Bible is the Word of God and all authority resides within its pages as it bears witness to Jesus Christ; (2) the Bible should be in the language of the people, who, by the power of the Holy Ghost, can gain their own understanding of God’s Word; (3) all church members hold the priesthood and should be involved in the total life of the church, meaning that no mediatorial priesthood is necessary; and (4) people are saved by their faith, through the grace of God, and not by any works they may do apart from or in addition to faith.

While Latter-day Saints share with Protestants a conviction of the importance of the scriptures, an extensive lay priesthood (but given only by the laying on of hands by those having proper priesthood authority), and the primacy of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior as the first principle of the gospel, they differ from them by affirming a centralized authority headed by a latter-day prophet and by a number of other doctrines unique to the Church, i.e. temple ordinances for the living and the dead, and the eternal nature of the marriage covenant. Despite some important differences, Latter-day Saints actually share much in doctrine, heritage, and aspiration with Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestants. Even so, they view themselves as embodying an independent Christian tradition standing on its own apart from these other traditions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not a reformation of a previously existing ecclesiastical body but is instead a restoration through heavenly ministrations of authority and of truths, structures, and scriptures that God returned to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors.

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JOHN DILLENBERGER
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PROTESTANT REFORMATION

The sixteenth-century Reformation was a major religious upheaval that has had repercussions to the present day. When Martin Luther challenged the Catholic doctrine of the sacraments, boldly declaring that salvation comes not by human works but by the grace of God alone through faith in Jesus Christ, he set in motion a complex series of events that not only broke the religious stronghold of the Catholic church but also had a profound impact on political, social, and cultural events as well.

LDS perspective regards the Protestant Reformation as a preparation for the more complete restoration of the gospel that commenced with Joseph Smith. Thus, the Protestant Reformation initiated a return to pure Christianity, a work that could not be completed without divine revelation and restoration. The leaders of the Reformation are honored as inspired men who made important progress, but without direct revelation they could not recover the true gospel or the priesthood authority to act in God’s name. That was the mission of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Perhaps the greatest legacy of the Reformation was the increased attention to freedom, one’s own freedom more than that of others. This concern eventually grew into religious toleration and the desire for greater political self-determination. The ending of the single, “universal” church and the proliferation of new churches and sects had echoes in the political arena, most notably in the independence of the United States of America. A great many factors contributed to the establishment of the United States, but the political and religious heritage of the Protestant reformers was certainly among them.

The restoration of the gospel through Joseph Smith took place within the context of this post-Reformation world. Yet Joseph Smith is not considered a successor to the reformers in the sense of building on their teachings. He claimed to receive his knowledge and priesthood authority directly by revelation, not by the study of other writers, thus initiating a new dispensation of the gospel rather than a continuation of the Reformation.

The religious environment of early-nineteenth-century America was predominantly Protestant. That environment encouraged religious differences and resulted in many rival churches. Among the characteristics of that religious revivalism was an emphasis on the Bible and Bible reading, a feature that was first promoted by the sixteenth-century humanists and reformers. The Bible used by Joseph Smith and others of his day was the English King James Version of 1611. It was his own reading of the Bible (in particular James
that led Joseph Smith to his first personal encounter with God.

The Reformation legacy is also seen in the frontier emphasis on congregational religion, emphasizing the right and ability of individual congregations to organize themselves as autonomous religious bodies, conducting their own worship services and generally governing their own affairs. Congregationalism grew out of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English Calvinist tradition in particular, but it was also practiced by other groups.

Especially important in relation to the Restoration was the concept that religion is personal, a one-on-one relationship between God and the individual worshiper. This was a key feature of the Reformation Anabaptists, who believed, much as Latter-day Saints do, in personal revelation and individual responsibility. The Anabaptists rejected infant baptism, teaching instead that baptism was a cleansing covenant with God, entered into only after the exercise of faith and repentance. Many other Anabaptist doctrines are remarkably similar to Latter-day Saint beliefs, including the concept of restoration itself, which the Anabaptists called Restitution—meaning the restitution of the apostolic Church of the New Testament.

Not as many specific doctrines are shared with mainline Protestants, but Latter-day Saints do have in common a devoted faith in Jesus Christ as Redeemer of the world and as personal Savior. This faith was the moving force in the actions of Martin Luther and other early reformers, and was central to the life and work of the Prophet Joseph Smith. It remains today a central tenet of the Church.

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PSALMS, MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN

The Psalms are a rich source of messianic prophecy; indeed Psalms 2, 22, 69, and 110 are cited or partially quoted as messianic prophecies in the New Testament. The Prophet Joseph Smith appreciated the messianic and prophetic nature of the Psalms, revising under inspiration several verses to make them even more emphatically prophetic of the messianic message (see JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE [JST]). Included in the revisions are Psalms 10, 11, 12, and 24.

Citations from Psalms contribute 116 of the 283 Old Testament quotations in the New Testament. Of these, a number are clearly messianic. For instance, Psalm 2:7 is referred to in Acts 13:33; and Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5 specifically apply the affirmation “Thou art my Son” to Jesus. Nearing death on the cross, Jesus himself quoted Psalm 22:1 (Matt. 27:46) and much of the rest of that Psalm characterizes his suffering. His disciples recalled the zeal mentioned in Psalm 69:9 during Jesus’ cleansing of the temple (John 2:17); and the same verse is applied to Christ by Paul in Romans 15:3. Jesus credits the HOLY GHOST with inspiring David in Psalm 110:1, and applies the passage to himself (Mark 12:35–37; Luke 20:41–44). Hebrews 5:5 quotes Psalm 110:4 concerning Christ and the MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD.

The JST revision of Psalm 10:15–16 alludes to the kingly role of the MESSIAH: “O Lord, thou will break the arm of the wicked... And the Lord shall be king... for the wicked shall perish out of his land.”

Psalm 11:1–5 similarly becomes more messianic by specifying the LAST DAYS rather than a contemporary Davideic event: “In that day thou shalt come, O Lord; and I will put my trust in thee. Thou shalt say unto thy people...” (JST Psalm 11:1). Referring to the Messiah’s overcomer of evil, verse 3 is changed to read, “But the foundations of the wicked shall be destroyed, and what can they do?” The JST also casts verse 4 into the future, emphasizing a future deliverance from evil and speaking of the Lord “when he shall come into his holy temple.” Verse 5 is doubled in length and adds a key messianic clause, “and he shall redeem the righteous.”

JST Psalm 12:1–8 begins with a sentence not found in the King James Version—that underscores divine assistance: “In that day thou shalt help, O Lord, the poor and the meek of the earth.” Other verses—2, 4, 5, 6, and 8—have been recast into the future tense. Verse 5 (JST) is messianic, beginning, “Therefore, thus saith the Lord, I will arise in that day, I will stand upon the earth and I will judge the earth for the oppression of the poor.”