

September 27, 1933

[Dedication of HP Methodist Church]

FDR Speech File

INFORMAL EXTEMPORANEOUS REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
HYDE PARK METHODIST CHURCH, HYDE PARK, NEW YORK
September 29, 1933, 8.15 P.M.

(Song, "Onward, Christian Soldiers".
Rev. James read the invocation.
Hymn by choir.
Rev. Hyman A. Tallman, of the Reform
Church of Hyde Park, read the 15th
Chapter of St. Paul.
Dr. J. Louis Hartside, Superintendent
of the District, led in Prayer.
Songs, etc.
Dr. Thorne introduced The President.)

My friends:

It is true that I am here tonight as your friend
and neighbor, but I have never thought of myself as a
preacher. (Laughter) Perhaps the real cause of my pres-
ence is that once upon a time I was designated as the Of-
ficial Historian of the Town of Hyde Park and, as such,
know probably almost as much about the history of the Meth-
odist Episcopal Church as the congregation itself does.

A few years ago I had the privilege of working
with your Pastor in compiling the records of this Church
and of the other Churches in our Township. That kind of
a compilation was made necessary for the one good and suf-
ficient reason that in the old days, when our Churches were
founded, the only statistics relating to births and marriages

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This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the speech made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

[Song, "Onward, Christian Soldiers"]
Rev. James read the invocation.
Hymn by choir.
Rev. Hyman A. Tallman, of the Reform Church of Hyde Park, read the 12th Chapter of St. Paul.
Mr. J. Louis Hartman, Superintendent of the Methodist in Town.
Songs, etc.
Dr. Theodore introduced the President.)

My friends:

It is true that I am here tonight as your friend

and neighbor, but I have never thought of myself as a

president. (Laughter) Perhaps the real cause of my presence

here is that once upon a time I was designated as the official

historian of the Town of Hyde Park and, as such,

know probably almost as much about the history of the Methodist

Episcopal Church as the congregation itself does.

A few years ago I had the privilege of working

with your father in compiling the records of this Church

and of the other Churches in our Township. That kind of

a compilation was made necessary for the one good and sufficient

reason that in the old days, when our Churches were

founded, the only statistics relating to births and marriages

and deaths were to be found in the registers of the several Churches. Unfortunately, of course, although our own Township dates back for nearly two hundred and fifty years, the religious life of this particular community did not begin in an organized way until after the Revolution. Before that time there wasn't any Hyde Park. There was a district of the County of Dutchess that was known as the Krum Elbow Precinct and across Krum Elbow Creek there was a country place that belonged to Dr. John Bard that was known as Hyde Park. But this community, until after the Revolution, went by various names, among others as De Cantillon's Landing and Stoutenburg's Store, and various other appellations. In the pre-Revolutionary days, as far as the record shows, there was no religious life in this community, although it had been settled far back in the year 1698; that is to say, there was no religious life except for an occasional wandering Quaker preacher who came hither from Millbrook or Pine Plains and held a meeting perhaps once every three months or so over on what you and I know today as Quaker Lane. It was not until -- I will have to check on the date some time -- until 1789 that the people in this community who belonged to various Churches got together and decided that they ought to have a Meeting House and thus in 1789 there was organized the

Stoutensburgh Religious Society, an association of men and women who wanted a place to worship in and, as a result, there was put up the first Church and what afterwards became Hyde Park Building. I suppose it was a very tiny structure, because it seated only forty-eight persons, but the interesting thing about that Church in 1789 was that in the meeting of the people who organized it, they passed a resolution and the resolution said that the house -- the Church -- shall be open to every good and well recommended preacher and every Christian society. In other words, it was a Church for all of the divisions of the Protestant faith. There were not many Baptists here in those days, they tell us, but there were Methodists, there were Dutch Reform followers, there were Presbyterians and Protestant Episcopalians and, for a number of years, in fact for a whole generation, this community worshipped in this house of the Religious Society.

A generation later, in 1811, the Protestant Episcopal Church was organized and then there came the Methodist Episcopal Church for which, as I remember the date, the first meeting was held in 1832. As a result of that first meeting Mr. ^{Albertson}~~Elbertson~~ (?), for whom ^{Albertson Street}~~Elbertson's~~ Greek has

taken its name -- it was somewhat before I was born (laughter) -- gave the lot of land on which the first church building was erected in 1833. But even then they did not have the funds or the congregation was insufficient to have one preacher, as they called them in those days, and so they got what was, what we call today a lay leader, whose name was ^{Silleck}~~Slack~~, Alonzo ^{Silleck}~~F. Slack~~, and, before he became a Pastor he came to the original Church and conducted services every other Sunday.

A little later on, when he had become a member of the Ministry, Mr. ^{Silleck}~~Slack~~ came here as the first Pastor of the Church and he, as you and I know, has been succeeded by a long line of noble and unselfish men down to the present day.

My own association with this Church goes back to a very, very early period, in the early eighties.

I remember one day, on my way home, I passed a little house that was occupied by that splendid old couple, Mr. and Mrs. John Clay, and Mrs. John Clay invited me in to give me a piece of gingerbread, and that was when I discovered that there was another Church in the Village besides my own. So Mrs. Clay was responsible for my first association with Methodism, and it was done with a piece of gingerbread.

Through all these years I have seen this Church grow -- grow in health and strength because, after all, back there in the eighties it was not nearly as important a factor in the life of the community as it is today.

I like to think also of the advent of other Churches in this Village from time to time, the Dutch Re-form Church growing out of that original old Religious Society that was organized in 1789, this Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Baptist Church, and the Catholic Church, and I like to go back to the origins of religion in this community. Religion in those days, a hundred and fifty years ago, was a community affair, and I am inclined to think that during the intervening time religion has ceased to be, to a large extent, a community affair. When I was a boy, let us be quite frank, there was not the same association, the same teamwork, the same cooperation between Churches in this community or of any other community that you and I find today. It is not only the spirit of the times, but it seems to me that it is fundamentally a matter of common sense that in our religious worship we should work together instead of flying off on different tangents and different angles, pulling

apart instead of pulling as a unified whole. During these latter years there has been a splendid change for the better in this regard. We find today the Ministers of the different Churches sitting amicably side by side on the same platform. More than that, we find them coming together from time to time to try to help to solve the community problems together.

Religion has had pretty hard sledding in many parts of the country. It has been an uphill fight, but I am inclined to think that it has been a winning fight and that things are getting better along with the rest of the American civilization. How much better, from the point of view of economics, is the religion of today as to what it was in the old struggling days or what it is today in many parts of our country? Down where I go, in the State of Georgia, in that little community, the salary of the Pastor of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Warm Springs during the boom days of the recent boom period was the munificent sum of four hundred dollars a year. In these last few years it was cut to three hundred dollars a year on the condition that that amount was raised. Now, that is not easy going for religion.

It seems to me that we who have been perhaps blessed a good deal more than many other parts of the country should convert those blessings that we have had into a very practical -- a very decent -- expression through the Churches to which we belong.

Last Spring, when I went to Washington, there were, of course, many people who came forward with the thought, verbally expressed, that the Government should take over all the troubles of the country, that we could, well, as we used to say in the old days, "Let George do it", and I began to think sometimes that my first name was George. (Laughter) After all, that is not exactly the American way of doing things. Some countries in the world may find it more convenient to put all their burdens on one person, but we don't. So I took the position then, and I think the country has understood the reasons for it, that the Government of the Nation has a responsibility, yes, but a responsibility which should be exercised only if the smaller units of our country have done everything that they possibly can and that has proved insufficient. Therefore, when we come down, for example, to the question of relief, we ask the question, before

extending Federal assistance to States or to communities, have the people in this community done their share? Mind you, there are many ways in which a community can do its share. They can do it through their taxing powers. They can do it through their constituted authorities, the officials of the village or township. But also, they can do and do an enormous amount of work for the relief of suffering humanity through their churches. So the first question we ask, quite frankly, in every case, is whether the community has done its share through its officials and its churches, and then we ask the next question, provided that was not enough and there is still unrelieved suffering. We ask whether the State has done its share as well, and if the answer is in the affirmative and there is still help needed, why then it becomes the duty of the Federal Government to see that nobody starves. That has been the principle which we are trying to extend to all the work of our Government to see to it that every man and woman and, I might add, child has done their share towards the common good.

The Churches are doing their share and the men and women and children who make up the congregations of

the Churches have shown a splendid period in these days. It is an interesting fact that although the national income from 1929 down to the Summer of this year fell off by a very large percentage, nevertheless the receipts of the Churches of the American communities fell off by a much smaller percentage. In other words, we have faith in our Churches and our Churches have faith in us.

I am very happy to take part in the one hundredth anniversary of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Hyde Park. I, with you, am proud not only of its history but of the splendid work that it has done in this community during the full century. I am happy in the thought that during the one hundred years that lie ahead of us, it is going to continue to do splendid work for the community, and that it is going to do that hand in hand with the other Churches of the community. That is the kind of American spirit that is going to bring us over the top.

In closing, may I say one word: In the task which we all face, you face just as much as I do the problems of so-called economics, the problems that are called monetary problems, the problems of unemployment, the problems of industry and of agriculture. We shall

not succeed in solving those problems unless the people of this country hold the spiritual values of the country just as high as they do the economic values of the country. I am very sure that the spirit in which we are approaching those difficult tasks and the splendid cooperation which has been shown, is going to be exemplified in the lives of the people calling themselves Christians who believe in God and uphold the works of the Church.
(Prolonged applause)

(The Congregation sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee")

Sept 29, 1933
Ded. of Hyde Park Methodist Church

Reading Speech 8315/39

Stoutsburgh Religious Society - 1789 -- a community church. Church had 48 seats.

"That the House shall be open to every good and well recommended preacher and every Christian society."

"When two-thirds of congregation will agree to call and support a divine of any Christian denomination then and in such case the House will be for the use of such divine and congregation".

Raised 117 pounds, 10 shillings; later 193 pounds, 10 shillings.

Became reformed Dutch Church 1817.

Protestant Episcopal Church organized 1811. Baptist Society in 1844, Catholic Church in 1863, and the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1832, through labor of Brother Alonzo F. Silleck, a layman in the Methodist Episcopal Church, and a useful member of the New York Conference. 1833 John Albertson Keeler, from the Town of Milan.