

False Teaching Then and Now

Lesson #4 Monarchianism ³²²⁴

Supplemental Attachments for This Lesson:

File # 1951 Title: *What is Liberal Theology?* from “Got Questions”

File # 1952 Title: *Seven Characteristics of Liberal Theology* by Keven DeYoung

File # 1953 Title: *The Fundamentals; a Testimony to the Truth*

File # 1954 Title: *What is Pietism?* from “Got Questions”

I. What is “Adoptive” Monarchianism? –

Principle Error: God is only One person, not three as in the Trinity.

- Jesus was born and came into existence as a very good man.
- Jesus was adopted by God and became some kind of lower divinity at His baptism. This heresy is also known as **Adoptionism** in that Jesus was baptized into some form of divinity (??) at His baptism.
- They rejected the eternality of the Son.
- They rejected the equality of the Son with the Father and the Spirit in their essence (Attributes).
- They allowed only one person as God, denying the existence of a three person God-Head.
- Many denied that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Meaning of the Name: Monarchianism. Derived from Latin and Greek origins from the root word Monarch which means “sole ruler”.

Greek: *μονος monos* (Str. 3332) 44x in NT; meaning *without accompaniment, alone, single existent, sole, only*.

Greek: *αρχω archo* (Str. 757) 86x in NT; meaning *to rule, to begin*.

Thus Monarch is derived from the Greek and means to be the single, sole ruler of all things.

Phil 2:5-11 *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW,^{Is 45:23} of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Note: All Scripture Passages in this series will be from the NASU unless otherwise indicated.

Col 1:15-20 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*

II. “Adoptive” Monarchianism Then: 2nd century (190 AD) to the 3rd century (AD).

A. Relevant Promoter(s) of this Heresy

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- Theodotus the Tanner of Byzantium – 1st so called Christian to be declared a heretic.
- Aesclypedotus
- Theodotus the Money Changer
- Artemis of Rome (3 decades later)
- Paul of Samosata (200 – 275 AD) taught that from eternity the **Logos** was an impersonal force active, for example, in Moses. When Jesus was baptized he was anointed by this force. He also taught a Gnostic Sophia Spirit in God. Both the Logos and Sophia were impersonal forces.

Most of this material is from **Harold O. J. Brown**; *Heresies*; pp. 95-98

B. Important Christian Apologists Against Monarchianism:

Epiphanius lived during the second half of the 4th century and died in 409 AD (early 5th century, was an effective apologist of Christological controversies in particular.

III. “Adoptionistic” Monarchianism Now: (20th / 21st Century)

A. Adoptive Monarchianism Still Challenging Our Churches Today:

1. Some Unitarians, although they frequently don’t accept that Jesus in anyway was or became divine. He is mainly considered a righteous man and a great teacher of ethics.
2. Liberal “churches”, primarily of the main line denominations such as United Methodists, Presbyterian USA, most Episcopal churches, some Lutheran churches, etc.
3. Some large denominations such as Southern Baptists, usually have a smaller branch of “liberal churches” that don’t believe in Biblical inerrancy and have at least a weaker view of who Christ was. Namely, that Jesus was not the eternally existent Son of God.
4. Almost all mainstream Protestant seminaries are substantially corrupted by this Liberal Theology.

IV. What is “Modalistic” Monarchianism?

A. What is Modalism?

1. Modalism is a belief that there is but One God who performs various functional roles and appears to humans as a different person functionally.

I as a single person am also at least 3 different functional persons. I am a husband, a father, a customer, an employee, a U. S. citizen, a taxpayer, a veteran, etc. etc.

The Modalists believe that God appears to us as 3 different functional roles, but He is only one person, not three. This is a clear denial of the Trinity. The three functional roles are:

- Omnipotent sovereign God as Father,
- Redeeming, suffering, priestly Son as an incarnate man,
- Indwelling, regenerating Holy Spirit.

2. What did Modalists’ believe?

Also referred to as “Patripassianists” or “Sabellianists” after one of their prominent proponents.

- Christ is simply a functional role of the One God. He has no existence separate from God but rather performs a different functional role.
- There is only One person of God, but He performs 2 other distinct functional roles.

3. This heretical belief arose in the 3rd century AD (200s) and was a distinctly different movement than Adoptionist Monarchianism. The main proponents of this early heresy were Noetus; Epigonus; Praxeas, and Sabellius.

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B. Important Christian Apologists Against Modalism:

“Modalism was condemned by Tertullian (c. 213, *Tertullian Against Praxeas* 1, in Ante Nicene Fathers, vol. 3). Also known as Sabellianism, it was condemned as heresy by Dionysius, bishop of Rome (c. 262).”
[Modalism | Theopedia](#)

V. “Modalistic” Monarchianism Now:

A. Modalistic Monarchianism Still Challenging Our Churches Today:

There are “churches” who still teach these doctrines today in various forms. They all deny the Trinity and thus are not churches at all since the Trinity is an essential of the Cristian Faith.

3rd Doctrinal Essential <u>Who is God? – Theology</u>	This one God exists eternally in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and are absolutely one in essence and being. Gen 1:26; Is 63:7-10; Matt 3:16-17; Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 12:4-6; <u>2 Cor 1:21-22</u> ; 2 Cor 13:14
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They are:

- United Pentecostals (a.k.a. Oneness Pentecostals)
- United Apostolic Churches
- Unitarianism
- Swedenborgianism
- Some Liberal Mainstream Protestants (to include Neo-orthodoxy)

B. What is Liberal Theology and Where Did It Come From?

Liberal Theology arose in the latter part of the 18th century (1700s) amongst scholars primarily in Europe, but quickly spreading to the United States in the 19th century (1800s). It reached its “heyday” in the US around 1900 to 1920. The first and second World Wars demonstrated the “depravity of man” (a conservative theological understanding) so effectively that there was a truth to the Scripture’s description of man and caused a large exodus from the mainstream churches to the Fundamentalist Churches (a.k.a Evangelical Churches). See **attachments # 1951 & 1952**.

C. What is the difference between Fundamentalists and Evangelicals?

Before about 1950 there was not any significant difference. They were essentially Bible believing, born again (Pietistic) Christians who stood against the slide of mainstream churches into Liberalist theology.

Definition: “Pietism” – basically a movement away from the high formality of the orthodox churches where one became a Christian by being baptized as an infant, attending the activities of the Church, being catechized into the theology of the Church, and then assuming that one had become a Christian when in fact there had been no “new birth”, no “regeneration of the heart”, no “new creation in Christ”, and no “permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit” into the new Christian!! The assumption in Pietism is that the “new birth” changes a Christian forever regarding morality, service, worldview, and theology. See **attachment 1954**.

In 1947 Carl F. H. Henry wrote *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* which was largely a critical attack on the Fundamentalist movement and reflected a much more liberal approach to Evangelicalism, thus causing a divide between the two branches of Bible believing Christianity. Henry was the founding Editor of Christianity Today and is known for founding the new movement of Neo-evangelicalism. Richard Muow in writing the “Forward” for this book identified the purpose of this New-evangelicalism to:

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1. Form a deep commitment to a new kind of evangelical scholarship that would wrestle seriously with the important issues being raised in the world of the mind;
2. Hope for a more open evangelicalism that would transcend the barriers that had been erected by a separatistic mentality;
3. A profound desire to engage culture in all of its created complexity.

During the 1950s and 1960s “Fundamentalists” became associated as separate from “Evangelicals” as Carl Henry had declared that they had not had any program to deal with social ills of society, nor worked toward ecumenicalism with the theological liberal churches. He also criticized their insistence on belief in supernaturalism and the inerrancy of Scripture.

The Fundamentalists did have some significant weaknesses that Henry did not focus on. These were:

1. Excessive extra-Biblical legalism.
2. A form of Pietism that was anti-intellectual.
3. Misunderstanding of the nature of Revivalism.
4. Godly citizenship responsibilities.
5. Establishment of a Biblical worldview in the minds of their congregants.
6. Not developing strong skills in hermeneutics of Scriptural interpretation amongst their congregants.
7. Not thoroughly teaching the attributes of God.

To a large extent, these are still weaknesses within Fundamentalist churches today and even amongst many Evangelical Churches today.

Important Quotes

The Evangelical is not afraid of facts, for he knows that all facts are God's facts; nor is he afraid of thinking, for he knows that all truth is God's truth, and right reason cannot endanger sound faith. He is called to love God with all his mind; and part of what this means is that, when confronted by those who, on professedly rational grounds, take exception to historic Christianity, he must set himself not merely to deplore or denounce them, but to out-think them. It is not his business to argue men into faith, for that cannot be done; but it is his business to demonstrate the intellectual adequacy of the biblical faith and the comparative inadequacy of its rivals, and to show the invalidity of the criticisms that are brought against it. This he seeks to do, not from any motive of intellectual self-justification, but for the glory of God and of His gospel. A confident intellectualism expressive of robust faith in God, whose Word is truth, is part of the historic evangelical tradition. If present-day Evangelicals fall short of this, they are false to their own principles and heritage.

J. I. Packer; *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God*"; p.34,

Fundamentalist legalism made the orthodox faith un-sustainable. Many people walked away or at least cooled down towards apathy because of the excess baggage of un-biblical rules dominating the life of the local church. The cause of this turning away? 30 to 70 percent of their message was not correctly derived from word of God, but rather was human wisdom in the form of rules to qualify one to righteousness and/or holiness that were not Biblical. Man's self-made religious rules supplanted solid theological truth necessary to deal with a life committed to Christ while still having a proper relationship with the world. We fought for the sake of fighting, not with love and humility. Ray Weedon in response to reading *Bad Religion, How We Became a Nation of Heretics*; by Ross Douthat.