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The Mormon Doctrine of Deity: The Roberts-Van Der Donckt Discussion

B. H. Roberts

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In nothing have men so far departed from revealed truth as in their conceptions of God. Therefore, when it pleased the Lord in these last days to open again direct communication with men, by a new dispensation of the gospel, it is not surprising that the very first revelation given was one that revealed himself and his Son Jesus Christ. A revelation which not only made known the being of God, but the kind of a being he is. The Prophet Joseph Smith, in his account of his first great revelation, declares that he saw "two personages," resembling each other in form and features, but whose brightness and glory defied all description. One of these personages addressed the prophet and said, as he pointed to the other—

"This is my beloved Son, hear him."

This was the revelation with which the work of God in the last days began. The revelation of God, the Father; and of God, the Son. They were seen to be two distinct personages. They were like men in form; but infinitely more glorious in appearance, because perfect and divine. The Old Testament truth was reaffirmed by this revelation—"God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." Also the truth of the New Testament was reaffirmed—Jesus Christ was shown to be the express image of the Father's person, hence God, the Father, was in form like the Man, Christ Jesus, who is also called "the Son of Man."

Again the Old Testament truth was revealed—"The Gods said let us make man in our image, and in our likeness." That is, more than one God was engaged in the work of creation. Also the truth of the New Testament was again reaffirmed—the Father and the Son are seen to be two separate and distinct persons or individuals; hence the Godhead is plural, a council, consisting of three distinct persons, as shown at the baptism of Jesus, and throughout the conversations and discourses of Jesus and his inspired apostles.

All this, coming so sharply in conflict with the ideas of an apostate Christendom which had rejected the plain anthropomorphism of the Old and New Testament revelations of God; also the scriptural doctrine of a plurality of Gods, for a false philosophy-created God, immaterial and passionless—all this, I say, could not fail to provoke controversy; for the revelation given to Joseph Smith challenged the truth of the conception of God held by the modern world-pagan, Jew, Mohammedan and Christian alike.

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