

The Theology of Sabellius

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Trinitarian Interpretations Are Not Valid

Much confusion has been added to Sabellius' theology by later trinitarian interpretations, which are couched in trinitarian phraseology, or in terminology foreign to Sabellian terminology.

Some have written of Sabellius' "illustration of the Trinity", erroneously assuming that Sabellius held a concept of their own "Trinity" in his view of the Godhead. Others have mentioned Sabellius' "economic Trinity", or Sabellius' "Trinity of revelation", again assuming that Sabellius just had to assume that the Godhead was a "Trinity" because he addressed the terms of "God the Father", "the Son of God", and "the Holy Spirit"...

Anyone who conscientiously studies Sabellius, and who strains the trinitarian distortions of his teaching through an honest filter, can readily conclude that Sabellius was definitely not a trinitarian in any sense of the word.

The term "Trinity" has a special, theological history that can be traced back to its beginning with the apologists in the second and third centuries, who were influenced by Platonism and Neo-Platonism. It assumes a plurality of divine Persons within the Godhead. That is something that Sabellius would have rejected out of hand.

The teaching of Sabellius is directly contradictory to this type of trinitarian theory. His teaching may be directly traced to the modalistic monarchians and the patripassians of the first three centuries. In this model of the Godhead, it is not possible by definition to assume more than one divine Person, regardless of manifestations or revelations of that one Individual.

(Sabellius: His Life and His Theology by William B. Chalfant, Easton, Kansas, n.d., 13-14)