

This answer had become clear in Spencer's mind as early as late March, but he felt unity within the leadership was important and he continued to discuss the matter with others. He sensed resistance from some, which he fully understood. He did not push, lobby, pressure, or use his office to seek compliance. Instead, he increased his visits to the temple, imploring the Lord to make his will known, not only to him but also to the Twelve, to these good men who all their lives had quoted other presidents of the Church that it was not yet time. In a sense the past prophets of the Church stood arrayed against this decision. The wisdom of the dead often seems loftier than the word of an imperfect living spokesman. Spencer wanted more than anything to have his fellow servants share with him a witness of the Lord's will. Camilla noted that in their prayers together, where he had always asked for "inspiration" or "guidance," he began to plead for "revelation." She also noticed that he read the scriptures even more intently than usual during that spring.²⁸

On March 23, Spencer reported to his counselors that he had spent much of the night in reflection and his impression then was to lift the restriction on blacks. His counselors said they were prepared to sustain him if that were his decision. They went on to discuss the impact of such a change in policy on the members and decided there was no need for prompt action; they would discuss it again with the Twelve before a final decision.²⁹

Francis Gibbons, secretary to the First Presidency, had the impression that President Kimball had already come to know God's will and was now struggling with how to resolve the matter in a way that the entire leadership would stand behind.³⁰

On April 20, President Kimball asked the Twelve to join the Presidency in praying that God would give them an answer. Thereafter he talked with the Twelve individually and continued to spend many hours alone in prayer and meditation in the Holy of Holies, often after hours when the temple was still.³¹ He described the burden of his prayers in an extemporaneous talk to missionaries in South Africa several months later:

I remember very vividly the day after day that I walked over to the temple and ascended up to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies, where we have our meetings of the Twelve and the Presidency. And after everybody had gone out of the temple, I knelt and prayed. And I prayed with such a fervency, I tell you! I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. And I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and to put them into place. Day after day I went and with great solemnity and seriousness, alone in the upper rooms of the Temple, and there I offered my soul and offered our efforts to go forward with the program³² and we wanted to do what he wanted. As we talked about it to him, we said, "Lord, we want only what

28. Spencer W. Kimball, interview. Camilla, interview.

29. Edward L. Kimball, Journal, May 12, 1982, reporting discussion with Francis M. Gibbons. See also Gibbons, *Spencer W. Kimball*, 293.

30. Edward L. Kimball, Journal, May 12, 1982. Elder Gibbons has confirmed that his description of "events leading up to and surrounding the Revelation on Priesthood are based upon personal, eye witness knowledge and are supported by my diary entries made soon after they occurred." Francis M. Gibbons to author, November 6, 1995.

31. Gibbons, *Spencer W. Kimball*, 293–94; Hinckley, "Priesthood Restoration," 70; F. Burton Howard, *Marion G. Romney: His Life and Faith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 239.

32. President Kimball often used the word "program" to mean an idea or concept, rather than a plan or agenda or design. He might say, "That's the program," meaning, "That is a good idea."

is right. We're not making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing that thou dost want and we want it when you want it and not until."³³

On one occasion during this time a temple administrator brought an organ tuner into the room where the Presidency and Twelve met. They interrupted President Kimball at prayer and withdrew, flustered.³⁴ Another time Spencer found one of the temple workers standing guard outside the room to protect him from interruption. Spencer thanked him for his vigil but protested that it was unnecessary.³⁵

At the end of the joint meeting of the Presidency and Twelve on May 4, when the priesthood policy was discussed, LeGrand Richards asked permission to make a statement. He then reported,

I saw during the meeting a man seated in a chair above the organ, bearded and dressed in white, having the appearance of Wilford Woodruff. . . . I am not a visionary man. . . . This was not imagination. . . . It might be that I was privileged to see him because I am the only one here who had seen President Woodruff in person.³⁶

Late on Saturday, May 6, 1978, a friend of President Kimball, Bryan Espenschied, met him walking alone as they both left the temple. Brother Espenschied had the *impression that Spencer was greatly worried or distressed*. Later Spencer explained that he had on that occasion been in the temple, praying about the question of priesthood.³⁷ Spencer's counselors shared his anxieties. *President Tanner's family saw him during this time seeming "greatly concerned, as though he carried the burdens of the world."*³⁸

Spencer continued to receive many letters from Church members concerning the issue. Some writers criticized and demanded; others expressed faith and hope. A letter dated May 19 from Chase Peterson, then a Harvard University administrator and soon to be president of the University of Utah, urged a "present opportunity," while external pressures had slackened, to open the priesthood to black men. After thoughtful expression of view, he concluded,

Could it be that the Lord has been both preparing us to accept the black man into full Priesthood fellowship and preparing the black man for Priesthood responsibility? . . . [Perhaps the Lord] is waiting for us to be ready, and if we fail to demonstrate our readiness, there may not be a [right] time again [soon]."³⁹

A few days later Spencer replied, "I thank you very much for your delightful letter and for the suggestions you have offered. Please accept my sincere thanks and best wishes."⁴⁰

33. Spencer W. Kimball, remarks, Johannesburg, South Africa, October 23, 1978, transcript of tape by Duane Cardall, Kimball Papers.

34. Spencer W. Kimball, interview; Jack Purser, temple recorder, interview by author, June 19, 1989, describing the experience of another.

35. Spencer W. Kimball, interview. Spencer might stay from a half hour to three hours. Geraldine Bangerter interview by author, February 2000, reflecting her notes of President Kimball's remarks at dedication of São Paulo temple, October 30, 1978.

36. Gibbons, *Spencer W. Kimball*, 294; Francis M. Gibbons, interview by author, recorded in Edward L. Kimball, *Journal*, May 12, 1982, notes as Gibbons read from council minutes; F. Gibbons at Mormon History Association Annual Meeting, Snowbird, May 18, 1996. See also Lucile Tate, *LeGrand Richards: Beloved Apostle* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982), 291–92, quoting Elder Packer's recollection.

37. Bryan A. Espenschied, interview by author, September 3, 1997. Espenschied later became mission president of the first formal mission in west Africa.

38. Ruth Tanner Walker, interview by author, August 19, 1998.

39. Chase Peterson to Spencer W. Kimball, May 19, 1978.

40. Spencer W. Kimball to Chase Peterson, dated May 30, postmarked June 2, 1978. A letter of June 28