ceed 1,000 members. Locally elected priesthood leaders presided over meetings of active priesthood members in discussions of religious, civic, and economic issues as well as of the spiritual and temporal concerns of the Church. Meetings were confidential, and admission was by tickets given to an invited membership.

President Brigham Young dissolved these branches of the Schools of the Prophets late in the summer of 1872 and then reorganized in November 1872 a Salt Lake City School of the Prophets for General Authorities and other invited priesthood leaders. Participants numbering more than 200 discussed theology and also temporal concerns. This school helped introduce cooperative enterprises into LDS communities. When united order organizations were incorporated in the spring and summer of 1874 to facilitate economic cooperation, the Salt Lake City School of the Prophets dissolved and some of its functions were absorbed by local united orders.

President John Taylor, who succeeded Brigham Young as Church President, reconvened the School of the Prophets in the fall of 1883. Inviting Church General Authorities and a select group of other Church leaders to participate, President Taylor followed the ceremonies of the original school. A branch of the school was established in St. George, Utah, in December 1883. These schools probably ceased to operate in early 1884, with no subsequent attempt by the Church to organize further Schools of the Prophets.

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STEVEN R. SORENSEN

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Because of belief in the ultimate compatibility of all truth and in the eternal character of human knowledge, Latter-day Saints tend to take a more positive approach to science than do some people in other religious traditions who also claim a strong foundation in scripture. The LDS experience includes encounters between religious belief and the natural sciences in three broad areas. For the most part, LDS responses to discoveries in American antiquities and New World archaeology have been enthusiastic, but sometimes cautious, as these findings are thought to have some potential for expanding contemporary understanding of the ancient book of Mormon peoples and book of Mormon geography. Latter-day Saints have often been defensive toward, though they have not necessarily rejected, developments in geology and the biological sciences that bear on the nature of the Creation and the age of the earth (see EVOLUTION; ORIGIN OF MAN). The revelations to Joseph Smith of an Abrahamic ASTRONOMY and three creation accounts, having some variation, have also stimulated positive interest in astronomical and cosmological issues. In particular, these revelations affirmed the plurality of worlds and heliocentrism in the scriptural writings of ancient prophets. Historical, scientific, philosophical, and theological factors have tempered discussions of science and religion in the LDS context.

Conceptions of scientific knowledge have changed many times since Greek antiquity. Thus, for example, modern understanding of the nature of the cosmos has changed radically from Aristotle in early Greece; to Galileo, Descartes, and Newton in the seventeenth century; to Lyell and Darwin in the nineteenth century; and in the twentieth century to Einstein, Hubble, and Hawking. Science itself continues in a state of constant flux, so that the total collection of scientific ideas at any point in time could never be considered final truth. Consequently, scientific theories are forever tentative and are not likely to be fully compatible with revealed religion at any particular time.

Realizing this, scholars today recognize that older descriptions of “conflict” or open “warfare” between science and Christianity are often mistaken. Nor could LDS thinking about science be described in this way. The Church is distinguished by its acceptance of ongoing revelation and the view that divine revelation underlies its scriptures and teachings. Consequently, Latter-day Saints assume that ultimate truths about religious matters and about God’s creations can never be in conflict, as God is the author of both. They look forward to a time when more complete knowledge in both areas will transcend all present perceptions of conflict.
As early revelations to Joseph Smith seemed to invite reflections on the nature of the universe and the place of human beings in it, Latter-day Saints came to reflect the kind of optimism about a future reconciliation of science and religion that characterized many of their contemporaries. As positive ideas and attitudes about the compatibility of science and religion emerged with growing confidence among Latter-day Saints, many began to use the theories and observations of science to support their religious beliefs. Two main reasons for this appear to be that (1) LDS THEOLOGY is philosophically committed to a positive conception of “true” science, and (2) Latter-day Saints could invoke science in partial support of the revealed world of the RESTORATION (true religion).

These LDS appeals to science are distinct from the traditional Christian efforts in natural theology, which assumed that science can lead to a theology of nature in which science and Christianity are compatible. While individual Latter-day Saints freely invoke philosophical arguments and scientific evidences to affirm religious claims, these have never been considered official or conclusive. Latter-day Saints tend to be dubious of natural theology because the existence and nature of God can be known only through revelation, not through speculative theology.

Several basic Church teachings combine to provide additional support for a positive attitude toward science. Because God governs his creations through the laws of nature, of which he is the author, science is perceived as one important means of gaining understanding of his governance. Furthermore, LDS scriptures teach that “the glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth” (D&C 93:36) and that the knowledge and intelligence gained in this life will be an advantage in the next (D&C 130:18–19). Finally, Latter-day Saints also use pragmatic and empiricological methods as legitimate means of gaining knowledge. They believe God expects them to use all forms of knowledge, including the revelatory and the scientific. Yet, revelation is always primary, and there is little sympathy among Latter-day Saints for the emphasis on science that leads to a rejection of scripturally based understanding.

While LDS publications from 1832 to the Nauvoo exodus in 1846 occasionally examined scientific ideas, extensive use and discussion of scientific themes did not emerge until the 1850s. Early Latter-day Saint speculations on science were set forth occasionally in conference addresses and published in the Journal of Discourses, the Millennial Star, and in the writings of apostles Parley P. PRATT and Orson PRATT. For example, Orson Pratt, the first LDS science-philosopher, wrote in 1873 that “the great temple of science must be erected upon the solid foundations of everlasting truth; its towering spires must mount upward, reaching higher and still higher, until crowned with the glory and presence of Him, who is Eternal” (Deseret News 22 [1873]:586).

Beginning in the 1890s, positive LDS speculations on science generally, and specifically in such fields as astronomy, cosmology, evolution, geology, and paleontology, while not always harmonious, drew on the ideas of the first academically trained LDS scientists (and later General Authorities) James E. Talmage, John A. Widtsoe, Joseph F. Merrill, and Richard R. Lyman. All four of these highly influential apostles used their scientific expertise to further the view that “correct” science and revealed religion are in close harmony because the author of both is God. Thus, Talmage asked rhetorically, “What is the field of science?” His answer: “Everything. Science is the discourse of nature and nature is the visible declaration of Divine Will. . . . There is naught so small, so vast that science takes no cognizance thereof. . . . Nature is the scientist’s copy and truth his chief aim” (c. 1895). “Among our young people,” Talmage wrote elsewhere, “I consider scientific knowledge as second in importance only to that knowledge that pertains to the Church and Kingdom of God. . . . Nature, as we study it, is but the temple of the Almighty” (c. 1900).

In 1930, Widtsoe wrote:

Science . . . is the recognition by the mind through human senses of the realities of existence. The mind of man is a noble instrument, a pre-eminent possession, by which he becomes conscious, not only of his own existence, but of the conditions of external nature. . . . The glory of physical conquests, of the sea and earth and air, have often dazzled men to such a degree that they have forgotten that back of all discovery and progress is the power of observation and thought. Without mind, there is no science, no progress, only extinction [In Search of Truth (Salt Lake City, 1930), pp. 36–37].

Later, in Evidences and Reconciliations, one of Widtsoe’s most widely known books, he wrote, “The Church supports and welcomes the growth of science. . . . The religion of the Latter-day Saints is not hostile to any truth, nor to scientific search for truth” (Vol. 1, p. 129).
Other (non-scientist) Church authorities, principally Joseph Fielding Smith, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, and later Bruce R. McConkie, vigorously criticized the ideas of some that the scriptures could be reconciled with scientific theories, in particular, evolutionary accounts of the origin of man.

Talmage, Widtsoe, and B. H. Roberts, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, probably have contributed more than any other LDS authorities—with the possible exception of the Pratt brothers—after the initial years of Church growth to scientific topics and their assumed general harmony with the gospel. That this attitude continues and is presently sustained within the larger Latter-day Saint culture, particularly among LDS scientists, is also supported by recent studies that suggest that the LDS community has produced more scientists per capita than most religious groups in twentieth-century America (see SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS).

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ERICH ROBERT PAUL

SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS
In a world where science and religion have sometimes been at odds, Latter-day Saints stand out for their positive attitudes toward science and their high proportion of involvement in scientific careers. Active scientists are often called to positions of Church leadership, and a number of LDS scientists have been internationally recognized for scientific work. With Church sponsorship, Brigham Young University maintains sizable programs in most scientific fields of study and supports significant research in many of these. The positive attitude toward science is often attributed to distinctive theological beliefs.

In the nineteenth century, some Latter-day Saints showed great interest in science, but none were broadly known as practicing scientists. Their experience in those early decades included constantly moving from place to place, struggling with persecution and economic loss, carrying the message of the restored gospel to the nations of the earth, and establishing new communities on the American frontier. While this life afforded little opportunity to become professional scientists, several pursued their scientific interests as they were able, including Orson Pratt's early establishment of an observatory in Salt Lake City. Distinctive cultural factors present from the earliest years eventually led Latter-day Saints to pursue careers in science in large numbers.