

## WAS THE EARLY CHURCH MORMON?

The Mormon Church knows as do all Christian historians that the Roman Catholic doctrine that the early Church had the same faith as the modern Roman Catholic Church though with perhaps less developed doctrines is untrue. The fact is that the most important doctrines of Christianity about the spirituality of God and the three persons being not three gods but three persons in one perfect God were never taught before the embryo of Catholicism was grown at the Nicene Council.

Mormons believe that the early Church taught current Mormon theology and changed so much doctrine that it was no longer Christian. Mormonism claims to be the restoration of Christianity. Jesus in the gospels often upbraided the apostles for lacking faith in his teaching. The Book of Mormon gives us a Jesus who chooses twelve disciples in America and tells them their faith is better than that of any other Jews. This would seem to hint that the Jerusalem apostles themselves fell away from the faith or that Jesus knew they would.

Mormons believe that there are many Gods and that the gods used to be men. God the Father used to be a man and is now a resurrected glorified being. His sperm made Mary pregnant with Jesus. Some Mormons taught that God had sex with her but now it seems they have adopted the idea of miraculous sperm implantation to explain the pregnancy

The Mormons say that when Paul wrote that there are many things called Gods – as indeed there are gods and lords – for the Church there is only one God (1 Corinthians 8:5,6) that he supported their doctrine that there are many gods and that God is just God over this world. But Paul tells us what he means by God in those verses. He links the word to creation and having the power to make. All men can make and so are gods in that sense but there is only one creator God who has made all things through the timeless Jesus Christ who used God's power to make all things. This still does not support the Mormon theory that men can become gods and be God to another world. It is mad to say that the theory is true when we cannot even prove life on other planets. There would be no harm in the Mormon God helping us to believe his gospel by showing us that these planets exist for that would not mean that they have a God over them if he is afraid of proving his gospel. God could prove his gospel to people who already believe and who want to believe and prevent anybody from being forced by the evidence by making them mentally blind.

The Churches that claim that divine tradition is another source of divine revelation in addition to scripture are wrong for they can see that the best tradition, which naturally is the earliest for the apostles were the foundation of the Church, show that the Early Church believed that the Father alone is fully God, the Son is a manifestation of the Father but is inferior and the Holy Spirit is inferior. They were not equals – and the equals doctrine came in at the Council of Nicea (A Short History of Christian Thought, Linwood Urban, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, page 54). This to me implies that God cannot be a spirit in the sense of being a being without parts. Because if he were, then the three persons would have to be equal for otherwise that would mean there was inferiority in God. This supports the Mormon theory that divinity is a material being. Mormons say that the Father and Son and Holy Ghost are three distinct Gods but who are so close that they are like one God in will and purpose so we can call them one God. But the pre-Nicene Trinity might have taught that there were three persons in God but not three Gods despite believing that God was a material being like a thinking gas. It would be easier for a material being to be like that than one indivisible spirit without parts.

Tertullian seems to have believed that the Trinity was one of three totally separate persons who were one substance or God but who were not equal – the Father being the supreme being and the Son inferior and the Spirit inferior to the Son. We have no evidence that Tertullian meant spirit by this substance but he certainly did accept the Stoical theory that God was immaterial though not like an exalted man or anything. In Against Hermogenes, Tertullian held that before anything was made God was not the Father for the Son had not been made yet. He said that when God created God became Lord for the first time for now he had something to be Lord over. He agrees with the Mormon theory that God lives in time and is subject to time. Tertullian opposed the Greek philosophical God which is now the God of the Christian faith and said that the creation of this God which was happening in his time could only produce a mottled Christianity (see On Prescription Against Heretics). The Catholic argument that when Tertullian denied the equality of the persons he only denied it in the orthodox sense. In other words, he meant they were unequal as regards origin for the Father exists of himself and the Son proceeds from him and the Spirit proceeds from both meaning the Father is like the original and that as persons in power and glory and knowledge they were equal for there is no imperfection in God. Tertullian certainly thought that God was perfect. Mormonism teaches that God is getting better and better all the time and progressing to higher levels of knowledge and glory.

The Mormons claim that since Irenaeus said that we must not wonder if there is a God better than God and superior to him that he was saying that there could be such a God but that it was not right to speculate. But what's the harm in speculation unless you are positive that there is no such God? Irenaeus made it clear that there was only one God in whom all

knowledge and power subsisted.

It is a big step from the ancient doctrines of the inequality of the Trinity and the materiality of God to the Mormon doctrine of God. There are only a few similarities. But most Christian perversions have some support in the early Church somewhere. It is certain however that the Mormon doctrine of God once being an ordinary sinful man would have been anathema in the early Church. It is certain that the doctrine that God has a God above him would also have been anathema. It contradicts the view that God the Father is the real God in the divine substance. The early Church did believe that man could become divine but not in the sense of man becoming God or a God. They believed that the more one became like God and let God work through her or him the more divinised one becomes. You are a miniature God but still God has all the power and glory and is to receive all the credit so you are not a real God. There is no evidence for anything like Utah Mormonism among the sects of the early Church and to argue that Mormonism was known then just because some Christian scholars misunderstood their theology and made slip-ups is downright ridiculous. It is like saying that a seventeenth century Christian child writing in a diary that God is an old man sitting on a cloud proves that Mormonism was known then.

The Mormon Church does not believe in the Bible doctrine of human inability to please God and do real good works. The early Church did not believe it either after it got rid of the apostles who were damning concerning human nature and human goodness and yet we are to believe according to Mormonism that this was one of the alterations made to the Bible. Why would the Church that did not want to go that far in slamming human nature make the scriptures go that far? Mormonism even denies the doctrine of original sin. There is no way the early Church would have turned away from a God who was an exalted man like the Mormon god for the pagans would just have loved that doctrine.

For further information, study the Barry R Bickmore Websites.