

was his, it was no longer enough to rely on the understandings of previous prophets or to wait for the Lord to take the initiative. He wanted "to find out firsthand what the Lord thought about it."

Years earlier, writing about revelation in general, Spencer said in a letter to his son Ed:

"Revelations will probably never come unless they are desired. I think few people receive revelations while lounging on a couch. . . . I believe most revelations would come when a man is on his tip toes, reaching as high as he can for something which he knows he needs, and then there bursts upon him the answer to his problems."

He prayed long and intently, trying not to prejudge what the answer should be. Should we maintain the long-standing policy, or has the time come for the change? He received no immediate answer. President Kimball also undertook to study the history of the policy and to ask for the perspective of others. He remembered well that the question had become divisive during the McKay administration. Hoping to maintain harmony as the question was explored again, he asked the apostles to join him as colleagues in extended study and supplication. In May 1975 he discussed with his counselors various statements by early Church leaders about the reasons black men could not hold the priesthood and asked for his counselors' reactions. In June 1977 he invited at least three General Authorities to write memos about the doctrinal basis of the policy and how a change might affect the Church. Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote a long treatise concluding that no scriptural barrier existed to a change.

Francis M. Gibbons, secretary to the First Presidency, observed that during the year before the revelation was announced President Kimball seemed focused on the issue. The President repeatedly invited the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve to discuss the issue at length and urged them to speak freely. A few said little or nothing when the topic was raised, and President Kimball invited them to talk with him in private. He could not let the matter rest. He seemed so intent on resolving the issue—with full unity among the leadership—that others worried. Elder Boyd K. Packer said to him, "Why don't you forget this?" But he quickly answered his own question: "Because you can't. The Lord won't let you."

President Kimball went to the temple after patrons and workers had

left. Some days he went more than once, always alone. He obtained a key so he could enter the temple night or day without troubling anyone else. He later recounted those months:

"Day after day, and especially on Saturdays and Sundays when there were no organizations [sessions] in the temple, I went there when I could be alone.

"I was very humble. . . . I was searching for this. . . . I wanted to be sure. . . .

"I had a great deal to fight . . . myself, largely, because I had grown up with this thought that Negroes should not have the priesthood and I was prepared to go all the rest of my life until my death and fight for it and defend it as it was."

Few knew about his contemplation in the temple except the security men who watched over him. One of them mentioned it to President Kimball's neighbor, who told Camilla. So she knew that much, but she had no idea what problem so preoccupied her husband. He always maintained strict confidentiality where Church business was concerned. She sometimes good-naturedly complained that he could not remember what was confidential and what was not, so he solved the problem by never telling her anything. She had to read about new developments in the *Church News*. Now, with her husband as consumed as she had ever seen him, she remembered Spencer's anguish over the excommunication of an apostle thirty-five years earlier and worried that something similar might be happening again. When President Kimball learned about the security officer's breach, he gently suggested to the security supervisor that his men should be careful about what they divulged.

On March 9, 1978, three months before the policy change, the topic was again discussed when the First Presidency and Twelve met in their



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