

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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15) and ABINADI forecasting the destiny of his captors and their descendants (Mosiah 11:20–25; 17:15–18). Other prophecies anticipated more immediate events. For example, on the eve of Jesus' birth, when lives of believers were threatened by unbelievers, Nephi₃ received divine assurance that "on the morrow" the signs of Christ's birth would be seen (3 Ne. 1:9–15).

Book of Mormon prophets also forecast events of the latter days. They foretold the European exploration of America (1 Ne. 13:12–15), the American Revolution (1 Ne. 13:16–19), and the gathering of Israel (1 Ne. 22; 3 Ne. 20–22). They warned of deceptive practices among religionists, including priestcraft, secret combinations, and neglect of the poor. They foretold the impact of the Book of Mormon on latter-day people and the destruction of the wicked. The prophecies of MORONI₂ included admonitions addressed to those who would live in the last days: "Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, . . . behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing" (Morm. 8:35).

Under inspiration, prophets in the Book of Mormon frequently quoted previous prophets in support of their teachings. They warned that in rejecting the living prophet's witness, their hearers were rejecting the testimonies of such revered prophets as Isaiah, Moses, and ZENOS (Hel. 8:11–20).

Prophesying falsely was viewed as a crime among the Nephites (W of M 1:15–16). Agreement with past prophets was a test of a prophet's authenticity. For instance, during a debate, JACOB exposed Sherem as a false prophet by showing that his testimony contradicted previous prophecy. Jacob then demonstrated that his own teachings agreed with former prophets, thus sealing Sherem's conviction as a false prophet (Jacob 7:9–12).

Prophecy sometimes came in dreams or visions after pondering and prayer. Lehi and NEPHI₁ were caught up in the Spirit (1 Ne. 1:7–8, 11:1). King BENJAMIN and Samuel the Lamanite were visited by angels (Mosiah 3:2; Hel. 13:7). Prophecy was delivered variously, as in a psalm by Nephi₁ (2 Ne. 4:20–35), in Zenos' allegory (Jacob 5), or in Jacob's chastisements (2 Ne. 9:30–38).

Besides their service to God, as his messengers, prophets served as religious leaders (ALMA₁), kings (Benjamin; MOSIAH₂), military leaders (Helaman₁), and historians (Nephi₃). They were

also social and moral critics of their society. Jacob denounced wickedness among his people not only because of its effects on that generation but also for wounds inflicted on the next (Jacob 2–3). Samuel the Lamanite foretold dire future consequences of the Nephites' lifestyle, criticizing their state of degradation (Hel. 13).

The presence of prophets and of contemporary prophecies were important to the Book of Mormon people. MORMON testified, "I also know that as many things as have been prophesied concerning us . . . have been fulfilled, and as many as go beyond this day must surely come to pass" (W of M 1:4).

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CAMILLE FRONK

PROPHET

[This entry consists of two articles: Prophets presents the LDS belief in prophets, both past and present, as an integral part of the Church, and Biblical Prophets discusses the phenomenon of prophets and prophecy as a distinctive feature of biblical religion.]

PROPHETS

A belief in prophets and their messages lies at the heart of LDS doctrine (A of F 4, 5, 6, 7, 9). Latter-day Saints recognize the biblical and Book of Mormon prophets, as well as latter-day prophets, as servants of Jesus Christ and accept as scripture the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the Pearl of Great Price, and the Doctrine and Covenants. They believe that Joseph SMITH and all subsequent PRESIDENTS OF THE CHURCH were and are prophets and representatives of Jesus Christ.

The word "prophet" comes from the Greek *prophetes*, which means "inspired teacher." Although neither the Greek term nor its Hebrew equivalent, *nabi*, initially required the function of foretelling (Smith, p. 3), all prophecy looks to the future. Since the Lord has chosen some of his servants to be foretellers—to disclose, sometimes in specific terms, momentous events that are to occur—the predictive element often overshadows

other implications of the word in the minds of some (*see* REVELATION; JESUS CHRIST: PROPHECIES ABOUT).

But the gift of prophecy is not restricted to those whose words have been recorded in scripture. By scriptural definition, a prophet is anyone who has a testimony of Jesus Christ and is moved by the Holy Ghost (Rev. 19:10; cf. *TPJS*, pp. 119, 160). Moses, voicing his approval of two men who had prophesied, exclaimed, "Would God that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Num. 11:26–29). Schools of prophets and "sons" (followers) of prophets, some false and some true, existed in large numbers in Old Testament times. In modern times, speaking of Brigham YOUNG, Elder Wilford WOODRUFF said, "He is a prophet, I am a prophet, you are, and anybody is a prophet who has the testimony of Jesus Christ, for that is the spirit of prophecy" (*JD* 13:165; *see* SPIRIT OF PROPHECY). It follows that this spirit does not operate in every utterance of its possessor. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that "a prophet [is] a prophet only when he [is] acting as such" (*HC* 5:265).

In 1820 a passage in James (1:5) led to Joseph Smith's First Vision (*JS—H* 1:11–20). Three years later the angel-prophet-messenger MORONI₂, while instructing Joseph Smith, quoted from the prophets Malachi, Joel, and Isaiah, who told of the forthcoming mission of the Messiah and of the role of prophets, including Elijah, in the latter-day RESTORATION of the gospel. Subsequent revelations given to Joseph Smith make frequent reference to the prophets of the Old and New Testaments. Most frequently cited, in addition to those mentioned above, are Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Peter, James, John, and John the Baptist. In April 1836, the prophets Moses, Elias, and Elijah appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver COWDERY and committed to them the KEYS OF THE PRIESTHOOD (*see* D&C 110:11–16). Other angelic messengers, all prophets, had been instrumental in restoring the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, beginning in 1829 (*JS—H* 1:68–73).

Joseph Smith had the spirit of prophecy after he and Oliver Cowdery were baptized in May 1829 (*JS—H* 1:73–74), and his prophetic office was officially recognized when the Church was organized on April 6, 1830. A revelation to him says, "Thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church . . .

being inspired of the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation thereof" (D&C 21:1–2). In March 1836, under the prophetic leadership of Joseph Smith, the membership of the Church sustained the FIRST PRESIDENCY and the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES AS PROPHETS, SEERS, AND REVELATORS (*HC* 2:417). Their successors have been similarly sustained.

An unbroken series of prophets have led the Church since the death of Joseph Smith in 1844: Brigham YOUNG (1844–1877); John TAYLOR (1877–1887); Wilford Woodruff (1887–1898); Lorenzo SNOW (1898–1901); Joseph F. SMITH (1901–1918); Heber J. GRANT (1918–1945); George Albert SMITH (1945–1951); David O. MCKAY (1951–1970); Joseph Fielding SMITH (1970–1972); Harold B. LEE (1972–1973); Spencer W. KIMBALL (1973–1985); and Ezra Taft BENSON (1985–). Since 1847, these prophets have administered the affairs of the Church from Church headquarters in Salt Lake City. They have dedicated themselves to their appointed mission of helping the people of the world prepare for eternal life, and for the second coming of Jesus Christ. They have provided leadership for the international missionary program of the Church and for the building of temples. The living prophet continues to receive revelations, select and ordain leaders by the spirit of prophecy, and serve as the principal teacher of the Church, instructing its members in doctrine and in righteous living.

Prophets and their messages have occupied a central place in God's dealings with his children from the beginning. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, an apostle, has written that a foreordained prophet has stood at the head of God's church in all dispensations of the gospel from the time of Adam (*see* Moses 5:9, 10) to the present, including, for example, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, and Joseph Smith (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, Salt Lake City, 1985, p. 2).

Prophets are always witnesses of Jesus Christ, a fact that is particularly evident in the Book of Mormon. The experience common to all its prophets is the witness they bore of Jesus Christ, the Messiah—of his divine sonship and his earthly mission. A number of them, including Lehi, Nephi₁, Jacob, Benjamin, Abinadi, Alma₂, and Samuel the Lamanite, foretold his coming (1 Ne. 1:19; 10:4; 19:7–8; Jacob 4:4–5; Mosiah 3:5–8). They foresaw his atoning sacrifice and his resurrection (Mosiah 3:10–11; 15). Nephi wrote earlier of

ancient prophets, Zenos, Neum, and Zenock (1 Ne. 19:10; 3 Ne. 10:14–16), who also foretold the visitation of Jesus Christ to the Americas after his resurrection (3 Ne. 11–26). Because Latter-day Saints identify Jesus Christ as Jehovah, they recognize that Old Testament prophets bore this same witness (see JEHOVAH, JESUS CHRIST).

The Book of Mormon, apart from its function as history, is essentially a record of the dealings of God with a long series of prophets, from Lehi, in the sixth century before Christ, to Moroni₂, a thousand years later. As witnesses of Jesus Christ, all were called to be teachers of righteousness. Though their teachings were all based in the gospel of Jesus Christ and they taught the same essential things, the record we have preserves some individual points of emphasis: ABINADI stressed living the Mosaic law with the proper spirit (Mosiah 12, 13); Nephi₁ and Alma₂ preached baptism and repentance (2 Ne. 31; Mosiah 18), as did Alma's sons (Alma 17–29). Many, including Nephi₁, Enos, Ether, and Moroni, were prompted to write and speak of faith and the gift of the Holy Ghost (e.g., 2 Ne. 26:13; 32:2–3). In counsel to his son Jacob, Lehi taught the principles of “opposition in all things” and of agency (2 Ne. 2). King Benjamin urged his people to serve God by serving one another (Mosiah 2:17). He and other Book of Mormon prophets, like their Old Testament counterparts, warned against vanity, greed, sexual immorality, materialism, and similar sins; but they also counseled love, kindness, patience, humility, and all peaceable things.

The Hebrew prophets spoke for God for many centuries until the post-apostolic era, from the second to the nineteenth centuries, when faith in continuing prophecy had vanished in that part of the world and when people assumed, even as did some in Jesus' day, that the prophets were dead (John 8:53) and their offices abolished. To believe that God had spoken to people of one's own time was “the test that Christ's generation could not pass” (CWHN 3:7).

“He that prophesieth,” wrote Paul, “speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3)—such a person teaches, admonishes, and gives assurance of God's love. The prophets have proclaimed those God-given messages in many ways and with varying emphases. Their messages, though timeless in import, have been relevant to the immediate life of communities

and nations. Some have combined their functions as prophets with other activities, such as being judges, military leaders, historians, poets, and church and civic administrators.

Some prophets have been popular figures and charismatic leaders—Moses, Samuel, and ALMA₂, for instance. But many have suffered abuse and betrayal. For every prophet who has been honored during earth life, many have suffered persecution and even martyrdom (2 Chr. 36:15–16; Matt. 5:11–12; Mosiah 17:20; D&C 135). Clearly, prophetic messages have not been designed to gain popular favor. A fundamental, common theme in all these messages is the call to repentance. Though prophets have counseled mercy, brotherhood, and humility, and though they have promised life and joy to those who have sought to love God and to receive his love, they have foreseen sorrow and despair as the unavoidable consequences of immorality, greed, idolatry, malice, pride, and other sins. They have yearned for peace, but they have condemned false prophets who have cried, “Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). Unwarranted complacency, obsessive materialism, and the worship of other gods were main attributes of false prophets and their followers.

The messages of the prophets have taken many forms. Foremost are direct instructions and commandments from God to his children, as in much of the Pentateuch and the Doctrine and Covenants. Many have come as sermons and covenant renewal ceremonies, such as those of Moses and Joshua (Deut. 4–11; Josh. 24). Important truths are found in the counsel of the prophets to their own families, as in the words of LEHI and Alma₂ to their children (2 Ne. 1–4; Alma 36–42). Some prophetic messages have been recorded in letters, such as the epistles of Paul, James, Peter, and John in the New Testament and those of Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 127 and 128. Some are expressed as prayer—such as David's prayer of thanksgiving (2 Sam. 7:18–29)—and some are couched in symbol and poetry: the symbolism of Ezekiel and John the Revelator, the songs of David, the poetic passages of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the figurative language of Paul (Eph. 6:10–18), and such poetic utterances as the “new song” in Doctrine and Covenants 84:98–102.

No true prophets, ancient or modern, have ever called themselves to their positions. Some, such as Moses, Amos, and Jeremiah, have even

accepted the calling reluctantly. Some, including John the Baptist, Samuel, Nephi₁, and Joseph Smith, were called in childhood or youth.

The calls made to individual prophets and God's further communications with and through them have been accomplished in various ways: through the ministering of angels; in dreams; in day or night visions; by prophetic inspiration, an intense conviction verified by subsequent events; by the literal voice of God; and in face-to-face visitations such as those experienced by Moses (Ex. 33:11), Enoch (Moses 7:4), and Joseph Smith (JS—H 1:17). Sometimes the call has come with blinding intensity, as in those of Paul and ALMA₂; sometimes, as with Elijah, the prophet has heard "a still small voice" (1 Kgs. 19:12). God has often spoken to his prophets in answer to prayer, but true prophets have not been mystics who try to make contact with the unseen by self-induced trances or similar means.

The calling of a prophet has always been made, and his messages have been written or spoken, through the power of the Holy Ghost, sometimes called the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 2:1–4, 37–42). Ananias put his hands on Paul that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. "And straightway he preached Christ . . . that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9:17–20). So, too, did the prophets before Paul, and so have all of them since. In close conjunction with the gift of the Holy Ghost is the priesthood power that has been exercised by God's representatives throughout all dispensations.

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BIBLICAL PROPHETS

The phenomenon of PROPHECY is a distinctive feature of biblical religion. In its fully developed char-

acter, it sets biblical religion apart from other religions of the ancient Near East. As in other related matters, such as worship, sacrifice, ethical principles, and practices, ISRAEL shared much with its neighbors. But often, and specifically in matters of religion, the people of the Bible formed and forged something distinctive and different from all that came before or continued side by side. And this is particularly true of biblical prophecy.

With few exceptions the surviving materials of pagan antiquity command now only marginal academic interest—quaint reminders of a distant past—whereas the prophets of the Bible speak across the centuries with words, and out of experiences, that have direct bearing on modern lives and meaning for modern civilization.

Prophets in the Bible claim to be both foretellers and forth-tellers and base their claims upon their private access to the God of Israel, who is the ruler of history—past, present, and future. Prophecy as an essential part of Israel's theopolitical structure and the prophetic movement as an actual historical phenomenon had their beginnings with Samuel and his band of followers in the eleventh century B.C., at the point of transition from the era of the judges to the beginnings of the monarchy with the installation of Saul as royal head of the Israelite Confederation, or League of Tribes. Prophets, beginning with Samuel, played a significant, if not decisive, part in establishing but also censuring the monarchy and remained an integral part of Israelite society as long as the monarchy survived, and even beyond, when there was still thought or hope of restoring the kingship of the house of David. While God generally speaks to prophets through VISIONS, auditions, and even dreams, with MOSES he spoke face to face (Deut. 34) or mouth to mouth (Ex. 33). And whereas other prophets often only sense the presence of deity, Moses saw his actual form and person (Num. 12; cf. Ex. 33–34).

From the biblical records of the prophets and their experiences, one can piece together a picture of prophets and their calling.

THE CALL. The divine call and commission mark the beginning of the prophet's career. In all recorded cases, the details are striking and distinctive; no two prophetic situations are exactly the same, although all share important elements. We have sufficient data for people like Moses, Samuel,

Elisha (but not ELIJAH), and the great literary prophets such as Amos, Hosea, ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, and EZEKIEL to fill out a composite picture. But we lack information about the call of such prophets as Nathan and Ahijah. Typically, the call is initiated by God and is often accompanied by one or more visions, along with some unusual or miraculous occurrence (e.g., the burning bush). It is the combination of circumstances that persuades the prophet (or prophetess) that he (or she) is not hallucinating but is having contact with the living God.

THE COMMISSION. The call is always accompanied by a commission. The purpose is to enlist or draft the prophet to carry out a mission or duty—to do something in response to the call. Some prophets are reluctant to take on such responsibility, and therefore make excuses or otherwise try to evade their calling (e.g., Moses, Jeremiah, and, above all, Jonah). Other prophets are eager to carry out their task and hasten to do so (e.g., Isaiah, Ezekiel, perhaps Hosea). The basic rules for the prophet—the marching orders, as it were—are given succinctly and eloquently in the book of Jeremiah: “Wherever I send you you shall go, and what I tell you, you shall say” (Jer. 1:7 [author translation]). In brief, the prophet is the ambassador or messenger of God, and his (or her) sole duty is to deliver the message as given.

THE MESSAGE. In most cases, the message is for others and especially for the nation, its leaders, and the people generally. Often it contains warnings and threats, sometimes promises and encouragement. Inevitably there is a predictive element, as messages are mostly oriented to the future but rooted in the past. For the most part, predictions are morally conditioned, based upon the COVENANT between God and Israel, offering the choice between life and death, with success as the result of obedience and failure as the consequence of disobedience and defiance. Occasionally the oracles are pronounced absolutely, guaranteeing the future, whether of destruction or restoration. Occasionally they are timebound—that is, within a specified period the events described will occur, but often no time frame is specified. Even when moral or temporal conditions are not articulated, they may be implied by the speaker or inferred by the hearers. A notable case is the flat prediction by Micah (Micah 3:12) that Jerusalem will be destroyed. A century later, Jeremiah quotes the pas-

sage not to show that the prophecy was unfulfilled (Jerusalem had not been destroyed and was still standing), or much less to indict Micah as a false prophet, but rather to argue that as a result of the prophecy, the king (Hezekiah) and the people repented, and hence Yahweh (Jehovah) forgave them and spared the city (Jer. 26:16–19). It was the prophet’s message that produced the result, and therefore both he and his message were vindicated as coming from God.

THE PROPHET AS WONDER-WORKER. MIRACLES are clearly and strongly associated with prophets such as Moses, Samuel, and especially Elijah and Elisha—as well as Isaiah among the so-called writing prophets—but there are many prophets with little or no such connection (e.g., Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, etc.). Miracles seem to be attached to unusual charismatic individuals who were also prophets but not necessarily to the role or office of prophet. In the case of Moses, they were designed to strengthen and confirm his claims to have received an authentic and authoritative message from God, and they served to augment the function and purpose of visions and similar experiences of other prophets.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE. On the whole, the results of the prophetic experience are themselves unpredictable, and success or failure on the part of individual prophets hardly affects their status as true prophets of God. Prophets such as Samuel and Elisha are reported to have met with much success in carrying out their missions. With Elijah and perhaps Isaiah, the results are mixed, as also with Amos, Hosea, and Micah. Ultimately, they were all recognized as true prophets, not because the leaders and the people heeded their words (often they did not), but because they faithfully reported what they heard from the mouth of God, regardless of consequences for themselves or the people to whom they delivered the message. The survival of the nation was seen to be at stake, and it was of the greatest importance to distinguish true from false prophets. This was no mere academic exercise, but required the best judgment of leaders and people alike.

TESTS OF TRUE PROPHETS. The book of DEUTERONOMY offers rules of procedure to decide the issue of truth and falsehood. There are two basic principles, both practical and applicable: (1) if the prophet speaks in the name of, and delivers

messages from, another god or other gods, then he is automatically condemned for APOSTASY and must be put to death (Deut. 13:1–5); (2) if the prophet makes a prediction and in due course the prediction is not fulfilled—that is, what is predicted does not come to pass—then the prophet is judged to be false and is to be executed (Deut. 18:20–22).

But the Deuteronomic rules will not work in many situations, and the jury is thrown back on other resources. In the end, the decision cannot wait until all the evidence is in, and must be based on other factors. The chief factor (after the basic test of orthodoxy: in the name of which god does the prophet speak?) must be the impact the prophet makes on his audience: his honesty, his courage, his reliability—the ability to make real to the listeners the experience of God and his messages to the prophet and through him to the people. Later there can be confirmation and vindication.

THE PROPHET AS CUSTODIAN OF COVENANT AND COMMUNITY. From beginning to end, the emphasis in prophetic utterance is on the ethical dimension of biblical religion and how it affects the well-being of the nation and its individual members. In contrast to the cultic concerns of the priests, the prophets stress the moral demands of deity and the ethical requirements of the covenant. The survival and success of the community depend more on the righteousness of the nation than on either the cultic activities of the priests or the military, political, social, and economic exploits of the king and his coterie. The battle against idolatry and apostasy was waged unremittingly through the whole biblical period, and the leaders in the struggle were the prophets. Second to that and equally difficult and important was the obligation to one's neighbor and to the community as a whole. On these two foundations, the prophetic message was constructed, and the prophets never ceased to propound the elementary and basic truths about biblical religion and the relationship of God to his people.

PROPHETS AND UNIVERSALISM. With the great prophets of the eighth and following centuries B.C., there was an important shift, although the basic truths remained untouched. The same requirements and the same standards were upheld and applied even more sharply to an Israel prone to defection and default. With the appearance of

the great world powers—Assyria in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. and Babylonia toward the end of the seventh and on into the sixth—the question of the survival of the little kingdoms of Israel and Judah (and their neighbors) became acute. The prophets raise the issue sharply and in a new way for the first time since the time of the patriarchs, with a larger perspective on the world scene and the role of Yahweh in ruling over the nations. The place of Israel and Judah in the larger picture is defined, and a theory of world order and time frame is foreshadowed. The implications of a single God ruling the universe but with special ties to one small nation (or two kingdoms) are developed. The danger and threats to the people of God are defined more sharply, but so also are the hopes and promises of the future. Ultimately, the God of the world, who is also the God of his particular way, and a restored and revealed Israel will take their place among the nations in a harmonious resolution of conflicts—to form the Peaceable Kingdom. The ultimate vision encompasses all nations and peoples, with a special place for Israel, still obligated by essential covenant stipulations, but a leader and model for all the others. Personal FAITH and morality are at the core of prophetic religion, but the implications and ramifications are social, national, and ultimately worldwide.

THE PROPHET AS SPOKESMAN FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. Normally one thinks of the priests as offering up prayers and sacrifices to God in behalf of the people, and especially of the role of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. In the same manner, prophets may exercise the role of intercessor, but in a different context. Jeremiah mentions two intercessors, Moses and Samuel, while confirming that God himself has denied that role to Jeremiah. The most dramatic case is that of Moses in the episode of the golden calf (Ex. 32). Only Moses has the audacity and the closeness to God to demand a change of heart and mind on the part of the deity. Only Moses can command REPENTANCE on the part of God (but see JST, Ex. 32:14). And he succeeds, as the text reports. Israel is spared. A different poetic version of the same event is Psalm 90:13. It is not accidental or incidental that this is the only psalm in the Bible directly attributed to Moses.

Moses remains the unique model of a prophet of Israel because of his inspiration, his leadership, and ultimately his intercessory powers. The clos-

ing words of the book of Deuteronomy reflect this singularity: “Not has arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom God knew face to face” (Deut. 34:10 [author translation]; cf. Ex. 33:11). And Yahweh would talk to Moses face to face, as men and women talk to their companions (cf. also Num. 12:8): “Mouth to mouth I speak to him . . . and the shape of Yahweh he beholds” (author translation).

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DAVID NOEL FREEDMAN

PROPHET JOSEPH SMITH

[Joseph Smith, Jr., *Prophet and first President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, is the primary subject of several entries and is mentioned prominently in many more. For a brief biography and articles on his teachings and writings, see Smith, Joseph: The Prophet. See also History of the Church: c. 1820–1831 and c. 1831–1844 and numerous articles relating to Joseph Smith cross-referenced there. For a history of Joseph Smith’s prophetic ministry prepared under his direction, see History of the Church.

Regarding Joseph Smith’s early prophetic experiences, see First Vision; Moroni, Visitations of; and Sacred Grove. During one of Moroni’s visits in 1827, Joseph Smith received the Gold Plates from which he translated by the “gift and power of God” the *Book of Mormon*; see Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith. For other visions and visitations, see Visions of Joseph Smith.

In company with Oliver Cowdery, Joseph Smith received divine authority; see Aaronic Priesthood: Restoration of, and Melchizedek Priesthood: Restoration of. Thus authorized, they proceeded with the Organization of the Church, 1830. Numerous Revelations given through Joseph Smith guided the infant organization; see Book of Commandments and Doctrine and Covenants. For other scripture that came through the Prophet Joseph Smith, see Book of Abraham; Book of Mormon; Book of Moses; Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible (JST); and Pearl of Great Price.

Joseph Smith’s mission focused on the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, including the First Principles of the Gospel and its Ordinances; he encouraged the

Gathering of the Saints and laid the foundation for the establishment of Zion and the New Jerusalem in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ. The Articles of Faith provides a summary statement of some of the principal doctrines of the gospel.]

PROPHET, SEER, AND REVELATOR

“Prophet, seer, and revelator” is the threefold title applied to all who have received the fulness of the KEYS of the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD associated with the apostleship. Ordinarily, those to whom this title applies are members of the FIRST PRESIDENCY or the QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES. All members of these two governing bodies are sustained as prophets, seers, and revelators by the Latter-day Saints in a public congregational vote (see COMMON CONSENT).

Though there are technical distinctions between the functions of a PROPHET, a SEER, and a revelator (cf. Mosiah 8:12–18), this threefold term is applied in its entirety to describe all these leaders. It was applied to Hyrum SMITH when he was made Assistant President of the Church and Patriarch to the Church, and to Joseph SMITH in his role as President of the Church (D&C 124:94). Also, at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple in 1836, Joseph Smith invited the members of the Church to acknowledge the Twelve Apostles as prophets, seers, and revelators (TPJS, p. 109).

LEWIS R. CHURCH

PROTESTANTISM

Christian Protestantism may be viewed as the product of late medieval “protests” against various elements of the Roman Catholic church. Though there were always persons within Catholicism pressing for reforms, the beginning of the Protestant Reformation is usually dated to 1517 when Martin Luther (1483–1546), an Augustinian monk in Wittenberg, Germany, published his ninety-five theses against papal indulgences. The theses challenged the authority of the pope and by extension of the Roman Catholic church. Protestants since that time are generally considered to be those Christians who are neither Roman Catholics nor Eastern (or Russian) Orthodox.

Although Protestant theology is varied today, it can be characterized by four basic beliefs: (1) the