

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

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001. transcript	re: Internal Transcript of Interview of the First Lady by Ken Woodward [partial] (5 pages)	10/20/1994	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Lissa Muscatine
OA/Box Number: 20088

FOLDER TITLE:

Newsweek/Woodward 10/20/1994

2015-0275-S

rc1917

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
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C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Internal Transcript

October 20, 1994

INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
BY KEN WOODWARD FOR NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE

Q I understand your Methodist roots go back to the Welsh 19th century, is that true?

MRS. CLINTON: English and Welsh, 19th century.

Q Mom's side, Dad's side?

MRS. CLINTON: My father's side. But it goes back to the early 19th century, and maybe if I ever have time to look into it, slightly before. Really in the very beginning of the Wesleyan movement.

Q I was giving a speech in Scranton, and I saw that your father was buried in sort of Methodist soil, was he not. Welsh Methodist soil --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, indeed. That's right. His name was Hugh, and my grandmother's maiden name was Jones, and it was a very big tradition.

Q What do you think Woodward is?

MRS. CLINTON: I'm not sure.

Q Welsh and English. I was told that what was interesting about you -- and Mrs. Jones -- confirm it or not -- after she got confirmed she went to church. She went not just the kids' service, but went to the adult service. I thought that was extraordinary -- in other words, a salt church person was what he was calling you, and that your parents didn't go that regularly. And he doesn't recall that your brothers went all that regularly.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, he may not remember -- my mother taught Sunday School, and so she often would teach Sunday School but

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not go to church. And my father was more of a special occasion church person, but not limited solely to Christmas and Easter, but more often than that. And my brothers went to Sunday School all the time, but weren't always interested in going to church.

Q What about Wellesley? Usually, when people go away to college, forget it.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, when I went to college we had a very active chapel organization at Wellesley, and the chapel was a regular Sunday service which I often attended, but I also went into town, went into Wellesley and would go to church on occasion. I don't know that I went every week. I doubt that I did. But I at least kept active in going to church during the time --

Q Was it a Methodist group on campus?

MRS. CLINTON: It was more of a --

Q Nondenominational?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, it was like a protestant chaplain, a Catholic chaplain, a Jewish chaplain. But we also, when I was at Wellesley, took a semester of Old Testament and a semester of New Testament as a requirement. So there was a lot of religious discussion. That was something that was done away with later, but at least when I was there -- and I'm very grateful for it -- we had a whole year of Bible study. And we had a Bible department at Wellesley which was quite good and very interesting.

I had a really good Bible professor, a young man named Clifford Greene. It was the first time I ever saw the word, "eschatological." I remember it very well.

Q Thought it was a dirty word --

MRS. CLINTON: I didn't know what it meant. It sounded a little bit suspect.

Q What about things like Motive Magazine? Do you remember that?

MRS. CLINTON: Our church paid for those of us who went off to college to get Motive Magazine. And I have every single copy I ever got of Motive Magazine.

Q D.J. Stiles would be happy.

MRS. CLINTON: There was an incredible article in the

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September or October 1965 Motive Magazine by Carl Oglesby, called Change or Containment, about the Vietnam War. It was the first thing I had ever read that challenged the Vietnam War, because in '65 it was only slowly coming into people's consciousness. And I often later thought, I wondered whether the administration board of my church knew what was in Motive Magazine, because they paid for every one of us to get it. (Laughter.)

Q Did you ever belong to the United Methodist Women

--

MRS. CLINTON: No. I would attend meetings and do events for them, but I never was an active member of that.

Q Any special influence you felt from the United Methodist Women --

MRS. CLINTON: No, I thought -- I did a lot of, especially in Arkansas, I did a lot of speaking and -- I guess mostly speaking to United Methodist Women groups, and I would spend time with United Methodist women. Oftentimes at our church they would have a monthly potluck lunch after the service, or some kind of an event at night. And I spent time talking with them on their various projects. I also followed what they did, particularly through the national efforts, at the national level, because the United Methodist Women sponsored a lot of projects that I was interested in.

Q They're a very powerful group.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, they are.

Q They raise their own money, spend their own money. I noticed that -- (inaudible) -- 7,800 letters right off the bat.

MRS. CLINTON: I spoke to their convention by satellite last year, which generated a lot of letters.

CAPUTO: They had a special event on Capitol Hill where they distributed those letters.

MRS. CLINTON: But we weren't involved in creating it. They asked me to speak and they announced at the time I was speaking they were going to do these letters. So it was an independent action.

Q And you taught Sunday School when you were in Little Rock.

MRS. CLINTON: I did, from time to time I taught Sunday

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School.

Q What about these speeches that I've been asking for -- Why I'm a Methodist?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know that I ever transcribed, recorded or wrote it out. I gave it -- in October, many Methodist churches, they have a lay speakers Sunday. And on several occasions I did the lay sermon. I think the first time I did the discussion about why I'm a Methodist was in the Sunday School class at my church in Little Rock. And then it grew into sort of a mini sermon that I gave a couple of times around the state.

Q Do you remember any of the points?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes. I remember a lot of the points. I remember very well. Part of it was my family tradition in Methodism, which was very important to me as a little girl. And my father was a very devout Methodist. He may not have been as regular a church-goer, but my father said his prayers kneeling by his bed every night of his life, until he had the stroke. And when we were all born we were taken back to the church in Scranton where we were all christened, which was the Court Street Methodist Church, which was where we had his -- and the church was a huge part of my father's life.

funeral
And my grandfather, who lived until I was in high school, was a very committed Methodist and an active leader of that little Court Street Methodist Church. And when my grandfather and my great-uncles and aunts would sit around, as I was a little girl, talking, they would often talk about stories they had heard from their grandparents, or maybe even been passed down from beyond that about life in England and Wales before they came to this country. And Methodism was always a big part of it.

So I had a real sense of some kind of rootedness in Methodism, and when I started going to the church I attended, it was a great family centered church.

Q Park Ridge?

MRS. CLINTON: Parkridge, yes -- First Methodist Church. It had not only active Sunday School and Bible School classes, but it had athletic events, it had plays, it's where the scout troops met, it was just this center of activity. And it was in walking distance of our house, and my brothers and I were up there all the time.

And then, as I got older and went into the Methodist youth fellowship as, I guess, junior high, maybe, it began to be

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intellectually challenging and theologically challenging to me, in addition to being sort of my religious activity. And, as I have said many times, Don Jones was an extraordinarily engaging youth minister for the young people in our church.

Q I don't want to go back too much over that. I think that's probably enough. But if we had time I'd love to talk about Joe Matthews and the Ecumenical Institute, and all of that.

MRS. CLINTON: You knew about that?

Q First story to hit Newsweek was on Joe.

MRS. CLINTON: Did you talk to Don Jones about that?

Q A little bit.

MRS. CLINTON: He took us down there.

Q Yes. I've got that story. That's why I'm kind of moving you on. (Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: Let me just -- the other point is that also, even though it was a suburban church in a very nice area, and it was an all-white community, at least Don Jones and several of the women in the church, in the Sunday School, were very intent upon expanding our experiences. And so it wasn't only the Ecumenical Institute, it was also -- when I was growing up, it's hard to believe, outside of Chicago we had migrant farm labor. And it was right there. Three blocks from my house ended houses and it was farmland. No longer, but then it was.

So we were always doing some kind of service, whether it was going to nursing homes, or taking care of migrant children and all of that, which was very important to me.

Q Well, it seems to me the Wellesley motto has something to do with that, too.

MRS. CLINTON: Very much so.

Q Served rather than be served, or something like that. Well, it seems to kind of fit into a pattern. Did you do baby-sitting for the migrant laborers?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Yes, we did.

Q Good Methodist social conscience.

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MRS. CLINTON: Well, it was also very -- it taught us a lot. It was something that was probably as important to us as any service that we performed for the families --

Q Which brings us back to this. Your bishop said this to me, not in connection with this story, but a while back -- Bishop Wilkie (?) -- he said, we've got to figure out what it is we stand for. This was a story on denominations and so forth. Jim Wahl (?) whom you know, I'm sure, will say, well, we're not the most intellectual of -- (inaudible) -- we've got hearts strangely warmed and the rest.

Wahl ✓

However, maybe a way to get at this -- and I don't mean to be too personal. Obviously, I want to be as personal as we can, but you and your husband made a decision Chelsea was going to be raised in the United Methodist tradition. I think I'd really be interested knowing how you decided the one over the other.

CAPUTO: Are we now going -- you're off your --

Q Yes, now we're going into the other things, yes.

CAPUTO: How do you want to do this, do you want to go on the record?

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MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think what you do is expose your children to the best of both of your traditions and give your child as much experience with your traditions. And my friends were both Christian and Jewish and mixed marriages; they celebrate Christmas, they celebrate Hanukkah, they often barmitzvah their sons. And then at a certain point the young person makes the decision. And it may be an early decision or a teenage decision or an adult decision, but I think exposing your child to the best of your traditions -- if you believe in them yourself. If all you do is go through the motions, that's going to be apparent to your children.

Q Can you tell me anything that -- what about the differences between -- and I'm not laying a political trap by any stretch of the imagination, but again, you must have seen some differences. What are some of the differences? What are some of the

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humorous differences? I can think of some between the Methodists and the -- somebody growing up in the northern Methodist tradition, southern Baptist tradition.

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Q No, no, I don't want to put you in that position. What I am trying to do is get -- people will identify -- there are so many mixed marriages out there, and my people just don't care. They don't care about these issues. You cared enough for your child -- this is what I'm trying to get at. You're coming at it from one end; I understand. I'm coming at it from another. And I think that also the people with mixed marriages would be interested to see how a First Couple handled these things. And these matters were not insignificant matters. And obviously, you're not in a situation of -- but it's a different feel. That's all. And I'm just wondering what those might be.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, but I don't want to talk about it.

Q Okay, all right.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't mind talking about myself and my tradition, but I --

Q Well, by all means, do. I was told that you had a Sunday School -- a Bible class that you sneak off to once in a while with some other women. Is that true, or does it happen just on rare occasions?

MRS. CLINTON: In Washington it happens on rare occasions. But I have continuing contact and conversations with women both here and in Arkansas who are part of an extended prayer group or an extended Bible study group for me. And I will talk with

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them or they will come here and stay with me and visit with me. So it's something that is important to me, but it is not, at this point, able to be a regular part of my life right now.

Q Do you mean to say that women come all the way from Arkansas to sit and talk about the Bible with you and religion?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. I mean, they don't come just for that reason. They're friends of mine and they're coming to Washington and they let me know and they come and stay with me. And I have a group of friends who are very faithful in their support through prayer for the President and me, and when they are in town, if it is mutually agreeable on our schedules, they'll stay with us here. And we have a number of friends who do that. We have -- not just women friends of mine, but a number of my husbands friends from around the country who are either very active lay members of their denomination or are preachers come here.

Q Do you really believe in intercessory prayer?

MRS. CLINTON: I do. I do. And not only do I believe in it, I think there is increasing evidence of it. There is an interesting study that was just completed in which patients of comparable medical condition were prayed for and prayers were, apparently, the only differences that could be discovered between how the patients were treated.

Q Yes, okay. All right, fine. Do you have -- I'm asking what is your favorite Bible passage, do you have one?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I have lots of them.

Q -- that sticks in your mind --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I have lots of Bible passages that are my favorite. I have gotten away from quoting individual verses unless they are really self-contained because I have found that, again, it's just this strange condition or circumstance I find myself in that if I quote a Bible scripture people are always looking for the hidden meaning in it. So I've come to take broader passages of the Bible and talk about them as my favorites, so that there cannot be any misunderstanding. So right now, anyway --

Q Give me an example of that.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, right now, at this point, I am spending a lot of time thinking about and am interested in the Sermon on the Mount, and particularly the Beatitudes, but really Matthew 5, 6, and 7 -- those three chapters I think are just filled with

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challenge and it's very hard to read and for me to fully understand -- or the whole Book of James, because I, being a Methodist, I'm big on deeds as well as words. And so, that to me is an important part of my biblical --

Q Is there any one story that you favor?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, right now I spend a lot of time thinking about the parable of the prodigal son. Someone gave to me Henri Nowan's (?) book about the prodigal son. And I have read a number of his works, but I, right now, find that very challenging and helpful. He has a line in there about the discipline of gratitude which has been a real -- (inaudible) -- and kind of guideline for me.

Q Who else do you read ?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I read all kinds of people. In the last couple of months -- oh, I've read Tony Campola, (?) who I like a lot; Gordon McDonald, who I think has some very wise ways of describing modern problems. I read -- let's see, the last couple of months -- I read C.S. Lewis, particularly Surprised By Joy, because I liked Shadowlands very much. Alan Dilangle (?) has some very helpful works. Let me see what else.

Q I'll trade you lists sometime.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, give me your list, too. I read so many different things, and it really depends upon what I'm thinking about and kind of where my own needs are.

Q What about magazines -- do you take any religious publications?

MRS. CLINTON: Not anymore. Occasionally, I see Christianity Today, but I don't really see many other -- I don't see any others on a regular basis. I pick up things at church and people send me sermons. My friends send me lots of sermons from both their own churches and my church in Little Rock.

Q You read sermons?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes.

Q You like the form?

MRS. CLINTON: Some of them are better than others, as you well know.

Q No, I never heard a good one -- (laughter.)

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to tape

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I heard a great one. I heard a great one. The other day I was in St. Petersburg, Florida, and the man who was the new head of the National Baptist Convention gave a five-minute sermon on the merchant who went out to buy pearls and found a pearl of overwhelming value and sold all of his goods to buy that one pearl. It was the most succinct, powerful short sermon I've heard in years. It was so good that even the Secret Service people, who never talk about anything, were talking about it. So, yes, I like sermons.

Q Do you read, try to keep up with or are aware of what's going on in feminist theology?

MRS. CLINTON: A little bit. I have some awareness of it; not a lot, but I do know --

Q Well, the Methodist Church, among others, is very strong on inclusive language.

MRS. CLINTON: Right.

Q Are you strong on inclusive language?

MRS. CLINTON: I'm sort of an agnostic when it comes to inclusive language. (Laughter.)

Q It is not unusual to go to a convent, let's say, or a Methodist or Presbyterian Sunday service and have God, He, and God, She used --

MRS. CLINTON: But, see, I've always thought that language was so inadequate to express the mystery and power of God. And to me that's almost irrelevant. I mean, use He, use She -- none of us are capable of really describing who God is or what God's powers are.

Q Well, let's up the metaphorical ante here. What about God as Father, God as Mother?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that God is both. I think God is everything. I think God is omnipotent and omniscient. I think that because of the fact that I am a child of my tradition and have developed as I have over time, I think of God more in a father sense. But that's not exclusive to me. I don't discount characteristics and virtues of the feminine by saying and thinking that. But that is the tradition I grew up in and it is accessible to me, so I'm more likely to rely on it.

Q Now, let me ask you about this. Have you heard of

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the -- (inaudible) -- conference in Minneapolis?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q Bear with me for just a moment, but it has been very big in Methodist circles. The Methodists supported it financially and with a big delegation, has been the largest and biggest kid on the block -- and it was here we had Liturgies to Sophia, which is the notion of wisdom, obviously. And we had songs about the honey in my loin -- I think there were things like this -- the perfume of my breast, it said. It was a very highly feminized liturgy for which there's been a lot of hell to pay by the folks that went there. You're not aware of this at all?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I don't know anything about it.

Q Okay, there's no point in asking you about it and dragging you into it since you don't know anything about it.

MRS. CLINTON: It sounds like a good thing not to know about. (Laughter.)

Q I think that's probably the wisest decision --

X -- screaming match on Nightline over this.

Q Oh, there was, as a matter of fact.

The White House has been open to religious lobbyists and editors, et cetera, an awful lot more. Who among these people do you listen to, admire, pay attention to? I'm told, for instance, that Joan Campbell at the National Council of Churches is a favorite of both yours and your husband. I'm trying to get some sense of this. And that Mr. Saperstein --

MRS. CLINTON: I wouldn't characterize it like that. I mean, Joan and David are people who have been very involved in many of the issues that are important to the President -- social justice issues and others like that. But there is such a broad range of people that the President speaks to much more regularly for spiritual and religious reasons, and I think that part of what he has struggled with is to try to figure out how to make live his belief that freedom from religion and freedom of religion are two very different points of view. So he has hosted many different religious leaders.

Q On health care, did you pay any attention to the United Methodist -- the Book of Resolutions, I'm the only guy in the press room who had the Methodist Book of Resolutions in his briefcase.

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MRS. CLINTON: I have a copy upstairs.

Q Okay, so they tell me you know the Methodist Creed backwards and forwards.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know about that. I know parts of it, but I don't know it all.

Q Were you guided in any way by that? They were strongly for universal health care, for example, have been in it for a long time.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. I have been -- I mean, both the Book of Discipline and the Resolutions I think are important. And if you look at the Methodist Church's willingness to struggle with difficult contemporary issues, I think that's a strength that they are willing to wade in and maybe even have some problems in their efforts to resolve such issues. But I don't see how you can ignore a call for universal health care coverage if you have a belief as a Christian that there is an obligation to provide necessities for other people.

Q You'll still be working in that -- there was also the issue of universal abortion coverage in this. And that could have been really politically significant, it seems to me, in terms of reaction. Is there any flexibility on that from your point of view?

one of my staffers
MRS. CLINTON: Oh, there was ~~tremendous~~ flexibility. We never got to the point where we ever had a chance to negotiate it. ~~Millan~~ (?) was the person in the White House who was working with the various groups from different points of view, and there was a lot of approaches that could have been followed. We just never got to that point. *editor* *were*

Q I think the religious right when they -- abortion is one of the issues that would separate them from you, or at least in their eyes. But what about this? There is no federal funding for abstinence-based programs in the schools --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, there is.

Q There is?

MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely is. There's abstinence funding; at least I've been told that. And it is something that is made available.

Q I want to check that out. How do you feel about

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the condom of distribution in the schools? Are you comfortable with that?

MRS. CLINTON: No, I'm not comfortable with that. I would much prefer that every child be given the appropriate guidance and discipline so that that was never an issue. But I also think that it is a problem that has to be addressed in certain parts of our country where, for whatever reasons, family and religion have failed to do their jobs. I mean, we wouldn't have a lot of these problems if families and religion were more effective with our children, and had been in the last decades.

Q Well, let me just ask one --

MRS. CLINTON: I think that -- one of the issues that I've talked with people about in the Methodist Church, and one of the reasons why I thought Bishop Wilkie's book was so important is that I think that the Methodist Church, for a period of time, became too socially concerned, became too involved in the social gospel, and did not pay enough attention to questions of personal salvation and individual faith. And there is a balance there. It is, for me, both a question of grace and personal commitment. And I think that there is now a real effort in the Methodist Church to try to regain that balance. But being Methodist, there is always going to be much more room for discussion and debate than perhaps is welcome in some other denominations.

Q I've just been looking over the statistics on women in religion, and you know that the average seminary age is about 40 now for women. It occurred to me as I was doing this sort of thing, someday you're not going to be living in this house. Will you ever be tempted to study for ordination? Not that you don't have enough to do.

MRS. CLINTON:

(b)(6)

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(b)(6) We attend other churches, and I am still visiting churches, but I like Foundry; I like its tradition, I like the fact that it's a downtown church, which is important to me since I live downtown. And I think he is a provocative preacher, and so I enjoy going there.

Q Last question.

X Did you want to ask about the Austin speech?

Q Oh, I did want to ask about this. Apparently, you've been less than satisfied with the reaction to your remarks with respect to Lerner's politics of meaning. Have you given that phrase back to Lerner?

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There is a good reason for not attending Foundry

off the record
missing 2 answers
mixed up.

MRS. CLINTON: I never knew it was his. (Laughter.)

Q Here's how I would frame that kind of thing, okay? wall
I agree with Jim Wahl (?) -- there's not a strong tradition in theology in tradition out of which you come. Its strengths are elsewhere. And we're also at a time where there's a lot of searching going on, there's a lot of vagueness going on, there's a lack of theological formation, even the simplest way kind of things -- you've got with the Jesuits, presumably, and so forth -- that you got even when you were 14 years old. So without asking you sign off on each article of the Creed -- I don't know how to put this to you -- but have you been unfairly identified as New Age?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes.

Q It seems to me you're an old-fashioned Methodist.

MRS. CLINTON: That's exactly right. I mean, I thought that was so strange. But I think it's part of the problem that Steven Carter talks about in The Culture of Disbelief. The secular press doesn't know how to talk about religion except in stereotypes. I think they've done a great disservice to many people who are in what is loosely called the religious right. I think the people who are searching for meaning and order in their lives are naturally going to be trying to have a theology that gives them answers to difficult questions posed by modern times. I have a great deal of sympathy for that, and I think it is unfair to the great number of people who identify themselves in such ways -- either evangelicals or fundamentalists -- to stereotype them. I think some of their leaders are, as pharisees have always been, willing to manipulate people for their own particular purposes.

Then I think, whether you talk about the mainline denominations or the struggles within the Roman Catholic Church or anything that is going on in religion today, it seems extremely difficult for most who cover and are not steeped in it as you are to know what they're talking about. And so they paint with a very broad brush that is often inaccurate.

Q Would you see yourself as an orthodox Christian in the sense that orthodox Christians in the Methodist tradition -- but certainly not alone in the Methodist tradition -- believe in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; believe in Jesus Christ? Billy Graham, where are you now that I need you -- and the need for redemption?

MRS. CLINTON: I believe in all of those things. I consider myself someone with a continuing challenge to become a Christian. One of the differences that I have with some of the

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denominations is the idea that one's Christianity is sealed at the moment that you accept Christ as your Savior and become in whatever ways are open to you a practicing Christian. I think that it is a never-ending challenge. And I believe that every day I fall short of what I should be achieving.

I gave a talk last year at the national prayer lunch about how difficult it is in my experience to be a Christian. And so, although I believe in what I view as the fundamental tenants of Christianity, I find that it is something I have to struggle with every day to live up to and to be open to. And I think one of the great difficulties we have now within the Christian community is the attempt to capture the definition of Christianity -- which has always occurred throughout history; we're just going through another period of it -- that oversimplifies Christ's message, which conveniently throws out great pieces of it that don't fit a political agenda. And I believe it's important for all of us who want to be worthy of being called Christians to constantly strive to do better and to be open to new definitions as to what it means to be a Christian today. I don't think --

~~END~~

~~Q Are you old-fashioned enough to believe in sin?~~

~~MRS. CLINTON: Absolutely. I do believe in sin.~~

~~CAPUTO: Now we have to go.~~

~~Q Right when we got to sin. All right. Well, I'm sorry, we could go on.~~

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Newsweek

To: National & Religion Editors/Producers

Contact: Carol Sullivan
at 212-445-4859

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Sunday, Oct. 23, 1994

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
SPEAKS FRANKLY ABOUT HER SPIRITUAL LIFE**

First Lady Says Religious Right Has Been Unfairly Stereotyped

New York -- First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, a devout Methodist, tells Newsweek that she has "a great deal of sympathy" for Christian fundamentalists who, like her, have been unfairly stereotyped by the media.

"The secular press doesn't know how to talk about religion except in stereotypes. I think they have done a great disservice to many people who are in what is loosely called the religious right," Clinton tells Newsweek's Religion Editor Kenneth L. Woodward in an exclusive interview appearing in the Oct. 31 issue (on newsstands Monday, Oct. 24). "I think the people who are searching for meaning and order in their lives are naturally going to be trying to have a theology that gives them answers to difficult questions posed by modern times."

Clinton met with Woodward for one-hour in the Map Room of the White House last week. Calling herself "an old-fashioned Methodist," she spoke frankly about her religious beliefs and habits. In Arkansas she regularly attended a Bible-study group. She says she doesn't have as much time for that in Washington, but she "has continuing contact and conversations with women both here and in Arkansas who are part of an extended Bible study group for me." A strong believer in the power of intercessory prayer, she adds that she has "a group of friends who are faithful in their intercessory prayer for the president and me."

Despite what some critics believe, Clinton is not markedly feminist in her religion. She does not follow feminist theology and seems unaware of the upheaval its most radical exponents have created among Methodists in the name of greater inclusiveness. The United Methodist Church is very strong on inclusive language for God as both He and She, but the First Lady feels "none of us are capable of really describing who God is...I think God is omnipotent and omniscient. I think that because of the fact that I am a child of my tradition and have developed as I have over time, I think of God in more of a Father sense." She adds, "I don't discount characteristics and virtues of the feminine by saying and thinking that. But that's the tradition I grew up in and it is accessible to me."

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Hillary Clinton Interview
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Page 2

Clinton thinks abortion is "wrong" but, like her husband, she doesn't think "it should be criminalized." The First Lady also says she "is not comfortable" with school's distributing condoms. "I would much prefer that every child be given appropriate guidance and discipline so that is never an issue," she says. "But I also think that it is a problem that has to be addressed in certain parts of the country where, for whatever reasons, family and religion have failed to do their jobs."

Clinton was hesitant to name her favorite bible passages, convinced that she'd be misunderstood: "If I quote a Bible Scripture, people are always looking for the hidden meaning in it." But she says that Matthew 5, 6 and 7 are probably her favorite passages. "Those three chapters are just filled with challenge and its very hard for me to read and fully understand. Or the whole book of James--because I, being a Methodist, am big on deeds as well as words."

The First Lady keeps a copy of "The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church" in her private quarters, along with the Bible. The two volumes reflect her search for religious balance. "I think that the Methodist Church, for a period of time, became too socially concerned," she says, "too involved in the social gospel, and did not pay enough attention to questions of personal salvation and individual faith. It is, for me, both a question of grace and personal commitment."

("Soulful Matters," p. 23;
"Interview: 'I Believe in Prayer'," p. 25)

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Soulful Matters

Hillary Clinton: In the middle of a crucial and bitterly fought political season, the First Lady speaks exclusively with NEWSWEEK'S Religion Editor about her spiritual life

By KENNETH L. WOODWARD

HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON HAS been called many things since she became the nation's First Lady. To her fiercest critics she is a radical feminist; to her most ardent admirers she is a disciplined political operative, an eloquent advocate who needs no notes when speaking. In softer profile, Mrs. Clinton comes across as a well-organized working mother and her husband's closest confidant. But long before she was a Democrat, a lawyer, or a Clinton, Hillary Rodham was a Methodist. And that, say those who know her now as well as those who knew her when, is the way the First Lady is best understood. She thinks like a Methodist, talks like a Methodist and wants to reform society just like a well-Sunday-schooled Methodist churchwoman should. "I am," she told NEWSWEEK in an exclusive interview at the White House last week, "an old-fashioned Methodist."

In any other place, from almost any other woman, such an admission would be insignificant. Americans want their First Family to be religious, but not strongly so. As Ronald Reagan understood—and Jimmy Carter painfully learned—vague belief firmly held is the most appropriate White House religion. Politicians may not care and the media may scoff, but the Clintons are perhaps the most openly religious First Couple this century has seen. The president is a hymn-humming, sermon-loving, liberal Southern Baptist who studied under the Jesuits at Georgetown and feels at home in any kind of pew. But Mrs. Clinton is cut from old, less expressive Methodist stock, and these days she feels like a battered woman. Her public role has diminished, and she's being blamed for the failure of health-care reform in a bitter political season. Meanwhile, evangelists of the religious right scorn her as a Mary Magdalene, while pundits in the sec-

ular press ridicule her spirituality as flaky New Age blather. All this has taught her a "great deal of sympathy" for Christian fundamentalists. Like them, she believes she has to prove that she isn't a figment of other people's prejudices.

Indeed, at one point in the conversation, the First Lady even submitted to a brief examination of her faith:

"Do you believe in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?"

"Yes."

"The atoning death of Jesus?"

"Yes."

"The resurrection of Christ?"

"Yes."

The interview was conducted in the Map Room around a makeshift folding table that looked like it had just been cleared of dishes. The First Lady, dressed in black, glanced down often at her hands. For three months NEWSWEEK had

*For her,
the social
gospel
is more
than pious
words*

sought an interview about her religious faith and her aides were fearful that no matter what she said, Mrs. Clinton would be accused of trying to manipulate her public image. She even hesitated to name her favorite Bible passages, convinced she'd be misunderstood: "If I quote a Bible Scripture, people are always looking for the hidden meaning in it" (page 25). Or, worse, that her words might be turned against her in the latest Rush to Judgment.

Can this Hillary Clinton be real? Though conservatives may doubt her religious convictions, and liberals wish them away, Hillary Rodham Clinton is as pious as she is political. Methodism, for her, is not just a church but an extended family of faith that defines her horizons. Through her father's fam-

ily, she can trace her roots back via her grandparents' stories to early-19th-century England and Wales—close to the beginnings of the original Methodist movement. Her mother taught Sunday school. Though her father was seldom seen at First United Methodist Church in Park Ridge, Ill., where young Hillary grew up, she vividly recalls that "he said his prayers kneeling by his bed every night of his life, until he had [his] stroke."

The First Lady is a Methodist by choice as well as by chance. Of the three Rodham children, only Hillary continued to attend Sunday services as an adolescent. "She's really a self-churched woman," says the Rev. Donald Jones, her former youth minister, who developed his privileged suburban students' social consciences by taking them to visit migrant workers' children. More than other Protestants, Methodists are still imbued with the turn-of-the-century social gospel, which holds that Christians have been commissioned to build the Kingdom of God on earth.

As a bright, well-educated woman growing up in the turbulent '60s, Hillary Rodham defied that generation's rebellious stereotype. At Wellesley, she continued to attend church, joined the interdenominational chapel society and took a year of required Bible study—an experience, she says, "I'm very grateful for." She also read

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On the same page: Singing hymns in Little Rock in 1978

'Hillary
views the
world
through a
Methodist
lens.' And, he
jokes, 'We
know what's
good for you.'

Rev. Donald Jones,
former youth
minister

With the
 Clintons in
the pews, he
tries to be
'prophetic'
without
striking at
the
president.

Reverend Wogaman,
Foundry United
Methodist Church

Motive, a now defunct magazine for college-age Methodists. "I still have every issue they sent me," Mrs. Clinton says. But the issue she remembers best contained an article by a Methodist theologian, Carl Oglesby, called "Change or Containment." "It was the first thing I had ever read that challenged the Vietnam War," Mrs. Clinton recalls. Partly because of that war, she switched from being a Goldwater Republican to a McGovern Democrat. But she remained a devout Methodist. Although the United Methodist Church had by then dropped most of its traditional taboos against alcohol and dancing, Hillary was conservative in her social habits. In a letter to Jones from college, she wrote that she

was having "as much fun as any good Methodist can." Even today, says Jones, "when Hillary talks it sounds like it comes out of a Methodist Sunday-school lesson."

That should be no surprise. In Arkansas, Mrs. Clinton taught Methodist Sunday school. She also attended church regularly and, in the Methodist tradition of favoring lay preachers, she spoke often at church gatherings on "Why I am a United Methodist." Even her campaign to reform Arkansas's public schools, says the Rev. Clint Burleson, her former pastor in Little Rock, was "grounded in Methodist social concerns. That's who Hillary is. She's not a woman who would be in harmony with [Methodism's conservative] evangelical movement."

Perhaps, but after two years in the White House, Mrs. Clinton is showing another side of her Methodist self. The religious books she reads are mostly by popular evangelical and spiritual-guidance authors, like Tony Campolo, Father Henri Nouwen and the Rev. Gordon MacDonald, and the only religious magazine she sees these busy days is Christianity Today, an evangelical weekly. She says she also keeps a copy of "The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church" in her private quarters, along with the Bible. The two volumes reflect her search for religious balance. "I think that the Methodist Church, for a period of time, became too socially concerned," she says, "too involved in the social gospel, and did not pay enough attention to questions of personal salvation and individual faith. It is, for me, both a question of grace and of personal commitment."

IN THE WHITE HOUSE FAMILY QUARTERS, the ethos is more Methodist than Baptist. A telltale example: liquor is served—something a staunch Southern Baptist would hesitate to do. But you have to ask for it, which is the moderate Methodist way. On Sundays, it's a Methodist, not a Baptist, church the First Family most often attends. And like her mother, 14-year-old Chelsea Clinton is being raised a Methodist.

The Methodist ethos extends to politics as well. The First Lady's speech in April 1993 calling for "remodeling society by redefining what it means to be a human in the 20th century" may have startled some listeners, but its ambitious optimism was fully consonant with the Methodists' liberal social creed. Indeed, Mrs. Clinton's many speeches defending the universal health-care coverage resonated with the moral rhetoric of resolutions adopted by the church's governing General Conference. Her favorite adjective is a Methodist byword: inclusive. "Hillary views the world through a Methodist lens," says the Reverend Jones, who is still a welcome guest at the White House. "And we Methodists," he adds wryly, "know what's good for you."

If the Kennedy era was Camelot and the Reagan White House a ranchero on the Potomac, the Clinton presidency—in the figure of its formidable First Lady—is Washington's Methodist Moment. And Methodists have waited a long time for that moment to arrive. With more members (8.8 million) than the Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and American Baptists combined, the United Methodists dominate mainline American Protestantism and its chief ecumenical agency, the National Council of Churches. But the last time the Methodists or the mainline had a political friend in the White House was during the Great Society phase of the John-

JOHN FICARA—NEWSWEEK

son administration. Jimmy Carter confided mostly in fellow Southern Baptists. The Reagan-Bush administrations assiduously courted the emergent religious right—and ignored what they regarded as the religious left, as represented by the mainline churches' liberal Washington lobby. Significantly, that lobby is housed on Capitol Hill in the Methodist Building.

Despite what some critics believe, the nation's First Lady is not markedly feminist in her religion. She thinks abortion is "wrong," but, like her husband, she says, "I

don't think it should be criminalized." She does not follow feminist theology and seems unaware of the upheaval its most radical exponents have created among Methodists in the name of greater inclusiveness.

As long as they are in the White House, the First Family has elected to worship at Foundry United Methodist Church, less than a mile away. There they find spiritual support from pastor J. Philip Wogaman, a liberal social-ethics professor who tries, he says, to be "prophetic" in his sermons "without embarrassing the president."

Generally the First Family slips into the same pew, three rows down from the front off the right center aisle. It's a mixed congregation in a mixed urban neighborhood. As Wogaman proudly points out, young singles and married couples usually sit up front on the far left, gays prefer the far right, African-Americans congregate in the center and older white congregants—including Senate Republican leader Robert Dole and his wife, Elizabeth—favor the sections near the door. Very inclusive. Very Methodist. Very Hillary Rodham Clinton. ■

Interview: 'I Believe in Prayer'

IN AN HOURLONG INTERVIEW at the White House with NEWSWEEK's Kenneth L. Woodward, Hillary Rodham Clinton spoke frankly about her religious beliefs and habits. She was wary, yet eager to clarify her spiritual and moral convictions. Excerpts:

You used to attend a Bible-study group in Arkansas. Do you in Washington?

On rare occasions. But I have continuing contact and conversations with women both here and in Arkansas who are part of an extended prayer or Bible-study group for me. I talk with them, or they come here and visit with me. I have a group of friends who are very faithful in their intercessory prayer for the president and me.

You really believe in intercessory prayer?

I do. I do. And not only do I believe in it, I think there is increasing evidence of it. There is an interesting hospital study in which patients of comparable medical condition were prayed for and prayers were, apparently, the only difference that could be discovered between how the patients were treated.

Do you have a favorite Bible passage?

At this point I am spending a lot of time thinking about the Sermon on the Mount, and particularly the Beatitudes, but really Matthew 5, 6 and 7. Those three chapters I think are just filled with challenge

and it's very hard to read and for me to fully understand. Or the whole Book of James—because I, being a Methodist, am big on deeds as well as words.

The United Methodist Church is very strong on inclusive lan-

God more in a Father sense. But that's not exclusive to me. I don't discount characteristics and virtues of the feminine by saying and thinking that. But that is the tradition I grew up in and it is accessible to me, so I'm more likely to rely on it.

The family that prays together... Church bound

guage for God as both He and She. Are you?

I'm sort of agnostic when it comes to inclusive language. I've always thought that language was so inadequate to express the mystery and power of God. I mean, use He, use She—none of us are capable of really describing who God is.

What about God as Mother as well as Father?

I think God is both... I think God is omnipotent and omniscient. I think that because of the fact that I am a child of my tradition and have developed as I have over time, I think of

Have you been unfairly identified as New Age? Oh, yes.

You seem to be an old-fashioned Methodist.

That's exactly right... The secular press doesn't know how to talk about religion except in stereotypes. I think they've done a great disservice to many people who are in what is loosely called the religious right. I think the people who are searching for meaning and order in their lives are naturally going to be trying to have a theology that gives them answers to difficult

questions posed by modern times. I have a great deal of sympathy for that, and I think it is unfair to the great number of people who identify themselves in such ways—either evangelicals or fundamentalists—to stereotype them. I think some of their leaders are, as pharisees have always been, willing to manipulate people for their own particular purposes.

One of the differences I have with some of the denominations is the idea that one's Christianity is sealed at the moment that you accept Christ as your Savior and become in whatever ways are open to you a practicing Christian. I think that is a never-ending challenge. And I believe that every day I fall short of what I should be achieving.

At a National Prayer Breakfast, Mother Teresa strongly criticized countries that accept abortion. Did you take her criticism personally?

Well, I talked with her after the speech. And we are going to help her establish a center here.

Are you comfortable with schools' distributing condoms? No, I'm not comfortable with that. I would much prefer that every child be given appropriate guidance and discipline so that that was never an issue. But I also think that it is a problem that has to be addressed in certain parts of the country where, for whatever reasons, family and religion have failed to do their jobs.