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 CWIH 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). For
Latter-day Saints the gospel of Jesus Christ has universal validity, in both time and space. God’s plan of salvation operates on a universal scale. Latter-day Saints believe that there are now countless planets whose inhabitants—children of God—are progressing, as are human beings on this earth, according to eternal principles towards a Godlike life.

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WORSHIP

Latter-day Saint worship is defined as coming unto the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, in spirit and truth (D&C 93:19; cf. JST John 4:24). All of life may be worshipful, as manifest in prayer and in devotion, in the ordinances of the gospel, including the sacrament, in selfless service to mankind, and in the culmination of all worship in the temples of God.

The Lord spoke to the Prophet Joseph Smith, “I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness” (D&C 93:19). Worship is idolatry unless it is reverent homage and devotion to the living God.

A modern revelation warns against the worship of false gods: “They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own God, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol” (D&C 1:16). Modern prophets have counseled Latter-day Saints against the worship of idols under new names: success, money, prestige, lavish pleasure, fashion (see Kimball, p. 4).

Much traditional religion assumes that only if God is “utterly other,” that is, mysterious and unknowable, can he be properly reverenced. For Latter-day Saints, the foundation of worship is not the radical contrast but the intimate kinship of the Father and his children. Christ was near unto God because he was “the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person” (Heb. 1:2). By keeping his commandments and walking in the way of his ordinances, every person walks in the path of the Master. In inspired worship, “truth embraceth truth; virtue loveth virtue; light cleaveth unto light; mercy hath compassion on mercy” (D&C 88:40). The outcome for Christ was that he could pray, “as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in thee” (John 17:21). Beyond this, worship cannot reach.

The restoration of Christ’s Church began with the lament from on high, “They draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me” (JS—H 1:19). Worship involves the heart and the whole of man. Unified worship—which occurs when those assembled are of one heart and one mind and are “agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me” (D&C 27:18)—prevails with the heavens. “By union of feeling, we obtain power with God” (Relief Society Minutes, June 9, 1942, Church Archives; cf. TPJS, P. 91).

Worship also involves the mind. “Love the Lord thy God with all thy . . . mind” (Matt. 22:37). The living God has a “fulness of truth,” is “glorified in truth and knoweth all things,” and is “more intelligent than they all” (D&C 93; Abr. 2, 3). As Elder B. H. Roberts wrote, worship is the soul’s surrender to God: “This submission of the mind to the Most Intelligent, Wisest—wiser than all—is worship” (TPJS, p. 353, n). Thus, daily prayer and study, penetrating, pondering study of the gospel and the scriptures, are commended to all Latter-day Saints. “It is not wisdom,” said Joseph Smith, “that we should have all knowledge at once presented before us; but that we should have a little at a time; then we can comprehend it” (TPJS, p. 297). Jacob Neusner has compared this linkage of worship with the mind to Jewish study-worship of the Torah (Neusner, p. 55). Such communion with God leads one through and beyond the written and the spoken word to the source of Light.

WORSHIP AND SERVICE. For Latter-day Saints, the life of consecrated labor surpasses the life of withdrawal. Thus, although proper worship may require fasting, self-denial, discipline, and sacrifice, the religious life is in the context of the natural and social life. Daily labor is the fulcrum of religion and the locus of holiness. One may bring the spirit of worship to every aspect of life and commu-