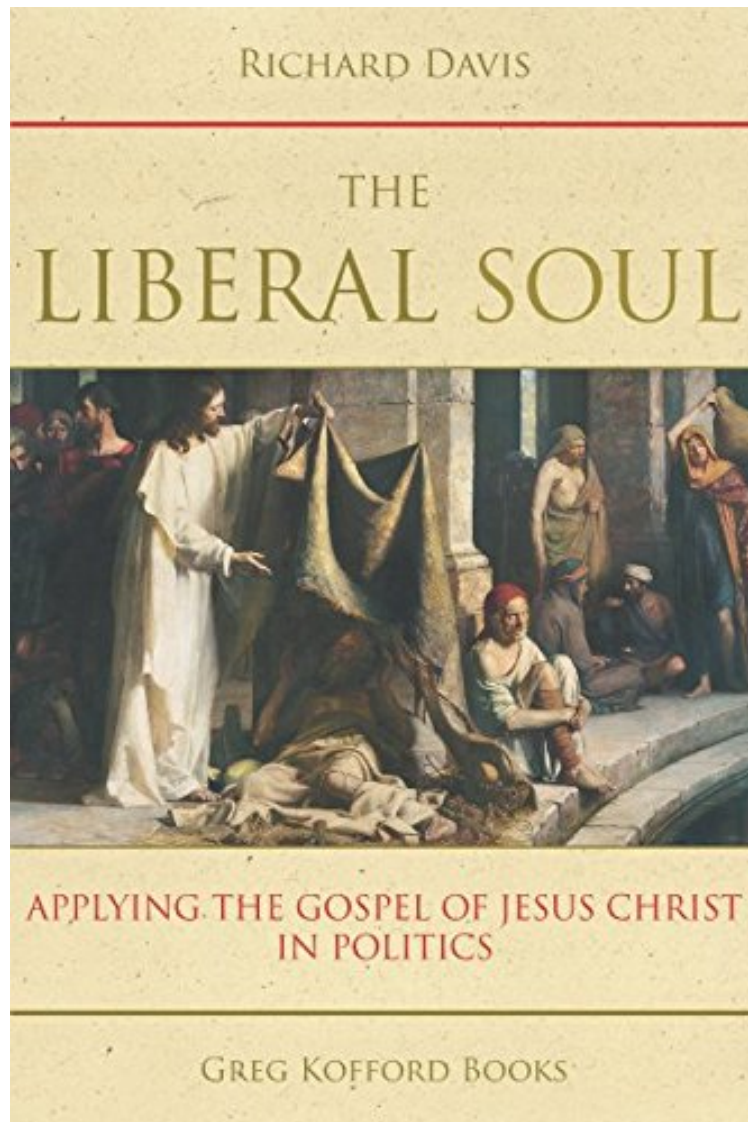


[DOWNLOAD] The Liberal Soul: Applying the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Politics

## The Liberal Soul: Applying the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Politics

*Richard Davis*

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**Richard Davis : The Liberal Soul: Applying the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Politics** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Liberal Soul: Applying the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Politics:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Discipleship in ActionBy MoseyOnIt is possible to find as much support for more progressive, even liberal, political views in gospel teachings as many Mormons seem to find for conservative views and the Republican Party? This is the question that Richard Davis, a Brigham Young University political science professor, tackles in this short, heartfelt book. His answer, of course, is yes. Indeed, he argues that the

gospel calls us to develop the characteristics of the "liberal soul," a term that he draws from Proverbs 11:25. Davis is at pains, particularly in his Introduction, to define "liberal" in a way that will insulate it somewhat from the pejorative meanings that have attached to it in some people's minds as a result of contemporary American political debates. For him, liberal connotes such qualities as generosity, inclusiveness, broad-mindedness, selflessness, openness toward others. It comes from a recognition that all people, of whatever religion, race, gender, or nationality, are sons and daughters of the same God, and that that God's Son suffered for all of them. This is not to suggest that Davis believes that whatever one of those children does is OK. To the contrary, the existence of right and wrong, good and evil--in thought, word, and deed--must be recognized. But so must the tendency to wrap one's personal views of right and wrong in scripture or the national flag and maintain that they are unerringly accurate, God-given, infallible. Davis would urge a bit more restraint before we dismiss those who differ with us as ungodly, evil, or deluded. Part of Davis's intention is to counter what he sees as the dominance in Mormon discourse (at least in the US, and particularly in Utah) of conservatism and the Republican Party. As he puts it, he wants to "help restore the role of liberalism as essential to the Church member who seeks to become a disciple of Christ" (p. xx). Davis takes up several specific topics: the use of wealth, care and concern for the poor and vulnerable, environmental stewardship, war, abortion, unity, the role of government, and what role (if any) religion should play in government and public life. He sees a role for action at three levels--individual, group, and government (which should be the agent of society's will)--in tackling the most important problems of the day. He does not excuse the individual from responsibility for his or her choices (quite the opposite, in fact), nor does he argue that governmental policy is a substitute for individual responsibility. He is at particular pains, however, to develop an argument for a robust role for government, against contentions that government is either the problem, or that its role should be minimal and limited to protecting property rights. I don't find all of his reasoning flawless. For example, I think he errs in his attempted analogy between affirmative action and Joseph Smith's search for redress for the victims of early anti-LDS persecution. I also think he is naive and unrealistic in his assessment of the proper response of the average person to the armed home invader or mugger, and therefore the analogy he is attempting to draw between this situation and national self-defense is weak. On the whole, though, I applaud his straightforwardness in asking readers to think about what it really means to be a disciple of Christ, and how discipleship should inform one's view of, and behavior in, politics. Many will disagree with Davis (though those who would take the strongest exception to his views are not likely to finish the book). It's a quick read, though, and worth the small investment of time. An equally short, clear presentation of the view he is countering would be equally welcome.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. This is one of the most enlightening books I have ...By Joel G. Hancock This is one of the most enlightening books I have read in recent years. It lays clear the real meaning of a "liberal soul" as it relates not just to our faith but also to our lives and even our politics. I wish it were on the reading list of every LDS who ventures to ask how can you be Mormon and still be vote for a \*\*\*\*\*3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Daryl W. Tanner This book will not "convert" Tea Party members but provides evidence of the need for "opposition in all things"!

The Liberal Soul offers something lacking in LDS culture. That is the presentation of a different way for Latter-day Saints to examine the question of how to be faithful disciples of Christ and good citizens. It shows public policy decision-making regarding government role as the manifestation of the "liberal soul" rather than as the libertarianism advocated by past Mormon speakers and writers such as Ezra Taft Benson, Cleon Skousen, or Vern Andersen. It also takes a different approach from the less radical but still traditional economic conservative attitudes of well-known politicians such as Orrin Hatch or Mitt Romney. Davis suggests that a Latter-day Saint can approach economic policy, war, the environment, and social issues with the perspective that society is basically good and not evil, tolerance and forbearance are desirable qualities instead of bad ones, and that government can and does play a positive role as a vehicle of society in improving the lives of citizens. He describes how Latter-day Saints can apply the Gospel of Jesus Christ to our roles at each of these three levels--individual, group, and society--rather than assuming the societal level violates the principles of the Gospel. The result is that Latter-day Saints can help bring about a Zion society--one where all benefit, the most vulnerable are aided and not ignored, inclusion is the rule and not the exception, and suspicion and fear are replaced by love and acceptance.