



GLOBAL IMPACT MINISTRIES

A Defense of the Apostolic
Christian Faith

The Early Roman Church Was Oneness (Modalistic Monarchian), Response to Dr. Morrison Part 5



The Early Roman Church was Oneness before Trinitarianism Developed

In our debate in Austen Texas and in his YouTube lectures, Mr. Morrison stated that Praxeus brought Modalism into the city of Rome in the early third century and that only the Roman Bishops Zephyrinus and Callistus were Modalists. However, Praxeus was a prominent Oneness leader from Asia Minor who first visited Rome well before Zephyrinus and Callistus were bishops. The historical evidence proves that Praxeus visited Rome immediately after Irenaeus had visited Rome in about 178-179.

Under Montanists, the New Advent Encyclopedia states, "... the first appearance of Montanus leaves insufficient time for the development of the sect, which we know further to have been of great importance in 177, when the Church of Lyons wrote to Pope Eleutherius on the subject." (Note: the early Roman bishops were not called "popes" in the first few centuries of the Christian era)

Irenaeus was sent by the Church of Lyons (Southern France) to convince the Roman Bishop Eleutherus to embrace the Montanists into fellowship. In the late second century there was much contention whether or not the Montanist prophecies were true or false which was why the Roman church was uncertain if they should fellowship with them. If the Roman church was against the gift of prophecy and the other Pentecostal gifts of the Spirit, why was bishop Eleutherus persuaded by Irenaeus to receive the Montanists into fellowship? Since Irenaeus was successful in persuading the Roman church to receive the prophecies of the Montanists, we know that the Roman church of 178 AD had to believe in the veracity of the Pentecostal gifts of the Spirit.

About one year after Irenaeus had visited Rome to successfully persuade the Roman church to receive the Montanists into fellowship, Bishop Eleutherus changed his mind and sided with Praxeus (A prominent Oneness leader from Asia Minor) who subsequently visited Rome to convince Bishop Eleutherus to reject the Montanists (also from Asia Minor) for their false prophecies. Since the Roman Bishop took Praxeus' advice over Irenaeus', it is hard to imagine that the Roman Bishop of 178 A.D. was not also a Modalist who warmly embraced Praxeus before Victor, Zephyrinus, and Callistus later became Roman bishops. These facts prove that the subsequent bishops of Rome received their modalistic theology in apostolic succession from bishop Eleutherus. Since Eleutherus was the Bishop of Rome from 175-189, we know that it was Eleutherus who warmly embraced Praxeus and his Oneness Modalism rather than Zephyrinus or Callistus (See Tertullian, *Against Praxeus Chapter 1*). Therefore, it is highly probable that the immediate successors of the Roman bishop Eleutherus were also Modalistic in their theology which would include his immediate successor, Bishop Victor.

Church historian Johannes Quasten wrote that the Roman Bishop "Eleutherus rejected Montanism in about 179 AD because of Praxeus (a Modalist) who visited Rome which infuriated Tertullian." (*Patrology Vol. 1, Page 279, Johannes Quasten; See Tertullian, Against Praxeus, chapter one*)

At 15:17 into Part 2 (https://youtu.be/3zwmTjNBS_o) of his lecture on Church History, Mr. Morrison alleged that Praxeus was the first to bring Modalism into Rome in the early third century. Yet the facts of church history prove that Praxeus' theology was well received in Rome during the late second century. I challenge Mr. Morrison or any Trinitarian apologist to cite historical data to prove that Praxeus first visited Rome with his Modalistic theology in the early third century (210-230 AD) rather than in the late second century (178-179 AD – see Tertullian, *Against Praxeus chapter 1*). If Modalism first arrived in Rome through Praxeus in the early third century, how can Mr. Morrison explain why bishop Eleutherus embraced Praxeus (a Modalist) in the second century (about 177-179 AD)?

It makes sense to believe that the Roman Church was already Modalistic in theology (which would explain why Praxeus was so well received by the Roman church) rather than believing that the Roman Church turned away from Trinitarian theology to embrace a new theological position. For if the early Roman Church was Trinitarian, such a shift of theological belief would have certainly caused quite a commotion in Rome. Since we have no historical documentation to prove that the early Roman church was Trinitarian, nor do we have any historical documentation to prove that the church in Rome experienced any theological debate with Praxeus when he arrived in Rome, we know that the early Roman church likely already held the same basic theology as Praxeus before he arrived in Rome.

Furthermore, if the earliest Roman Church was Trinitarian, then why did both Clement and Hermas of Rome teach that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit who became incarnate as Christ within the first century?

"The pre-existent Holy Spirit which created all things did God make to dwell in a body of flesh chosen by himself." (*The Shepherd of Hermas, Parable 5:6*)

"After I had written down the commandments and similitudes of the Shepherd, the Angel of repentance, he came to me and said, 'I wish to explain to you what the Holy Spirit that spoke with you in the form of the Church showed you, for that Spirit is the Son of God.'" (*The Shepherd of Hermas, Parable 9:1*)

Clement was a first century bishop of Rome who personally knew some of the original apostles. 2 Clement 14:3-4 states that the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit which is Christ".

“...the Holy Spirit ... guards 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 dishonoured the flesh has dishonoured the Church. Such a one, therefore, shall not partake of **the Spirit which is Christ.**”

Trinitarian theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is not the Son and that the Son is not the Holy Spirit while the first century Roman Church taught that the Holy Spirit is “that Spirit” who “IS THE SON OF GOD” “which IS CHRIST”. Since Arian theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal active force (Jehovah’s Witnesses); and Unitarian Socinian theology teaches that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father who is not the Son, the first century Roman Church had to be Oneness (Modalistic) in theology rather than Trinitarian, Arian, or Socinian.

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