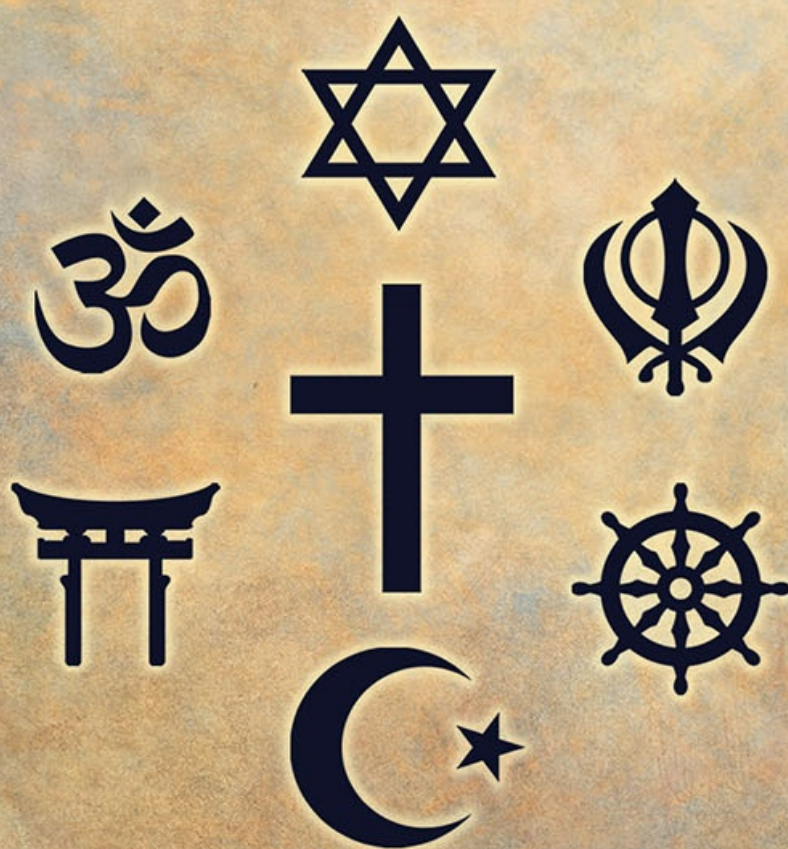


HAVING HOLY ENVY



*Life-changing Truths
We Can Learn From Other Religions*



ALONZO L. GASKILL

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Chapter 1

SHOULD LATTER-DAY SAINTS MANIFEST HOLY ENVY?

Even though the idea of *holy envy* was introduced in relation to the dedication of one of the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, I fully acknowledge that some will still be uncomfortable with this phrase. Indeed, a friend of mine has told me more than once that he “hates” the term. It just rubs him wrong. He prefers the term “shared light,” which carries some of the same connotations.³² However, what *holy envy* implies—which *shared light* does not—is the presumption that we should desire (or envy) that which is holy in other religions. Most religions share certain bits of truth or light. And yet, many of us do not feel a desire to embrace or be impacted by that which is true or uplifting in another religion. Thus, in my estimation, *holy envy* captures something that the phrase *shared light* does not.

As a convert to the Church of Jesus Christ, I understand firsthand the discomfort one feels when, for the first time, one encounters something totally new and must grapple with whether to believe and embrace that new doctrine, practice, or understanding of God’s plan. The newness of ideas, particularly religious ideas, is often uncomfortable to people (as missionaries quickly discover), and those ideas don’t always feel right until the person hearing them has sufficient background to see them in their proper light and context.³³ The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that it was difficult for him to get new ideas into the heads of the people, including the Latter-day Saints, whom he called “slow to understand.” According to Joseph, getting people to accept a new idea was like trying to split a knot in a piece of wood using a pumpkin for a hammer and a pancake as a wedge.³⁴ Nearly impossible!³⁵ And yet, the Prophet kept teaching “new” truths, ordinances, and scripture, even if some struggled for a time with embracing them.³⁶

The challenge with the principle of *holy envy* is that, for members of the Church, it sometimes feels a bit too “non-LDS.” If one misunderstands the concept, one might

erroneously assume that it somehow downplays the importance of the Restoration or implies that others “do religion” better than we do. Of course, that’s in no way what it implies. But I understand the confusion because of the uniqueness or newness of the phrase. Perhaps, if we cast this in Restoration terms, it will make more sense.

While leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have not traditionally employed the term *holy envy*, a significant number of our General Authorities have actually expressed their fondness for something they have seen in, or learned from, another religion. Many have shared how they have been introduced to a teaching or practice in another faith tradition and felt that it either blessed them spiritually or set an example of how they could better live their religion. Note just a few examples of this.

On one occasion, Elder Marlin K. Jensen of the Presidency of the Seventy discussed the need to avoid seeking recognition for the good we’ve done. He said the “greatest happiness” is found “in serving anonymously.” He then illustrated this principle with something he admires in another religion:

In this regard, we can perhaps learn a lesson from our Christian brothers and sisters in the Amish communities of Pennsylvania. It is reported that their writers frequently compose and publish poetry and religious literature anonymously, so as to deflect attention from themselves and ensure that only God receives the glory.

There is something particularly noble about the good works of those who act . . . with no expectation of reward or recognition.³⁷

Speaking of an Orthodox Jewish friend he had in law school, President Dallin H. Oaks noted that they discussed the Sabbath and, from those discussions, President Oaks was provoked to do some personal introspection:

As I have learned more about the Orthodox Jews’ observances of the Sabbath day, I have concluded that *their* practices are in many respects superior to *my own* and to those of many other Latter-day Saints.

We certainly have fewer rules than the Orthodox Jews, but I wonder whether we match *their* excellence in faithfully carrying out the positive purposes of the Sabbath day.³⁸

Elder Parley P. Pratt of the Quorum of the Twelve expressed his *holy envy* for Islam and the way it taught the law of chastity better than many Christians: “They have better morals . . . than many Christian nations” and “have exceeded in righteousness and truthfulness of religion, the idolatrous and corrupt church that has borne the name of Christianity.”³⁹

Elder Mark A. Bragg, a General Authority Seventy, expressed his *holy envy* for an aspect of Sikhism. Focusing on how they constantly feed the poor and needy, Elder Bragg explained, “Our Sikh neighbors” have “set a high standard for providing meals to those in need.”⁴⁰ Elder Bragg saw this as instructive for our own people, including the youth of the Church.

In teaching the principle of forgiveness, President James E. Faust of the First Presidency noted that, on October 2, 2006, a lone gunman (who worked as the local milkman) entered a one-room schoolhouse in Bart Township, Pennsylvania, and opened

fire on the young students. He shot ten girls, killing six of them. Of this horrific event, President Faust said,

This shocking violence caused great anguish among the Amish but no anger. There was hurt but no hate. Their forgiveness was immediate. Collectively they began to reach out to the milkman's suffering family. As the milkman's family gathered in his home the day after the shootings, an Amish neighbor came over, wrapped his arms around the father of the dead gunman, and said, "We will forgive you." Amish leaders visited the milkman's wife and children to extend their sympathy, their forgiveness, their help, and their love. About half of the mourners at the milkman's funeral were Amish. . . . A remarkable peace settled on the Amish as their faith sustained them during this crisis. . . .

It was an amazing outpouring of their complete faith in the Lord's teachings in the Sermon on the Mount: "Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." . . .

How could the whole Amish group manifest such an expression of forgiveness? It was because of their faith in God and trust in His word, which is part of their inner beings. They see themselves as disciples of Christ and want to follow His example.

Hearing of this tragedy, many people sent money to the Amish to pay for the health care of the five surviving girls and for the burial expenses of the five who were killed. As a further demonstration of their discipleship, the Amish decided to share some of the money with the widow of the milkman and her three children because they too were victims of this terrible tragedy.⁴¹

The aforementioned are but a small sampling of the *many* times General Authorities of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have highlighted something good or admirable about another religion. In the Church's instructions to members regarding "interfaith efforts," leaders have encouraged us to seek out "elements in other faiths to emulate" in our own lives—which is exactly what each of these previously quoted general authorities were encouraging.⁴² As BYU's Dr. Spencer J. Palmer explained, "By looking at gospel truths from the vantage-point of" other religions and cultures, "we should gain new insights into God's [dealings] with others, and hopefully, we shall also gain greater appreciation of the completeness of the gospel which we have received. Our study of" other religions "should enhance our understanding of our own faith."⁴³ The presiding Brethren have expressed no harm in our ability to find truth and spiritual upliftment in other religions. Indeed, President Russell M. Nelson has reminded us that "all truth is compatible because it all emanates from God."⁴⁴ Similarly, President Gordon B. Hinckley reminded members of the Church:

We want to be good neighbors. We want to be good friends. We feel we can differ theologically with people without being disagreeable in any sense. We hope they feel that same way toward us. We have many friends and many associations with people who are not of our faith, with whom we deal constantly and we have a wonderful relationship. It disturbs me when I hear of any antagonisms. . . . I don't think they are

necessary. I hope that we can overcome them. . . .

Be understanding. Be tolerant. Be considerate. Be respectful of the opinions and feelings of other people. *Recognize their virtues; don't look for their faults. Look for their strengths and their virtues, and you will find strength and virtues which will be helpful in your own life.*⁴⁵

President Hinckley not only counseled us to look for the virtuous, the lovely, and the praiseworthy in other religions (see the thirteenth article of faith), but he also promised that as we do so, we will “find strength” in what we discover, and we will be “helped” in our personal lives by what we learn from other faiths and their people. Similarly, President Hugh B. Brown (of the First Presidency) explained:

Let us not think because we feel and know we have the truth that we have *all* the truth for there is truth yet to be revealed. Let not our knowledge that we have the truth stifle our *search for more truth*. Let us build into our characters the kind of faith that will accept the truth when it comes and, by its coming, perhaps *modify some of our ideas* about the truth.⁴⁶

President Brown then added:

In this divided and imperiled world of chaos and confusion it is incumbent upon the various and differing churches to seek a better understanding of one another. Frank and friendly discussion should increase our sympathetic appreciation of the religious beliefs and practices of our neighbors and cause us to review and clarify our own. *We might perchance find kernels of truth in what we considered to be nothing but chaff.*⁴⁷

Time and again, the leaders of the Church have encouraged us to look for the good and the true in other religious traditions; to not just be tolerant but to seek understanding and even engage with those of other faith traditions in positive conversations and celebrations of faith. Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted,

My wife and I, and two of my colleagues and their wives, recently participated in a Jewish Shabbat (Sabbath) at the invitation of a dear friend. . . . It began by blessing the family and singing a Sabbath hymn. We joined in the ceremonial washing of hands, the blessing of the bread, the prayers, the kosher meal, the recitation of scripture, and singing Sabbath songs in a celebratory mood.⁴⁸

Similarly, Elder Ulisses Soares of the Quorum of the Twelve visited a Shinto shrine in Tokyo, along with Elder Terrence Vinson of the Presidency of the Seventy. The shrine's priest, Moriyasu Ito, taught them about the Shinto washing rite (associated with their shrines or temples). Then, “upon entering the courtyard, the contingent was led to the first sanctuary, where after washing their hands,” as part of the previously explained rite, the “Shinto priest purified the guests by shaking a bough.”⁴⁹

What I found instructive about Elder Cook's and Elder Soares's experiences was that they each, accompanied by other General Authorities, "joined in the ceremonial washing" and, in the case of Elders Soares and Vinson, received a blessing from a priest of another faith tradition. What a message this sends. As Latter-day Saints, we can engage with our sisters and brothers in other religions in many ways. While we do not participate in what we might call salvific ordinances or rites which have an associated covenant as part of the ritual, we can partake of *many* other aspects of religiosity and do so (as Elder Cook and Elder Soares have suggested) with complete propriety.⁵⁰ Just as three members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles could attend a Jewish Shabbat dinner and participate in the associated rites, and just as another Apostle and Seventy could willingly participate in a washing and blessing ritual associated with Shinto—and *each* come away inspired—you and I can engage with our sisters and brothers of other faith traditions and find those "kernels of truth"⁵¹ that will "be helpful to us in our own lives."⁵² We can have *holy envy* for the good and godly in their lives and ways of worship.

The Lord has commanded His Saints to be seekers of *all kinds* of truth. In one of the most recognizable passages of the Doctrine and Covenants, He says through the Prophet Joseph, "I give unto you a commandment," and then explains what that mandate is:

Be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms—

That ye may be prepared in all things when I shall send you again to magnify the calling whereunto I have called you, and the mission with which I have commissioned you. (D&C 88:78–80)

Here, the Lord commands members of the Church to seek instruction about nearly everything: astronomy ("things in heaven"), agronomy ("things in the earth"), geology (things "under the earth"), history ("things which have been"), current events ("things which are"), prophecies ("things which must shortly come to pass"), domestic politics and issues ("things which are at home"), international confrontations ("things which are abroad" and the "perplexities of nations"), and customs and cultures ("a knowledge . . . of countries and of kingdoms"). And He requires this of us for the stated purpose that you and I will be "prepared in *all* things" when He sends us to magnify the calling to which He has called or foreordained us. Of course, the Lord is not speaking of our eighteen or twenty-four-month mission. Rather, He is speaking about the life-mission of Joseph, and of you and me. For us to be used by God in the ways He needs to use us, we need to know as much as we possibly can so that He can draw on that training, that knowledge-base, that understanding which we have developed through seeking diligently to learn all that is "expedient for [us] to understand" (D&C 88:78). In many ways, President Gordon B. Hinckley exemplified this approach to learning and understanding:

“President Hinckley . . . prefers to be treated as though he is an ordinary worker,” said Elder [Russell M.] Nelson. “But he isn’t ordinary in any respect. He is a multifaceted genius. He understands anatomy and physiology better than any non-physician I have worked with. He talks with builders about finials and mullions and speaks the language unique to their profession. When questions arise that have legal ramifications, he typically says, ‘I’m no lawyer, but it seems to me that . . .’ and then renders an opinion that my lawyer colleagues insist would be a credit to any lawyer. Whether it is medicine or law, education or plumbing, it doesn’t seem to matter. He grasps things quickly, has an amazing breadth of knowledge, and can apply what he knows.”

A man with an insatiable appetite for learning, President Hinckley not only read widely but found other ways to increase his knowledge and understanding of specialized areas of expertise. . . . Bishop Robert D. Hales [then serving in the Presiding Bishopric] added: “I have never met an individual who can become so well informed through reading and through contact with people. When he spends an evening at dinner with someone, he leaves knowing something about that individual’s expertise.”⁵³

What was here said of President Hinckley can also be said of President Russell M. Nelson. Clearly, the Lord expects us to learn and to know; and that applies as much to religion as it does to other things. You cannot understand another human being (including an atheist) if you do not understand his or her views on religion and God.⁵⁴ We have been commanded, “Seek ye diligently . . . ; yea, seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). Commenting on this very verse, Noel B. Reynolds explains:

To understand the Mormon commitment to education, however, one must see that for us it is a sacred charge. In the revelations received by Joseph Smith, the Latter-day Saints were instructed to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith,” to “seek . . . out of the best books words of wisdom,” and to study all peoples and nations, both near and far (D&C 88:79, 118). Furthermore, we have been taught in our own scriptures to look for the inspired teachings of God that have come to men in all nations; “For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have” (Alma 29:8), and in the words of Joseph Smith himself, “We should gather all the good and true principles in the world and treasure them up, or we shall not come out true ‘Mormons.’”⁵⁵

If we are commanded to “seek out of the best books”—and we willingly include some of the greatest works of literature and philosophy in that collection of “best books”⁵⁶—then we *have to* ask, is the content of Shakespeare more important or inspired than the content of the holy books of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism,

or Islam?⁵⁷ In other words, can we argue with a straight face that these books about God (that teach us to be moral, honest, obedient, and holy in our personal lives) are not part of the “best books,” particularly when fictional pieces of literature often end up on the LDS list of “best books”? It seems counterintuitive to suggest that the scriptures of the world’s great religions wouldn’t be among the “best books,” above and beyond the various “great works” of literature.⁵⁸

Of course, “meaningful encounters” with those who are not of our same faith “are a two-way process.”⁵⁹ We both must be open to learning. My biggest regret regarding my full-time mission is that I was inclined to argue with those who believed differently than I, and I was not as teachable as I should have been.⁶⁰ While that aspect of my personality and approach to religion has *entirely* changed, I regret the mistake I made as a young man in not being more open to learning from those who believed differently than I do.⁶¹ I could have built bridges, but I occasionally set fire to a few by my closedmindedness.

Someone who sees things from another perspective than yours can often inspire you to see what you already believe from a different and even more enlightened viewpoint. As an illustration, one Episcopal priest shared a story of how she lost her dog on her more than one-hundred-acre farm. Chasing the puppy through brush, streams, fences, and multiple fields and hills, she eventually became quite disoriented. As she crested a barn-capped hill, she assumed she had reached the farm of one of her neighbors since she didn’t recognize the barn or the hill. Then, suddenly, she realized that this was *her* barn, but because she was seeing it from an unfamiliar angle, she hadn’t recognized it. It was as though she was seeing it for the first time. She explained, “It is a great thing to see something familiar from an unfamiliar angle for the first time, even if it is because you have been worried and lost for longer that you would have liked.”⁶²

Holy envy can show us what we’ve already known, but from an angle that is so unfamiliar that we see the thing we knew in a different, and deeper, way, a perspective-changing way, an inspiring way. *Holy envy* helps us to reimagine our beliefs in a way that inspires us to live them better, more fully, more faithfully—because it enables us to see them from a different perspective than the old, tired one that has made our faith somewhat mundane, routine, and, as a result, uninspiring to us.⁶³ In the book *Finding God at BYU*, Rabbi David Rosen wrote:

God is more than any of us can grasp. If God relates to his children in all their diversity, then there must be diverse ways of being able to relate to him. Above all, it is obvious to me that . . . encountering other people created in the divine image, one is in fact encountering the divine presence, God’s presence . . . , which must be greater than simply any one tradition in itself. . . . Therefore, *for me* the encounter with people of faith . . . is an immensely rich experience. Each experience and encounter with people of faith is for me, therefore, a religious experience.⁶⁴

I think that’s beautiful. As I have opened my heart and mind to learning from those who believe differently than I do, I have been inspired by the ways I have seen the face of God in my brothers and sisters of other religions.⁶⁵ I’ve been moved, humbled, and even hallowed by the experience. It has helped me to live my own religion better, but it has also helped me to see people who are different from me in ways that are more loving and Christlike; in ways that are more accurate and authentic.⁶⁶ Christ doesn’t want us to

separate ourselves from everyone who thinks or believes differently than we do.⁶⁷ Thus, to get along, to interact, to understand, and to love them as Jesus loves them, we *need* to understand them—because you simply cannot understand another human being if you do not understand their religious beliefs.

Professor Hugh Nibley once noted, “An old maxim of Mormonism states that all religions have some truth that we share with them.”⁶⁸ Nibley was right. However, one of the challenges is to recognize in ourselves what President Hugh B. Brown cautioned about: We often assume something to be “chaff” when it is actually a “kernel of truth.”⁶⁹ In other words, because of personal prejudices about other religions, because of misunderstandings or misperceptions we might have about that religion, or because things are packaged differently than we’re used to, we might assume the teachings of another faith are wrong, simply because of our own ignorance.⁷⁰

An example of this would be the well-known golden rule, which teaches that we should treat others the way we would want to be treated.⁷¹ While this will sound familiar to Christians since Jesus Himself taught the principle (Matthew 7:12), most don’t realize this is a universal truth. Many of the world’s great religions have taught this *exact* doctrine. While each religion words it differently, the truth is essentially the same. The packaging varies, but the message is consistent.

The Bahá’i Faith—“Choose for others that which you desire for yourself.”⁷²

Buddhism—“Hurt not others with what pains yourself.”⁷³

Christianity—“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”⁷⁴

Confucianism—“What you do not wish for yourself, do not impose on others.”⁷⁵

Hinduism—“One should not do to others what would be disagreeable if done to oneself.”⁷⁶

Islam—“None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.”⁷⁷

Jainism—One should “treat all beings as he himself would [like to] be treated.”⁷⁸

Judaism—“What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.”⁷⁹

Taoism—“Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain, and your neighbor’s loss as your own loss.”⁸⁰

Zoroastrianism—“Nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self.”⁸¹

Despite dramatic differences in phrasing, the essence of the golden rule—empathy, compassion, and mutual respect—is an ethical foundation in most major religions. And this tends to be the case with *many* other practices and doctrines. For example, most religions have washing rites, sacred garments or clothing, sacred spaces, and some form of sacrifice, which could be through the offering (to God) of time, talents, money, or something else. Similarly, almost every faith tradition believes in a divine being or force, commandments that should be obeyed, a concept of an afterlife, and sacred books from which believers draw their history, doctrine, or practices. In each case, these practices and beliefs are unique, but they are, at their core, the same principle, practice, or teaching—often with very similar symbolic meanings. Because the packaging is different, we

sometimes miss the core similarities. This may not matter, but it certainly risks creating prejudices based on misperceptions rather than on reality.⁸²

I once read that the ideal approach to religion is having *alophilia*, a love for *all* that is true and good in other faiths and other people.⁸³ I'm not preaching relativism. On the contrary, I'm only saying that *all* truth should be embraced—if it is indeed true. Too often, people who are deeply religious and committed to their faith suffer from *alophobia*, or a strong *fear* of “the other”—that which is different from their faith. When we have the truth and have a strong testimony of the teachings and practices of our religion, we have no need to fear that which is different.⁸⁴ We should be able to notice that which is good, beautiful, or true in other people's beliefs or practices and not feel threatened by it but inspired by it.⁸⁵ One Jewish commentator wrote:

Interfaith dialogue does *not* mean that one sacrifices the particularities of one's tradition on the altar of intrafaith sensitivity. I don't enter into dialogue with a Christian or a Muslim, a Buddhist or an Atheist, presuming that I'm going to convert that person to my view. Now, if that happened, that would be fabulous, but it's unlikely and that's not my goal. My goal is rather to understand how my neighbor understands his or her own scripture, his or her own tradition, beliefs and practices, and then also to help my neighbor understand what I am doing, and if in that conversation I learn a little bit more about myself, which is *usually* what happens, I think that's all to the good. Interfaith dialogue, when it works, should prompt what the great Lutheran theologian, Krister Stendahl, called Holy Envy; the ability to see a glimmer of truth or insight or beauty in a tradition that is not one's own. So that I [as a Jew] can walk into a cathedral or go to a mass, or read the theology of a Christian colleague and think, “You know, there's something there that speaks to me,” sometimes aesthetically, sometimes intellectually, sometimes spiritually, and I get a glimmer of the divine.⁸⁶

Having worked for many years as a professor of world religions, I have seen a number of practices and beliefs in the religions I teach that, to me, are *truly* moving and, in many cases, entirely harmonious with the faith I live and love. I have traveled the world and been to some of the most sacred sites on the face of this earth. My experiences have caused me to agree with Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor, who, having done the same, wrote, “I have found something to *envy* every place I have been.”⁸⁷ I can honestly make that same claim.

What follows in this book are but snippets of my own *holy envy* for other traditions. This book is not exhaustive. There are *so many* other things I could share that I have been moved by.⁸⁸ However, I think the few that I have selected will be sufficient to make the point that our Father in Heaven has spoken to, and taught truths through, individuals who were not members of the restored gospel, which has only been on the earth for about two hundred years. So many inspired things in this world evidence God's fingerprints on the lives and religions of His various children. It is my sincere hope that as you read the pages that follow, you will find these snippets of inspiration fascinating and moving, and that you will be inspired to be more committed to your covenants, more devoted in your discipleship, and more consecrated in your Christianity. And I hope you will see that God's prophets have encouraged us to manifest *holy envy* for all the

truths He has inspired, no matter where they are found.

32. My friend will typically follow his use of “shared light” with “divine light” or “God-given light” to clarify that all of this comes from God and not from other human beings.
33. An additional challenge is that we’re often not that curious. We have the truth, so why study the “non-true” or the “less true”? (At least, that’s the thinking.) Some think to themselves, “Why would I study another religion if the book or class I’m taking is only going to highlight the ‘good parts,’ but isn’t going to delve into the worst or controversial parts of that religion?” Often, our personal religious contentment causes us to only want to know more about another religion if that “more” is somehow salacious or shocking. Thus, if something doesn’t wake us up to the goodness or truth in another religion, we just don’t care. My friend Roman Catholic scholar Steve Webb told me about how anti-Mormon he was—and was content being. However, when his research assistant became LDS, Steve was suddenly interested in knowing what we really believe. That changed his entire view on the Church.
34. Joseph’s actual statement was, “Their [sic] has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation[.] it has been like splitting hemlock knots with a corn dogger for a wedge & a pumpkin for a beetle; Even the Saints are slow to understand[.]” See Joseph Smith, 21 January 1844, *The Revised & Expanded Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Alonzo L. Gaskill and Richard G. Moore, comps. (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2024), 435. See also JSP, D14, 106. For the sake of clarification, a “hemlock knot” is a knot in a piece of wood from a hemlock tree. Hemlock trees traditionally have more branches and, thus, a high number of knots in their wood, making them challenged to split or cut. “Corn dodger” was a nineteenth century term for a cornmeal pancake. A “wedge” (used in splitting logs) is sometimes also called a “splitting maul.” A “beetle” is a large, heavy wooden hammer or mallet, also called a “persuader.”
35. Joseph went on to say, “I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the saints prepared to receive the things of God, but we frequent-ly see some of them after suffering all they have for the work of God will fly to peaces like glass as soon as any thing Comes that is Contrary to their traditions.” Joseph Smith, discourse given 21 January 1844, Gaskill and Moore (2024), 435–36.
36. As an example, the members didn’t receive section 76 well. A few members were even excommunicated over their choice to preach against the vision, claiming it was not of God. Brigham stated: “When God revealed . . . that there was a place prepared for all, according to the light they had received . . . it was a great trial to many, and some apostatized because God was not going to send to everlasting punishment heathens and infants, but had a place of salvation . . . for all.” Brigham Young, discourse, May 18, 1873, *Complete Discourses of Brigham Young*, 5 vols., Richard S. Van Wagoner, comp. (Salt Lake City: The Smith-Pettit Foundation, 2009), 5:2960.
37. Marlin K. Jensen, “An Eye Single to the Glory of God,” *Ensign*, November 1998, 27–28. This could be said of Jehovah’s Witnesses as well, since they also write doctrinal articles and produce religious art without attribution or credit. Speaking of this same principle, Elder John C. Pingree explained, “As God works through us, the adversary may tempt us to take credit for any accomplishments. However, we can emulate the Savior’s humility by deflecting personal praise and glorifying the Father (see Matthew 5:16; Moses 4:2). When a reporter tried to recognize Mother Teresa for her life’s mission to help the poor, she retorted: ‘It’s [God’s] work. I am like a . . . pencil in his hand. . . . He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used.’” John C. Pingree, “I Have a Work for Thee,” *Ensign*, November 2017, 35.
38. Dallin H. Oaks, “Push Back Against the Word,” CES fireside for young adults, November 4, 2007, 8; emphasis added. Elder Quentin L. Cook likewise said, “As I thought about [how practicing Jews commemorate the Sabbath], I reflected on the extreme persecution that the Jews have experienced over centuries. Clearly, honoring the Sabbath has been ‘a perpetual covenant,’ preserving and blessing the Jewish people in fulfillment of scripture. It has also contributed to the extraordinary family life and happiness that are evident in the lives of many Jewish people.” Quentin L. Cook, “Shipshape and Bristol Fashion: Be Temple Worthy—in Good Times and Bad Times,” *Ensign*, November 2015, 41.
39. Parley P. Pratt, discourse, September 23, 1855, *Journal of Discourses* 3:42. See also 39.
40. Elder Bragg went on to talk about how the Church of Jesus Christ has “been blessed” by the members of the Sikh faith who “were incredibly supportive in our efforts to build a house of the Lord in Yuba City.” He added, “It was great for our youth to see how those of different faiths can come together and bless one another and the community.” See Trent Toone, “Interfaith friendship between Sikhs and Latter-day Saints in California continues to grow,” *Church News*, August 13, 2024, https://www.thechurchnews.com/members/2024/08/13/sikh-church-of-jesus-christ-yuba-city-california-interfaith-friendship-lds/?utm_source=chatgpt.com, accessed March 6, 2025.
41. James E. Faust, “The Healing Power of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, May 2007, 67–68.
42. See “Interfaith Relations,” Church Newsroom, <https://news-bb.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/interfaith>, accessed January 3, 2025. This same source reminds us, “Latter-day Saints accept all sincere believers as equals in the pursuit of faith” and the “different faiths” of the world “each” make “a valuable contribution to the larger community of believers.”
43. Spencer J. Palmer, “Why Study Asia? Random Thoughts on Mormonism and the Oriental Faiths,” *Asia* 4 (March 1971): 6. The pagination for this article is that which is given on the typeset copy in the possession of this author.

One article in the Church's Liahona magazine pointed out: "Associating with and learning from others is a natural outgrowth of being nourished by and sharing the teachings of Jesus Christ. . . . Their faith and goodness can strengthen our own." Samuel B. Hislop, "What if God Cares About the Game, Not Just the Team?" Liahona, December 2023, 12.

44. Russell M. Nelson, *Teachings of Russell M. Nelson* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2018), 387.
45. Gordon B. Hinckley, interview with Phil Riesen, KUTV, May 12, 1995, quoted in Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 576; emphasis added. In the Church's Media Library, the following appears: "We all have gaps in our souls that can only be filled by each other, by learning from those who don't think, act and believe the way we do. . . . One of the greatest blessings and gifts [God] gives us in this life is the opportunity to learn from each other." See "Hope Works: 'We Aren't God's Only People,'" <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2016-10-0004-we-arent-gods-only-people-samuel-hislop?lang=eng>, accessed January 3, 2025.
46. Hugh B. Brown, *The Abundant Life* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 21; emphasis added.
47. Brown, *Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1962), 1; emphasis added.
48. Cook, "Shipshape and Bristol Fashion," 41.
49. See "Elder Ulisses Soares Visits Meiji Shrine and Meets with Priest Seitaro Nakajima," September 5, 2019, <https://news-jp.churchofjesuschrist.org/%E8%A8%98%E4%BA%8B/elder-ulisses-soares-visits-meiji-shrine-and-meets-with-high-priest-sei-taro-nakajima>, accessed March 6, 2025.
50. One of my BYU colleagues, who is himself heavily engaged in interfaith work, had a massive heart attack. As a consequence, he was hospitalized for a time. One of his visitors was an Evangelical pastor and friend. During the visit, the pastor asked if he could "pray over" my colleague, which is essentially their version of giving a blessing. My colleague gladly accepted that gracious offer. He was thankful for the faith and prayers of the pastor on his behalf and was not going to turn down an act like this just because the man offering that was not a member of the Church. Was he wrong in doing so? Of course not! Similarly, another was visiting a Hindu temple when the priest approached her with some blessed food called "prasad" (which means a "gift" or "grace" from God). When the priest extended this sort of pseudo "sacramental food" to her, she thought, "I'm about to be struck by lightning." But then, she realized this did not make her a traitor to her faith; the priest was simply offering her a symbol of God's blessing to her, a token of God's love for her. So, she partook, feeling (in her words) that she was turning away from "the primitive part of [her] brain" and "toward the God just beyond her understanding." Again, did she do something offensive to God or contrary to her covenants? I don't think she did. She wasn't joining the Hindu faith, nor was she suddenly believing in or worshipping Lord Vishnu. She was simply accepting with graciousness the kindness of this priest and the symbolic way the Hindu tradition depicts God's love for those who visit a temple. As one world religions professor pointed out, bowing when visiting a Buddhist temple "doesn't make you a Buddhist, I promise." See Barbara Brown Taylor, *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* (New York: HarperOne, 2019), 41–42, 53; emphasis added.
51. Brown (1962), 1.
52. Hinckley, in Dew (1996), 576.
53. Dew (1996), 449–450.
54. Even atheists have a belief about God and religion, even if that view is that one doesn't exist and the other shouldn't exist.
55. Noel B. Reynolds, "Brigham Young University: A Special Commitment to Faith," in *Mormons and Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations*, Spencer J. Palmer, ed. (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1983), 13. "I want my friends to know that the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declare that God inspires men. We heard Elder [Orson F.] Whitney read to us the twenty-ninth chapter of Alma . . . [which] states that men are inspired, and are given all that is wisdom in God that they should have, and Alma says that [a man] ought to be content with the things that were allotted unto him [by God]. . . . I commend to all Latter-day Saints when the conference [report] is published, to read what Elder Orson F. Whitney said about the inspiration of God being given to men in all parts of the world. We endorse his remarks." Heber J. Grant, Conference Report, April 1921, 202–203. The Church has said, "A respect for the diverse beliefs and unique contributions of all the world's faiths is one of the hallmarks of Mormonism." "Interfaith Relations," Church Newsroom, <https://news-bb.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/interfaith>, accessed January 3, 2025.
56. Elder Orson F. Whitney explained: "Literature means learning, and it is from the 'best books' we are told to seek it. This does not merely mean the Bible, the Book of Mormon, the book of Doctrine and Covenants, Church works and religious writings—though these indeed are 'the best books,' and will ever be included in and lie at the very basis of our literature. But it also means history, poetry, philosophy, art and science, languages, government—all truth in fact, wherever found, either local or general, and relating to times past, present or to come." Orson F. Whitney, discourse, June 3, 1888, *Collected Discourses*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014), 1:391–392; emphasis added.
57. One LDS source notes, "The Doctrine and Covenants urges us to 'obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms' (93:53) and to 'seek ye out of the best books words of wisdom; seek learning, even by study and also by faith' (88:118). . . . Those wisdom-infused 'best books,' in my opinion, obviously include spiritual classics like the Daodejing and the Bhagavad Gita" (Grant Hardy, "Why Alma Would Have Liked Buddha and Confucius," *Meridian Magazine*, May 24, 2011, <https://latterdaysaintmag.com/article-1-8058/>,

accessed March 12, 2025). Elsewhere we read, “Works outside the modern canon can be beneficial or enlightening or perhaps even ‘scriptural’ in a loose sense in that they might contain ideas and concepts that, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, are true and in harmony with what God has revealed. Indeed, there is a richness of truth and beauty to be found in works of art, literature, music, and film from multiple cultures and religious traditions. When Doctrine and Covenants 88:118 directs us to seek ‘words of wisdom’ out of ‘the best books,’ it doesn’t restrict these books to only the standard works of the Church. Latter-day Saints are therefore not by any means exclusionist when it comes to granting the presence of divine inspiration in many sources” (Stephen O. Smoot, “Et Incarnatus Est: The Imperative for Book of Mormon Historicity,” *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 30 [2018]: 139). Another LDS source states, “As Latter-day Saints, we should appreciate the best of other religious traditions—if for no other reason than that we can empathize with the feeling of being misunderstood. In addition, we have an inspiring mandate to seek wisdom out of the ‘best books’ (D&C 88:118). I include the Qur’an in this group.” “Appreciating the Qur’an,” Robert Ricks, *Times and Season*, January 19, 2010; emphasis added.

58. I appreciated this statement: “By . . . creating a world full of people who spoke different languages, God shows variety over uniformity. God created the conditions for multiple interpretations of everything that required speech to describe. There was no longer one right way to say a true thing. There were many ways to say it. Torah. Veda. Dharma. Gospel. Qur’an.” Taylor (2019), 182.
59. Rosen (2001), 163.
60. The Prophet Joseph counseled, “Christians should cease wrangling and contention with each other and cultivate the principles of union and friendship.” Gaskill and Moore (2024), 411.
61. In the Church’s Media Library, the following appears: “If you’ve been a missionary, you might be familiar with that trademark fire of faith that you have to go out there and serve and share a message. And it’s an important message, and we should be excited about it. But sometimes we can let that fire if we’re not careful [consume our] humility and blind us to the goodness that exists outside of the church.” See “Hope Works: ‘We Aren’t God’s Only People,’” <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/media/video/2016-10-0004-we-arent-gods-only-people-samuel-hislop?lang=eng>, accessed January 3, 2025.
62. See Taylor (2019), 175–176.
63. Taylor (2019), 175.
64. Rosen, in Brown, Hanson, and Kearn (2001), 164; emphasis added. Similarly, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks wrote, “The greatest religious challenge is: Can I see God’s image in one who is not in my image—whose . . . culture or creed is different from mine?” Jonathan Sacks, *Judaism’s Life-Changing Ideas: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible* (New Milford, CT: Maggid, 2020), 11.
65. Mother Teresa taught, “Seeking the Face of God in everything, everyone, all the time, and His hand in every happening” is what God calls us to do. Mother Teresa, *In the Heart of the World* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1997), 33.
66. While they may “call God” by a different “name,” “the neighbors” He “has given” us were given for us “to love.” In 1 John 4:20, we read: “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” You can’t love God without loving His children, whom He created and placed around you. “What better way could there be for me to actively pursue the God I did not make up . . . than to try for even twelve seconds to love these brothers and sisters whom I can see?” To love “these fundamentally irritating and sometimes frightening people are also made in the image of God?” Jesus essentially says, “Love God in the person standing right in front of you.” See Taylor (2019), 137, 194–95.
67. See Taylor (2019), 147.
68. Hugh Nibley, *Eloquent Witness: Nibley on Himself, Others, and the Temple* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2008), 480.
69. Brown (1962), 1.
70. As a singular example, in response to Andrew Kirk’s November 29, 2006, article “Mormons Ought to Read Taoist Scripture”—which was not controversial in its content, simply listing parallels between Taoist and LDS teachings—a reviewer wrote: “The two are not even close. As a believing and devout Mormon the ancient writings give absolutely no comparative that authorizes any one profit. It teaches we are all the spark of god [sic] and no one lives above anyone including more personal contact with any one person. Also the ancient religion bluntly points out the practice of big beautiful temples are NOT a part of the game. Can’t pick or chose what you agree with.” <https://dailyutahchronicle.com/2006/11/29/mormons-ought-to-read-taoist-scripture/>, accessed March 7, 2025; emphasis in original. Based on the reviewer’s comments, I can only assume that (1) he has not actually read the Tao Te Ching (or Dào Dé Jīng) or he would likely not have had this kind of a visceral reaction, and (2) he missed the point of the article, which does not suggest that one should place Daoism or Daoist teachings over those of the restored gospel. It simply highlights parallels between the teachings and practices of those two faith traditions. Indeed, the author of the original article concludes by explaining his point, which was simply this: The Tao Te Ching should be read, along with the teachings of Confucius, to better understand Asian culture. Educated people should become familiar with the Quran and Bhagavad Gita to better understand the people of the world. Anyone interested in Europe and the Americas should know the Bible. That strikes me as completely accurate. If you want to understand a religion and its people, study what’s most sacred to them.
71. Taylor (2019), 76–77.

72. Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, Julie Chanler, trans. (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Company, 1928), 24.
73. The Buddha, *Udanavarga* 5.18, *Udanavarga: A Collection of Verses from the Buddhist Canon*, W. Woodville Rockhill, trans. (London: Trubner, 1883), 27.
74. Matthew 7:12.
75. Confucius, *Analects* 12.2, *The Analects of Confucius*, Simon Leys, trans. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 55.
76. Mahābhārata 12:251, "The Dharma of Final Release," *The Mahābhārata*, John D. Smith, trans. (New Delhi: Penguin, 2009), 643.
77. *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Book 2, Hadith 12, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, 9 vols., M. Muhsin Khan, trans. (No City Listed: Islamic English Books, 2009), 1:14, which renders this hadith, "The Prophet said, 'None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.'"
78. *Sutrakritanga* 1.10.3, *Vardhamana Mahavira, The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 45, *Gaina Sutras*, 50 vols., F. Max Muller, ed., Hermann Jacobi, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895), 307.
79. Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a.
80. T'ai-Shang Kan-Ying P'ien, "Treatise of the Exalted One on Response and Retribution" #213–228, T'ai-Shang Kan-Ying P'ien, Teitaro Suzuki and Paul Carus, trans. (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing, 1906), 53.
81. *Dadistan-i-Dinik*, 94:5; *ManuScihr i Juwanjantan, The Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 18, *Pahlavi Texts*, 50 vols., F. Max Muller, ed., E. W. West, trans. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), 271.
82. President Jeffrey R. Holland reminded us, "It is imperative for the extended Christian community to acknowledge that what we have in common is so far-reaching and so potentially powerful in addressing the ills of society and of the soul that the very least we can do is know and understand each other better than we do." "Evangelical and Latter-day Saint Leaders Gather in Tabernacle to Promote Faith and Religious Freedom," January 23, 2014, <https://news-au.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/evangelical-and-mormon-leaders-gather-in-tabernacle-to-promote-faith-and-religious-freedom>, accessed March 6, 2025.
83. While I cannot remember where I read about allophilia, the word is clearly derived from two Greek roots: "Allo" (ἄλλος), meaning other or different, and "Philia" (φιλία), meaning love or affection. So, allophilia literally translates to a "love of others" or a feeling of "brotherly love" for those who are "different" from oneself.
84. Elder Mathias F. Cowley taught: "The Latter-day Saints are not afraid to come in contact with the world in every form. They are . . . willing to receive truth wherever it can be found. We recognize the fact that there are fragments of truth scattered abroad in the earth, that they have been handed down among the children of men on the pages of history and by tradition from generation to generation. Many of the oriental religionists that are designated by the more enlightened as 'heathen' have ideas which are not at variance with some of the principles of the Gospel." Matthias F. Cowley, *Conference Report*, October 1897, 52–53.
85. Barbara Brown Taylor wrote, "Students would sometimes tell me that they were scared to study other religions for fear of losing their faith. It was an odd concern, on the face of it. Would studying Spanish make them lose their English? Would traveling to Turkey cost them their US passport? I had a stock response to their concern: engaging the faith of others is the best way to grow your own." Taylor (2019), 209.
86. See David Rutledge's interview with Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, on "The Religion Report," December 31, 2008, at <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionreport/amy-jill-levine/3165086>, accessed March 6, 2025.
87. Taylor (2019), 219; emphasis added.
88. The Trappist monk Thomas Merton spoke of "the million different voices through which God speaks to us." Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (San Diego: Harcourt & Brace, 1999), 143. I believe that because that has been my experience. Merton is said to have also taught: "God speaks to us in three places: in scripture, in our deepest selves, and in the voice of the stranger." Cited in Taylor (2019), 101.

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