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Methodist
Church

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Address to General Conference

April 24, 1996

(applause)

JOHN THOMAS (South Indiana): You may be seated. Well friends. A high moment has now arrived. In the commission considering who would have the privilege of making the introduction, several persons were suggested and several person requested that privilege. *(laughter)* I think it's been the wise decision of the commission to pick her bishop to make that introduction. So from the State of Arkansas, the Arkansas area, Bishop Richard Wilke for the purpose of making the introduction. *(applause)*

BISHOP RICHARD B. WILKE: The joy of this introduction is to present a warm and gracious friend. And I must say, Mrs. Clinton, you have warm and gracious friends here to receive you. *(applause)*

The honor is to present to you the first lady of the United States of America, and in many respects, the first lady of the world. *(applause)* Twelve years ago, when Julie and I moved to Little Rock, Ark., Julie had joined the First United Methodist Church of Little Rock, and I entered my offices in that very same building. We quickly discovered that Hillary Clinton was a vibrant and vital part of the life of that congregation, serving as a Sunday school teacher, a worker with youth, a faithful worshiper in the church. We were privileged to worship with Mrs. Clinton and Chelsea. In fact we were present the morning that Chelsea was confirmed in the church there and both Governor Clinton and Mrs. Clinton were present. One of the fun evenings was an evening that Mrs. Clinton invited an adult Sunday school class for a picnic on the back lawn of the governor's mansion. Now, that's the way to have a Sunday school picnic!

So it was no surprise to me to see in the newspaper a few Sundays after the inauguration the Clintons faithfully trudging through the snow, making their way to the Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. We had no attorney, no chancellor of the United Methodist Church, in Arkansas, but we hadn't needed one up until that time. So one day I invited top professional United Methodists, top business leaders of our church, to lunch. I told them we needed a highly dedicated lay person who loved the Lord, knew and loved the United Methodist Church, and we needed an attorney with such sterling stature that any attorney or legal representative in the state of Arkansas would have instant respect. They ate the free lunch. Then they said with one voice, you are looking for Hillary Rodham Clinton, the finest attorney that you can find. And I was thrilled to have her serve as my church attorney, the chancellor, until the president was elected.

Her great concerns are life-long. Her concern for children reaches back to immunization of children in Arkansas, to presidency of the Children's Defense Fund. Each year she and the governor honored volunteers of Camp Alders Gate, our United Methodist work with children having illnesses or handicapping conditions. I was not surprised when she spoke so forcefully in China, pleading for children, women, human rights. Mrs. Clinton also is in the practice of bringing people together,

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people of all races and of all social structures. Those of us who know her have seen her move easily and work carefully with people of all backgrounds. Her recent book, *It Takes a Village*, continues her plea for the children of the world. Mrs. Clinton, I wore a Save the Children's tie in your honor today. She is in the forefront for education for children, always. She is in the forefront of health and safety for children, always. She is in the forefront for the spiritual formation and nurture of children, always. So, it is my great honor and privilege to introduce a brilliant attorney, an advocate of concerns dear to The United Methodist Church, a loving mother and spouse, a gracious and warm person who walks as easily among the great of the world as she does in a children's ward in the hospital or in a kindergarten room in the school; to present to you my friend, Hillary Rodham Clinton. (applause)

MRS. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you so much, Bishop Wilke, for that kind introduction. We're going to miss the bishop and Mrs. Wilke in Arkansas, but I am particularly pleased to have just learned as I was walking in that they will both be working on the *Disciple Bible Study* in their continuing efforts.

I have to confess to you that I have not been this nervous, with 150 bishops, someone told me, behind me, since I read my confirmation essay on what Jesus means to me in my home church. (laughter and applause) And I got through that all right. I hope I am able to convey to you my great sense of honor and pleasure at being here.

This quadrennial General Conference is important to all of us who are Methodists. And Methodism has been important to me for as long as I can remember. My father came from a long line of Methodists who had immigrated from England and Wales. And they took their church very seriously. And when my brothers and I were born, despite the fact we were then living in Chicago, my parents took us back to the Court Street Methodist Church in Scranton, Pa., to be christened in front of my grandfather and other relatives. We recently took back my nephew to go through the same experience at that church.

My parents belonged to a very large and active congregation in Park Ridge, Ill., the First United Methodist Church. It was the center not only for Sunday morning worship, but Sunday evening youth groups and often during the week for other activities. My mother taught Sunday school and my brothers and I were there as often as the church doors opened, sometimes, although my mother later confessed that one of the reasons she taught Sunday school was to keep an eye on my brothers, so that they actually showed up and stayed after they were dropped off.

The Church was a critical part of my growing up, and in preparing for this event, I almost couldn't even list all the ways it influenced me, and helped me develop as a person, not only on my own faith journey, but with a sense of obligations to others.

It taught me practical lessons as well: for example, how to recover from the embarrassment of passing out in an over-heated sanctuary when I was playing an angel during the Christmas pageant. That particular lesson has stood me in good stead on many occasions in my adult life.

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But most importantly, I learned from the ministers there, and the lay leaders there, the men and women such as yourselves who ran the church life, about the connection between my personal faith and the obligations I faced as a Christian, both to other individuals and to society.

I am particularly indebted to the many people who taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School. I can remember the lessons there, sometimes more vividly than what I have read or seen just last week. How many times did I sing the song, "Jesus Loves the Little Children of the World, red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." Those words have stayed with me more personally and longer than many earnest lectures on race relations. And to this day, I find myself wondering how anyone who ever sang them could be prejudiced against any group. (*applause*)

When I graduated into Methodist Youth Fellowship, I was fortunate to have a youth minister who arranged for us living in our very comfortable, middle-class, all-white suburb of Chicago, opportunities to go into the inner city, to have exchanges with church groups of black and Hispanic youngsters, to baby-sit for the children of migrant workers who, for those of you who did not grow up around Chicago in the 1950's and can only imagine flying into O'Hare where everything looks developed, might find it hard to believe how many farm workers we would have, and our church took some responsibility for helping. We visited the residents of nursing homes; we would go to public events that would feature speeches by people we'd barely heard of like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We discussed what our faith meant in the world, and I am so grateful for those lessons and those opportunities.

I am equally grateful that my daughter has had the same, both at her church in Little Rock, and now at her church in Washington. Her Sunday School teachers there have helped her and her peers explore and express ideas and fears. One time just this past year, Bill and I went to a meeting of the teenage Sunday School group where the teenagers talked about what bugged them about their relationships with their parents. And it helped to have another child say what your own child didn't want to say to you directly. It was one of the many experiences that we have had because of the loving and faithful adults who care for young people in the Methodist Church. And I hope (*applause*) that one of the lessons we all take from our own experience, and one of the messages that come forth from this conference, is that despite all the headlines and the problems that we face in helping our children and young people, we have so many young people. (*applause*) And just a few days ago, I received a letter from a young man who is a delegate here from Arkansas. You are going to think that between the Bishop and me we are promoting Arkansas! He wrote to me about all the good things that were happening in his church and conference, and he said to me, "Our Church and our world must know that youth are not just involved in gangs, drugs and violence; they are also involved in youth programs, missions, and the life of our Church." And I hope that each of us, and certainly from my background with the debt I owe to so many who helped me, understand that in today's world, churches are among the few places in society where young people can let down their guard, let off steam, and be part of a fellowship that offers them the opportunity for religious and spiritual expression and acts of humanity. And if we look at the positive side of what we can offer to young people, then we know that at the center of that experience is our faith and our mission as Methodists and as Christians.

That faith has certainly meant a great deal to me over the years, but I know that today, here at this conference and throughout the world, we are faced with many new challenges and opportunities

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that test and try us; that ask us how we will put into action what we believe. We know we need to strengthen the spiritual and moral context of our lives, and we know that we need a new sense of caring about one another in which every segment of society, every institution, fulfills its responsibility to the larger community, and particularly to families and children.

Here, in the United States, and certainly in the other countries represented here, we see too many children and people who remain on the margins of society. We see children who are unloved, unfed, unhealthy, and unschooled. We see women and people of color who are marginalized because they are denied the opportunities they deserve to become full participants in society. Those are the continuing challenges, and yet, we now know much more about what we can do together to meet those challenges. Despite the problems of poverty and illiteracy and violence, there are solutions being born, being born in churches and communities throughout the world.

The bishop mentioned a book that I have written, *It Takes A Village*, which really does, for me, express my fundamental belief that we all have an obligation to reach out to assist each other, and that we all should be willing to work toward solutions to our problems. It is easy to complain about the problems we face. It is harder but far more rewarding to roll up our sleeves and work together to solve them. (applause) I was heartened, therefore, when I read a text of this year's episcopal address, to see that the Council of Bishops has renewed its call to make the welfare of children a top priority. And I commend the Council for adopting the Episcopal Initiative on Children and Poverty which will amplify the discussion of this very important issue worldwide. Children need us. They are not rugged individualists. They depend, first and foremost, on their parents who bear the primary responsibility for their upbringing. And, yet, as a mother, I know that my daughter's life has been influenced and affected by countless other people, some of whom I know; many, many others I will never meet. Think of it: the police who patrol our streets to keep our children safe; the government officials who monitor the quality of air and water and food; the business leaders who employ parents and make decisions about what kind of income and benefits they will receive; the executives who produce the programs that our children see on television. As adults we have to start thinking and believing that there isn't really any such thing as someone else's child. (applause) My child, your child, all children everywhere, must live and make their ways in society, and now, in the increasingly shrinking world we live in, in the larger globe as well.

For that reason, we cannot permit discussions of children and families to be subverted by political or ideological debate. There are strong feelings about what should or should not be done, but there also, I believe, strong areas of agreement where people should get beyond their disagreements to work together. There should be no disagreement about the fact that the family structure is in trouble not only here, but in many parts of the world. There should be no debate that children need the nurturing and care that a stable family can provide. And there should be no debate about a common sense truth—that children are the result of both—the values of their parents and the values of the societies in which they live.

And so, if we look honestly at the problems we have as the Episcopal Initiative is doing, then we should be asking ourselves, "What areas of common agreement do we have that can lead us as individuals, as a church, as community and society to work together on behalf of our children?" We know the biblical admonitions about caring for each other. We know so well what Jesus said to his disciples in Mark, holding a small child in his arms that whoever welcomes one such child in my

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name, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me, but the one who sends me. If we could only keep that in mind, and see in every child's face that faithful, hopeful,ness. Take the image we have of Jesus—I can remember so clearly walking up the stairs so many times to my Sunday School class, and seeing that picture that is in so many Methodist Churches of Jesus as the Shepherd. Taking that face and transposing it onto the face of every child we see. Then we would ask ourselves, "Would I turn that child away from the health care that child needs? Would I say that there is no help for that child because look who he is or look who her parents are?" No, we would take a deep breath in the face of disappointment in our efforts to help and we would continue to try.

For me, the Social Principles of the Methodist Church have been as much a description of our history, as a prod for my future actions. We can find direction, if we look to the church's call to strengthen families and renew our schools and encourage policies that enable each child to have a chance to fulfill his or her God-given potential. Now, it is not easy to do that. I don't think it ever has been. I believe if one looks back, not only into the Bible, but certainly since then, and reads the stories of John and Charles Wesley and looks to other church leaders in the last century, we know that acting on our faith is never easy. And it is often a test of our own resolve as much as anything else. I think of the stories that I heard even as a child of John Wesley preaching to people who did not want to hear him. There was that one memorable story of where they were throwing whiskey bottles at him. And I think to myself, how many of us, myself included, would even go into places now where we were likely to be the object of thrown whiskey bottles? Not many of us. And in part what we have to confront is our own willingness to take the blessings we have and take them into a world that is complex, often turns away, and may even be hostile.

But just look at the tradition we come from. We continue in this church to answer John Wesley's call to provide for the educational health and spiritual needs of children. We can be proud that our church has been a leader in the fight to improve the quality of education, promote parental responsibility, curb smoking among young people, expand comprehensive health care, strengthen marriages, and help people of all kinds of backgrounds. I'm heartened by the work I see being done in the communities of Shalom Initiative, where individual churches and churches in union are looking to transform just four city blocks in some instance. But taking that responsibility on, being there one-on-one with people unlike ourselves, often. Letting people hear the message of the gospel as well as the example of our works. We'll do more to change lives than any program that could be passed by any legislative body. *(applause)*

As I look at this great gathering, I see reflected here John Wesley's words that the world is my parish, and if that be the case, then I am optimistic. Despite the headlines of the moment, and all of the difficulties we know lurk outside in this city we are in today, and every other one. I am optimistic because I see spiritual growth and action based on that. Beginning to manifest itself in so many different ways. In my book, I wrote a little chapter called "Children Are Born Believers" because I feel so strongly that we owe our children a chance for them to have a spiritual life. For them to be part of a church, and it is not only something we do for them. We do it for ourselves, and we know that in ways we might not even predict consequences can be positive.

A recent survey of young people and drug use found that children and youth who had regular religious involvement and attendance in a church or synagogue were far less likely to engage in

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self-destructive behavior like drug use. So we do it because we believe and we do it because we trust that it will lead our young people to a better life for themselves.

Just this past month, I attended the funeral of a young man who epitomized the Methodist spirit of compassion and charity. He was the grandson, the son and the nephew of Methodist ministers. His name was Adam Darling. He attended Foundry Church in Washington as my husband and daughter and I do. And he had accompanied Commerce Secretary Ron Brown on his trip to Bosnia, and was among the men and women who died on the side of that mountain in Croatia. He was only 29 years old. But in the four years the president and I had known him, we had seen a young man that not only blossomed professionally, but was committed to rebuilding cities, rebuilding communities, living in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Washington, getting to know his neighbors, babysitting for their children when he had time, hitting a ball with them in the street. Because he understood from the way he was raised, that fame and success were fleeting, but a commitment to the spirit, involvement in the work of his church would give him satisfaction and build a legacy that others, themselves, could take advantage of. I raise his name because when one contrasts what his short, young life meant, and what he was attempting to rebuild, it gives me a great deal of energy and optimism about what all young people can do if they are given the chance.

I know that we have disagreements in society. We even have disagreements in the church. I think one of the reasons that I'm a Methodist is because I think disagreements are part of life. I think *(applause)* it's part of how we grow together. And I think all of us know that despite our disagreements as the *Book of Discipline* puts it, we are engaged in a task to articulate our vision in a way that will draw us together as a people in mission. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are called to work within our diversity, while exercising patience and forbearance with one another. Such patience stems neither from indifference toward truth, nor from an indulgent tolerance of error. But from an awareness that we know only in part and that none of us is able to search the mysteries of God, except by the spirit of God. That call to humility and forbearance and patience is not only important for the work of the church within the church, but it's critical to our work outside. It calls us to try time and again to reach into the lives of those who are left out. And it also prods us to look for ways we can work together to help our children.

If we were able, even within our own church, in every congregation represented here, to help every mother and father be the best parent that parent could be, we would have done a wonderful piece of work. *(applause)* If we are able to persuade every parent that it's important to talk to a baby, to be affirmative toward a child, to wrap that child in the love, attention and discipline every child needs. Then by the time those children reached our schools, we would be able to persuade our teachers to look at every child and see hope, and see possibility. And we could renew and reform our schools so that they involved even welcomed parents through open their doors to the community, and were determined to leave no child behind.

We would also ask those in the business community to think about the decisions they make in terms, not only of their primary responsibility to their bottom line, but also to the communities that they serve and work in. To ask how they, too, could be *(applause)* part of strengthening families.

(applause)

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Even simple things like things, like giving time off to parents to go to parent-teacher conferences in schools would send a wonderful signal about what is important. *(applause)*

And if we were able to persuade everyone who has any control of what appears on our televisions and what we hear on our radios, to think about their own children, would they want their own children to see and hear what comes into our homes on a daily basis? Or would they rather not? *(applause)* And therefore change what they produce. *(applause)*

And we would ask all of us who are members of churches and synagogues and mosques, we would ask all of us, to set an example of love and respect. We would ask all of us, whatever form it appears in our holy writings, to follow what we call "the Golden Rule." We would ask all of us to act on the outside of church the way we try to act inside, and to throw open the doors *(applause)*, to throw open the doors of our churches, and welcome in those who John Wesley sought out. And open those doors after school, on weekends, especially in some of our tougher neighborhoods, so that children have places that are safe to go.

There is so much we can do in meeting these challenges, and so many opportunities for us, as Methodists, to grasp and be part of fulfilling.

I am grateful for my Methodist upbringing. I am grateful for this church. I watch with great interest and appreciation those of you who struggle to make the decisions that will govern us for the next four years. And I appreciate that you are grasping with the hard issues; being willing to debate and discuss what needs to be done. And I would hope that many of us, not only members of this church, but all people of faith, would say we have so much in common that we can do, and summon our energy on behalf, first and foremost, of our children. If we were to do that, I know we would see changes before our very eyes. And that the church you serve and that has served us, would continue to grow because it was serving the world, living out the gospel, and being a servant for those who need to hear that message.

With that in mind, I thank you for keeping alive the Methodist traditions and teachings; for helping to awaken and strengthen the spirit and faith of men, women, and children; and for helping all of us to have courage in the face of change, to be willing to struggle forward doing what we can individually, and to make common cause with others who believe that we are called, both for personal salvation, but also for the work we must do in this world. Thank you very, very much.

(applause)

BISHOP IVES: Mrs. Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, on behalf of all of us today, we thank you for walking among us, but more importantly, we thank you for your witness in the world into which you go. Go in peace, and may God bless you.

(applause)

JOHN THOMAS: You may be seated. And now, on behalf of the commission, we have asked a commission member, Mollie Stewart of the North Alabama Conference, to make a presentation on our behalf to our distinguished visitor and speaker. Mollie Stewart.

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MOLLIE STEWART (North Alabama): Mrs. Clinton, you have graced us with your presence, inspired us with your reflections on the United Methodist Church, and lifted our spirits with your vitality. This has been a historical moment in the life of our denomination. For those of us in the room, it has been an afternoon we will not soon forget. *(applause)* We trust that for you, too, it has been a memorable day. In thanks and appreciation, we, the Commission on the General Conference, want to present you with these two items. First, a copy of the limited edition hymnal of this General Conference. *(applause)* We also want to present to you this wooden trinket box which bears the logo of the General Conference. *(applause)*

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you, Mollie. That's so very nice of you.

AMERICAN METHODISM & THE WHITE HOUSE

by Dr. William K. Quick

Senior Pastor - Metropolitan United Methodist Church, Detroit, Michigan

Our denomination has been described as America's "... most characteristic church." It is short on Theology, long on good works, brilliantly organized, primarily middle-class, frequently bigoted, incurably optimistic, zealously missionary and touchingly confident of the essential goodness of the person next door. It exhibits all the chief American faults and virtues and has done so for 170 years." [Life Magazine, 1947.]

Since 1789 when George Washington was inaugurated as our first President forty-one men have held our nation's highest elected office. Each one of them has had either membership in or attended church.

The denominational breakdown includes: eleven Episcopalians, six Presbyterians, five Methodists, four Unitarians, four Baptists, three Disciple of Christ (Christian), two Dutch Reformed, two Quakers, one Congregational and one Roman Catholic.

Two Presidents—not church members—attended. Thomas Jefferson, who considered himself Deist, attended the Unitarian and Episcopal churches on occasion, and Abraham Lincoln attended the Presbyterian church.

Lincoln highly respected the Methodists and on May 18, 1864 said, "It is no fault in others that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospitals and more prayers to heaven than any. God bless the Methodist Church . . . Blessed be all the churches and blessed be God who in this our great trial giveth us the churches." History records that his dear friend, Methodist Bishop Matthew Simpson, was chosen to deliver his final funeral oration.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized at the Christmas Conference at Lovely Lane in Baltimore in 1784. In 1789, at the request of the General Conference Bishop Francis Asbury and Bishop Thomas Coke called on the newly elected President, George Washington, and offered the prayers and support of the Methodists. This was the beginning of a long connection of the Methodist Church and the White House.

It has been said that one cannot read the history of the United States in the nineteenth century apart from the history of Methodism. Be that as it may the facts are the five Methodist Presidents were all elected in the nineteenth century and were born in states where Methodism remains a strong late 20th century witness: They are James Knox Polk and Andrew Johnson of North Carolina; Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley of Ohio.

Three Presidents were educated in United Methodist related colleges: James Buchanan at Dickinson, William McKinley at Allegheny College and Richard Nixon at the Duke University Law School.

Let's take a brief glimpse at the five Methodist Presidents.

JAMES KNOX POLK's parents took him as an infant to be baptized Presbyterian but the pastor refused to perform the service unless both parents professed their faith in accordance with Presbyterian custom. For his mother there was no problem but his father refused. An argument ^{between} Mr. Polk and the clergyman followed and the former stalked out with his wife and unbaptized child. In 1833 he attended a religious camp meeting and was profoundly moved by the preaching of the Rev. John McFerrin. He became a Methodist privately affirming his devotion to that faith. He married Sarah Childress, well-educated at the exclusive Moravian Female Academy at Salem, N.C. A strict Moravian, she and the President refused to attend the theater or horse races. Mrs. Polk banned dancing, card-playing and alcoholic drinks in the White House and even

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refused to permit visitors in the White House on Sunday. On his death bed Polk summoned Bishop McFerrin who baptized him a Methodist before he died.

ANDREW JOHNSON attended Methodist services with his wife, Eliza McCardle, who at 16 married at a younger age than any other First Lady. He occasionally attended Catholic services and defended Catholicism from its critics and championed religious freedom. He never attended a single day of school, barely taught himself to read. His better educated wife patiently tutored him, teaching him to write and to figure Math and greatly improved his reading and spelling. While he labored in the tailor shop, she often read aloud to him. Johnson never formally joined a church.

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES neither smoked nor drank and married Lucy Ware Webb of Cincinnati, a devout Methodist. She was the first First Lady to graduate from College. They attended church regularly. Lucy Hayes vigorously opposed slavery and convinced her husband to abandon the Whig Party for the antislavery Republican Party. As First Lady she brought her zeal for temperance to the White House and was called *Lemonade Lucy*. She banned all alcoholic beverages except on one occasion - the reception for the Grand Duke of Russia in 1877 at which wine was served. Women's Christian Temperance Union hailed her policy and in gratitude commissioned a full-length portrait of her which now hangs in the White House.

A typical day in the White House began with prayers. In the evening the family often gathered for music and hymn singing. As President, Hayes introduced the practice of group hymn sings in the White House on Sunday nights. They set a good example for every American family and quickly gained respect for their hospitality, simplicity and modesty. They introduced the custom of Easter egg rolling by children on the White House lawn.

Hayes wrote "*I try to be a Christian. I want to be a Christian and help do Christian work.*" He gave freely, both of money and time. He contributed 25% of the construction costs of a new Methodist Church and bore another 25% of its reconstruction costs after it burned down.

ULYSSES S. GRANT, as a youth, rarely went to church and had never been baptized. All this changed when he fell in love with Julia Boggs Dent of St. Louis and began attending Methodist worship services with her. During his final struggle with cancer the Rev. John Phillip Newman of Metropolitan Methodist Church in Washington called on Grant regularly, urging him to confirm his faith in God and the Church. After one such visit, Rev. Newman announced to the press that he had baptized the former President at his request. Family members later disputed this, however, saying Grant had tolerated Newman's visits and bedside prayers only because they comforted Mrs. Grant and he did not want to be rude to the minister whom he greatly admired. Grant had little use for organized religion but many times expressed his belief in God, the Bible and an afterlife.

He said in a speech at Des Moines, Iowa, "*Leave the matter of religion to the family altar, the church, and the private school, supported entirely by private contributions. Keep the Church and the State forever separate.*"

He wrote, "*Hold fast to the Bible as the anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future. Righteousness exalted a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.*"

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WILLIAM McKINLEY, was brought up in a devout Methodist home. At ten years of age he publicly professed his faith at a revival meeting in Poland, Ohio, and joined the Church at age 16. He was throughout his life a devout active Methodist and a regular churchgoer. In Canton, Ohio he belonged to the First Methodist Church where he was Superintendent of the Sunday School. In Washington he attended the Metropolitan Methodist Church. At his inaugural he kissed the Bible, opened to 2Chronicles 1:10: "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" As President he often invited guests to sing hymns with him in the Blue Room on Sunday evenings. Among his favorites were: *Nearer My God To Thee*, and *Lead Kindly, Light*. In 1899 he summarized his credo in a personal memo: "My belief embraces the Divinity of Christ and a recognition of Christianity as the mightiest factor in the world's civilization." Maintaining his faith to the end, he was overheard softly reciting the Lord's Prayer as he was being prepared for surgery after being shot.

Theodore Roosevelt, who on September 14, 1901 succeeded the assassinated William McKinley, remarked to the Methodist Chaplain of the US Senate, "Your Church is the Church of America."

President Calvin Coolidge spoke at the unveiling of the only equestrian statue in Washington, D.C. which does not honor a military hero. On the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Bishop Francis Asbury, Father of American Methodism and 'Prophet of the Long Road', President Coolidge said Asbury "was entitled to rank as one of the builders of our nation. He printed the map of our country with the hoofbeats of his horses." He observed, "We build monuments to men who do not need them."

Some of us were present in Baltimore, Maryland in 1966 when President Lyndon Baines Johnson spoke at the Bi-Centennial of Methodist beginnings in America.

The many links of historic Methodism to the White House includes the actions of delegates from the 1980 General Conference in Indianapolis to send a delegation, headed by Bishop William R. Cannon, to the White House for a meeting with President Jimmy Carter regarding the Americans held hostage by the Iranians. We note that President Carter married a Methodist, Rosalyn Smith of Plains, Georgia. So the action of the 1996 General Conference requesting a delegation headed by Bishop Woodie White to call on President Clinton has many historic precedents.

In a few moments we are eyewitnesses to a current page of Methodist (& White House) history as we welcome the most forthright Methodist witness in 95 years. The national publicity brought to United Methodism by the current First Lady is without historical precedent.

As we have reviewed American Methodism in the White House of the 19th century I would close by reminding delegates and visitors of a statement by Martin Marty, our contemporary historian at the University of Chicago, "Methodism was the hottest lava flowing in America in the 19th century. Beware if it heats up again in the 21st!" Lord, do it again!

[Dr. William K. Quick is completing his 22nd year as Senior Pastor of Metropolitan UMC, ⁸⁰⁰⁰~~800~~ Woodward Avenue, Detroit, MI 48202. The church is a multi-cultural, multiracial, trans-economic congregation, with members from 47 nations. He is chair of the Program Committee of the 1996 General Conference and Vice-Chair of the Commission on the General Conference. He is also a member of the Agenda and Calendar Committee. This is his *tenth* General Conference, including his *sixth* as a delegate.]