



## GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES

*A Defense of the Apostolic  
Christian Faith*

### Pentecostal Oneness Heresies, Response to John MacArthur



I am responding to a YouTube video entitled, "Pentecostal Oneness Heresies," by John MacArthur because John MacArthur's teaching does not accurately convey what Oneness Pentecostals believe.

**[Play video clip from 0:33 – 0:55](#)**

John MacArthur said that Oneness Pentecostals believe that God sometimes appears as the Father, at other times He appears as the Son, and at other times He appears as the Holy Spirit but "He is never all three at the same time."

Oneness Pentecostals do not believe that God "is never all three at the same time." For the scriptures teach that after God had become a true human being in the incarnation through the virgin, God now simultaneously reveals Himself as our Heavenly Father as our Creator, as the Son as a true man in order to save us, and as the Holy Spirit in emanating His presence in acting from heaven.

Oneness Pentecostals do not believe in sequential modalism. We believe that our Heavenly Father is "the only true God" (*John 17:3*) and that the Holy Spirit is the Father's Spirit in action. Hence, the Father's Spirit has always existed without a beginning, but the Son is Immanuel, God with us as a true man because God also became a man via virgin conception and birth. Now that God has become a man, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit simultaneously exist because the Holy Spirit is the Divine Spirit of the only true God the Father who also became a man as a true Son.

The scriptures teach that God the Father is the omnipresent Holy Spirit (*Joel 2:28; John 4:23-24; Jer. 23:23*) who alone has always existed throughout eternity past. But "when the fullness of the time had come" (*Gal. 4:4*), God's Holy Spirit descended from Heaven upon the virgin (*Luke 1:35; Matthew 1:20*) to be "manifested in the flesh" (*1 Tim. 3:16*) in becoming a true human son by being "made fully human in every way" (*Heb. 2:17 - NIV*). Hence, the Son is Immanuel, "God with us" (*Matthew 1:23*) as a man who was sent after he was "made of a woman" (*Gal. 4:4*). Therefore, Oneness believers reject the idea that God "is never" the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit "at the same time."

The idea that the early Modalistic Monarchians taught sequential modalism primarily came from two of their Semi-Arian opponents, namely Hippolytus and Tertullian. Sequential modalism is the idea that God first existed as the Father, then he later became the Son, then he later became the Holy Spirit. While the scriptures teach that the Father's Holy Spirit has always existed throughout eternity past, the scriptures do not teach that the Son has always existed as a child born and son given (*Psalms 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; Heb. 1:5; Rev. 3:14*).

It is hard to believe that the early Modalists could have taught that the Holy Spirit did not exist before the incarnation because the scriptures repeatedly state that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God the Father Himself throughout the Hebrew Bible.

"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the waters (*Genesis 1:2*)."

"**The Spirit of God has made me**; the breath of the Almighty gives me life (*Job 33:4*)."

"**You are our Father**, we are the clay, You are our Potter, and **we are all the works of Your Hands** (*Isaiah 64:8*)."

Since "our Father" created mankind by "the works" of His "Hands", the Holy Spirit of God who Job said "has made me" has to be the Spirit of our Heavenly Father as our sole Creator (*Isaiah 44:24*).

"Do not cast me from your presence or take **your Holy Spirit from me** (*Psalms 51:11*)."

God the Father is a Spirit (*John 4:23-24*) and He is Holy. Therefore, God the Father is the Holy Spirit. [G1]

"**Where can I go from your Spirit?** Where can I flee from **your presence** (*Psalms 139:7*)?"

"Woe to the obstinate children," declares the LORD, "to those who carry out plans that are not mine, Forming an alliance, **but not by my Spirit**, heaping sin upon sin; who go down to Egypt without consulting me; who look for help to Pharaoh's protection, to Egypt's shade for refuge" (*Isaiah 30:1-2*).

"Yet they rebelled and **grieved his Holy Spirit**. So he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them. Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people—where is he who brought them through the sea, with the shepherd of his flock? Where is he who **set his Holy Spirit among them**, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for

himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths? Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble; like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by **the Spirit of the Lord**. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name (Isaiah 63:10-14).”

Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:20 prove that the Holy Spirit came upon the virgin to supernaturally incarnate Himself as the Christ child. Hence, the idea that the Modalists believed that the Holy Spirit did not exist until after the New Testament Church was established is completely absurd.

Under “Monarchians”, the New Advent Encyclopedia admits, “It is true that it is easy to suppose Tertullian and Hippolytus to have **misrepresented the opinions of their opponents**...”

The context of the New Advent Encyclopedia shows that it is easy to suppose that Tertullian and Hippolytus to have misrepresented the opinions of the Modalists in falsely accusing them of “Patripassianism” (*the Father suffered as God the Father*) and “sequential modalism (*the Father, Son, and Spirit could only exist sequentially, but not at the same time*).”

#### **The Historical Evidence proves that the Writings of the 3rd Century Modalists were Burned**

Since the historical evidence proves that the writings of the third-century Modalists were burned, we cannot know for certain if any of the ancient Modalists had ever taught “Patripassianism” or “sequential modalism.” [G1]

Under Sabellius, the New Advent Encyclopedia admits, “All of his (Sabellius’) original works were burned”.

Author Paul Pavao wrote, “No writings of Praxeas or Sabellius survive today because they were considered heresy by the Church.” (*Paul Pavao, Christian History for Everyman. Greatest Stories Ever Told. 2014. <http://www.christian-history.org/page-name.html>*)

Church historian B. B. Edwards wrote, “That he (Sabellius) was a writer cannot well be questioned. The younger Arnobius (de Deo uno, etc. p. 570 in Feuarent’s edit, of Irenaeus) says that in the fifth century some of his writings were still extant. Of what nature these were, he has not told us.” (“*THE BIBLICAL REPOSITORY AND QUARTERLY OBSERVER. By B. B. EDWARDS’ Under Views of Sabellius, The Biblical Repository and Classical Review, American Biblical Repository*)

Since most of the writings of the late second and third-century Modalists were burned, we cannot know with certainty the details of their theological position. However, [G1] the earliest first century post apostolic church had taught that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ who became incarnate. Therefore the first century apostolic church had to have been Modalistic Monarchian in theology.

2 Clement 14:3-4 - “... the Holy Spirit ... guard the flesh that you may partake of the (Holy) Spirit. Now if we say that the flesh is the Church as the Spirit is Christ, then verily he who has dishonored the flesh has dishonored the Church. Such a one, therefore, shall not partake of the Spirit which is Christ.”

Hermas Parable 5:6, “The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by Himself.”

Hermas Similitude 9:1, “The angel of repentance, he came and said to me, I want to show you what THE HOLY SPIRIT which spoke with you in the form of the church, showed you; for THAT SPIRIT IS THE SON OF GOD.”

Ignatius of Antioch, Magnesians 15:1, “Fare ye well in the harmony of God, ye who have obtained the inseparable Spirit, who is Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 3:17; Romans 8:9; John 14:16-18).

Since only Oneness Modalistic theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God who became incarnate as Christ, the first century post apostolic church had to have been Modalistic. For even Tertullian had admitted that the Oneness Modalists were among those who “always make up the majority of the believers” as far back as Tertullian knew (AD 160-225 – Against Praxeus 3). Thus it is hard to believe that the third-century[G1] Modalists could have taught that the Holy Spirit did not exist as the Father’s Spirit throughout eternity past while the Modalist of the first and early second century had believed that the Holy Spirit has always existed.

**[Play video clip from 0:57 – 1:06](#)**

John MacArthur said, “A little bit of trouble at the baptism of Jesus. He is changing hats really fast.”

Oneness theology does not teach that God had to change “hats” or masks “really fast” because our Heavenly Father’s omnipresent Holy Spirit can simultaneously exist, act, and speak in heaven and on earth at the selfsame time.

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. Suddenly the heavens were opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on Him**. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!’” Matthew 3:16-17 BSB

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom **My Soul** delights. **I have put My Spirit upon Him**; He will bring forth justice to the nations.” Isaiah 42:1 NASB

According to Isaiah, God the Father put His own Spirit upon the Messiah (“*I have put My Spirit upon him*” – Isaiah 42:1). Here we see that our only true God the Father spoke from heaven while His own omnipresent Spirit descended like a dove upon the man Christ Jesus. Thus we only see One Divine Person who is our Heavenly Father speaking and descending from heaven upon one human person. For God’s Divine Person (“*My Soul*” = *One Divine Person in Isaiah 42:1*) also became one human person via incarnation through the virgin (Heb. 1:3 states that Jesus “...is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person,” i.e. *The Father’s Divine Person became a human person*).

Nothing in this text shows three coequal God Persons at Christ’s baptism as we see only “One God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).” For the One Divine Omnipresent Spirit Person called the Father “is a Spirit” (Jer. 23:24; John 4:23-24 – “*But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*”) who remained unchangeable in the heavens (Mal. 3:6 – “*I am Yahweh, I change not*”; Heb. 13:8) while He also descended upon the man Christ Jesus at his baptism. This was that Holy Spirit of the Father who led Jesus into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1 – “*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil*”) and did the mighty works through him (John 14:10 – “*the Father abiding in me, He does the works*”). For when God became a man via incarnation through the virgin, that man was “granted” a distinct human “life in himself” just as “the Father has (a distinct divine) life in Himself” (John 5:26) because God the Father also became a true man person as the Son within the virgin (Matthew 1:20; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 2:17). Therefore, the Oneness interpretation has to be the only correct exegesis because God as God “cannot be tempted of evil” (James 1:13), neither can God as God pray to God with a distinct human nature (Numbers 23:19 – “*God is not a man*”).

**[Play the video clip from 2:25 – 2:33](#)**

John MacArthur said, “The Councils of Nicaea, 325, and Constantinople, 381, Modalism was universally condemned as heresy.”

I challenge anyone to cite historical evidence to show that the AD 325 Council of Nicaea “universally condemned” “Modalism as heresy.” The 381 Council of Constantinople condemned Modalism but not the 325 AD Council of Nicaea. Thus we can see that Mr. John MacArthur does not know much about church history, nor does he know what he is talking about when speaking against Oneness theology.

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