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GEORGE R. DAVIS ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW I

PREFERRED CITATION

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Transcript, George R. Davis Oral History Interview I, 2/13/69, by Dorothy Pierce McSweeney, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.

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GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Reverend George R. Davis

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, George R. Davis, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research maybe entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed by George R. Davis on August 21, 1971

Accepted by Harry Middleton for Archivist of the United States on April 30, 1973

Original Deed of Gift on File at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, 2313 Red River, Austin, TX
78705

ACCESSION NUMBER 73-48

Preparation of "Gift of Personal Statement"

- A. If you do not wish to impose restrictions on the use of your tape and transcript and if you do not feel the need to retain literary property rights upon the material, please sign the enclosed statement and return it to the Oral History Project.
- B. If you wish to restrict the use of your transcript for a period of time beyond the date of the opening of the Johnson Library, a new statement will be prepared (either by you or by us) deleting paragraph 2 and substituting the following, with one of the alternatives:

It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not,

for a period of _____ years

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be available for examination by anyone except persons who have received my express written authorization to examine it.

[Handwritten annotation] Release at anytime. [Typed Annotation] This may be released at anytime if President Johnson is in agreement. I would not mind having all of this public knowledge at anytime, and beginning now. [Signed] George Davis

- C. If you wish to have the restriction imposed above apply to employees of the National Archives and Records Service engaged in performing normal archival work processes, the following sentence will be added to paragraph 2:

This restriction shall apply to and include employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

- D. If you do not wish to have the restriction imposed above apply to employees of the National Archives and Records Service, the following sentence will be added to paragraph 2:

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I hereby designate _____ to have, after my death, the same authority with respect to authorizing access to the aforesaid material as I have reserved to myself in paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 above.

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The donor retains to himself for a period of _____ _____ years all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument. After the expiration of this _____ year period, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

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The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

[Typed Annotation] I have no intention now, but might at a later date do some writing, and might use some of the basic content of this document, but would not use the document itself.

[Signed]George Davis
8-21-71

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Narrator Dr. George Davis

Biographical information:

Born in Topeka, Kansas; earned master and bachelor of divinity degrees at Phillips University, Enid, Oklahoma; attended Chicago University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City; major ministries: Chickasha, Oklahoma, St. Joseph, Missouri, Wichita Falls, Texas, National City Christian Church, Washington, D.C.

Interviewer Dorothy Pierce McSweeny

Position or relationship to narrator U. T. Oral History Project

Accession Record Number AC73-48

General topic of interview:

Discusses his ministry and his relationship with President Johnson.

INTERVIEWEE: DR. GEORGE DAVIS
INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE MC SWEENY
February 13, 1969

M: This interview is with Dr. George Davis, the minister of the National City Christian Church in Washington, D. C. Today is Thursday, February 13, 1969, and we are in his office this morning about quarter of eleven. This is Dorothy Pierce McSweeney.

Dr. Davis, to begin our interview, I would like to ask you how long you have served in the National City Christian Church here in Washington, D. C.?

D: I've been minister of the church here for eight years. I came here from Wichita Falls, Texas, where I had been minister for twelve years of the First Christian Church there.

M: How did you happen to come to Washington, D. C.?

D: I don't know that I can answer that question exactly. We were very satisfied in our Texas ministry. In fact, we liked Texas very much even though I was born in Kansas. But this is the national church of our denomination; we don't even own our properties. The properties are owned by our denomination. They were looking around for a minister, and for some reason turned in my direction. We decided to accept the invitation to come here to be the minister of our national church. Just why they turned in my direction I'm not sure.

M: You said eight years. This would be about 1960, 1961?

D: Yes.

M: Would you give me a little of your background information, your education, and your church service?

D: I was born in Topeka, Kansas; graduated from high school there; began preaching when I was 16 and a junior in high school, and have been preaching since. After I graduated from high school, I taught school for a year in Kansas, then went to Phillips University--our denominational school in Enid, Oklahoma, for seven years and earned my master and bachelor of divinity degrees. Then I went to my first located pastorate in a college town, Chickasha, Oklahoma, and was there for nearly twelve years. In addition to my own academic work in our school, I did a good deal of summer work at Chicago University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. I also have honorary degrees, one from my own alma mater, Doctor of Divinity, and one from Midwestern University in Wichita Falls, Texas, an L.L.D. My pastorates have been rather long for our denomination, and most of them--all of them, in fact, in the Midwest and Southwest.

M: Could you just tell me where you have served?

D: I won't begin with the small churches I served in high school and during college. My major ministries were, the first, in Chickasha, Oklahoma, twelve years; and then to St. Joseph, Missouri for five and a half; then in Wichita Falls, Texas, for twelve; and then to Washington where I've been eight years.

M: Who was the minister that preceded you here in the National Christian Church?

D: Dr. Warren Hastings. When he died, the pulpit was vacant for eighteen months while they searched for a successor.

M: Dr. Davis, of course as you already know, this interview is concerned with the history of Lyndon Johnson. Could you begin by telling me when you first met Lyndon Johnson and his family?

D: I met President Johnson more than twenty years ago when I went to Texas but had known of him before then and watched his career with interest. I knew him, I'm sure, before he knew me. I met him as I went to give invocations for political meetings, chambers of commerce meetings, where he happened to be in attendance or a speaker. I think he was first aware of me perhaps about twelve years ago when he came to Wichita Falls to attend the funeral of the late governor of Texas, Mr. Allred. I conducted that service and met President Johnson at that time. Of course we had many mutual friends, men who knew him well and who knew me well. I had opportunities to know him, so to speak, indirectly. But my friendship for him goes back a good many years and, in a sense, his for me over a number of years.

M: Was part of your interest in Lyndon Johnson the fact that he was a member of this faith?

D: I don't think that my first interest was primarily in that. I've always been profoundly interested in politics and have had profound respect for men who chose this as a profession. I've been interested in government, international relationships in all these related areas. I don't think that my interest in President Johnson had much to do with the fact that he was a member of the Christian Church. That developed later on, but was never too important until he became the President. Of course anyone would take pride in a man of his own denomination who achieved great success. But I don't go in too much for that sort of thing. It was on a deeper level than that.

M: What were your first impressions of Mr. Johnson?

D: Well, my first impression of him was he was a very able political leader. I knew that he used some very unusual means. You have to understand his background, his place of birth, the hard fight up that he made, to understand him. He was not a Harvard graduate. But he was the type of man for whom I have great respect just fundamentally. I like Southwestern people. They sometimes shoot from the hip, but at least they're forthright. A lot of people who accuse Lyndon Johnson of playing rough in politics played rough, too, even though they did it with a polished accent and left the impression that they were playing it straight. I just liked his type. I met a lot of men in Texas of that open, forthright, pioneer spirit.

There's something in me, though I didn't grow up there, that responds to this kind of openness.

M: You sort of answered this question, but can you think of some adjectives to characterize him that you have not given me?

D: Oh, I think open and forthright. On the other hand there has always been something of a secretive nature about Lyndon Johnson's approach to politics and life. I think this grew out of his background. You'd have to be born on the Pedernales River and live in that part of Texas and come to grips with the rough way people had to live and make a living and deal in their relationships in a pioneer sort of way to comprehend him.

I always was aware of the fact that he seemed to feel that his religion primarily could be worked out through his chosen profession. He may not have been a church-goer every Sunday back clear through the years, but he felt his religion was a practical thing and that more naturally worked out through his chosen profession. Pretty good interpretation for religion for any man to know that his best religion is worked out where he spends most of his time. I'm not sure that that answers your question. I could go on at length.

M: You have. Did you meet the Johnson family before 1960?

D: Oh, yes. I met the Johnson family before 1960. Mrs. Johnson was with Mr. Johnson when they came for Governor Allred's funeral. I didn't meet the girls until later. I do not recall exactly the first time I met the girls, but I met them, of course, on many occasions, after I came to Washington while President Johnson was Vice President. But the President and Mrs. Johnson I knew before I knew the girls.

M: Dr. Davis, beginning about 1960, can you tell me approximately how many times you have come in contact with the Johnson family, or perhaps I should phrase it, the number of occasions that stand out in your mind and tell me just a little bit about them?

D: I was with him on many occasions. I've never counted them up. I have some of my people who have tried to count up the number of times he came to church, but I've never gone in for that sort of thing--many times and in many kinds of situations--at the White House, Camp David, up on the river when they have spent the weekends and I would go up late Sunday afternoon to conduct services, at various public gatherings in Washington when I was there as a participant or just for a variety of reasons. But many occasions he came to our church here in Washington and in the earlier years, quite often he would stay over for the coffee hour. I've been with President Johnson every time he was in the hospital except one and on several occasions conducted services for him in the hospital. So I've been with him and with the family on practically every kind of occasion you could think of.

M: Do some of these particularly stand out in your mind, either the events that happened around them, or the conversations you had with the President?

D: Of course, I particularly remember the brief service he had us arrange on Inaugural Day in our church--a thirty-minute service ahead of the actual Inaugural ceremony. It was a very simple and a very moving service, interdenominational and interfaith at his suggestion. He had hoped for this to be a very small service with just his closest friends, but due to circumstances over which he had no control it turned out to be a service attended by every nationally known leader and many world leaders. But it was still a very moving service. I'll always remember that.

I discovered later that I was with him at the White House or Camp David while he was in the process of making some of his most critical decisions. But I didn't know of it at the time because I was not an adviser. He didn't share with me national security matters. But at least I was there when some pretty momentous decisions were being made. I look back upon them as very moving experiences, though I didn't know exactly what was back of them at the time.

I think attending two of the State dinners, one at the very beginning, and the last one he gave; being with him on Christmas Eve just before he left office at a reception he had for close friends; I will always remember that. Being with him in the hospital when he was under pressure, I've been with him on many occasions of that kind.

E: What occasions were you with him in the hospital?

D: Well, every time he was in the hospital. The first time after the Inaugural when he had the serious cold. I was with him then. I was with him in every case he was in the hospital since he has been in the Presidency, except the last time. I was ill at the time myself and didn't want to run the risk of going into the room and giving him some bug. But I was in contact with him even on that occasion.

M: Dr. Davis, could you tell me a little bit about either the arrangements or what happens when a President comes to your church?

D: Out of all the times he came to the National City Church--and he averaged once or twice a month while he was in the Presidency and most of the time Mrs. Johnson came with him--we had advance notice only on two occasions. One was the Inaugural service, and one was one time when Billy Graham preached for me. There was some public announcement about that and we had advance notice. We had some kind of indirect notice, but only "the President may be attending," or a call that suggested he might. But I never knew actually when he was coming to church. It was always a surprise, so to speak. We were prepared all the time. My main concern was security. But we actually never knew, except on two occasions, when the President was coming to church. And even on occasions when the Secret Service would show up ahead of time, he would not come. This may have been a part of the security precaution. We just didn't know when he'd come.

M: Is there a pew reserved in the church for the President?

D: He gradually learned to locate a place he liked best, eight rows from the front of the pulpit. And when I asked him if we could mark the pew, he hesitated for about eight months, and then he allowed us to mark it with a bronze plaque. But he did not want the words, "This pew reserved for the President," but the words, "This pew is occupied by the President when he attends," which I thought was a very gracious conservative way to state it. And that pew will remain marked, and he will remain, as he has been for four years, an honorary member of this congregation--I mean, an honorary elder.

M: Would you explain that?

D: In the Christian Church we have three fundamental offices--in most Christian churches. We have elders who look after the spiritual welfare of the church, deacons who look after the financial and social concerns of the church, and deaconesses who do charitable work, benevolent work, but also they have just as much authority--the women do--as the men in voting and all that sort of thing. The elders are, so to speak, the most important lay elective office in our church, and we have an office called the honorary elder which we began several years ago, because we are the national church. We name important disciples or members of the Christian Church across the United States or the world, whether they're members of this congregation or not. President Johnson was the first one named; then we named General Omar Bradley and General Maxwell Taylor, who are both members of the Christian Church.

M: Does he have any activities in this capacity?

D: He is welcome to attend the meetings and is invited to attend them, but we made it clear to him that this did not require him to attend. It was an honorary office, but with the full privileges if he cared to attend and participate. His schedule was so heavy that we didn't burden him with the requirement. But he had the privilege if he so desired, the same privilege that any elder had, and it's rather far ranging.

M: Mr. Davis, you spoke of security precautions which of course would come with the President attending. What type of arrangements had to be prepared?

D: When there were special services, like the Inaugural or the last Sunday President Johnson was in office when he came and people guessed he might be there, many Secret Service came and they were very cautious and very careful in preparations. But in the general run of events, the Secret Service would show up, and they were here. They were with him, but it was done very quietly. In fact, I must pay a tribute to my congregation. We did a very good job of making it easy for him to come. After a number of months, the Secret Service had the church well enough in mind that they were here, and they knew what was going on. We knew they were here, but there wasn't a great deal of motion and movement. The last time he came, the one thing that made me feel good, though I was sorry to see him leave, was the fact that we had gotten through all of these years without any difficulties.

M: Dr. Davis, this is an odd question to ask, but do you make any preparations yourself in the sermon with the idea in mind that the President might be attending?

D: No. I can honestly say I never have. I've been accused of this, but you grow used to this in Washington and don't pay any attention to it. We've never changed a hymn, a scripture; we've never changed anything because of the President's being here. I always remember public leaders in prayer. Now when the President is here, I will add a sentence or two in the prayer to remember him personally. I will call attention to his being in the service. I never change a sermon. Occasionally, because I am interested in our world affairs and our national affairs, illustrations and that sort of thing will be in my sermons. On occasions, when I have referred to Viet Nam or to some other problem and the President happened to be in church, I was accused by the press that I had inserted this for Johnson's benefit, but this is not so. He just happened to be there when I would deal with it. But I never preached a whole sermon on Viet Nam or any other issue. But the press, of course, usually would play up even two sentences out of proportion. But I never made any special preparation for the President. I didn't preach to him.

Unconsciously probably the knowledge that he might be there may have driven me to prepare more carefully whatever I was going to preach about. I don't know. But being human, I'm sure that maybe this was helpful to me, even though I never knew when he'd be there, just say--I couldn't prove this, I don't even know this--but unconsciously I think honestly maybe the knowledge that he might come may have driven me to more careful preparation. I can't quite answer that question.

M: Dr. Davis, being in your position, as you have said newspapers do cover you, have you ever been badly misinterpreted or misquoted in such an occasion of public coverage?

D: I would say that nearly every time the President has been in church what I have said has been misinterpreted, lifted out of context. For example, one Sunday I mentioned Viet Nam. It took me forty-five seconds, and the newspapers in Washington and some others headlined, "President's Pastor Supports Viet Nam Policy and Gets Invitation to Lunch." Well, you can see the implication of this. But out of the twenty-five minute sermon I had taken forty-five seconds to refer to it. I would say the majority of times the press did not give too fair an interpretation of what went on.

Interesting thing--the Stars and Stripes --got copies from Viet Nam and all over the world--did as good a job about printing what we said and what went on than almost any newspaper, because Associated Press and United Press send out reams of material and then the local papers decide what they'll put in. We have had some good press. Don't misunderstand me. I believe a thousand percent in the American press, even if it's irresponsible. I'd rather have an irresponsible press than no press at all. But they have been rather unfair at times. And I'd almost say dishonest at times.

M: Has the President ever talked with you about publicity that has come from a service that he has attended, or a function that you've attended?

D: On one or two occasions he has mentioned that he wished ministers could be cautious when he was present to say something that might be used against them or him, but rather jokingly.

I said, "Well, I'm sure I have been guilty of this myself." He would reply, "No, you really haven't. You're doing a fairly good job." But he was always very gracious in this regard.

I have asked his opinion on various things, and he hesitated to give them to me. I asked him once, "What would you do in my place when the press keep after you to give an interview about this, or that, or about you, or my relationship to the White House?" He said, "Well, I'd hesitate to advise you." And I persisted and he said, "Well, just tell the reporters to come down to church and hear you preach." And that was about that.

M: Have you ever given any sort of interview, Dr. Davis?

D: I've been very cautious about it. The one or two that I gave I regretted later on because, again, my remarks taken out of context--though I have always operated on the philosophy that when the President came I was not going to change what was in my sermon for his benefit. I decided this was a very dangerous road to go down, that if you began doing this, then you would play havoc with your preaching.

But as time went along, I did come to the conclusion that a man in public life, and in my type of pulpit, does have some responsibility to history. Though I did not change anything in sermons and was honest in my conscience, I did feel that I had some responsibility to be very, very careful to try to make clear what I was saying. This far, at least, I tried to go.

M: Have you ever participated in any other history program or project somewhat similar to this?

D: You mean like the one in which I'm engaging now?

M: Yes.

D: No. I think this is a first for me.

M: Dr. Davis, could you tell me about any social occasions which you attended at the White House?

D: We've been very fortunate. The President and Mrs. Johnson were very gracious to us. I never took advantage of this, I never talked about it in public. Since he left office, I've mentioned it on occasion because it then could do no damage and really could not take advantage of a favored position, so to speak. But we attended his first State dinner and the last State dinner they gave. We were invited to both of the girls' weddings. I had private lunch with the President twice. We were there with him this past Christmas Eve in 1968 for a party and a farewell reception for close friends. Several times [we] have been up to Camp David and up on the boat with him. And though these were primarily invitations to come up after church to conduct service for him the few times he was not in church on Sunday, they were also social occasions and lots of fun. He never asked me to leave my own service

or my own worship to conduct a special service for him. It was always at a time when it would not interfere with my own church obligations.

M: Does anything stand out in your mind particularly about these various events that you've attended?

D: They were just a wonderful experience--you know, to go to the White House to dinner, or to go up to Camp David. Anybody that has any sense of history at all would be inspired by that. We had good times with them. They were always gracious and we were always made to feel so much at home, as everybody else was. President Johnson seemed at ease around me. He didn't have to act like he was somebody else, and I didn't either. He seemed to be at ease. I think he trusted me at this point. I felt good about this. These were nice occasions, particularly being with the President, and particularly a President and family that you knew something about and had known. It wasn't something that just came about overnight.

M: Did your family come with you?

D: Yes. On many occasions--my first wife died nearly three years ago, was very close to President Johnson, very, very close. He liked her openness and friendliness. She was from the Southwest. And our children--my son is now doing a three year residency in surgery in Texas, and my daughter has married a young attorney in Wichita Falls.

When they were here on vacation in the summer, they have been invited to affairs. I was recently married, this past December, to a principal of a school in this area, and she was invited with me to the Christmas Eve celebration, and also went to this last State dinner with me. So the family has always been included. Whenever they could, they included the family. Of course, our children were gone most of the times. But they always had this family consciousness, I guess because they were a family themselves.

M: Dr. Davis, how would you describe your relationship to Mr. Johnson?

D: I would say largely "spiritual." In fact, one of the favorite pictures he gave me, inscribed, says, "To my spiritual adviser, George Davis." But Mr. Johnson had many spiritual advisers. More ministers were in the White House during his Administration than during the Administration of any other President--of all denominations, of all colors. But I think that during those years, I was close to him. Another picture he gave me is inscribed: "To my favorite minister, who has been with me in sunshine and sorrow." So though I discussed issues with him when he would ask me questions, and I heard many discussions that he had with other people, I was not his political adviser. I was not his international relationships adviser. I made no presumption at this point. President Johnson had the capacity, so to speak, to pick your brains without your knowing it. He was gathering information from people as he'd listen to what they had to say. But my relationship to him was primarily as a minister and a friend.

M: You said one of the inscriptions said, "sunshine and sorrow." What was meant by the sorrow?

D: After all, President Johnson was under a great deal of pressure. He received a lot of undeserved punishment. Of course, we kill our Presidents--not just the ones that we assassinate, but we kill them with cruelty and criticism. Abraham Lincoln was dealt very cruelly with while he was alive; he became a hero after he died. President Johnson probably took as much brutal treatment as any President--and undeservedly so. I would consider that sorrow. I think that it was sorrowful for him at the time of the assassination of President Kennedy. I was close to him at that time. It was a time of sorrow for him when any of the tragedies occurred in the nation--the riots and the student rebellion and revolution, anything that tore the nation up. I think this word sorrow has a very broad connotation--times of stress and times of ease, so to speak.

M: Do you recall any conversations that you can tell me about in these critical times?

D: I remember now that just on the eve of our first real escalation of the Viet Nam conflict, one time I had lunch with President Johnson. I didn't know until later, but later I could put two and two together and know that I was there when history was taking place without knowing because, as I said, I was not in on the secret negotiations. It would have been unwise for him to talk with me about matters that he kept just for his own National Security Council and his own fellow-elected officials. But I was there when it was going on. Maybe he received benefit from having a so-called spiritual leader by his side at the time he was deciding.

I remember now things he said, and maybe he was sort of, again I say, picking my brain about it. I remember before some of the important appointments he made when I was with him, and as I look back upon the conversation, I was participating more than I knew but didn't know it.

M: Can you give me some examples?

D: I was with him just before he named Thurgood Marshall, on the Sunday before he named him the next week. This was discussed, but I didn't know what the discussion meant--not discussed with me, but discussed with other people who were there. I remember that particularly, and the names that were talked about. It was this example and other examples when I saw on Monday and Tuesday in the press, information that was entirely inaccurate, that I knew the press was just guessing at it--what I call irresponsible press. I had a hundred occasions when I came to be able to judge this. I had rather not go into it more than that, but that's one good example. There were others.

M: What did the President discuss with you, if you can tell me, when he was sick or in the hospital? What was the direction of his thoughts?

D: An interesting thing, I never saw him afraid. The first time he was in the hospital, right after the Inaugural, I just went out on my own and left a letter, not expecting to see him.

When the letter got up to him, he asked the Secret Service to tell me to come on up. After that, he would ask that I come to the hospital before his surgery. But I never saw him afraid. I prayed with him. I heard him pray. But he always had a sort of laughing spirit, kidding with the nurses and the doctors just before he went into surgery.

I remember one of the times I was with him when some national emergencies were being confronted he said, "We're going to have to pray a great deal during the next six months, Dr. Davis." He is a man who believed deeply in prayer. He's a man you couldn't put into a pattern; I mean, he's just unpredictable. He's cut out of a different pattern, and I think that's why some people misunderstood him. They tried to force him into a pattern he didn't fit, and therefore drew the wrong conclusions. But in the hospital, there was just a friendly discussion about this, that, and the other thing; and we would have prayer together, and sometimes he would ask questions about the church and about religious things. We never got too pious or serious, but serious enough to be real. I don't know whether that answers your question or not.

M: Let me add one along the same line. How would you describe Mr. Johnson's religious attitudes and convictions?

D: As a very young boy, having grown up in a Baptist background, he on his own decided to join the Christian Church. He, I think, attended a revival meeting--just out of the clear blue, walked down the aisle, made his confession, and was baptized. [He] later on told his mother and she accepted it. One of the very outstanding mottos of the leaders of our denomination from the beginning was the motto, "Come Let Us Reason Together." We believed in the rationality of religion. And I wouldn't be surprised if maybe Johnson was influenced by this approach to religion, that religion could be reasonably discussed. And he used this phrase often. Anybody who's a member of the Christian Church ought to understand this thoroughly. It ought to be music to them because this was our approach to it--the rationality of religion.

Maybe you would like to broaden that question out just a little bit, and I could elaborate.

M: I don't want to broaden it. I want you to.

D: Would you mind just stating that question again, so I can be sure that I'm on the right track?

M: I asked you how you would describe Mr. Johnson's religious attitudes and convictions.

D: It was a reasonable approach to religion which led him to this concept that I mentioned previously; that being reasonable and practical, it could best be applied in practical ways. He decided to go into the political arena. He believed that his religion, whatever it was, could best be applied through trying to do in politics in the world some creative things. His whole career was marked by this very achievement. One doesn't have to agree with all of his political conceptions or political actions to know that he was driven by the desire to serve. Politics is a rough business, and has been from the time of George Washington.

Anybody who reads American history knows that. But I think there can be no question on the part of anybody who honestly studies his career that he was motivated by the desire to serve and to do good.

I heard him say in my presence at Camp David one time, "I do have great authority now--any President does--and I'm going to use that to the full extent to do as much good for our people in the world as I can while in that office." And people who say that he played politics, if he were playing politics all the way, I could have advised him on a lot of things to do differently than he did, because in some respects he did the very opposite of playing politics in making decisions that hurt him in the long run, but they were the right decisions. I'm sure that not every decision he made was right. After all, he's no more perfect than anyone else. But he was motivated by the desire to serve and do good through the political field. His religion was very practical.

But he was also very homespun in his religion. He liked the old hymns. He responded emotionally to what you might call the emotional nature of religion. I've seen this happen on many occasions. I doubt if he were a man that could have put down in a brief creed his whole religion like a theologian might do, but this doesn't mean too much. He wasn't a theologian. He was a practical politician, but very, genuinely religious.

M: Did he ever tell you stories of his childhood?

D: Yes. He, of course, gave me some books on his childhood and some materials and a book about his mother and his father. I've heard him in groups of people tell stories about his background at home. I don't recall particularly, but many, many times I've heard him account his growing up and the process of maturing that he went through, the struggle and his ambition, which he finally gained after a little period of drifting as a young man, which was the case with all young people. Finally, I suppose largely through the encouragement of his mother--although he had a strong father too--but because of the encouragement of his mother he settled down and decided to plug away and get an education and do something with his life.

M: Did you notice either one re-occurring as being a favorite one?

D: I don't know. Probably if I had a little more time to think about--he just liked to talk a lot about the early days of his boyhood and the difficulty of settling down to the hard discipline of getting an education and taking the long way around to reach his goals. I don't remember any specific story that I think of just at the moment. I'm sure if I had a little more time to think about it I would, but at this moment I don't recall one in particular. There were favorites. However, I don't remember hearing him repeat too many things too often, and I was with him many times. You know, a lot of people tell stories and tell them over and over again so often you say, "Well, I heard that before." He did some of this, of course, and people with him a lot I'm sure heard many of those stories many times just as in the case of other people who tell stories.

M: Did he ever discuss with you Biblical references that he often drew as a parallel in speaking engagements or in times of crisis?

D: Yes, I remember one time that he had heard a minister read a passage of scripture in Johnson City from the writings of Paul, and the passage includes the words "add to your faith a virtue, and to your virtue knowledge, and to your knowledge self-control, and to you self-control patience," and so on--and some other passages of that kind. In one of the passages--the exact location slips my mind right now--it had to do with charity and the implications of education. It was when he was making quite a struggle for the poverty program and education, and he sort of felt this scripture fit what he was trying to do. In several weeks when I was going up to Camp David to preach for him, I asked Mr. Busby if he could think of any particular scripture that might be pertinent, and he recalled to my mind this scripture that Johnson had loved specially, having to do with the implications toward education over ignorance and caring for those who were hungry and so on, so I used this as the background for my brief message that day.

He liked that passage from the Old Testament, of course, "Come now, let us reason together," it and a like passage in the New Testament, "Every man ought to be able to give a reason for the hope that's in him." The Sermon on the Mount was also one of his favorites.

Whenever I would get a new translation of the Bible, on some occasions I would write to him. There's one Bible published a good many months ago called the "New Jerusalem Bible." It has a long passage in the Old Testament about the struggles Moses went through, when he was about to throw in the towel, he got so tired of being opposed by the people. And Moses asked God, "Why is it I have to put up with so much of this ridiculous behavior on the part of the people when all I'm trying to do is help them?" I would send passages like this to him.

We had quite an extensive correspondence. I didn't go down to the White House every day and knock on the door or call. I avoided this because he was busy, and I didn't take advantage of my friendship. But we did lots of writing. In fact, one of my fond memories of those years will be the correspondence I had with the President which I have not shared and won't because it's intimate and friendly, but it was very interesting.

M: Did you talk with him very often on the telephone?

D: Not often, but on a number of occasions. I called him on very rare occasions about things that were really of great importance. There were not too many because I just did not take advantage of it. A number of times he'd call me; sometimes he would call me through aides, but they were always significant occasions. One time when I appeared on the "Today" Show in a debate on the Viet Nam situation based upon a chapter I'd written in a book, and debated with a man who was opposing the American position--

M: Who was this?

D: The chaplain of Yale University. Mr. Watson called me in New York. I talked with him and then with the President, and they both expressed appreciation for the good job they thought I had done. The President called me on the phone the very day that my wife died, and I never will forget that conversation with him. The conversations we had were always very important, one way or another, but I did not bother him too much with telephone calls.

M: Dr. Davis, as you have personally come to know the President, there have been many things that have been written about his mood and his temper. Can you give any description of seeing that part of him?

D: I know he was a moody man, and I'm sure he had a temper. He never revealed this in my presence, and he didn't seem to be trying to cover up. I never heard him say an unkind word in my presence about anybody--not one man. I'm sure he had; in fact, if he didn't, he should have with the treatment he got. But I never heard him say in my presence an unkind word about anybody. But not having been born yesterday, I could read a mood, and I know he did have moods. I know he had characteristics that at times may have been harmful to him--in the sense, politically harmful. He had a rather secretive attitude, playing his cards, so to speak, close to the vest. He even admitted later on that he didn't communicate as well as he wished he might have. This he said himself. But after all, his characteristics were just like the characteristics of all other people. His moods grew out of his background and out of the kind of man he was.

I think we make a serious mistake in trying to make everybody into the pattern of everybody else. President Johnson was a particular kind of man. You have to understand his Texas background on the Pedernales River. You have to understand political infighting. You have to understand the years he fought coming up politically. He did have moods, but these moods were never very extremely apparent in my presence. But I think he must be measured on higher levels than that. When he's measured on the higher levels--the so-called image--he comes off, I think, very well.

M: Did you ever see an example of his great persuasive talent?

D: President Johnson was an expert in individual conversation. I wish more people could have talked with him personally. I wish lots of student groups could have conversed with him personally. He probably did more for the poor, the disinherited, and even young people, than most other Presidents, and yet he took a beating from the so-called intellectual student community.

He listened to a good many people. The violent student groups mean by listening that everybody should do exactly what they want them to do. I repeat, this is what the dissenters mean: they mean "they don't listen unless we do what they want us to do." But he listened very carefully; he listened to a good many people. He, as he himself said, did not always communicate adequately or as perfectly as he would have liked. He even stated this in one of the last speeches he gave in Chicago before he left office. He was a wonderful conversationalist. When he forgot completely trying to be someone else and was himself, he came through. Sometimes he came through, I thought, tremendously well on

television and radio. But maybe he might have done a better job in communication. As I say, he said this himself.

M: Dr. Davis, how would you describe the effects of Mrs. Johnson, or her relationship, with the President?

D: She's a very strong woman, a very gracious woman. I don't think we've ever had a more gracious woman in the White House. I've seen her under many kinds of circumstances, and she was poised--even in the Eartha Kitt incident, which I thought was terrible.

M: Were you there?

D: No, but I was in Indianapolis, and I gave a release to the press in her defense. I got some trouble over that, too. But I'm glad I said it. She very graciously confronted that. She confronted every kind of situation and I think came through with flying colors. I think she had a tremendous influence on President Johnson, as all good wives do on their husbands. Every man that gets anywhere--most of them anyway--has somebody who is with him. She was his best critic, I'm sure. She didn't do this publicly, of course, but I am sure she was his best critic. Maybe she advised him sometimes when he didn't follow advice, and he might have been better off if he had. I don't know that. I assume that to be possible. She was a very able woman. I think she will get very high grades in terms of First Ladies.

M: How would you describe the President's relationship with his daughters?

D: I grew to know the daughters fairly well--not as well as some other people knew them, so I cannot speak as an expert in this field. I'm sure that back through the years when Johnson was coming up in politics that he was so busy that he may not have been with his family--in fact, I'm sure he wasn't as much as he would liked to have been. I think he probably grew closer to them as the years went along during the years in the White House. I'd rather not get into the problem of which one he was closest to--that sort of relationship.

I think, considered in the light of all the problems they confronted, the girls did a fairly good job. They matured and grew during this experience, but they were just, so to speak, kids when they went into the White House, and it is not easy "to have the world at your feet," so-to-speak. There's a good relationship I think largely back through the years. I think they were a pretty close-knit family. I'm sure they had their usual differences and arguments and debates like all normal families do.

M: Dr. Davis, Mr. Johnson often attended two services, sometimes even more than that and also, including in this, many different denominations. Why do you think this was part of his approach to his religion?

D: He was just built that way. I like to think that it grew out of his relationship to the Christian Church. Our whole denomination or movement began with the central idea of Christian unity. A way back at the beginning of our movement, our leaders were concerned that the Christian world was divided. We believed that Christians were Christians, and that

regardless of the name they go by, they were Christians--Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Roman Catholics. This was a part of our religious philosophy. I like to think that President Johnson inherited this from growing up in that faith, and that it was very normal for him to go from church to church. Then the fact that his wife is an Episcopalian and later Luci became a Roman Catholic. He knew ministers of other faiths like the German priest of Stonewell. He had been close to a good many preachers before he came to Washington. It was just normal for him to do this. I don't think President Johnson was the kind of a man who would have been satisfied to go to the same Church every Sunday and listen to the same man every Sunday. I think he was of a nervous disposition and needed to get around to meet people. Many motivations led to this, but it was not politics. If he used his Church-going for political reasons, everybody else uses their Church-going for some reason or other, too, but this doesn't mean that's their main motivation. Many reasons probably lead people to go to church, but I grant the average person's basic sincerity in his motivation. President Johnson went to church as President, and to many churches just because he was built that way. He was naturally ecumenical in his attitude.

M: Dr. Davis, there's often speculation about the President's religious leanings, and I'm thinking in terms of there's someone who has said occasionally that he may be becoming a Roman Catholic. What is your view of that?

D: I've never discussed it with him. I consider that to be in the department of his own business. If he had wanted to discuss it with me, he could. He didn't, so I didn't discuss it with him. I've had calls from newspapers all over the country and for three years have heard the rumor he's going to become a Roman Catholic. If he decided to do that, it would be his own business. In reading between the lines of some things he has said to me, I don't think this is so. But someone told me not long ago--about a month ago--that Drew Pearson predicted that in a year or two he would be a Roman Catholic. Maybe Mr. Pearson knows more than I do. He's not perfect; he hasn't always been right. But if this is so, it's still in the department of President Johnson's own business. I don't know what he plans to do. In fact, when the newspapers call me about it, I say, "Why don't you ask him? He's the man to ask, not me." I don't think this is so. But if it is, that's his affair.

M: Many times when he did attend the various church services, he had some surprising results when he was sermonized on or to from the pulpit, or he was highly criticized. These were all members in good standing of various denominations--leaders of the denomination. What is your opinion of that?

D: I'm going to be brutally frank in this sense. I was in Williamsburg on Christmas Day and for nearly a week. I went to church on Sunday following Christmas at Bruton (sp) Parish. When the man that directed the service--I couldn't help but have a very strange reaction to him, the fact of remembering that this man had deliberately rewritten a sermon knowing that President Johnson would be in church, and so to speak, attack him on Viet Nam.

Now I never knew when the President was going to be in church, so I never prepared sermons. When I mentioned Viet Nam, I was going to say it regardless of who was in church, not because he was there. Some of the commentators later criticized me by

saying that the Bruton Parish minister had a right to do that to the President if I had a right to support him in the pulpit. But it doesn't hold. This man deliberately prepared a sermon to deliver to the President. I never did this, and never would have done it. I didn't change sermons, so the comparison is all awry.

I think it was very poor taste for anyone, particularly a minister, to take advantage of the President's presence to preach to him. President Johnson got just what I had prepared for everybody else. He never bothered me [or] worried me; I was never nervous, except at the point of security. I wanted him to be safe there and to get out safely.

Now I always unconsciously had the feeling that here was the strongest leader of the world, he was the President of the United States. Any man in his right mind would have to take pride in this. He would be awe-stricken to some extent. But I was never nervous because he made it very easy for me. I mean, he wished to be like everybody else. When he got in and worshipped, he didn't look at you like he thought, "Well, here, I'm the President of the United States, so be careful what you say and what you do." He made this easy for me. So I never preached to him, because I never knew when he was coming, and I never would have been guilty of preparing a sermon to deliver to the President of the United States. I think it's very cheap, vulgar, and almost unpardonable.

M: He also occasionally evoked religious criticism in that he attended one service and may not have been of that denomination, or he may have done something that was not within that denomination's traditions. What is your feeling about that?

D: For example, I know there was some criticism about maybe his having taken communion in a church where a non-member was not supposed to take communion. I think he just had this free spirit that a Christian ought to be able to go to any church and do as he pleased. He didn't do it to be out of the way or to take issue; he just was Lyndon Johnson. He was very open and frank and down-to-earth. He liked to go to various churches, as I said earlier, because he was built this way. And religion was on another level other than denominationalism with him. To accuse him of politics, I don't want to bring personal elements in--people keep asking me what do I think about President Nixon having private services at the White House, and my answer is it's none of my business. In the light of the criticism that Johnson received for going to all Churches, maybe it's smart for President Nixon to have private Services, in the light of the security problem. But to say that the Services of the White House are now private is hardly true, because Billy Graham has been in the newspapers over conducting Services down there, which is just as public as Johnson going to church. Mr. Nixon has the right to do as he pleases, but if you are going to criticize Johnson and say it was political, you can criticize every President who went to Church of being political. I think his going was just his nature.

The Presidency is different. You cannot measure problems of a President by the problems of any other man, and so a man in the Presidency ought to be understood sympathetically.

M: Have you ever traveled with the President anywhere or for him anywhere?

D: I traveled with him on brief journeys. I could have made the trip as one of the members of the team he sent to investigate the Viet Nam situation some months ago, but I'm glad that I didn't because, here again, the President would have been accused of politics--sending his, so to speak, own minister on that trip. I'm glad that I was unable to go for his sake.

I've flown in the helicopter with him to Camp David. My wife and I were invited to go to New York when he signed the bill on the Statue of Liberty grounds. We flew up in Air Force One for that occasion. The next day he was to meet Pope Paul. Three or four occasions in the helicopter and Air Force One, but never on any journeys out of the continental United States.

M: Has Mr. Johnson ever appointed you to any boards or panels or task forces, commissions, committees?

D: As I say, I could have been appointed on this Viet Nam trip, but I wasn't. But I did accept an appointment he made of me as one of the members of the National Advisory Council on Economic Opportunity. Several years ago Congress passed a law that the President must appoint an advisory commission to study the whole poverty program. This was an advisory council of rather noted people. I was the least of the whole membership in terms of experience and background, but it was an experience I'll never forget. In fact, I'm still on the commission. When the new members will be appointed, I don't know, but I'm a carry-over and we meet every one or two months. We made a very thorough study of the Poverty Program, and made our report last March to the Congress on the directions the Poverty Program should take. This was one of the finest experiences I ever had, serving on this commission.

M: How did it happen to come about?

D: The President just called me and asked me if I would serve on it. Again, here the New York Times tried to pick this commission to pieces and suggested it was all a political appointment, that President Johnson just put people in agreement with him on it. This was not the truth, I have never been on a commission in which there was such wide divergence of opinion. We literally tore the Poverty Program apart and put it back together again. But nevertheless, as the press was so often in the habit of doing, they tried to read something into it that was not so. This was not a commission or council made up of people in agreement with Johnson.

Of course, it did have on it some people that were close friends of his, but two or three of his closest friends were not in sympathy with all the poverty programs. I'm sure that President Johnson in part named me on there because he did trust me and there certainly can be nothing wrong with his having appointed people he trusted in important places like that. He knew, of course, that I would not "sell him down the river," but also that I would be honest in the discussions. But what all of his motivations were in, appointing me, I do not know.

M: Can you give me some general or broad conclusions that you arrived at regarding our poverty program?

D: I was very interested in the fact that when the President met with us right after we were appointed, he gave some guidelines. One he said, "I must admit myself that there has been a tendency to over-promise people too much. I hope that whatever you come up with, that you'll be cautious about over-promising. Second, I want you to remember that you're not there to study the poverty program to support me, or make me come out in a perfect light. Make an honest study. Third, try to come up with what you consider to be the best parts of the poverty program."

We did all of this and more. By the way, our report was very brief, for we tried to write a document that saved people from having to wade through the same kind of long, drawn-out affair that the Kerner Commission came up with, which no one could read.

We came up with the recommendations about elements of the Poverty Program that might be taken into already existing agencies, and so forth. I think there's no question that maybe people were over-promised. But this is not unusual. We live in a very difficult time and there are a lot of things we need to do. Maybe we tend to over-promise. The idea of the poverty program is good.

Frankly, I think the Administration of Nixon is going to keep some of it. The implication was they were going to tear it to pieces, but I doubt this. Some of the projects are going to go on, and I think the poverty concept will go on. It needs to be restudied, it needs to be changed some. President Johnson knew this. There were serious mistakes made as we experimented, serious mistakes, financial and otherwise. Nobody doubts this. But when you're trying to deal with great, critical, national, world problems, you're going to make mistakes. You have to experiment and experiment to the extent that you may make some bad mistakes, but that's better than doing nothing at all. And poverty is a real problem and needs to be tackled.

M: When were you appointed to this council, sir?

D: I've actually been serving on it now over two years. My appointment ran out last March, but they keep sending me invitations to come to the meeting, and so I'm still on. I guess I will be--it's sort of a carry-over--until a new council is named, or the present one is dropped. This was a Congressional decision, that the President had to name this council. So I've been on it over two years.

M: Did Mr. Johnson ever discuss with you his stepping down, his withdrawal of March 31st?

D: No, I was listening to him and it was as much a surprise to me as to anybody. There were times when I sort of read between the lines and wondered if he didn't have this in mind, but he didn't share this with me. There were times that I wondered. Mrs. Davis told me she felt definitely that the President would not run for another term, that it wouldn't be wise for him

health-wise to go through the pressure of that campaign. There were times when I wondered if he might do this, and yet I felt in the end, "well, he won't."

Of one thing I'm sure. His place in history is established. When all of it has been shaken down, he'll come out with a fairly high grade when we think through it. But I had no real idea that he was considering this.

M: You've known the President since 1960--almost nine years now--and it has been through his Vice Presidency, and of course you also had met him prior to that. Have you seen changes in the man? Let me add on to that--and also the effects of the Presidency on this man?

D: I think the Presidency affects any man, any man who has any sympathy or insight deepens in the Presidency. He, so to speak, is free from politics to some extent. He gets a broader vision and conception of what he can do. He gradually grows in his understanding of what the Presidency can accomplish. So he becomes a bigger man, if he's big at all, by the very nature of the office. We've had only a handful of rare exceptions to this. Most of our Presidents have become greater in the Presidency.

I think that the opposition that he encountered when he held to his guns in certain areas took its toll. He was a man who didn't like to be criticized; in fact, I don't know anybody who particularly relishes criticism--I don't. But he couldn't understand why he should have been criticized in areas where intelligent people should have understood what he was doing, and personally, I shared his feelings.

The intellectual community was one of the most arrogant groups. They insisted that everybody had to have a Harvard accent, if you don't mind my bluntness of saying so. Johnson did everything he could to draw the intellectual community into the orb of sharing, he asked their opinions; he asked their advice. The trouble with the intellectual, as Eric Hoffer says, is when you don't take their advice they conclude that you have not listened.

The White House years softened Johnson to some extent. They made him more understanding. They deepened his spiritual life. One of his greatest contributions was this tremendous way he relinquished this office. There was never any better transfer of power than Lyndon Johnson made to Richard Nixon.

It looks like the Proliferation Treaty is going to be passed now. Mr. Fulbright is going to give his approval to it, I guess, but it's Mr. Johnson's child. The easing of tensions in France began months ago, Nixon inherits this, but it's because Johnson stayed silent in the face of criticism. He never had an all-out desire for total victory in Viet Nam, never said so. He had a very limited conception, and that limited goal has already been accomplished; we stopped the take-over of South Viet Nam by North Viet Nam and the Communists. He got them to the peace table. One reason they are there now is because we stood so steadfast as long as we did in spite of all the criticism on the part of the people in the United States and the press. I think he's mindful of his mistakes and errors. He made some. It did a lot in deepening him, but I think it was tremendous the way he let go of his

office and moved out of it and the way he turned it over. I don't know of anything in American history that equals it. If there is, I'd like to have somebody point it out to me.

M: Dr. Davis, have you ever talked among men of similar background--I mean, with similar careers such as yours in church service regarding Mr. Johnson or his Administration?

D: You mean to other ministers?

M: Right.

D: Yes. A lot of the clergy tended to be critical at times of President Johnson, particularly over Viet Nam. This is where most of it lay. But I don't know that the clergy is the best qualified to understand this. Many of us are softheaded. We consider that because we're experts in theology that that qualifies us to be experts in all the other areas. This was the only thing that bothered me about men like Coffin, the chaplain of Yale University, and this Committee Of Concerned Clergy and Laymen About Viet Nam. It leaves the arrogant suggestion that nobody else was concerned. I debated it, as I said, with Coffin, on the "Today" Show, and his whole attitude was that "we're concerned, nobody else is." I said, "This is a rather arrogant attitude for a clergyman. You mean Rusk is not concerned? Maxwell Taylor is not concerned? Johnson is not concerned? They're Christians. It's rather arrogant for you to presume that you're just concerned." This disturbs me. You go ahead and elaborate or maybe restate that question. Sometimes I get a little lost in my answers.

M: I was just wondering if you had ever been confronted by other ministers.

D: Yes. These ministers, particularly over Viet Nam--many of them came to the place where they thought this was an immoral war. This is where most of it began. I've talked with many clergy who have written letters, criticism of President Johnson, many in praise of him. As I say, he sought the advice of more preachers than any President who ever was in the White House. He had more to lunch, more to dinner, seeking out their help and suggestions. Yet over the Viet Nam proposition, he ran into trouble with the clergy, many of them who are pacifists--and I don't say this to be derogatory in my attitude toward them. But the church in the last few years has tended to be pretty cocky. Clergymen sometimes set themselves up as experts in too many fields as if they spoke with the authority of God. And at least the Protestant conception of religion is that every man's a priest before God, and that if God can speak to Mr. Coffin he can speak to Lyndon Johnson. But they never seem to quite see this.

I think basically, and I think increasingly, the clergy will begin to realize all that President Johnson did in the areas that they're really concerned about--in human help and so forth.

M: What is your opinion of the unpopularity that grew in attachment to Lyndon Johnson as he sort of ended his Administration? Of course then it was beginning to turn too, but it did develop. He was highly criticized--

D: This goes back, first of all, to this image he had from the beginning. The people said that he was just a politician, the arm-twisting politician; that he played rough; that he had this old idea of using under-handed tactics to get his will done. But as I said, a lot of these smooth-speaking use the same tactics, only they do it with Yale and Harvard accents. And I don't see any difference. This image, so to speak, of Johnson.

Then he lived against the background of John Kennedy. I loved President Kennedy very much, but a good many of Kennedy's dreams would have never been fulfilled without President Johnson. Most of the major legislation that President Eisenhower got through, he got through with Lyndon Johnson's help. There has never been a single major civil rights bill passed in our time without the hand of Lyndon Johnson on it, and that was during the Eisenhower years too. So this idea of the image was used. People ask me, "Is he really religious." I said, "That's rather a presumptuous question for you to even question his religion." But he just didn't fit their pattern.

Second, is the increase of riots and revolution in the United States, and crime, but this all was beginning before President Johnson came to office. It was under the surface. This couldn't have happened overnight. I mean, there was a volcano there. He inherited it, and then had to deal with it the best he could.

Viet Nam, he inherited. Two Presidents before him committed us, one a Republican, one a Democrat. He was criticized over Viet Nam. These and other things led to criticism.

Now, don't misunderstand me. President Johnson is no angel. I know his faults very well, but I have mine too, and all the people who criticized him have theirs, too. I want to repeat again that in the long pull, I think he will come out very well.

M: Mr. Davis, we've covered a lot of subjects. I don't have any further questions. Do you have anything else you'd like to add on anything that we've discussed or haven't discussed?

D: I would like to say this word about the President and our church. We've been very fortunate in having him here. He has been of great benefit to our church--the way he has come, the quiet way they have worshipped without a lot of show. There's no question he indirectly has helped us in church attendance. Doors have opened for me, opportunities have come to me that never would have come without my relationship to the President. He didn't even know he was opening some of these doors. It was just because of the fact that he was the President that I had opportunities. But we never built our program around him, and he wouldn't have wanted us to. A number of churches in Washington suffered terribly after a President stopped going to church; attendance-wise, financially and otherwise. We'll have some reaction here too, but I think that the attitude of our people and the attitude the President and Mrs. Johnson took toward our church, they did us permanent good. It wasn't on a shallow basis.

Personally, I miss him very much. In fact, at times the town seems very empty and vacant without President Johnson's being here. But I don't think he's through. What he has

in mind doing politically, I have no idea. I'm sure that if he lives, and I hope he does, that there's much yet he's going to do, maybe politically in various ways. He did much for this church. I think we did much for him. In fact, he has said this on many occasions--his deep appreciation for his relationship with this church.

Of course, I get to Texas quite often. My daughter and son are there. And I love Texas, even though I wasn't born there. So I hope I'll be seeing the President on occasion, and I hope when they come to Washington, and they will, that we'll see them here in church again. He will remain an honorary elder of this church. His pew will remain permanently marked. They were great years, and I'm glad that I had some small part in them.

I believe that that perhaps is all that I would say.

M: Thank you very much, Dr. Davis.