joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance’ (Gal. 5:22-23).

Just as the Father sent Jesus into the world, the Savior sent his disciples into the world (John 17:18). Latter-day Saints, therefore, do not believe in asceticism—a withdrawal from the world in an effort to avoid worldliness and to obtain spirituality. Their commission is to be in the world but not of the world, to improve the quality of life on earth by such things or activities as rearing good children, pursuing education, expanding their knowledge of all truth, contributing to the well-being of members of their communities, and sharing the gospel with others. Through example and precept, they seek to encourage all people to put off worldliness and become spiritually reborn by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. In summary, LDS doctrine cautions that “Men drink damnation to their own souls except they humble themselves and become as little children... putthelh off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord” (Mosiah 3:18-19).

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WORLD CONFERENCES ON RECORDS

Two World Conferences on Records have been sponsored by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. In celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the Family History Library and to exhibit the newly constructed Granite Mountain Record Vault, the Genealogical Society of Utah hosted the first world conference, August 5–8, 1969. The theme, “Records Protection in an Uncertain World,” emphasized that, since no one organization can preserve all the valuable records of the world, each nation or society must preserve its own records from wear, deterioration, neglect, and natural or man-created disasters.

Sessions combined two types of meetings: records preservation, usage, and accessibility; and genealogical research. For the first time on a world scale, a conference brought together genealogists, archivists, demographers, and technical experts on microfilming and other methods of preserving records. Two hundred and eighty specialists in these fields presented 180 seminars during the four days to an audience of both amateurs and professionals from national and governmental bodies, private institutions and societies, and individuals from every state in the United States and forty-five nations.

The second World Conference on Records was held August 12–15, 1980. The theme, “Preserving Our Heritage,” was stimulated by Alex Haley’s, 1976 book Roots. Much of the conference focused on gathering, preparing, and preserving personal and individual family histories—writing “the history of the heart”—in addition to factual genealogical data. The featured speaker, Alex Haley, said: “In all of us there is a hunger... to know who we are and where we come from.” Attendance of 11,500 more than doubled that of the previous conference, including representatives from each of the United States and from fifty nations. Printed copies of the sessions of the conferences were made available at the Genealogical Society headquarters in Salt Lake City.

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Doris Bayly Brower

WORLD RELIGIONS (NON-CHRISTIAN) AND MORMONISM

[This entry consists of seven articles: Overview Buddhism Confucianism Hinduism Islam Judaism Shinto]

The articles gathered under this title generally explain the relationships between Latter-day Saints and persons of other faiths, and illustrate differences and similarities in belief between non-Christian religions and the LDS religion. On the former subject, see also Interfaith Relationships: Jewish and Interfaith Relationships: Other.]
OVERVIEW

Latter-day Saints believe that God has inspired not only people of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, but other people as well, to carry out his purposes. Today God inspires not only Latter-day Saints but also founders, teachers, philosophers, and reformers of other Christian and non-Christian religions. Since LDS belief is grounded in a theistic biblical faith, it has been relatively easy for scholars and believers to perceive parallels between it and traditional Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Now that the Church has become a global movement extending into Asia, comparisons between the gospel of Jesus Christ and the principal religions of India, China, Korea, and Japan are increasingly significant.

The gospel does not hold an adversarial relationship with other religions. Leaders of the Church have said that intolerance is a sign of weakness (R. Lindsay, “A Mormon View of Religious Tolerance,” Address to the Anti-defamation League of B’nai B’rith, San Francisco, February 6, 1984). The LDS perspective is that “we claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may” (A of F 11). The Church teaches that members must not only be kind and loving toward others but also respect their right to believe and worship as they choose.

George Albert Smith, eighth President of the Church, publicly advocated the official Church policy of friendship and TOLERANCE: “We have come not to take away from you the truth and virtue you possess. We have come not to find fault with you nor to criticize you. . . . We have come here as your brethren. . . . Keep all the good that you have, and let us bring to you more good, in order that you may be happier and in order that you may be prepared to enter into the presence of our Heavenly Father” (pp. 12–13).

On February 15, 1978 the FIRST PRESIDENCY of the Church issued the following declaration:

The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals. . . . Our message therefore is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father [Palmer, 1978].

In the words of Orson F. Whitney, an apostle, the gospel “embraces all truth, whether known or unknown. It incorporates all intelligence, both past and prospective. No righteous principle will ever be revealed, no truth can possibly be discovered, either in time or in eternity, that does not in some manner, directly or indirectly, pertain to the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (Elders’ Journal 4, no. 2 [Oct. 15, 1906]:26). “If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things” (A of F 13).

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BUDDHISM

“Buddhism has been the most important religious force in Asia for nearly two thousand years. No other religion has affected the thought, culture, and politics of so many people. In aesthetics, architecture, dance, drama, handicrafts, literary arts, and music Buddhism has also been the single most important civilizing influence in the Eastern world” (Palmer and Keller, p. 49).

Siddhartha Gautama (563–483 B.C.), the founder of Buddhism, acknowledged no God, no soul, and no future life; he taught of the bliss of nirvana, which involves the extinction of ego and lust. Caught in the legacy of karma, one’s life is bequeathed to another who falls heir to it—a continuation that is sometimes called “stream of consciousness,” the “aggregates of character,” or the “skandas.” Consequently, the historical Buddha did not advocate worship or prayer, but practiced introspective meditation as a form of spiritual discipline.

The philosophy of Gautama (Gotama, in Pali), sometimes called Theravada Buddhism, with its emphasis upon the worthlessness of the physical body, of individuality, of this phenomenal mortal life, of faith in God, and of judgment,
with LDS doctrine. In the restored gospel, mankind is the literal, personal offspring of God. It is a privilege to be born into mortality to gain a physical body, so that one can become more like the Heavenly Father, who is a personal, tangible being (cf. D&C 130:22). Self-fulfillment, not self-negation, is the purpose of earth life. Latter-day Saints seek to emulate Christ and, through the power of his divine atonement, to be personally exalted into the presence of God after death, and to become like him (see Godhood).

This is not to say that the gospel and Buddhism contradict one another in every way. The LDS religion, like Buddhism, advocates meditation, reverence, inspiration, and moderation. Latter-day Saints embrace elements similar to those of the Eightfold Middle Path, which advocate freedom from ill will and cruelty, and abstinence from lying, talebearing, harsh and vain thought, violence, killing, stealing, and sexual immorality (see Commandments).

Other dimensions of Buddhist doctrine and practice, in the schools of Mahayana Buddhism in northern Asia, are similar to LDS doctrine and practice. Both LDS belief and Mahayana Buddhism are theistic. The Bodhisattva ideal of benevolence and compassionate service, of helping others who cannot by themselves reach the highest realms of spirituality, is not only largely consistent with the vicarious sacrifice and redeeming love of Jesus Christ, but also is expressed in wide-ranging, loving service on behalf of the living and the dead carried out within Latter-day Saint temples (see temple ordinances).

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CONFUCIANISM
The Confucian focus upon moral example as the basis of harmony in society, government, and the universe is consistent with LDS views. However, Confucius was not interested in metaphysics or theology; he did not advocate belief in God, nor did he talk about life after death. He was concerned with humans in their social setting.

Arguments that Confucianism is not a religion have often been answered by references to its sacred text. One could also point to the lives of millions who have sought to practice its teachings by honoring parents and deceased ancestors through acts of affection and piety in the home or through performances at tombs, shrines, and temples that convey spiritual belief as well as moral affirmations (Palmer, p. 16). For Latter-day Saints, morality is based upon the individual’s relationship with God as an expression of one’s faith in God and upon obedience to his will.

Confucian morality is generally expressed in social and cultural ways. Values of loyalty, virtue, respect, courtesy, learning, and love are preserved primarily through outward courtesies and formalities, including traditional family ceremonies. Filial piety is the ultimate virtue. It includes honoring the spirits of one’s ancestors not only by observances at graves and family tombs but also by striving to achieve acclaim in learning, in the mastery of sacred texts, and in aesthetic arts such as music, poetry, and painting.

The Confucian quest for sagehood, for refinement and cultivation of the ideal human, has its counterpart in the Latter-day Saint quest for eternal life. Both the sage and the true Latter-day Saint personify the transforming power of righteous behavior (see righteousness). In LDS scripture it is sometimes referred to as putting off “the natural man” and becoming a saint, one characterized as being “submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict” (Mosiah 3:19).

Latter-day Saints and Confucians share a mutual concern for the salvation of the extended family. Though the focus differs, both carry out devotional ceremonies in sacred places on behalf of departed ancestors. In this respect, both the LDS Church and Confucianism may be called family-centered religions. Both place importance upon genealogical research, the preservation of family records, and the performance of vicarious holy ordinances on behalf of their dead. In both instances, there exists a commitment to the idea that the living can serve the needs of departed loved ones (see temple ordinances).

Church members believe that Elijah, the Old Testament prophet, personally appeared to Joseph Smith in the Kirtland Temple in 1836 and conferred priesthood keys, or authority, by means of which the hearts of children could turn to their ancestors and to the promises of salvation made to the fathers and the hearts of forebears could turn to their children (D&C 110:13–16),
with the result that families and generations can be joined together "for time and for all eternity." Joseph Smith’s remark concerning the dead "that they without us cannot be made perfect—neither can we without our dead be made perfect" (D&C 128:15; cf. Heb. 11:40) also resonates in the Confucian world.

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HINDUISM
Unlike the LDS Church, Hinduism has no founder, no central authority, no hierarchy, no uniformly explicated or applied moral standards. However, Hindus and Latter-day Saints share at least two fundamental beliefs—the continuing operation of irreversible cosmic law and the importance of pursuing ultimate union with the divine—though these principles may be understood differently (see UNITY).

Hinduism and the gospel of Jesus Christ differ in their perceptions of deity. In Hinduism there exist many gods, of thunder, drink, fire, sky, mountains, and the like, who are variously playful, capricious, vindictive, loving, and law-abiding. During the period of classical Hinduism, Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva emerged to represent, respectively, the three primary functions of creation, preservation, and destruction. However, among the gods there is no generally recognized order.

For Latter-day Saints, God the Father, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost form a tritheistic group of individuals of unified purpose and power, always systematic and ethical. The Father and the Son have bodies of flesh and bones, and the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit (D&C 130:22). The physical world was organized by the Father, through the instrumentality of the Son, who is the only Savior of the world, having willingly submitted to the suffering in Gethsemane and to crucifixion as an atoning sacrifice so that humankind could be delivered from death and sin. Several ORDINANCES of the Church are similitudes of the life, death, and redemption of Christ.

LDS belief and Hinduism both subscribe to a belief in an antemortal existence (see PREMORTAL LIFE). Hindus believe that premortal experiences determine inequalities of earthly life, including the caste system. In LDS cosmology, eternal laws of cause and effect were applicable in the premortal existence, as they are for inhabitants of the current temporal world: “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—and when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:20–21). Valiant souls from the pre-earth life may be ordained to be leaders here (Abr. 3:23; cf. Jer. 1:4; see FOREORDINATION).

In Hindu terminology, the cosmic law of justice is called “karma.” Hindus believe that individual spirits are reincarnated repeatedly on earth in accordance with the effects of karma. Those who have not yet merited release from this wheel of rebirth are in a state of negative karma. If they improve their deeds during the next incarnation, they can improve their karmic condition and may even gain freedom to reach Nirvana (see REINCARNATION).

To Latter-day Saints, mortality is considered an extension and continuation of premortal performance in proving and preparing persons for exaltation in life after death. Humans are born only once on earth, and all mortal beings at birth are candidates for exaltation in the CELESTIAL KINGDOM. Hindus believe that the accumulated prebirth experiences have more consequence in determining one’s future state than the actions of mortality. For Church members, birth is not an indication of failure to achieve release from the wheel of birth but rather a positive step forward along the path from premortal life to mortal life to IMMORTALITY and ETERNAL PROGRESSION. In this connection, the FALL OF ADAM was no accident. It was an essential event in the plan of reunion with God (cf. 2 Ne. 2:25).

At the philosophical level, Hinduism sees the phenomenal world as an illusion, but within the manifold appearances there is Brahman, the World Soul. Individual life is an invisible aspect of Universal Life. The ultimate object of all works, devotion, and knowledge is to gain release from egotistical lustful attachments to this physical world so as to achieve a state of peace that comes from identity with the impersonal Universal Soul, or Nirvana.

Gaining a conscious union with God is also a prime objective of LDS belief, although it is perceived differently. Jesus not only declared that he
and his Father were one but also prayed that his
disciples would likewise become one with them
(John 10:30; 17:11), both in mind and will, as well
as in heightened states of celestial consciousness,
that is, to develop thoroughly Christlike and god-
like qualities (D&C 35:2; 76:58; 1 Cor. 6:17; Heb.
2:11; Rom. 12:2). In purpose, power, and personal-
ity, and even in the glorification of the body, hu-
mankind can become perfect (Matt. 5:48; 3 Ne.
12:48; see also PERFECTION). Unlike Hinduism,
the LDS faith does not seek the relinquishment of
INDIVIDUALITY. Free AGENCY and personal re-
ponsibility are not impaired but ultimately hon-
ored and enhanced.

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ISLAM
Interest in the Church’s associations with Islam has
appeared in literary comparisons, within LDS
comings, and through historical contacts. The ini-
tial comparison was perhaps made in 1834, when
the anti-Mormon Pastor E. D. Howe suggested
that Joseph Smith matched Muhammad’s “igno-
rance and stupidity,” thereby coining an analogy
that experienced polemical and “scientific” phases.
The polemical phase entailed American Protes-
tants vilifying the Church and its prophet by liken-
ing them to Islam and Muhammad, long presumed
fraudulent by Christians. This disputative tactic
had been used against Protestants during the
Counter-Reformation, and emphasized such allega-
tions as sensuality, violence, and deception.
These polemics yielded a literary corpus—for ex-
ample, “The Yankee Mahomet” and books by Jo-
seph Willing and Bruce Kinney. The scientific
phase began when the explorer and Arabist Rich-
ard Francis Burton visited Utah in 1860 and re-
phrased in academic discourse the analogy, subse-
sequently elaborated by David Margoliouth, Eduard
Meyer, Hans Thimme, and Georges Bousquet.
These Orientalists and sociologists of religion ap-
enently felt they could study fully documented
Mormonism as a proxy for underdocumented
Islam.
The Church’s doctrinal posture toward Islam
has also gone through phases. Islam is not men-
tioned in either the Book of Mormon or the Doc-
trine and Covenants. Yet articles in Times and Sea-
sons suggest that some LDS spokesmen initially
reheated medieval Christian views of Islam as fanati-
cal heresy (Editorial, 3 [15 Apr. 1842]; “Last Hour
of the False Prophet,” 5 [Apr. 1, 1844]; “Mahometanism,” 6 [Jan. 15, 1845]). But speeches by apostles George A. Smith and Parley P. Pratt in
1855 evoked more positive traditional interpreta-
tions: that Islam, fulfilling biblical promises made
to Ishmael (Gen. 21), was divinely instigated to
“scourge” apostate Christianity and to curb idola-
try. Perhaps unknowingly paraphrasing Muham-
mad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792), George A.
Smith applied historical judgment to Islam’s ex-
xperience: “As they abode in the teachings which
Mahomet gave them,... they were united and
prospered; but when they ceased to do this, they
lost their power and influence” (pp. 34–35). More
recently, perhaps in the context of the Church’s
growth to global dimensions, Muslim cultures
have figured prominently in dicta—such as those
by President Spencer W. Kimball and Elders
Howard W. Hunter, Bruce R. McConkie, and Car-
los E. Asay—stressing that God is no respecter
of persons on grounds of race or color. In the “Easter
Message” of February 15, 1978, the LDS First
Presidency wrote that Muhammad and other
biblical religious leaders and philosophers “re-
ceived a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were
given to them by God to enlighten whole nations.”
On balance, Mormon teachings thus seem to have
cast Islam in a positive historical role.
Latter-day Saints’ historical contacts with
Islam include missions in countries with Muslim
populations. Some LDS proselytizers have ex-
pressed sentiments articulated earlier by such
Catholic and Protestant missionaries as Cardinal
Lavigerie and Samuel Zwemer: that Islam’s own
doctrinal claims (e.g., God is one not three; Jesus
was a prophet, not God’s son; apostates from Islam
merit death), Islamic society’s holistic character,
and the sad legacy of Muslim–Christian relations
make difficult the converting of Muslims to Chi-
Christianity. Since World War II many LDS profes-
sionals have lived in Muslim communities. Some have
chronicled their experience in terms that are
to human (Marion Miller) or historical-theological
(Arthur Wallace). At least one has engaged in rad-
cal syncretism (Ibn Yusuf/Lloyd Miller; see Green,
1983). Governments of Islamic countries, most of
which ban proselytizing, such as Egypt and Saudi
Arabia, have allowed discreet worship by LDS
families. In 1989 Jordan permitted the establishment of an LDS cultural center in Amman.

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JUDAISM

The views of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members toward Jews and Judaism have been shaped chiefly by LDS teachings and by historical contacts with Jewish communities. These teachings include regarding the Jews as an ancient covenant people with a prophesied role in the contemporary gathering of Israel and in events of the last days, and the contacts include educational activities in Israel and LDS proselytizing efforts outside of Israel.

Latter-day Saints share some traditional Christian positions toward Judaism, such as acknowledging debts for ethical foundations and religious terminology. Moreover, they have adopted stances expressed in Paul’s mildly universalistic writings: Bible-era Judaism, based on the law of Moses and embodying the Old Testament or covenant, was essentially “fulfilled” in Jesus Christ (cf. 3 Ne. 15:4–8), so Christianity became the New Covenant and therefore spiritual “Israel.” However, they have tended not to share the anti-Semitic postures of some Christian eras or groupings. Reflecting a more positive view, the Book of Mormon contains such passages as “Ye shall no longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, . . . for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them” (3 Ne. 29:8), and President Heber J. Grant stated, “There should be no ill-will . . . in the heart of any true Latter-day Saint, toward the Jewish people” (GS, p. 147).

Mormons consider themselves a latter-day covenant people, the divinely restored New Testament Church. In this light, they have interpreted literally the Lord’s mandate to them to regather Israel. While seeing historical judgment in Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman treatment of biblical peoples, they have viewed the “scattering” as having beneficially diffused the “blood of Israel” worldwide. As a result, the Prophet Joseph Smith said that the Church believes in the “literal gathering of Israel” (A of F 10). This is done principally by missionary work searching for both biological and spiritual “Israelites” among the Gentile nations.

In LDS eschatology, the first Israelite tribe thus being gathered is Ephraim, with which most Latter-day Saints are identified through patriarchal blessings. To this “Semitic identification” has been attributed the substitution of Judeophobia for anti-Semitism among Mormons (Maus). Indeed, LDS doctrine has envisaged a partnership both in promulgating scripture—in Ezekiel 37:16, Latter-day Saints find allusions to the Bible and Book of Mormon—and in erecting millennial capitals: Ephraim will build the new Jerusalem in an American Zion, Jews (“Judah”) will gather in “the land of their fathers” (3 Ne. 20:29) to rebuild (old) Jerusalem, a prominent theme in the Book of Mormon (see 2 Ne. 6, 9–10, 29: Ether 13) and the Doctrine and Covenants (sections 39, 42, 45, 110, 133). Like several post-Reformation evangelical groups, Latter-day Saints have anticipated a return of Jews to Palestine as part of Israel’s gathering. Indeed, the Prophet Joseph Smith sent Orson Hyde, an apostle, to Jerusalem, where in October 1841 he dedicated the land and prayed “for the gathering together of Judah’s scattered remnants” (HC 4:456). On grounds that “the first shall be last,” Brigham Young said that the conversion of the Jews would not occur before Christ’s second coming (Green; cf. Ether 13:12). Yet Palestine was subsequently rededicated for the Jews’ return by several apostles in the Church: George A. Smith (1873), Francis M. Lyman (1902), James E. Talmage (1921), David O. McKay (1930), and John A. Widtsoe (1933).

The creation by modern Zionism (secular Jewish nationalism) of a Jewish community and then a state in Palestine tested LDS doctrine’s equating the Jews’ “return” with Israel’s “gathering” (i.e., conversion, but in different locations). While Rabbi Abraham Kook’s disciples viewed Zionism’s success from Jewish eschatological perspectives, some Latter-day Saints began regarding it from LDS perspectives: a secular preparatory stage for the messianic era. A latter-day apostle, LeGrand
Richards, and some others in effect identified Zionism and the State of Israel as the expected “return,” the physical prelude to the spiritual “gathering.” Others, such as Elder Bruce R. McConkie, wrote that the Zionist ingathering was not that “of which the scriptures speak. . . . It does not fulfill the ancient promises.” He saw it as a “gathering of the unconverted” but “nonetheless part of the divine plan” (Millennial Messiah, Salt Lake City, 1982, p. 229).

Pre–World War I contacts with Jewish communities were apparently influenced by Brigham Young’s dictum. Jews immigrated into Utah after 1864, aligning politically with non-LDS “Gentiles.” Yet they related well to the LDS majority, which did not proselytize them. Indeed, to the earliest Jewish settlers in Utah, the LDS Church provided meeting places for services and donated land for a cemetery. Utahans have also elected several Jews to public office, including a judge, state legislators, and a governor (see Brooks, 1973).

An LDS Near East mission (from 1884) was based temporarily at Haifa, where a cemetery contains graves of missionaries and German converts. Teaching mostly Armenians and German colonists, this mission ignored the longtime resident Jews of the Old Yishuv and had few contacts with new Zionist immigrants. After World War I some LDS leaders felt impressed to begin “gathering” Jews. New York Mission President (1922–1927) B. H. Roberts wrote pamphlets later consolidated into Rasha—The Jew, Mormonism’s first exposition directed at Jews. In this same vein, Elder LeGrand Richards composed Israel! Do You Know? and then received permission to launch experimental “Jewish missions,” the largest being in Los Angeles. This and smaller Jewish missions (Salt Lake City; Ogden; San Francisco; Portland, Oreg.; New York; Washington D.C.) were disbanded in 1959, when the First Presidency directed that Jewish communities not be singled out for proselytizing.

Noteworthy interaction has accompanied Brigham Young University’s foreign study program in Jerusalem (begun 1968), based first at a hotel and then at a kibbutz. Seeking a permanent facility, BYU leaders were granted a location on Mount Scopus by Jerusalem’s municipal authorities. Construction began in 1984 on the Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies and, because it was such a prominent facility on such a choice site, drew opposition; ultra-Orthodox Jews, suspecting a “missionary center” under academic cover, warned of “spiritual holocaust.” However, anti-Mormon campaigns failed to halt construction of the center, partly because U.S. congressmen and Jewish leaders, as well as Israeli liberals, defended it. The controversy reached Israel’s Knesset, which obliged BYU to strengthen its non-proselytizing pledge. This contest was linked to the larger debate between Israel’s secularists, who valued pluralism, and its militant Orthodox, who feared a new alien presence.

LDS contacts with Judaism have led to an exchange of converts. Salt Lake’s synagogue Kol Ami has been attended by some ex-Mormons. Perhaps a few hundred Jews have become Latter-day Saints. Like Evangelical Jews, most have continued to emphasize their Jewishness, and fellow Mormons have welcomed them and considered them “of Judah.” Convert memoirs have appeared; for honesty and literary quality probably none surpasses Herbert Rona’s Peace to a Jew. Jewish Mormons formed B’nai Shalom in 1967 to function as a support group and to facilitate genealogical research.

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SHINTO

Shinto, the earliest and largest native religion of Japan, has no known founder, no sacred scriptures, no systematized philosophy, no set of moral laws, no struggle between good and evil, no eschatology or life after death, no ecclesiastical organization. Shinto is “the way of the gods.” It is folkways and spiritual feeling toward the awesomeness, the purity, the beauty of unspoiled nature.

In the Japanese view, the ever-present powers and spirits within nature are the kami, or gods, but they are neither transcendent nor omnipotent.
Shinto has a rich mythology. Its luxuriant polytheism is dominated by Amaterasu, the goddess of the Sun, and by her brother Susano, who is most often frivolous and rude.

The LDS Church, on the other hand, has a founder, a set of sacred scriptures, a philosophical basis, a declared body of ethics and doctrine, and a structured church organization, and accepts a tri-theistic godhead through obedience to whom mankind can overcome the evils of this world. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are the supreme godhead, perfect, tangible beings whose light and love emanate from their presence “to fill the immensity of space” (D&C 88:12; cf. 130:22).

Latter-day Saints believe that God’s work and glory are to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). But Shinto is concerned with the here and now. It expresses a “joyful acceptance of life and a feeling of closeness to nature” (Reischauer, in D.B. Ficken, Shinto: Japan’s Spiritual Roots, Tokyo, 1980, pp. 6–7).

No counterpart to the central tenet of LDS faith—the crucifixion and atonement of Christ—exists in Shinto. While the LDS Church and many other world religions concentrate on the theology of death and sin, the importance of holy writ, and the responsibilities of parenting and church service, Shinto values and attitudes are transmitted through festive celebrations of the powers within mountains, waterfalls, trees, and other aspects of nature.

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WORLDS

Latter-day Saint prophets and scripture teach that other worlds similar to this earth have been and will be created and inhabited in fulfillment of God’s eternal designs for his children. As explained in REVELATIONS to the Prophet Joseph Smith, God has in operation a vast plan for the eternal progress of his children. In a vision given to Moses, the Lord said, “worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose, . . . there are many (worlds) that now stand, and innumerable are they unto man” (Moses 1:33, 35). This same many-worlds view is echoed in other scriptures (see Heb. 1:2; D&C 76:24; Moses 7:30; Abr. 3:12).

Joseph Smith’s version of pluralism shared some similarities with ideas of his religious contemporaries and of modern science. But the pluralistic cosmology that emerged from his revelations and the interpretations of the early generation of LDS leaders taught by him were distinctive. Unlike other religious pluralists, Joseph Smith evidenced no interest in using pluralism for proselytizing purposes, but only to unfold a fuller understanding of God’s purposes for people in this life and in the hereafter. The full and coherent picture painted in these Mormon teachings is not plausibly derived from any contemporary view, but is generally compatible with ancient cosmologies, and particularly with ideas attributed anciently to Enoch (Crowe, pp. 245–46; Paul, pp. 27–32; see also CWHN 1:180–88; 2:236–40).

Like contemporary pluralists, Joseph Smith’s system implied innumerable stellar systems with inhabited planets. In addition (see Paul, p. 28), Joseph taught that old physical worlds pass away while new ones are being formed (Moses 1:35, 38); worlds are governed hierarchically (Abr. 3:8–9); each system of worlds has its own laws (D&C 88:36–38); Jesus Christ is the creator of all these worlds (D&C 76:24; 93:9–10); people assigned to different levels of glory inhabit different worlds (D&C 76:112); the earth has been the most wicked of all worlds (Moses 7:36); resurrected beings also reside on worlds (D&C 88:36–38); and these other worlds exist in both time and space (Moses 1:35, 38; D&C 88:36–38, 42–47; 93:9–10).

Mormons therefore accept the existence of other worlds created by God for a divine purpose that is the same as the purpose of earth life—“to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life” of God’s children (Moses 1:39). The inhabitants of these other planets are understood by Latter-day Saints to be children of God and created in his image, though they might differ from the earth’s inhabitants in unspecified ways (Moses 1:33; D&C 76:24). The means of salvation through the GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST is the same for all of God’s creations. Creation is continual and expansive and is directed toward the eternal happiness of all intelligent beings, for the Lord told Moses, “As one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words” (Moses 1:38).