

My FAITH IN LOVE  
A message delivered by Robert D. Grant  
at Beaverkill Community Church August 4, 2013

How do I know that God is good? I don't. I gamble. I bet my life that it is so.

FAITH

I know not why the Evil,  
I know not why the Good, both mysteries  
Remain unsolved, and both insoluble.  
I know that both are there, the battle set,  
And I must fight on this side or on that.  
I can't stand shivering on the bank, I plunge  
Head first. I bet my life on Beauty, Truth,  
And Love, not abstract but incarnate Truth,  
Not Beauty's passing shadow but its Self.  
Its very self-made flesh, Love realized.  
I bet my life on Christ—Christ crucified.  
Behold ~~HE~~ your God, my soul cries out. He hands  
Serenely patient in his agony  
And turns the soul of darkness into light.  
I look upon that body, writhing, pierced  
And torn with nails, and see the battlefields  
Of time, the mangled dead, the gaping wounds,  
The sweating, dazed survivors struggling back,  
The widows worn and haggard, still dry-eyed,  
Because their weight of sorrow will not lift  
And let them weep; I see the ravished maid,  
The honest mother in her shame; I see  
All history ~~pas~~3 by, and through it all  
Still shines that face, the Christ Face, like a star  
Which pierces drifting clouds, and tells the Truth,  
They pass, but it remains and shines untouched,  
A pledge of that great hour which surely comes  
When storm winds sob to silence, fury spent  
To silver silence, and the moon sails calm  
And stately through the soundless seas of Peace.  
So through the clouds of Calvary—there shines  
His face, and I believe that Evil dies,  
That God lives on, loves on, and conquers all—  
All War must end in Peace. These clouds are ~~lie~~3.  
They cannot last. The blue sky is the Truth.  
For God is Love. Such is my faith, and such  
My reasons for it, and I find them strong  
Enough. And you? You want to argue? Well,  
I can't. It is a choice. I choose the Christ.

T.A. Studdert-Kennedy, 1883-1929

Chaplain in World War I, Chaplain to King George V

No person can voice another's faith exactly. But the author in this poem comes very close to capturing both the focus and spirit of my faith. Faith not fact; it is not knowledge. That is the realm of science. But faith has as important a role to play in human life and affairs.

My father worked as a janitor in the hose of a wealthy family. To supplement his wages he did picture-framing. I can remember people coming to our home with a painting, a photo or some other picture. Dad would bring out samples of the framing he kept in stock. choosing three or four of the most likely choices from among the different widths, plain or variegated colors, he would place them along the side of the painting.

He would take some away and leave one. The people would stand back and look and usually ask him to try another one, trying to imagine how the painting would look with the entire surface framed. The choice is important, for the appearance of the painting is influenced by the frame placed around it. A frame can enhance colors in the painting or tend to suppress them.

Your faith is the frame you place around your life experience. It gives meaning to the facts and knowledge of science. It influences how the world looks to you and how you relate to the people in it. Faith adds purpose to your life and determines how much worth you find in living.

The frame I have put around my life is love. In spite of the violence in o34\* world and the number of people who seem to take pleasure in violent acts, I bet my life that love is what is ultimately real and will outlast the other.

I've never been one for creeds. So often **the** statements that clarify good beliefs and use them to determine who's right and who's wrong, who's In, and who's out, who's a true believer and who's a heretic. But love can be pretty vague. Since it can refer to sentimental emotion or the hard work of willing the good of a despised group of people, I thought it well to spell my faith out in some specifics. Here's the result;

God is Love. And I'm willing to transpose that and say, Love is God. Whatever, Love is at the very heart of the universe.

We are created in the image of God, that is, with the capacity to love and needing love.

Love expresses itself in concern for all creation, the natural world of which human beings are part; expresses itself in willing the good of others, seeking justice for all, and embracing non-violence **the method** of action.

Jesus incarnated the fullness of love and our task is to establish and nourish an intimate friendship with him until we are one with his spirit.

To love is to be fully alive; Love is life eternal.

What is of most importance to you, your central frame of reference that gives meaning and purpose to your life.? What is central to your faith, for which you are willing to risk all?

Most of you can probably recall Branch Rickey as General Manager of the Dodgers baseball team when they were located in Brooklyn. Few, if any, of you recall him as a professing Christian. He was described as a "Bible-thumping Methodist". He took his faith seriously. While he was unable to change the league's policy, he never attended games on Sunday. He believed that as God's Sabbath, his creatures should keep it holy.

He took his faith seriously at a deeper level: his conscience that professional sports discriminated against African-Americans, refusing to include them. In baseball they were kept segregated in a Negro league. The lily-white complexion of the sport kept eating away at his conscience until he decided to start with his own team.

In 1947 his passionate concern led to actually feeling that God was calling him to act. But was there a Negro player, highly skilled at the game, and with the strength of character to endure the bitter backlash Rickey knew his appearance would receive. It would take someone with courage enough not to retaliate, to fight back against the abuse of demeaning words and hurtful acts by angry fans, members of opposing teams and even some of his own teammates. For as soon as he did and set off a riot, the cause of desegregation would be derailed for years. Rickey needed a Christian who believed that "turning the other cheek" was not only the practical, but right thing to do, if justice was to prevail.

At his first interview with Jackie Robinson, Mr. Rickey took down from the shelf in his office a book, "The Life of Christ" by Giovanni Papini, and read the entire section devoted to the Sermon on the Mount aloud to him. Then shared with him the adverse reactions he believed his appearance on the field would stir.

Jackie Robinson had a keen sense of justice and had been in trouble in the past from responding violently to mistreatment at the hands of whites. He answered abuse in kind. But his pastor at the church where he was a member had worked with him, helping him see that Jesus' teaching, "resist not evil" did not make him a coward and answering the evil of violence with violence only increased the evil.

And so, when Branch Rickey put it straight to him that he was looking for someone with "guts enough not to fight back" when abused, Jackie felt his friendship with Jesus was strong enough to fill the bill.

But the viciousness of the attacks the first two years were a test beyond anything he had bargained for. They sent him to his knees many a night, praying for God to grant him the strength not to cave in to the temptation to strike back. We know that in the end he received the strength, gained the grudging respect of the American public, other players and broke the color barrier in baseball. Other sports have followed and a more just society is the result, thanks to the hard work of love.

Interestingly, it was Jennie Grossinger, a Jew, who opened her hotel in the Catskills for Robinson and his wife to retreat from the pressure any time he was free. I'm sure she was not thinking of the Good Samaritan as a model, but she was