

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

Clinton Library

| DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE | SUBJECT/TITLE | DATE | RESTRICTION |
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| 001. paper | Interview of the First Lady by Ken Woodward for Newsweek Magazine; RE: personal info [partial] (5 pages) | 10/20/1994 | P6/b(6) |
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COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
First Lady's Press Office (Lissa Muscatine)
OA/Box Number: 20112

FOLDER TITLE:

FLOTUS Press Office Interview Transcripts Volume V 10/19/94--04/10/97 [Binder] :
[10/20/94 Woodward, Ken Newsweek Magazine]

2011-0415-S
ms104

RESTRICTION CODES

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

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

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]

b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]

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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.

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

10/20/94
Woodward, Ken
Newsweek Magazine

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 funeral and the church was a huge part of my father's life.

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: Park Ridge, 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

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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 Wall 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.

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 humorous differences? I can think of some between the Methodists and

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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 them or they will come here and stay with me and visit with me. So

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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 challenge and it's very hard to read and for me to fully understand

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

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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 --

CAPUTO: -- 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?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, there was flexibility. We never got to that point. One of my staffers was the person in the White House who was working with the various groups from different points of view, and there were a lot of approaches that could have been followed. We just never got to that point.

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

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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.

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Q -- Gap in tape --

MRS. CLINTON: 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.

CAPUTO: Did you want to ask about the Austin speech?

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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?

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

Q Here's how I would frame that kind of thing, okay? I agree with Jim Wall -- 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?

MORE

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 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 OF TAPE)

END