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A CRITIQUE OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST
OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

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ABSTRACT

The entire research work is a searchlight on the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints otherwise known as the Mormons. The aim is to critique these doctrines in the light of authentic historic doctrines of the Bible.

The Introductory chapter focus on an overview of this study, its purpose, significance, definition of key concepts and methodology. Chapter Two is a historical perspective of the life and times of Joseph Smith (Jnr) the founder of the Mormon Church. The objective here is to assess the impact of his ancestry and environment on his new religion. Chapter Three highlights the major doctrines and core beliefs of the Mormon Church. Chapter Four dwells on a critical analysis of these doctrines vis-a-vis biblical doctrines. The aim is a comparison of both doctrines. The fifth Chapter is the concluding remarks and recommendations to evangelicals like the Baptists.

CONCLUSION

This study, an attempt at critical evaluation of the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints vis-a-vis the teachings of Orthodox Christianity, has revealed that a lot of differences exists between the two.

In the first chapter of this study, we emphasised the importance of the teachings of the central truths of the Bible, and the significance of adhering to the truth in faith, Practice as taught by Jesus Christ and the Apostles. Jesus Christ warned: "for false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great sins and miracles to deceive even the elect---"¹. To this, Apostle Paul added "The spirit clearly says that in latter times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."² It is evident that the spirit of deception is at work contradicting the true doctrines of the Bible and denying the central truths about the gospel of Jesus Christ. The doctrines of the Church of Jesus of Latter Day Saints can be put in this category because while the church claims to be

¹see Matthew 24:24.

²see I Timothy 4:1.

Christian in nomenclature and outlooks, her doctrines are everything but Christian. Her teachings contradicts the central truths of the Bible, which is the yardstick in judging that which is genuinely Christian or not. The Bible as said earlier is the plumbine or standard of ascertaining that which is orthodox and acceptable teaching of the Church or not. R.T. Kendall appraises the teachings of the Bible as a guide against error when he said;

Truth- Christian doctrine as revealed in the word of God - is the proof and guarantee that one is in the Spirit; it also serves as a yardstick for testing actions which are allegedly in the Spirit but which in fact are not. The truth keeps worship from going off the rails. The Bible was not given to replace the Holy Spirit. The Bible is there to correct abuse, and to help us make sure that our worship and our Christian walk are genuinely in the Spirit.³

It is unfortunate that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not recognise the Bible as the inspired Word of God. In their articles of faith, the Mormons believe the Bible to be the Word of God as far as it is translated correctly. The Bible is believed to be "---polluted and an insufficient guide."⁴ They believe that God has not spoken exclusively in times past but continues to reveal new truths as is necessary

³ R.T. Kendall - "Worshipping God; Rediscovering the Full Dimension of Worship," (Ibadan: Scripture Union Press Ltd., 1992), p.7.

⁴ Thelma Geer, Mormonism, Mama and Me, Arizona: Calvary Missionary Press, 1980, p.17.

and on a continual basis. This is much unlike Orthodox Christianity's assertion, of a closed Canon of Scripture and revelation. This is why the Book of Mormon is placed on the same pedestal with the Bible. This doctrine of the Word of God held by the Mormon is not in any way compatible with Christianity's stand that the Bible is truly inspired and infallible and serves as a guide for Christian faith. This is the point of divergence in the teachings of the Mormons and that of Christianity, because it is the Bible that reveals the true nature of God, Christ, Holy Spirit, the Church, Coming Kingdom, etc.

Since the Mormon's doctrinal foundation is faulty, as regards her position on the Bible, the superstructure built on this foundation of necessity must be faulty too. The revelations that Prophet Joseph-Smith Junior claimed to have had are spurious (as testified to by his contemporaries), full of distortions of Biblical truths, plagiarism of Bible contents as seen in several chapters of the Book of Mormons, conflicts with true Biblical revelation and denial of the essentials or fundamentals of the Christian Faith. How can the Church of Latter-Day Saints be truly Christian then?

Joseph Smith is regarded not only a prophet and founder of the Mormon Church but he "is considered to be another of God's choicest Spirit Sons who had done to usher in the

greatest of all dispensations, the "fullness of time." He is now the Head of the Church and this dispensation, holding all the gospel keys and power of earth, heaven and hell."⁵ On the contrary, the position of the Head of the Church and Possessor of the Keys of power of earth, heaven and hell are ascribed only to Jesus Christ, the Son, of God.⁶

Other teachings of the Church of Jesus of Latter Day Saints which are at variance with Orthodox Christian teachings includes its polytheistic views of God, the belief that God was once man and also that man is capable of becoming God, if faithful to the Mormon Gospel; the inefficacy of Christ's atonement to blot out certain sins, denial of sinlessness of Christ who according to Mormons, while on earth was a polygamist ; the Holy Spirit is a fluid substance, and not a person; and her total denial of the doctrine of trinity. As regards the doctrine of sin and salvation, the Mormons believe that it was necessary for Adam to have sinned, and that the sin of Adam was a blessing in disguise. Salvation comes only by obedience to the Mormon gospel and baptism in a Mormon temple. Baptism by proxy or baptism for the dead is also practised, pertaining to the doctrine of the last things, the Mormons believe there are three degrees of glory in the life hereafter, the Celestial, Telestial and

⁵ Geer, p.53.

⁶ See Matthew 28:18, Revelation 1:17.

testial. Again, the level of one's commitment to the Mormon's Church determines the kind of glory one will receive in the life after. None of these views enumerated briefly above are taught in the Bible. Walter Martin, a renowned scholar of cults gives his verdict on Mormonism thus:

After carefully perusing hundreds of volumes on Mormon's theology and scores of pamphlets dealing with this subject, the author can quite candidly state that never in over a decade of research in the field of cults has he ever seen such misappropriation of terminology, disregard of context, and utter abandon of scholastic principles demonstrated on the part of non-Christian cultists that is evidenced in the attempts of Mormon theologians to appear Orthodox and at the same time undermine the foundations of historic Christianity. The intricacies of their complex system of polytheism causes the careful researcher to ponder again and again the ethical standard which these Mormon writer, practice, and and the blatant attempt to rewrite history, Biblical theology and the laws of Scriptural interpretation that they might support the theologies of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young...⁷

Elsewhere, Walter Martin noted that:

Mormon theology with its pantheon of gods, its perverted view of the Virgin Birth, and its outright condemnation of all churches as an abomination---removes itself from serious consideration as a form of Christianity--- There is a great deal more to the Gospel than the similarity of terms albeit redefined---⁸

⁷ Martin, Kingdom of Cults, p.200.

⁸ Martin.

