternal Son in his rhetoric that "Wisdom" is always being "generated" and that the Son is "without any beginning."

Origen wrote, "And who in his sound senses ever sought for form, or colour, or size, in wisdom, in respect of its being wisdom? And who that is capable of entertaining reverential thoughts or feelings regarding God, can suppose or believe that **God the Father ever existed, even for a moment of time, without having generated this Wisdom?** For in that case he must say either that God was unable to generate Wisdom before He produced her, so that He afterwards called into being her who formerly did not exist, or that He possessed the power indeed, but--what cannot be said of God without impiety--was unwilling to use it; both of which suppositions, it is patent to all, are alike absurd and impious: for they amount to this, either that God advanced from a condition of inability to one of ability, or that, although possessed of the power, He concealed it, and delayed the generation of Wisdom. Wherefore **we have always held that God is the Father of His only-begotten Son, who was born indeed of Him, and derives from Him what He is, but without any beginning,** not only such as may be measured by any divisions of time, but even that which the mind alone can contemplate within itself, or behold, so to speak, with the naked powers of the understanding." (*Origen Principis Book 1, 2:2*)

Yet Origen contradicted his eternal Son theory by writing in his Commentary of the Gospel of John, Book 1:18, that **THE FATHER IS THE BEGINNING OF THE SON.**

This meaning of the term “beginning,” as of origin, will serve us also in the passage in which Wisdom speaks in the Proverbs. “God,” we read, “created me the beginning of His ways, for His works.” Here the term could be interpreted as in the first application we spoke of, that of a way: “The Lord,” it says, “created me the beginning of His ways.” One might assert, and with reason, that God Himself is the beginning of all things, and might go on to say, as is plain, that **THE FATHER IS THE BEGINNING OF THE SON; and the demiurge the beginning of the works of the demiurge,** and that God in a word is the beginning of all that exists. This view is supported by our: “In the beginning was the Word.” In the Word one may see the Son, and because He is in the Father He may be said to be in the beginning.

Origen’s Commentary of the Gospel of John, Book 1:19, says that “**THE FATHER IS THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST.**”

In addition to these meanings there is that in which we speak of a beginning, according to form; thus if the first-born of every creature is the image of the invisible God, then the Father is his beginning. In the same way Christ is the beginning of those who are made according to the image of God. For if men are according to the image, but the image according to the Father; in the first case, **THE FATHER IS THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST,** and in the other Christ is the beginning of men, and men are made, not according to that of which he is the image, but according to the image. With this example our passage will agree: “In the beginning was the Word.”

This is why church historians such as Pelikan have identified two contradictory views held by Origen. Pelikan wrote, “In Origen’s doctrine of the Logos, however, there were two sets of ideas ... In one sense, the logic of Origen’s anti-Sabellian exegesis led to the insistence that the Logos was distinct from the Father, but eternal, so that none could ‘dare lay down a beginning for the Son’ (Origen, *Principis*. 4 4:1) ... But at the same time Origen interpreted the passages of derivation and distinction in such a way as to make the Logos A CREATURE and SUBORDINATE to God, ‘the firstborn of all creation, a thing CREATED, wisdom (Origen *Princ*. 4 4:1). And in support of this latter interpretation his chief proof was Proverbs 8:22-31.” (*The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, Vol. 1, Pg. 191 – Pelikan*)

Unlike his predecessors, Origen of Alexandria advanced the development of Trinitarian theology by developing the idea that the Son never had a beginning. Yet Origen continued to teach like the rest of the semi Arians of that time that the Son is a subordinate god who was created in time under the Most High God (the Father).

Origen clearly taught that the Son was created,

“... we have first to ascertain what the only-begotten Son of God is, seeing He is called by many different names, according to the circumstances and views of individuals. For He is termed Wisdom, according to the expression of Solomon: ‘The Lord created me in the beginning of His ways, and among His works, before He made any other thing; He rounded me before the ages. In the beginning, before He formed the earth, before He brought forth the fountains of waters, before the mountains were made strong, before all the hills, He brought me forth.’ He is also styled First-born, as the apostle has declared: ‘who is the first-born of every creature.’ The first-born, however, is not by nature a different person from the Wisdom, but one and the same.” (*Origen Principis Book 1, 2:1*)

Since Origen identified the personified wisdom of God as actually being the living Son of God before his birth, Origen was teaching Arianism. For Origen clearly stated that God created the Son literally before his birth in Bethlehem in the above quote. In contradistinction, Oneness theology believes that God first created Christ in His mind and plan as a human son. It is in this sense that Jesus said that he was “the beginning of the creation of God” in Rev. 3:14, and “the firstborn of all creation” in Colossians 1:15. Thus Origen clearly taught that Wisdom is “the only-begotten Son” who was literally “created ... in the beginning.” It is no wonder that Origen’s successor and pupil, Dionysius of Alexandria, declared that “The Son of God is a creature and something made” (*Pelikan, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition, Vol. 1, Pg. 192 / Ath. Dion. 4:2, 10-11*). In like manner, this is why Eustathius (an early fourth century Modalist who signed the Nicene Creed), blasted the writings of Origen in his polemic as containing “the roots of Arianism.”

Trinitarian historians themselves have cited the students of Origen’s later school which moved from Alexandria to Caesarea as those who later developed the Trinity doctrine. The three Cappadocian fathers from the school of Origen were responsible for further developing the Trinitarian doctrine of Eternal and Coequal Sonship (a Timeless Son). Other students of Origen’s school such as Eusebius took the other side of Origen’s rhetoric, teaching that a subordinate pre-incarnate Son was created. Thus Origen sowed the seeds of both Arianism and Trinitarianism in his style of rhetoric which cannot be denied (*Note: Origen’s influence continued through his school long after his death as his writings were used as the main source of his school’s teachings*). Therefore the students of Origen became both Semi-Trinitarians and Semi-Arians.

Semi-Arian Pupils of Origen: Eusebius and Dionysius of Alexandria. Many others were influenced into Arianism by Origen’s writings.

Semi-Trinitarian Pupils of Origen: “Gregory Thaumaturgos (the wonder worker) ... and the Cappadocians, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, were inspired by Alexandrian theology (Origen’s theology).” (*Cited from Patrology 2, Pg. 121, Johannes Quasten*)

Under “Christian Philosophy”, Wikipedia informs us that Clement and Origen of Alexandria were heavily influenced by Greek Philosophy.

“Clement of Alexandria: Theologian and apologist who wrote on Greek philosophy, using ideas from pagan literature, Stoic and Platonic philosophy, and Gnosticism to argue for Christianity.”

“Origen: Origen was influential in integrating elements of Platonism into Christianity. He incorporated Platonic idealism into his conceptions of the Logos, and the two churches, one ideal and one real. He also held a strongly Platonic view of God, describing him as the perfect, incorporeal ideal.”

Wikipedia informs us that the later catholic fathers continued to be influenced by “Neo-Platonism” (New Platonic Greek Philosophy).

“Certain central tenets of Neo-Platonism served as a philosophical interim for the Christian theologian Augustine of Hippo.”

It should alarm professing Arian and Trinitarian Christians that almost every single early Christian writer that was influential in the development of Arianism and Trinitarianism was at least partially influenced by elements of Greek Philosophy. In contradistinction, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the Modalistic Monarchians were influenced by Greek Philosophy. In fact, the evidence proves that they condemned it!

Eusebius cited one of the early Modalistic Monarchian leaders in Rome who condemned the influence of Greek philosophy within the lifetimes of Hippolytus and Tertullian (likely from the Modalistic Monarchian Roman Bishop Callistus or Zephyrinus) but the original work was lost or destroyed.

“These men have fearlessly perverted the divine scriptures, and set aside the rule of the ancient faith, and have not known Christ ... And having deserted the holy scriptures of God, they study geometry, being of the earth and speaking of the earth, and ignoring Him who comes from above. Some of them give their minds to Euclid; some of them are admiring disciples of Aristotle and Theophrastus (Greek Philosophers) ...” (*Cited by Eusebius H. E. 5, 28:13 / From The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity, Page 131*)

Wherefore, the historical evidence proves the following four facts about early Christian history.

1. The Semi-Arians were the founding fathers of both the Arian and the Trinitarian doctrines and these Semi-Arian founding fathers were influenced by Greek philosophy and the Pagan Greek Platonic idea of the “demiurge” which was also borrowed by the Gnostics.
2. It was the pre-Nicene Modalists who were upholding the later theology of Nicaea against the Semi-Arian theologies of Justin, Hippolytus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen long before the Nicene Creed was written.

3.The Modalist Christians outnumbered the Semi-Arian Christians in the early days of Christianity.

4.There is no historical evidence to suggest that the Modalists were influenced by Greek or Gnostic Philosophy while the historical evidence overwhelmingly proves that it was the Semi-Arians, Arians, and Trinitarians who were influenced by Platonic Greek Philosophy (Colossians 2:8-12 warns that the entrance of Greek Philosophy would spoil the church of God).

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