

An Interview with David Sjodahl King

Val Hemming

DAVID S. KING HAS LED a life exceptional for its combination of public and ecclesiastical service. His parents were Vera Sjodahl King (1891–1955) and William Henry King (1862–1949), a four-term U.S. Senator from Utah. Born on June 20, 1917, in Salt Lake City, King attended public schools in Washington, D.C., and Paris, and subsequently graduated from the University of Utah in 1937. He served an LDS mission to Great Britain (1937–39), received his law degree in 1942 from Georgetown University College of Law, returned to Utah in 1943, served for two years as legal counsel for the Utah State Tax Commission, and then established a private law practice in Salt Lake City. He married Rosalie Lehner in the Salt Lake Temple. She was born in 1926 to Chester Hart Lehner and Virginia Gladys West Lehner in Waukegan, Illinois, and was educated as a nurse. Together they reared eight children.

Elected as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1958, he served from 1959 through 1962. He was an unsuccessful candidate for election to the U.S. Senate from Utah in 1962. He again won election to the House of Representatives in 1964 but was defeated for reelection in 1966. In 1967, he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Malagasy Re-

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public (Madagascar) and, in 1968, also to Mauritius, serving in both capacities until late in 1969. From 1979 to 1981, he served as alternate executive director of the World Bank.

King also has a long and distinguished record of service as a Church executive. Following his return to Salt Lake City, he served for nine years as second assistant general superintendent of the LDS Mutual Improvement Association (MIA) (1949–58). Later he served for almost eight years as bishop of the Kensington Ward of the Washington D.C. Stake (1970–78). Accompanied by Rosalie, he then served as president of the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission (1986–89). Soon after their return from Haiti, he was called as president, and Rosalie as matron, of the Washington DC Temple (1990–93). Since 1994, he serves as patriarch of the Washington DC Stake. He derives satisfaction from his long, less conspicuous, but important, service as a full-time missionary, seminary instructor, stake high councilor, and Sunday School teacher. He is also the author of *Come to the House of the Lord* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 2000).

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Val: First, would you tell us a little about your mission and your unique experiences as a returning missionary traveling in Europe on the eve of World War II?

David: After my graduation from college in 1937, I was called on a mission to Great Britain. Before leaving I was ordained a Seventy by Rulon S. Wells, senior member of the First Council of the Seventy. He was then in his late eighties. He had been ordained a Seventy by none other than Brigham Young. Imagine! I could therefore trace my “Seventy” lineage back to the Three Witnesses in three jumps.

My mission gave me the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of serving under the direction of President Hugh B. Brown, who later served as a counselor in the First Presidency. His deep spirituality and eloquence made him the idol of all his missionaries. We loved him with a passion. I believe it safe to say that he became a role model for all who labored under him. He understood the questions raised by his college-graduate missionaries who were experiencing a cognitive dissonance arising from their studies of geology, anthropology, philosophy, and other faith-challenging subjects. He didn’t treat elders like apostates simply because they asked

searching questions. Toward the end of my mission, the British were understandably more interested in avoiding a devastating war with Germany than in finding the way to the celestial kingdom. The prewar harvest of converts, therefore, was meager, though the postwar harvest would prove much more abundant.

Immediately following my mission I made a brief tour, with a missionary companion, of a few countries in western Europe. This was permissible at that time. We saw Germany on the brink of war. German military officers, nattily dressed in green-trimmed gray uniforms, were everywhere. In Rome we saw Benito Mussolini review several divisions of his army. He was showing off like a strutting peacock from the balcony of his palace while his ecstatic troops, in battle array, were shouting a thunderous "Duce, Duce, Duce!" while stamping their hobnailed boots on the cobblestones. The Duce knew how to put on a good show. But within six years his army would be decimated; Italy would be in shambles; he would be captured, tried, and executed; and his body would be strung up for public display, like a smoked ham, in a public square in Milan. The fate of the mighty German Wehrmacht and its grotesque leader, Adolf Hitler, promised to be just as sickening. *Sic gloria transit mundi*.

Two days later, on September 1, 1939, while traveling though Switzerland, we heard the word being passed up and down the aisles of our train that Hitler had invaded Poland. When we reached Paris, people were in a frenzy. The Parisians feared that the German Army would move west with its numerous panzer divisions. Their fear was almost palpable, but who could blame them? Millions would die before this terrible scourge would become history. The French were placing their shaky confidence in their presumably impregnable Maginot Line; but the Germans simply flew over it or passed around it through Belgium and Holland. I believe the Parisians had a premonition that that could happen. A year later, all of France had succumbed.

When we reached London we found that everyone there had been issued an individual gas mask—millions of them—for immediate use in case of a gas attack. A 100 percent blackout was strictly enforced, meaning that a plane flying overhead at night literally could not see one single point of light anywhere in a city of 8 million. This was an impressive feat. The English were good at that sort of thing.

London was the designated gathering place for almost all of our European missionaries, who were returning to the United States by the

boatload. This massive exodus was a prudent and well-planned operation. President Brown put me in charge of a group of approximately 250 missionaries sailing on the *SS America*.

Val: Tell us about your relationship with your famous father, Senator William Henry King.

David: Since my father served in the Senate for twenty-four years (1916–40), I was reared in Washington, D.C., although our family regularly returned to Utah during the summers. My father was a man of impeccable honesty. Though he had his share of political adversaries, none of them ever accused him of being dishonorable. The fact that he survived for twenty-four years in the Senate as a member of Utah's minority party speaks for itself. He was a product of his time and took his public duties seriously. While I was growing up, I felt the awesomeness of his presence, but little of his tenderness. I knew that he loved me, but he was tethered to an inexorable lifestyle that made little allowance for expressions of sentimentality. Politics is a rough game.

Val: Did your father influence your choice of law as a profession?

David: Absolutely. I can't think of any other reason for having become a lawyer. If I had to do it all over again, I might prefer the study of ancient languages, or philosophy, or religious instruction, or all three. I love to teach. In my later years, I spent considerable time learning classical Greek. Although I admire the logical precision and tidiness of the legal mind and did quite well in law school, and later enjoyed writing some creditable legal briefs, I didn't like the worldliness of law practice and the bad feelings which its adversarial nature necessarily engendered.

However, to its credit, my law practice did enable me to support my growing family and, even more than that, to run for political office. I could never have done that in any other setting. The lawyer is his own boss and can juggle his professional schedule so as to enable him to campaign and to do all the other things that a strenuous political campaign requires.

Val: What about the influence of your mother, Vera Sjodahl King?

David: She poured out enough maternal love upon her four children to make up for whatever may have been lacking elsewhere. She was sensitive to the feelings of others and expressed affection easily. She was also an excellent organizer and could impose discipline when needed. She served as president of the Relief Society in the Washington D.C. Ward for a number of years. Her influence is felt even until this day.

My mother took me, with my brother and two sisters, to Paris where

I attended a French school during the 1929–30 academic year. There I learned French, a skill which greatly shaped my future. In retrospect, I wonder whether this turn of events was providential or random. The entire French experience, which seemed commonplace to me at the time, I now realize, was of enormous personal significance. It wasn't easy for my remarkable mother to manage this difficult odyssey, especially since she spoke very little French.

My mother also saw to it that I attended my Church meetings and was reared a believing Latter-day Saint. This would not have happened but for her strong will. My only regret is my failure to tell her then, with a little more passion, what I now know and feel—the importance of her guiding hand and her loving encouragement in shaping my life. It takes a lifetime to fully evaluate and understand these precious experiences.

Val: Were there others who had great influence on your life?

David: Excluding my mother and father, my mission president Hugh B. Brown would head the list of the most influential men. My wonderful wife, Rosalie, would head the list of women. I could never have accomplished what I did without her help.

Rosalie not only willingly played her role but also joined me in defining both of our individual roles in our many enterprises. We acted as a team in everything we did. Once our roles had been decided on, she always supported me all the way. As the wife of an ambassador, with five of our eight children still with us, she showed impressive leadership among the other ambassadorial wives. In her own right, she won honor for our country by her conspicuous leadership in the field of aid to the poor and care of the sick. The president of the Malagasy Republic publicly acknowledged her outstanding contributions to his country.

As a “mission mom” during our missionary service in Haiti, her nursing training and experience allowed her to contribute significantly to the missionaries' health by teaching them principles of good health and by supervising their diets and lodging. Our success in Haiti would have been impossible without her. Later, she fulfilled her calling as a temple matron with similar skill and devotion. Her contributions were an inspiration to all. I shall never cease to be grateful for her influence.

I cannot refrain from also telling you that our children, now mature adults, are also a strong influence and an inspiration to me. Their combined wisdom has acted as a North Star, keeping my compass pointed in the right direction.

Val: Tell us more about how your university and legal training impacted on your religious faith.

David: They greatly matured my faith but did not lessen it. I remained active in Church work throughout my university years. I then served on the Washington D. C. Stake high council shortly after my law school graduation, when Ezra Taft Benson was its president. He ordained me a high priest.

Val: You said that one of your most formative Church experiences came while serving in the general superintendency of the YMMIA.

David: That is correct. The MIA has little meaning to the present generation, but in 1958 it had reached the pinnacle of its importance and influence in the Church. It was a huge organization, sponsoring an immense program that included structured regular weekday classes for each age group, plus dance, music, drama, speech, and athletic programs. This youth program earned worldwide admiration. Our dance festival, in connection with June Conference, was held on two successive nights. Spectators filled the University of Utah football stadium. Our music festival amassed youth singers from all over the Church, filling over one-fifth of the Salt Lake Tabernacle. The drama and speech festivals, and our massive athletic programs, including both basketball and softball, were renowned.

Eventually this gargantuan program was gradually phased out without fanfare and was replaced by another, far more modest, but adequate, youth program. Though our hearts were broken, we realized that there were good reasons for the change. One of them was that the MIA's over-size and success became the cause of its own demise. It was just too big, too ambitious. It interfered with young people's homework and other school programs. The high school activities competed with it on every front. The schools also had the advantage of more spacious facilities, a professional cadre of teachers and coaches, and a budget to match. The MIA was so large that staffing it drew strength away from other equally important Church programs and activities such as seminary, missionary and temple work, and genealogical research. Though the change was inevitable, broken-hearted MIA partisans christened its demise "Operation Teardrop."

Val: Tell us about your involvement in Utah politics and your decision to run for Congress.

David: Once I entered law practice, I also became involved in Utah politics. I ran for a seat in the Utah Legislature in 1946 to represent a dis-

trict in the avenues in Salt Lake City. It was heavily Republican, and I lost. In 1952 I managed the campaign of Salt Lake City's mayor Earl J. Glade in his race for governor of Utah. His opponent was the conservative incumbent governor J. Bracken Lee. The timing of the campaign made it difficult, inasmuch as General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was extremely popular in Utah, was running for U.S. President. Harry Truman, who was winding up his almost eight years in the presidency, was disliked in Utah, even though historians now agree that he was one of our truly great presidents. The campaign was vigorous and, occasionally, even nasty. Finally, the Republicans came up with a slogan that was impossible to beat: "We have a good governor and a good mayor; let's keep both."

I decided to enter politics again in 1958, in spite of the mud with which I knew I would be pelted, because of certain political convictions which I had theretofore been unable to articulate. I felt, for example, that Utah remained tepid in its zeal to eliminate discrimination against blacks. Something needed to be done about it. I had always felt that racial discrimination was inconsistent with my understanding of Latter-day Saint morality. In fact, the Book of Mormon very specifically condemns it (2 Ne. 26:33). I also felt that the position of labor unions had never been fully explained and that the law should enable the dialogue between labor and management to take place on a more equal playing field. The protection of existing national parks, the creation of new parks, and the preservation of our environment were also burning issues. These and many other hot-button issues impelled me to reenter the political arena.

My first intention was to run for the Utah House of Representatives. My chances of winning were just so-so because we were living in a marginally Republican district. Just before I announced my intent, however, the Utah Democratic national committeeman, Calvin Rawlings, came to my office and suggested that I fix my sights, not on the state house, but on the U.S. House of Representatives. Wow! That had never entered my mind. It would be like jumping over a two-story building and, therefore, undertaking the impossible. However, as I thought about it during the few seconds I had to make up my mind, I realized that I wasn't young any more. I could feel the succeeding generation of my competitors breathing down the back of my neck. The way I was going, I wouldn't get anywhere; and I obviously needed to change my course. To put it bluntly, I saw politics as a shortcut to the means of accomplishing some of my societal, as well as my political, goals. I had spent many years in the general superintendency of

the MIA. Maybe it was now payback time. If I should decide to go for it, I was also determined to uphold my religious principles, even in the midst of what I knew would be a messy fight.

I also knew that I would encounter stiff competition both within the party and from William Dawson, the incumbent Republican congressman. There were two or three Democrats who had a better right to the nomination than I, based on their much stronger record of public service, plus their superior political skills. Moreover, they had more name recognition and had accumulated a stable of followers for whom they had done political favors and from whom they could expect allegiance and financial help. Money, as everyone knows, is the fuel that keeps the political machine operating. For me, these valuable political assets were almost totally lacking. I had no stable of political supporters, no promises of financial aid, no record of political performance, and no flaming issues with which my name was associated. However, I had acquired some name recognition through my MIA activities, particularly in connection with the YMMIA June conferences. On those occasions, I would stand in line greeting and shaking hands with at least two thousand MIA workers. I had gone through that routine eight times.

Later, I had reason to believe that this suggestion from Mr. Rawlings, which actually bore the cachet of semi-official approval by the Democratic high command, was being made to me because they felt that the timing was not right for the Democrats to run their fastest horse in the 1958 race. He was sure to be beaten. The right year for the race would be 1960, when the nation would turn from Eisenhower's conservatism to someone a little more exciting—it happened to be John F. Kennedy. The prize Utah Democratic horses could be kept in the stables until then, at which time they could be trotted out, and the fastest one selected to run against the Republican incumbent. Apparently these more eligible Democrats didn't object to this arrangement as they did not want to spoil their record by running a losing race in 1958. In the meantime, the party needed a sacrificial lamb who could fly the party banner in 1958 with respectability. If the sacrificial lamb should win by some miracle, then so much the better. The Republican incumbent, William Dawson, had a good record and was well liked. President Eisenhower still had another two years in office. Secretary Benson would, of course, lend his support to Dawson; this I knew. These seemed daunting obstacles.

Nonetheless, my answer to Mr. Rawlings was "Yes." I saw the brass

ring and grabbed it. It probably would never come again. His visit changed my life forever, as well as those of all my posterity. In retrospect I have wondered what would have happened if I had been out to lunch when the fairy princess came to tap me on the shoulder with her golden wand. I assume that she had other names on her list of prospective "sacrificial lambs." They come cheap.

So that is how I received the Democratic nomination by default. The campaign against Dawson was difficult, and at times unpleasant, but not because of any particular act of Mr. Dawson. He was a decent gentleman. The dirty work was left up to others. Since my political organization was jerry-built and my funds meager, I had to depend at the outset on the cheapest of all campaign techniques: public appearances in parades, ethnic picnics, public gatherings, and lots of handshaking. But these devices aren't worth much unless they are also coordinated with the press, with the understanding that the latter will print stories playing up the theme that the candidate is "taking his message directly to the people." This type of article, if you can get enough of them, has great value. Its photo opportunities are pure gold.

I found that a candidate can shake only about 800 hands a day, non-stop, if accompanied by a smile, a brief greeting, and a piece of campaign literature. Paradoxically, candidates who are "taking their message directly to the people" cannot afford to actually discuss their message with the "people." If they do, they'll get into nasty arguments, which they will probably lose, and will use up precious time which could otherwise be spent shaking hands with fifty other prospective voters.

If candidates move too fast, it is demeaning to the voter. If they're too slow, they lose precious time. Also, to meet even 800 voters per day requires working in areas of maximum population concentration, such as large stores and supermarkets. Even under the best of circumstances, a candidate running in a large congressional district and devoting one-fourth of his or her time to hand-shaking, can only hope to shake hands with less than 1 percent of those registered voters who actually vote. Democrats shaking hands in heavily Republican section of their districts will do themselves more harm than good. For every apathetic voter they convert to their cause, they will stimulate five other voters to get out and vote—but for the wrong candidate. In off-year elections, fewer than one registered voter in four actually votes unless pressured to do so. Democratic candidates do better, therefore, to spend all their time in Demo-

cratic areas within their district. These are hard lessons that can only be learned from experience.

When the votes were finally counted, I had won by a margin of about 600 votes. That would represent considerably less than 1 percent of the votes cast. The Democratic National Committee immediately placed my name in the "endangered species" category.

The day following the election my opponent called on me. He was very cordial and said, in effect: "Dave, I want to congratulate you on your victory. I wasn't expecting to lose. The Republicans figured that there would be a Democratic revolt against Eisenhower, originating in California and reaching Utah in 1960. But it reached us before we expected, and so, obviously, our timing was bad. Just recently we bought a house in Kensington, Maryland. We were to have moved into it, but now we can't." At this point I held back some tears. "We were wondering whether you might like to take it off our hands. It was just built and has never been lived in." To make a long story short, we took the house, and forty-five years later we are still living in it.

Val: Were you not in the Congress during the John F. Kennedy years?

David: Yes. Since I was elected in 1958, that meant that I first served during the last two years of President Eisenhower's presidency. In 1960 I was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles which nominated John F. Kennedy, whom I supported. I was reelected in 1960, which meant that I also served during the first two years of the Kennedy administration. In 1962 I ran for the U.S. Senate against the incumbent, Wallace Bennett. At the very end of a very difficult campaign, we had arranged for President Kennedy to fly to Salt Lake, at which time he would meet with Church President David O. McKay. A rally and parade would be held in Kennedy's honor, and he would speak in the Tabernacle and say some good things about my candidacy for the Senate. Things were all set for this climactic event, including excellent press coverage. Two days prior to the big event, which was to virtually sew up my victory, the White House phoned to call the whole thing off. Later we learned that it was canceled because of the Cuban missile crisis! When the votes were counted, I lost to Senator Bennett by a margin of defeat that was narrow enough to lead me to believe that if Nikita Khrushchev had not decided to install a nuclear missile launching pad in Cuba, I would have been elected to the U.S. Senate.

After my defeat, I immediately returned to Utah with my family and started my 1964 campaign for the congressional seat which I had just vacated in order to run for the Senate. Fortunately for me, Sherman P. Lloyd, who had won that seat back in 1962 did in 1964 exactly what I had done in 1962—that is, he ran for the Senate. He lost his bid for the Senate while I won back my old House seat. So I served in the House during 1965 and 1966 when President Lyndon B. Johnson was in the White House. I had the privilege of supporting most of his “Great Society” program, including Medicare, civil rights legislation, and a host of other historic legislative enactments that made the 89th Congress the most productive in the nation’s modern history, with the exception of Roosevelt’s 72nd “New Deal” Congress.

During my third term, I twice traveled to Vietnam to view first-hand the progress, or lack thereof, of our dismal war there—the war that produced the first military defeat in our history. Perhaps we had it coming for having caused the suffering and loss of so much life, which was inexcusable and unnecessary. Lyndon Johnson could easily have been ranked among America’s greatest presidents, but he squandered his political capital by stubbornly pursuing the Vietnam War. Today you hardly ever hear his name mentioned.

In 1966 I ran again for my house seat and was defeated by my old friend Sherman P. Lloyd, who was doing exactly as I had done two years before. Shortly thereafter I was appointed U.S. Ambassador to the Malagasy Republic (Madagascar) and later to Mauritius. I have reason to believe that my qualifications for this appointment were my fluency in French, my legislative and legal background, my sobriety—my predecessor had caused the embassy some problems—and my personal friendship with President Johnson.

Val: Let me ask whether your father, who was a pillar of the Democratic Party in Utah, influenced you to become a Democrat?

David: Probably, but that answer doesn’t tell the whole story. I also had reasons of my own. I felt that the Democratic Party generally represented the interests of those who were still struggling to get ahead, as opposed to those who were already prosperous. For that reason, I felt that supporting it came closer to doing what I felt was my Christian obligation to help those in need. And by the way, in retrospect, history will record that from 1933 until the present day, the overwhelming majority of all political innovations that have since become integrated into the very fabric

of our political and social structure, such as Medicare, social security, and civil rights legislation, were initiated by Democrats. These were historic achievements, most of which have subsequently been accepted by the Republicans. This seems to vindicate my decision to become a Democrat, even without my father's influence. I chose to become proactive rather than reactive.

As an interesting footnote, I might add that my father made it one of his crusades to champion the cause of the politically oppressed. This was liberalism, vintage 1910-40. Woodrow Wilson, who championed the League of Nations and freedom from German imperialism, became the liberals' file leader even after his passing. For my father, Jefferson, rather than Washington or Lincoln, was the greatest American president. States rights was still the flaming issue during his day.

My father worked hard promoting Armenian independence from Turkey and became one of their heroes. He worked equally hard for independence for the Philippines. He also worked to withdraw the U.S. Marines from Haiti, whose presence there had become burdensome and humiliating. He favored Zionism for the Jews and denounced Hitler. He had kind words for others aspiring to freedom from oppression like the Greeks, the Native Americans, the Puerto Ricans, and many others. However, for African Americans the story was a little different.

Ironically, notwithstanding my father's liberalism, he would be considered a racist by today's standards. It is not that he treated the blacks badly or wished to deprive them of their rights. It is just that he treated them, socially speaking, like children. The life of the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer involved a similar irony. Although this world-class Good Samaritan spent fifty years of his remarkable life in bringing medical assistance to the Africans at great personal sacrifice and risk, he refused to eat with them at the same table. Though world-renowned as the consummate black benefactor, in later life he became an embarrassment to the government of black Gabon where he lived.

In my father's case, the reasons for his patronizing attitude are not difficult to understand. Those states which had constituted the southern Confederacy voted solidly Democratic in the national elections. The non-southern Democrats were in the minority, nationally, and found it absolutely necessary to form an alliance of sorts with their southern brethren if they were to have any chance whatsoever in the national presidential

sweepstakes. Even then they fared poorly, electing only one president in more than fifty years.

It followed that the non-southern Democrats were forced to empathize with their southern colleagues' cultural eccentricities. In this light, my father's reactions were quite understandable. The great day of political deliverance for the American blacks wouldn't come for another twenty-five years. I was honored to be part of it by supporting all the civil rights legislation which was part of President Johnson's Great Society Program. Had my father been in Congress at that time, his liberal spirit, I am convinced, would have led him to do likewise.

Val: What about the issue of women's rights?

David: I have always taken the position that women should not be discriminated against in any respect. Husband and wife are equal before the Lord. Neither should dominate the other. Chauvinism is despicable in any form. The proposed equal rights amendment was not before the Congress when I was there, so I was not involved. The legal problem which it presented, however, which made it so objectionable, was that the specific application of the abstract principle of the equality of the sexes to specific situations created so many ambiguities as to make the proposition unworkable, and therefore unacceptable.

For example: Could women reporters be allowed by law to enter men's locker rooms or men's lavatories? Would universities be forced by law, and contrary to their high moral code, to sanction coed dormitories and shower rooms? Would the Boy Scouts be forced by law to admit girls, and the Girl Scouts to admit boys? Could the Catholic clergy be forced by law to ordain female priests? In fact, could any organization structured on the basic premise that there is a difference between the sexes be allowed to exist? Should laws enacted for the *protection* of women be outlawed?

Attorneys would grow fat handling the thousands of cases that would explore the endless ramifications of this proposed amendment, some of them leading to disgraceful practices. There are deep moral, as well as legal, questions involved. I think that the common sense of the great majority of the American citizens recognized that the proposed amendment would be impossible to rationally administer. What constitutes its basic flaw is that it proceeded on the premise that there is no difference between the sexes. Any parent who has at least one of each knows very well that there is a difference. *Vive la différence!*

Val: At the time you were practicing law and were involved in politics

and in rearing eight children, you must have faced great difficulties in meeting your financial obligations and reconciling your religious beliefs and practices with the rough realities of the brutal world of politics with all its contradictions and impossible predicaments. What specific challenges did you face while you were trying to comport yourself consistently with Church standards in your private, professional, and political life?

David: As a congressman, my striving to uphold the standards of my faith in my personal conduct didn't give me a particularly bad time, inasmuch as I represented a constituency whose overwhelmingly dominant religious influence was Latter-day Saint. Nonetheless, I did encounter difficulties in my political life in deciding which political course to follow. But that had little to do with my religious views. Most of my constituents were basically fair-minded and generous people. But in a free society, there is something contradictory about the way human beings act in certain situations. When kind, generous people find themselves in an adversarial situation where economic survival or personal ambition is at stake, they become very competitive and play hard to win. Self-interest seems to trump everything else. If I had had a thousand dollar reward reserved for the first person who lobbied me in favor of a bill that was clearly against his *own* self interest, but favorable to the best *national* interest, out of the hundreds of suppliants who came to my office, not one of them could have qualified to receive the reward.

On the day following my first election to Congress, I met a good friend on the street. Said he: "Congratulations, Brother King. And now that you are elected, I hope you will forget politics and do the right thing." I knew exactly what he had in mind, and I gave him the answer I knew he wanted to hear: "Thank you, Brother So-and-so. You can be assured that I shall do my best to forget politics and do the right thing." I may have fudged a little in my reference to "politics," but I didn't have time to explain to him how our political system works. And with the answer I gave him, my conscience didn't bother me.

The irony in my friend's statement was that when he told me to do what is "right," what he really meant was to "do what is right for *me*." I do him no discredit in saying this, nor do I betray any cynicism on my own part. This man was a very honorable gentleman. I am only saying what many years in public life taught me about the way the human mind works. In political and public life, the law of self-interest predominates. If congressional representatives look for a textbook providing the guidelines

that they need to distinguish between a “right” vote and a “wrong” vote, they won’t find it, because it doesn’t exist. The usual procedure for congressmen and congresswomen is to cast their vote according to the desires of those who will give them the strongest support in the next election. Ordinarily they will constitute the majority. And that isn’t a bad a thing, either, for that is exactly how democracy is supposed to work. A representative is supposed to “represent.” But representatives cannot represent everyone, since many of their constituents have opposite points of view. So, they will have to settle on representing the position of those whom they feel embody the dominant consensus in their districts.

But it’s not quite that simple either, because that approach fails to take into consideration the rights and wishes of the minority. They, too, must at least be considered and respected, even if not agreed with. The generally accepted characterization of a democracy is a government where “every man and woman is given the right to vote, and where the will of the majority prevails.” But this could also be a recipe for tyranny—the tyranny of the majority over the minority. Democracies can become instruments of tyranny. Witness the fact that Adolf Hitler, history’s most diabolical tyrant, became German chancellor (read: absolute dictator) by the eventual approval of the German people. Many other principles must also be present to make democracy work—including universal suffrage, the “equal protection of the laws” clause, and the “due process of law” clause of our own Constitution. So all these considerations must be mulled over by the conflicted congressman or congresswoman before deciding which is the “right” vote to cast.

Now we come to the much-maligned two-party system with all its faults. It is also one of the most indispensable elements enabling a democracy to work. We recall Winston Churchill’s famous commentary on democracy, which, he said, is “the worst political system in the world, except for every other system.” Ditto for the two-party system. The virtue of having two parties is that the public knows exactly where to pinpoint responsibility: that is, on the party in power. When things go well, the voters know who gets the credit. When things go poorly, they know exactly where to go to “throw the rascals out.” The party in power is referred to as the “point with pride” party. The other one is the “view with alarm” party. American democracy has worked this way for many years, representing the way we do things.

Admittedly, the morality of American politics is not sugar-sweet. But

this much can be said for it: When the party on stage knows that there is another party in the wings—ready, willing, and able to step in and take over at any moment of time—that realization has a profoundly chastening and cleansing effect on the party in power, from which the public benefits. A strong Republican Party is the best thing in the world to keep the Democrats pure, and vice versa. Political contests can be mean, but a gladiatorial combat between two mighty organizations provides the best system for keeping each of them strong and healthy. Decadence is the ultimate destiny of every one-party government.

Let's be honest. There are some things that the Democrats just can't say. They prefer leaving it up to the Republicans, and vice versa. If you, as governor, appoint one of your loyal supporters to a position of trust and then find out that he is involved in a nasty scandal, you will be very happy indeed to let your opponents do the dirty work.

The point of this discussion is that the ideal arrangement is for the political game to be played by two competent parties. We have had a flirtation with third-party presidential candidates, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Strom Thurmond, and Ross Perrot, but they have never gotten very far. We just aren't politically attuned to the idea of a third party and likely never will be.

Under our system, it is true that both parties expect their respective congressional representatives to support the party platform. As with an army, there is strength in unity. However, both parties understand that congressional representatives must also be true to certain principles on which they campaigned but which may be contrary to the party line. The party high command will look the other way, since it would rather have a congressional representative who will vote with his or her party 90 percent of the time and get reelected than vote with the party 100 percent of the time and get defeated. Having said that, however, the fact still remains that when representatives stray from the party fold too often, their influence in the party weakens, and they become less able to bring back the political goodies which can secure their reelection.

Thus, congressional representatives, in planning their agenda, will not forget those things, regardless of their rhetoric back home about high moral principles. Reelection depends on bringing home "the bacon" to the constituents, even though that bacon may be pure pork. To quote House Speaker Tip O'Neill: "All politics are local." This is why, even though constituents make much of wanting their representatives to "vote

their principles," they continue to support the incumbent if he or she brings them back the goodies they think they deserve. This may sound a little crass, but it is generally how the system works. This explains a paradox. Surveys show that the overwhelming number of voters feel that most lawmakers have low ethical standards and that many are corrupt and cannot be trusted. Yet the same surveys also reveal that an overwhelming number of incumbent candidates are reelected time after time. This shows that, although most people imagine themselves to be honest and wish for honesty in their elected officials, when they enter the voting booth they vote their pocketbook and are quite happy to leave the high morality up to somebody else's congressional representative.

This raises an intriguing question for congressional representatives to ponder: Whom do they represent? To whom are they accountable: the entire United States? their congressional district? their supporters? their party? the present generation? the future generation? the worthy? the unworthy? the needy? the defenseless? To give "all of the above" as an answer to the above multiple question gets representatives nowhere since the needs and desires of those falling into the above categories are so diverse, conflicting, and overlapping that acceding to the desires of one will certainly incur the wrath of one or more of the others. Sometimes, at the end of a tumultuous day, representatives find themselves wondering what fit of insanity made them want to get into politics in the first place.

However, in the midst of this ambiguity from trying to define a congressional representative's responsibility, I want to emphasize that political morality in the halls of Congress is not dead. The spirit of Daniel Webster ("I would rather be right than be president") lives on in the hearts of many congressmen, congresswomen, and senators, who have gone down to glorious but unheralded defeat rather than sacrifice their moral convictions. There are heroes in the halls of Congress, just as there are on the fields of battle. We all understand, of course, that lawmakers are human beings and are driven by the same instincts for survival as anyone else. Naturally they want to get themselves elected or reelected. They have staked their professional future on their success at the polls and, in doing so, have often burned their bridges behind them. And yet I have seen congressional representatives cast votes which I knew were against their own political best interest. It would exact a penalty from them.

Although not many issues coming before the Congress actually call for this kind of moral theatrics, there are some that do; and more than

one congressman or congresswoman has crashed to political death or oblivion in defending what he or she thought was the only moral choice that he or she would feel comfortable in making. In my own case, I can truthfully say that I never cast a vote which I felt violated my moral code, though some of them were unpopular. Whether they contributed to my two defeats I don't know, but I doubt it. There were many other political considerations that played a role.

Val: Clearly then, you assert that in politics a certain amount of compromise is both essential and justified?

David: Of course. Compromise is what democracy is all about. Unfortunately the word *compromise* has unjustifiably taken on an odious connotation. It is true that there are some principles that are so sacred that no compromise is justified, as I discussed earlier. But as far as most of the day-to-day legislation is concerned, situations of this kind seldom arise. So my answer to your question is: Of course, representatives and senators have to compromise every day of their lives. How else can they equitably spread out both the rewards and burdens of the government of a nation of 285 million people unless they are ready to both give and take? In a democracy, the lawmakers frequently find themselves doing things that they wish they didn't have to do. Democracy is an imperfect system. It has to be because it is made up of imperfect people. It does not assume that people are angels. It assumes that they are exactly what they are: full of greedy self interest, as well as noble altruism. Democracy allows these people, with all their moral contradictions, to live together in reasonable harmony, by requiring them to adjust both their noble and their selfish impulses according to the realities by which they are surrounded. This is compromise.

Picture in your mind a congressman who is very anxious to get a bill passed which favors his home district but which would negatively impact another congressional representative's district. An example of this would be the construction of a dam in one district that would impede the migration of salmon or the movement of ships in the adjacent district. So the two representatives must come together and work out a compromise that will make both of them reasonably, if not completely, satisfied.

Compromise played an enormous historic role in the birth of our great nation, as every student of our constitutional convention well knows. The Constitution turned out to be a "bundle of compromises, a tapestry of second choices," as one writer put it, not contemplated by the

delegates when they first assembled. The most historic compromise was between the large and small states, which was necessary to get their final support. There were many others. Without them there would have been no Constitution.

Val: While you were in Congress, did the LDS Church or its leaders give you their opinions on certain pending legislation or bring pressure on you to vote in a certain way?

David: As far as the Church was concerned, the answer is no. As far as the leaders of the Church are concerned, speaking their personal views, the answer is yes. Of course, they gave me their private opinions. But no, they did not bring inappropriate pressure to bear. They had the same right as anybody else to express their opinions, and I was glad to receive them. In fact, I went out of my way to solicit their opinions, as I did those of Monsignor Hunt, the Catholic bishop, and of other prominent clergymen in my district. It must be remembered, moreover, that my district had a great diversity of non-Latter-day Saint faith communities. I owed them exactly the same consideration that I did my own church.

It is true that a few LDS Church leaders had strong individual views on certain issues, as did the leaders of other faiths. The issue of the repeal of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1965 was particularly contentious at that time. This act involved a measure that was designed to strengthen labor union membership to the point where unions could enjoy a more level playing field by making their strikes more effective when bargaining with management over corporate practices they considered unfair. Those private interests that had had trouble with the unions took an anti-labor stance during the debate, doing what they could to discredit unions in general in the eyes of the public.

This downgrading of unions was intensified by the false accusation that most of the labor unions in America were Communist-oriented. First, what the anti-union interests did not seem to understand was that when the Soviet Union took control of a nation, the first thing it did was to abolish labor unions. The Communists hated them. Second, the presence of an effective labor union, capable of meeting with management on an even playing field for the purpose of working out labor-management differences, made it unnecessary for the government to step in to avoid a destructive strike. This situation strengthened the private enterprise system by giving the government a lesser role to play. I knew that the unions regarded themselves as one of the bulwarks of the free enterprise system.

It is true that a few labor unions misbehaved themselves, but so did the CEOs and boards of directors of some of the biggest corporations in America. That didn't mean that all labor unions should be crippled, any more than that all large corporations should be punished.

I must make it clear, however, that at no time did the LDS Church or any other church tell me, officially, what position I should take on any issue. As I said before, I did receive letters from Church leaders from time to time, written in their individual capacity, discussing various public issues and indicating their preferences. I received comparable letters from leaders of other churches as well. I also received a number of letters from private individuals or corporations expressing strong opposition to labor unions in general. Some of these letters rode piggyback on the Church by suggesting that they were merely adopting the latter's position. I knew that this was incorrect, and I never considered these letters to be anything more than the private opinions of zealous, but misinformed, individuals exercising their constitutional right to express those opinions.

While in Congress I was surprised to receive several letters from Latter-day Saints scolding me for taking a position contrary to that expressed by some of the General Authorities, speaking in their private capacities. The opinions expressed in these letters seemed to me so obviously erroneous that to belabor the point any further would seem to be raising a straw man only for the purpose of destroying it. But inasmuch as this erroneous opinion was somewhat prevalent, I believe it now appropriate to elaborate a little further.

The Constitution of the United States, which the Latter-day Saints believe was composed by inspired men, provides, in its first amendment, that "Congress shall make no law respecting freedom of speech." Translated, this means that all people shall have the right to speak as they please and, by inference, to think as they please. The reasoning of the founding fathers was that, if society allowed complete freedom in the marketplace of ideas as well as in the marketplace of commodities, eventually the good ideas would rise to the top, and the bad ones would sink to the bottom and eventually disappear. This position assumed, of course, that the public would be well informed. To ensure that they were, this same article in the Constitution also protected freedom of the press, so that good ideas, even though disagreeing with each other, might circulate freely. This openness would ensure a healthy intellectual climate in which the nation could grow and prosper. I believe it not unreasonable to conclude that the

amazing fertility of ideas for which America is renowned has been made possible, among other things, by the complete freedom of speech and press which we have always so zealously protected.

The question therefore is whether that same principle applies when a General Authority speaks as a private individual. In such a case, are we still allowed to think for ourselves or has his pronouncement preempted all further creative thinking? We acknowledge the inspiration of the words: "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken . . . and my word shall not pass away, but shall be fulfilled, whether by my mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same" (D&C 1:38). I accept that inspired men can become authorized to act as God's mouthpiece. But does every word spoken by a General Authority fall into that category? As I read my Church history, the Prophet Joseph Smith at no time interpreted that passage to mean that every word that dropped from his lips bore a divine imprimatur or that it was impossible for him to say anything that was less than eternally true. He seemed quite willing to admit that the principle of learning through trial and error applied to him as it did to others. There is something creative and spiritually stimulating in a free exchange of ideas, and the Prophet Joseph Smith well recognized this and frequently sought the counsel of others. I do not believe that the Lord wished for us, either, to be denied that dynamic experience.

When the Prophet Joseph Smith and his successors spoke, or now speak, under the type of inspiration from God which forecloses further debate on a subject, that fact usually becomes evident. Otherwise we seem to be free to acknowledge that their words do not fall into that special category. The fact that the opinions of the General Authorities differ among themselves on a number of important subjects, and the fact that they are divided in their membership between our two major political parties, and the further fact that the Church has had both Republican and Democratic General Authorities elected to the U.S. Congress—for example, Republicans George Q. Cannon and Reed Smoot, and Democrat Brigham H. Roberts—and that they disagreed on various questions would seem to settle this issue once and for all.

Val: Were the General Authorities cordial to you after your election?

David: The General Authorities are caring, loving men. They were always cordial to me and offered me any appropriate assistance that they could give. I have already indicated that several of them expressed their views on public matters, in their own individual capacities, as did the lead-

ers of other churches. As I mentioned before, they certainly had every right—perhaps even the duty—to do so.

Val: Discuss a little further your relationship with Ezra Taft Benson.

David: My relationship with him was warm and friendly, almost affectionate. He ordained me a high priest and called me to serve on his high council. He performed the sealing ordinance for Rosalie and me, uniting us for time and all eternity. I admired his courage and supported him with enthusiasm in his calling as a prophet and as president of the Church. It is one of the ironies of my life that we differed in our political views, yet this difference did not affect our personal relationship.

President Benson, as Secretary of Agriculture in President Eisenhower's cabinet, was considered an arch-conservative. His thesis was that the generous farm subsidies which we were lavishing on the American farmers were excessive and counterproductive in that they encouraged overproduction. His ideas were only partially accepted and, from what I could see later, did not substantially change the direction of our agricultural policy. Last year Congress gave the American farmers a subsidy of about \$17,000,000,000. Secretary Benson would have been incredulous.

I have a theory. It is just my own idea. I believe that what Brother Benson was trying to tell the nation was that there were just too many farmers, and that the marginal ones were redundant. This was because their total actual and potential agricultural production, due to their vastly increased acreage under cultivation and their unbelievable technical progress in agricultural production, had far outstripped the capacity of their markets (both foreign and domestic) to absorb it, thus depressing the price of agricultural commodities and making farming less profitable. But in politics, there are some things that will never happen; and recommending that our marginal farmers abandon their farms and swell the ranks of the unemployed is one of them. Secretary Benson well knew this. Though he may have been correct in his basic concept, yet many an economically sound principle has had to be sacrificed on the altar of political reality.

On one occasion, in the heat of one of my political campaigns, Secretary Benson lashed out with vehemence at the Democrats and at me, by inference, making serious accusations. I lashed back, pointing out that he had been speaking only in his individual capacity and that it might have been more appropriate for a high Church dignitary to re-

strain his partisanship. This response was the substance of a press release that I regretted having to issue, but the rules of the political game required it. One rule provides that if one side fires a broadside of damaging accusations at the other side, the latter is expected to answer. If it doesn't, the public is entitled to assume that the accusations are accepted as correct and that they may be used as ammunition throughout the rest of a campaign.

Val: You have already discussed the question whether members of the Church were required to agree with a General Authority when he expresses himself on a public matter, even in his capacity as a private citizen. Your answer was "No, they are not." But that raises a corollary question that merits discussion. How are we to tell when a General Authority is speaking under the influence of the Holy Ghost and when he is speaking in his individual capacity?

David: I am convinced beyond any doubt whatsoever that God has spoken, and does speak, through the mouths of his authorized servants and that, when he does, it is as though God himself were speaking. But how does one know, with absolute certainty, that it is God speaking through his servant, and not the servant speaking for himself? Many of the General Authorities have spoken to this subject and have said some wonderful things. Elder B. H. Roberts of the First Council of the Seventy was one of them. He made such a statement in a discourse in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, from which I take the liberty of quoting a small portion:

"Whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, etc."

But it is not given to mortal man always to walk upon that plane where the sunlight of God's inspiration is playing upon him. Men may, by care and devotion and spiritual strength, rise sometimes to that high plane; may stand at times as on mountain tops, uncovered, in the presence of God, their spirit united with his Spirit, until the mind of God shall flow through them to bless those who hearken to their words: and there is no need that one shall rise up and say "This man was inspired of God," for all the people who receive of his ministrations know that by the effect of his spirit upon their spirits. But sometimes the servants of God stand upon planes infinitely lower than the one here described. Sometimes they speak merely from their human knowledge, influenced by passions; influenced by the interests of men, and by anger, and by vexation, and all those things that surge in upon the minds of even servants of God. When they so speak,

then that is not Scripture, that is not the word of God, nor the power of God unto salvation.¹

What Elder Roberts was saying is that God has given to each of us the power of discernment and that through prayer, righteous living, and intense spiritual effort, the truth of God's authentic revelations will be made known to us. The mistake we sometimes make in our quest for absolute certainty in theological matters is in downplaying the role which God has assigned to us. It's much easier to leave it all up to him. By doing this, however, we lessen the need for putting forth our own effort, and lessen or eliminate the so-called gray areas. Gray areas leave us a little uncomfortable since we would prefer having spiritual truths revealed to us in clearly defined colors.

By way of comment, however, I might suggest that maybe the Lord *wants* us to be a little uncomfortable. Spiritual discomfort has its good points and protects us from falling into spiritual lethargy. First, it motivates us to exercise the mighty faith which, as we learn in Moroni 10:4, is the necessary prelude to receiving a "witness" of the truth. Second, discomfort motivates us to penetrate deeper into God's revealed word and, by so doing, to expand our understanding of gospel principles. I daresay that many, if not most, of the very scholarly works that have recently come forth in overwhelming support of the Book of Mormon were motivated by the desire of faithful scholars to overcome the discomfort involved in understanding the meaning of some of the book's deeper and less obvious passages. However, I must make it clear that any intellectual discomfort which we may experience relating to our ability to fully understand certain theological points has no bearing on our ability to reach a conviction regarding gospel fundamentals. As to them, Moroni 10:4, and other comparable scriptural passages, are clear in their meaning, and the Holy Ghost so testifies. They make it crystal clear that every person can receive an absolute witness of the truth of those principles which he or she must know for his own exaltation, and particularly the truth of the Book of Mormon.

1. B. H. Roberts, *Defense of Faith and Saints* (Provo, Utah: Maasai Publishing, 2002), 665. He was speaking at a Sunday devotional service in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on March 19, 1911, following an address by Charles W. Penrose, an apostle.

The Church obviously recognizes that there is much room for creative thinking within the gospel framework established by the Lord. I see a rough parallel between the pattern established by the Lord for the governing of his kingdom and the pattern of lawmaking established by the inspired Constitution for governing the American people. Under the latter's provisions, the Congress of the United States sets forth the broad legislative framework for governing the nation but leaves it up to various governmental agencies to establish the rules and regulations implementing the congressional mandates. Similarly, the Lord has given us the broad gospel framework, unalterable by humankind, but has left it up to his chosen servants to use both their inspiration and their creativity to put these principles into application. It follows that the Church recognizes that there is ample room for individual thinking, which may even lead to disagreement among those who still faithfully hold on to the iron rod, which represents the word of God. I might add that the Church actually encourages a diversity of cultures and of thinking, especially in politics. By our supporting two strong political parties, a rational political balance is better achieved.

Val: You spoke about the moral dilemmas which confronted you as a congressman. Were there not similar dilemmas during your ambassadorship or during your mission presidency in Haiti?

David: The answer is yes in both instances. There is always a difficulty in moving from an affluent society to a moderately poverty-stricken one, such as Madagascar, or an agonizingly poverty-stricken one such as Haiti. The pain was not only in deciding what to do, but in actually doing what had been decided had to be done. In Haiti, there was scarcely a day when one or more pathetic individuals, obviously in real need, did not come to the door asking for help. When help was given to one, often the next day two of his friends would show up, and so on. Where does one draw the line? As a mission president, I was personally responsible for the moral and physical well-being of over a hundred young, red-blooded, active, homesick, love-starved missionaries laboring in a very strange and turbulent environment. The fact that elders were working within the proximity of some very lovely sister missionaries didn't make the task any easier. The miracle is that they did, for the most part, comport themselves entirely the way they should and made far more converts, per missionary, than were made in Great Britain when I was laboring there in 1937-39. To me this was evidence that God was very near to them and was blessing

their efforts. The fact that these missionaries could actually start preaching the gospel in the Haitian Creole language after a few weeks' training in the Missionary Training Center and three or four months of proselyting (remember that these young men and women were not linguists nor even, for the most part, college graduates) bespeaks the power of God which was blessing them most miraculously. I have no other explanation for their success. The task was not made any easier by the fact that Haiti suffered four *coups d'état* while we were there. One missionary was shot through the stomach but recovered. The miracle was that, with all the political disturbances, we suffered no fatalities out of 300 missionaries over a three-year period, and no permanent injuries.

My situation as ambassador in Madagascar was different. My staff consisted of mature, well-screened, usually married professionals whose careers were on the line. An unfavorable report from me could ruin them. Therefore, I had no disciplinary or moral problems. On the other hand, I was always laboring under the weight of a number of regulations from Washington which, if I violated, could ruin *me*. After closing hours each day, the security officer made the rounds, and woe unto any employee, including the ambassador, who left even one scrap of paper on top of his desk. The penalties were severe. In the foreign service, there was very little room for error.

I must add, however, that my experiences both as an ambassador and as a mission president were filled with excitement and with a wonderful sense of fulfillment. I do not regret for one minute the fact that I answered affirmatively when asked to serve in these two capacities. My wife was with me all the way, and I could never have succeeded without her constant help. I am old enough now to know the truth of the saying: "No pain, no gain." I have often said that pain is not to be regarded as an enemy to joy, but rather as a stepping stone, bearing us up to a higher level of appreciation for the immense joy that the Lord has reserved for those who have met their pain with fortitude.

Our experience in Haiti, in particular, brought with it the blessings of heaven; and we shall never cease thanking God for the privilege of serving there. Almost all of our missionaries showed an uncommon fortitude and devotion to duty. This was due to the powerful spirit which they embodied. These missionaries included a number of Haitians, plus others who came not only from the United States, but from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain, France, Spain, Tahiti, and elsewhere.

Val: Please contrast your secular responsibilities as congressman or ambassador with your duties as president of the Washington D. C. Temple.

David: I will try. Both the secular and the ecclesiastical callings shared at least one thing in common. Both were carried out in large part with complete confidentiality. The operations of the foreign service are still carried out in secrecy, in spite of all the current talk about the need for public disclosure. This is for a very good reason.

Let us suppose you are an ambassador. Your job is to keep the Department of State completely informed on the condition of things in your host country. Now let us suppose that, based upon your personal observation and aided by your CIA undercover agents, you discover that the president of your host country is an alcoholic, a slob, and not to be trusted. You have secret channels through which that information must be communicated to its designee at the State Department. The magic words in your diplomatic correspondence in such cases are "eyes only." This ensures that no mortal person will read it on the way. If by some slip-up, your message is inadvertently leaked out within the embassy, then you can be certain that it will leak back to the victim of your unflattering evaluation. The effects of the stench that would ensue would alter the whole course of history, as far as that country is concerned. As I said before, there is very little room in the foreign service for error.

Now the confidentiality of much of the work in the temple is just as strictly enforced as the work of the ambassador, but for different reasons. Although some revelations from God are intended for the whole world to know, others are intended only for those engaged in sacred functions who have shown that they understand their sanctity. The reason for this is plain. The Lord has told us that certain ideas, principles, and procedures are sacred, just as certain places are sacred. To expose them to those who do not so understand would be comparable to allowing cattle to roam about inside a chapel, or, as the Savior said, like casting pearls before the swine. This is not because the Savior has anything against swine. It is because pearls are entitled to better treatment. If a different rule were adopted, the temple would become a tourist attraction and would become totally disqualified from performing its sacred functions.

The temple president is the administrator of the temple and presides over all that takes place there. His wife becomes the temple matron, without whose assistance the functioning of the temple would be impossible. In the case of my wife, Rosalie performed her functions and duties

with great vigor and competence. She specialized in scattering love and understanding among all the temple workers and particularly among those patrons receiving their own endowment.

The physical operation of the temple, including the recording of all ordinances, is the responsibility of the temple recorder, who answers to the president. A temple president deals for the most part with mature workers, unlike the president of a proselyting mission. These temple workers are wonderful people who have been refined and screened by time and experience. They have long ago come to terms with the reality that life is no bowl of cherries. Most of them have held responsible positions in the Church. Many have lost a spouse or a child or grandchild. Some have been deeply disappointed by misfortune but have put their disappointments behind them and are carrying on in faith and with remarkable courage. Some suffer physical afflictions. All of them are making a sacrifice—and in some cases, a great sacrifice.

Most of the people with whom I worked were deeply religious. Some of them had miraculous things happen while performing their sacred duties. In three years I estimated having had reported to me over 250. I am certain that there were many more of which I had no knowledge. When I talk about miracles, I am talking about occurrences outside the natural sequence of events, which must be attributed to the operation of God's power to override the known processes of nature. Temple miracles ordinarily occur where loved ones from beyond the veil make it known in miraculous ways that the work which engages us is true and that the day will come when loved ones will be reunited forever. These miracles are profoundly sacred. No one who experiences them can ever question the overruling power of God in directing human affairs. Specifically, the miracles reported consisted, ordinarily, in a strong feeling of the unseen presence of the deceased, or an audible voice, or even a visible presence. The unspoken message accompanying these manifestations was one of gratitude for the work being done.

No two of these miracles were exactly alike. In one case, an officiator saw the walls of the endowment room seemingly disappear and saw a large concourse of persons, numbering perhaps two thousand, seated before him, having come as though from beyond. They were attired in white and were silently observing the proceedings. In another case, a sister very clearly heard the strains of a heavenly choir. She said, "Never in my life have I ever heard anything as beautiful, or even dreamed that anything

could be so beautiful. I was so overcome that when the music ceased after a few minutes, I sobbed because I wanted it to continue."

In another case a lad of about fifteen, being baptized for his deceased grandfather, reported seeing him as the lad emerged from the water. They communicated vocally in the idiom with which they were both familiar, thus confirming the grandfather's identity. The lad was visibly moved, with tears trickling down his cheeks. As I think back about the event—and there were many more like it—I realize how improbable it would be for me to accept any explanation other than the obvious one which the lad himself offered, namely, that he had actually seen his grandfather. Could he have been faking or hallucinating? Not likely. It would take a trained thespian (which he was not) to cause tears to flow at will. Suffice it to say that I had the overwhelming impression that he was telling the truth and that he had been privileged to witness the power of God in a miraculous way. This conclusion was confirmed by the fact that this type of experience was repeated over and over again by a large number of other teenagers who told me the same kind of story.

In other cases I received reports of flashes of enlightenment or of answers to agonized prayers. In still other cases, the miracle consisted in perceiving heavenly beings or receiving messages from afar. These events were so deeply spiritual and so sacred that one is reluctant to speak of them lest the hearer esteem them lightly, and this I do not want to happen. I view them as God's desire that our faith be strengthened and purified by manifestations of his love for us and his desire that we continue this work on behalf of our departed dead until its final consummation.

Val: Were you skeptical or cynical when you first heard of these remarkable events? Did you expect to hear of them when you first assumed the presidency of the Washington DC Temple?

David: I have never seen myself as being either skeptical or cynical, but I'll admit that I have often been disappointed, and this has made me cautious. I have used my caution as a spark to ignite my resolution to dig deeper in my search for truth, and my search has brought forth rich rewards. I must also note that I myself am not a miracle-prone person. The kinds of miracles we are speaking of here are not for everybody. My testimony of them is based on what others have told me. My miracles do come to me, but internally and powerfully. At times I sense God's very presence and feel myself enveloped in the power of his love. This is a very real experience to me, and it is what keeps my faith incandescent. When I became

temple president, I had heard of these temple-miracles and was very curious to see to what extent I would be a witness to them. I must say that their profusion greatly exceeded my expectations.

Hearing these miracles reported to me was so moving as to bring tears into my eyes. These experiences clothed the following words in the Doctrine and Covenants with greater meaning: "Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Ponder these things in your hearts, and let the solemnities of eternity rest upon your mind" (D&C 43:34).

I have always been driven by a strong sense of curiosity and an unwillingness to accept the expression of shallow generalities without first giving them serious reflection. Some readers may identify themselves with me on this point, and some may not, but we must recognize that we are all poured into different molds. It is this attitude that led me to do the research resulting in my publishing *Come to the House of the Lord*, a book on the glories of the temple. Yet I fully recognize the limits of scholarly research and the consequent importance of faith. Faith is the willingness to accept the fact that human wisdom can go only so far and that, beyond that, faith must take over. Faith is the bridge connecting the known to the unknown. Persons who use it will discover vast areas of intellectual pursuit opened to them which will be closed to those who stubbornly refuse to go beyond what can be proven with mathematical certainty.

Continuing our discussion of miracles, it is interesting to note that, as I have said, not all good people receive them, and it is no reflection on their righteousness if they do not. Apparently some are more miracle-prone than others. Doctrine and Covenants 46:21-26 implies this. The Prophet Joseph Smith's father and Heber C. Kimball and many other early leaders of the Church received miracles even before they were members of the Church, but many did not. Johannes Brahms claimed that his compositions were miraculously inspired by God himself. In fact, he claimed as much for all great music, as opposed to purely "cerebral" music, which was not.

So what can we conclude about miracles? We know that they do occur, that they are manifestations of God's power operating beyond the known processes of nature, that some people are more miracle-prone than others, that God's true church will always experience them, that they may come to the unworthy as well as the worthy, that even Satan can perform them, that they are given mostly to the righteous for various purposes including the building of faith and the confirmation of the power of God.

There is so much about miracles that we do not understand! In fact, that is what makes them miraculous.

Our search for answers to these and other questions inevitably finds us butting our heads against a brick wall. But why should we suppose that God has given, or should give, answers to every question that we could possibly ask and that he should do it right now? If this supposition leaves us dissatisfied, we should turn to the Doctrine and Covenants. What it says in effect is: "Just have a little patience, please. It was never my intention to answer all your questions all at once. The day will come, upon my return, when all your questions *will* be answered, and you will then comprehend the fullness of my glory" (D&C 101:32-34; see also 2 Ne. 27:8-11).

But while we are waiting for all these answers to come, we need not be idle. We can spend our entire lifetime in carefully and prayerfully studying the material that God has already given us, which, we are told, exceeds that which has been given to any previous generation since the beginning of human history (D&C 124:41).

It is true that questions arise from the fact that the present-day pattern for the performance of miracles is quite different from what it was a hundred and fifty years ago. Then we read of spectacular events that today make us gasp, such as speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues, the appearance of cloven tongues of fire, the sounding forth of prophetic utterances, the appearance of angels, and so forth. In the setting of the times, these spectacular events seemed more natural. But we must not conclude that, even then, miracles were automatic or commonplace. When they did occur, they were of special note. There were many times, even in the 1830s and '40s, when the sick were not healed and prayed-for miracles did not occur. God was testing their faith then as he tests ours today.

Miracles do occur today, however, and most members have their own stories to tell of miraculous answers to prayer, particularly those having to do with healing, and, of course, with the innumerable temple miracles of which I have spoken. It is to be remembered that the Lord characterized apostate Christianity as "denying the power thereof" (i.e., of godliness). But the fact still remains that things are a little different today from what they were a hundred and fifty years ago. I myself have never spoken in tongues nor seen cloven tongues of fire. This is not at all surprising. In the early days, the Lord may have needed to "jump-start" the Church by

the use of these spectacular occurrences, even as he did in the early days of Christianity as revealed in the book of Acts. But that is not our need today. The Church is strong and needs *sustaining* power rather than *starting* power.

The Book of Mormon makes clear that the true Church of Christ will always have miracles (Moro. 7:27, 37) and, as pointed out, those miracles do exist in profusion today in Christ's true church restored to the earth in the latter days. It is also true that the occurrence of miracles is associated with the exercise of faith, today as in days of old.

Val: In the light of your university training, as well as your unique world experience, what is the foundation or bedrock of your religious faith?

David: I am pleased to respond to that question. The history and teachings of the Church are viewed and interpreted with slightly different emphases by different members. For example, the late Henry Eyring, perhaps the greatest scientist the Church has produced and the father of Apostle Henry B. Eyring, did not see eye to eye with President Joseph Fielding Smith on a number of issues, yet both men were rock-solid in their faith in gospel fundamentals. In fact, Brother Eyring wrote a book recounting the interesting discussions he had with President Smith regarding these issues.²

It seems to me that, notwithstanding the diversity of thinking within the Church, all those who profess to have a testimony of the truth of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ must accept certain core beliefs upon which there can be no diversity of opinion. I cannot list them all, but they would include a belief in the truths declared in the thirteen Articles of Faith, which include an affirmation of the existence of God, our eternal Father, and in the atoning sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. In addition, they would also include a belief that Joseph Smith was personally commissioned by God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ to be the instrument for restoring the fullness of the gospel, in the manner recounted by him as it appears in the Pearl of Great Price. They would also include the belief that the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God and that it is a true revelation of God's will. This book solemnly confirms that Jesus came to the earth, both in Judea and on the American

2. Henry B. Eyring, *The Faith of a Scientist* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1967).

continent, and offered himself up in expiation for the sins of humankind. It is also necessary for the believer to affirm that Joseph Smith and his associates received a restoration of the priesthood and the power and authority to administer the ordinances of exaltation, both for the living and for the dead. These are principles I accepted long ago, and none of my later experiences or additional knowledge have caused me to change my position.

Val: Tell me more about your efforts to fortify your spiritual life from the buffeting of academic secularism.

David: The most important lesson I learned as an undergraduate at the University of Utah was that spiritual growth was analogous to physical and mental growth in this respect: All three require effort. I discovered this when I noted some of my classmates growing apathetic in their faith. The results of the scenario they were following were very easy for me to see. Their routine consisted in spending twenty or thirty hours a week sweating over their homework dealing with secular subjects, and forty-five minutes a week in Sunday School, listening to an untrained teacher deal with spiritual topics, but demanding absolutely nothing from his class members. These students were lavishing nourishment and tender loving care on their tree of secular learning but were giving absolutely nothing at all to the growth of their gospel tree. Later I discovered that Alma had said exactly the same thing, but in a much more articulate way (Alma 32). However, I was pleased that I was able to figure this out for myself.

What I mean by investing effort in spiritual growth can be demonstrated by my experience with the Book of Mormon. The first time I read this great book from cover to cover, I tried to satisfy the conditions of Moroni 10:4. As I approached the end, I was expecting God to give me some spectacular manifestation of the book's truth. When I reached the book's last page, I don't know exactly what I was expecting. Perhaps it was a voice from heaven, or cloven tongues of fire. But, whatever it was, it didn't happen. No voice from heaven and no tongues of fire. I was disappointed. But I felt that the book had at least made a *prima facie* case for its truth. Over the years, I have since read the book a number of times, and certain passages probably a hundred times. It is a bottomless well of information and spiritual insights. I have become absolutely convinced of its truth, and I can now say unequivocally that I know it to be the word of God. But this conviction came after a lot of prayer and spiritual effort.

Val: Suppose that I were a son or nephew of yours, and therefore one

whose spiritual welfare was of deep concern to you. Suppose, further, that I had been raised in a good LDS family, but that, having reached maturity, I was having some trouble believing all that I had been taught. What would be your response?

David: You are now asking me to entangle myself in the age-old debate between theists (pro-God) and atheists (no-God). It should be added that LDS theology enriches this debate by adding fresh evidence in defense of the pro-God position but complicates it by adding a theology which finds itself at odds with other defenders of the pro-God position. Our young friend's position, theoretically, can either be one of believing that there is no God, or of believing in God but rejecting Mormonism, or of believing in Mormonism. My guess is that he is so bewildered that he doesn't know what his position really is except that he has heard a lot of stuff that is hard for him to believe.

My first statement to him would be, "Hang in there, buddy," and I don't say this as a pleasantry. I have found that time, if you give it a chance, can bring with it a lot of answers and that, in the meantime, you have to stay the course and let time work its magic. I would emphasize to my young friend that he must take his spiritual quest seriously and be prepared to put forth the spiritual effort which this quest requires. This means real prayer in which one approaches his Heavenly Father as a penitent transgressor, stripped of all pride and self-conceit, and pleads for forgiveness and enlightenment. It means that my young friend must earnestly search the scriptures for answers. Now, it is true that there are historical examples of testimonies that did burst forth almost instantaneously, often following a miracle, and that we are free to accept these as manifestations of the glory of God. But that isn't always the way things happen. I think the material we previously discussed on temple miracles may be helpful in building faith. It is hard for me to believe that anyone could seriously consider these marvels that occur in the temples of the Lord and fail to be impressed that these are powerful forces at work, beyond human power to explain.

But God has not promised that these super-dramatic experiences will come to everyone. On the contrary, the situation described in Alma 32 seems to be more typical. There we are told that reaching an absolute knowledge of divine truth may first require a lot of effort, prayer, and faith. Many people never associate the word *effort* with obtaining a testimony. They are captivated by the idea of a "push-button testimony"

which, they assume, will remain with them forever, and without giving the matter any further thought. But that isn't the way it is. Miracles may play an important part in a conversion; but the staying power and the enlargement of that testimony can only come through following the steps so clearly outlined in the scriptures, and particularly in Alma. The sure way may be long and arduous but the Lord has made a promise that the prize is there, waiting for the one who can "endure to the end."

I should say a particular word about the Book of Mormon. If we become convinced that it was translated from the original plates by the gift and power of God, then everything else falls into place. If we approach the Book of Mormon determined to disprove it, we will no doubt find something to support our view. But if we approach it with an open mind, ready to be taught by the spirit of the Lord, we will find a veritable cascade of evidence to support its authenticity. Once again, it will involve to some extent an exercise of faith. The Lord could have made it very easy by providing us with a Central American Rosetta Stone or some other incontestably identifiable artifact to remove any possible doubt as to the book's divine origin. Its truth could have been established as simply as "two plus two equals four." But that's not the way it is. As already pointed out, the Lord wants us to work for what we get, even in regard to spiritual things; and by doing so, we will receive our answer. He wants us to exercise both our faith and our intellect in our quest for a testimony of the Book of Mormon's truth, and I can testify that by doing so, any fair-minded person will find what he or she is looking for.

Let me elaborate a little on the question of why the Lord doesn't give us all the answers we want. First, if the Lord tried to lift us up to his level of thinking, I am certain that we could not understand what he was telling us. After all, the intelligence of the One who conceived this universe, with all its unbelievably gargantuan dimensions and complexities, is pursuing a trajectory totally beyond the capacity of the human mind to comprehend. Although the present generation has received more truth than any previous generation (D&C 124:41), why should we conclude that there is no more to come? Thus, the Lord has his own timetable. The divulging of information has followed an evolutionary course, building one revelation upon another, and presumably will continue to do so. Then again, along with knowledge comes responsibility. We have been frequently told that unto whom much is given, much is required (D&C 82:3). In 2 Peter 2:20-21, we are told that if a person receives the fullness of the truth and

then turns away from it, it would have been better for him not to have received it in the first place. Perhaps the Lord, knowing our capacities and our limitations even better than we do, is doing us a favor by withholding from us knowledge which we are not yet ready to receive.

As I said, we have been told that in the due time of the Lord, all our questions will be answered. In the meantime we need to learn patience. So, my answer to my young friend who is having difficulties with his understanding of the gospel is to keep on searching and to have patience in the process.

Let me say a few words about the sacred calling of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Lately it has become popular among the Church's critics to emphasize the Prophet's fallibility. This approach seems to proceed on the theory that a prophet of God does not make mistakes. Let me make it clear that we are talking here about the kind of mistakes everyone makes while going through a learning process, but not about moral transgressions. There is a difference. As I have stated previously, "trial and error" is the most effective teaching device known to humanity. We learn by our mistakes, and there is no reason why Joseph Smith should have been deprived of that learning experience. In fact, the evidence is very clear from the Doctrine and Covenants that he did learn from his mistakes and that he did not repeat them.

But the point is not whether he made mistakes. If we insist that the performance bar for a prophet requires that he never make a mistake—not even an innocent one—then we have disqualified every member of the human race, save the Savior himself. My wife and I, while visiting Florence, Italy, were privileged to see Michelangelo's famous sculpture of David. It stands almost eighteen feet high and is truly a wonder to behold. How a man was able to chisel that marvelous reproduction of a human being, with only a mallet and chisel, out of an ungainly piece of cold Carrara marble is beyond understanding. Yet, as the docent observed, the statue is not perfect. Its hands and feet and even its head, are disproportionately large. Yet the statue stands as one of the half dozen most remarkable pieces of sculpture in the world, not because of the absence of its defects, but because of the presence of its indescribable majesty and beauty. And so we find what we are looking for. If we are looking for beauty, we'll find it in abundance.

The contributions of the Prophet Joseph Smith to the enlightenment of the human race will stand as perhaps the greatest contribution

ever made by any religious leader, or perhaps by any leader, except Jesus himself, in the world's history. It is to his credit, not his discredit, that, like that ungainly piece of Carrara marble, he ultimately became a giant among men, sculpted and polished by the Almighty. Viewed from that perspective, we have no hesitation in ascribing to him the exalted role as the prophet of the Restoration.

The question I am raising, however, is almost unfathomable in its profundity, namely, how can God, who is perfect, create so many imperfect and terrible things, and should our recognition of the fact that they do exist cause us to reexamine our belief that there is a perfect God, or even any God at all?

My answer to my young friend is that the things in the universe that bespeak the presence of God completely overwhelm those features that raise questions about his existence. I speak of evidence to be found in both nature and in scripture. Still the question can be asked why God allows imperfections to continue with their attendant human suffering when obviously he could eliminate them if he wished. How can we feel comfortable in an imperfect world?

Our Church has much to say on the subject and, in fact, has more to say that makes sense to me than any other church in the world. I hate to make comparisons, but in this case it is unavoidable. It seems to me that the key word in explaining a life with so much suffering in it is the word "effort." All the features in the universe that we don't like, such as difficulty, pain, suffering, sorrow, ignorance, disappointment, and grief, are designed to cause us to exert ourselves, that is, to make an *effort* to overcome the very things that are so painful to us. So, from an LDS point of view, these terrible things are to be regarded, as I stated previously, not as enemies to joy, but as stepping stones, raising us up to a higher level of appreciation for the things that will bring us increased joy. This is typical LDS philosophy, and it makes sense. We are here to prepare ourselves for a celestial glory, and the ability to overcome evil through our own effort is the prime quality needed to reach our objective. It is through effort, induced by pain or the threat or fear of pain, that we become wiser, stronger, purer, and worthier to enter into the presence of the Lord.

Let me discuss a little further the obsession the Church's critics have with the idea that the presence of human error in the unfolding of the Church's history vitiates its claim to a divine imprimatur. I believe I have shown that it not only does not vitiate it, but it strengthens it by showing

that imperfect human beings can, when touched by the hand of God, do such superhuman things. The Lord did not choose angels to do his work of restoration. He chose fallible mortals and shared with them the glory of the work by enabling them, by retaining their moral agency, and, through much stumbling and with great effort, to finally accomplish the job they were given to do. This is the highest kind of real-life drama.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is so stupendous, so well thought out, so intricate in its doctrinal texture, so far above the capacity of mortals to invent or envision without God's help, and so capable of bringing comfort and hope to the suffering world, that one must conclude, as did the Prophet Joseph Smith himself after contemplating the glories of the plan of salvation, as portrayed in Doctrine and Covenants 76: "Every honest man is constrained to exclaim: 'It came from God.'"³

3. Joseph Smith Jr. et al., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, edited by B. H. Roberts, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1902-12), 1:253.