

5. The Modalistic Monarchians

The second form of Monarchianism is called Modalistic Monarchianism. It was also concerned to preserve the unity of God, and once again the Logos doctrine seemed to endanger that unity, as well as to endanger the deity of Christ. For if the personal nature of the Logos were preserved, and monotheism maintained, then it would seem that the Logos would need to be considered a person who was subordinate to the Father, which would then deny Christ's deity.

Noetus of Smyrna, and Praxeas propounded the solution that Christ and the Father are one and the same divine Person (Tertullian wrote a strong reply to Praxeas). Sabellius held that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one divine Person who manifests Himself in different modes according to circumstances. Thus God revealed himself as Father in creation and in the giving of the Law, as Son in the incarnation, and as Spirit in regeneration and sanctification.

In the west this view was also known as Patripassianism, since it held that the Father had become incarnate and had suffered in Christ. In the east it was also known as Sabellianism, after its most famous representative.

Modalistic Monarchianism

