

I Believe In

Short essays about some
things I believe in

By

George B. Van Antwerp

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The Author



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George has served on the Board of Directors of ten non-profit charitable organizations. At age 75, George began a small publishing house and has published over twenty books, including several that he wrote himself.

George and his wife, **Mary Lou** (nee Beale), live in Royal Oak, Michigan, and have three adult children and six wonderful grandchildren.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all those individuals who struggle to understand life and to accept their set of beliefs.

The author wishes to dedicate these thoughts to those friends who suggested topics for the essays.

Mostly, the author dedicates these writings to those whose personal beliefs inspired those expressed here. His own beliefs and conscience were formed under the wonderful influence of his parents, siblings, teachers, pastors and friends.

It is my prayer that the children of today's world may find such guides in their own lives.

God bless all those individuals of whatever religion and in all countries who work to guide the minds and morals of each succeeding generation.

Preface

I felt like crying. The whole experience made me wonder about what is happening in our world. Or, perhaps, it is only me, am I just “out of it”? Perhaps, in my isolated, private school, religious education, I was set aside and out of touch with what was happening in the world around me.

Let me explain and perhaps, dear reader, it will explain the reason for this book.

It was 1978. The day was Good Friday. The time was one o'clock in the afternoon. It was during the sacred “three hours” when many Christians throughout the world were observing, with silence and with prayer, the hours during which they believe that Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins.

I was working at the time as the deputy director of SHAR House, a drug-free, residential, therapeutic community helping about one hundred persons who were addicted to illegal drugs. I had invited as many who so desired to join me in a classroom to read scripture, pray and talk about Jesus and his ultimate sacrifice for us.

You need to understand some things. For the most part, these were young men and women who were not brought up as I was but down deep they were basically nice “kids” like my own children. They might have lacked parental

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advice, counseling or moral guidance to the same extent as I.

So when I started to explain Christ's love for us, they immediately questioned my use of the word "love". I explained that I understood "love" to mean "caring for the good of another". I tried to show how that is carried out in a relationship between married persons, siblings, and in love of our country.

That was not their understanding of "love" Several laughingly said that "love" means "sex". Sex? I tried to explain, sex is not love. It is simply one way that spouses demonstrate their love for one another.

I finally gave up and asked them to listen while I read the passion and death of Christ from the Bible and then we ended with a short prayer.

If these men and women have such distorted views of love, what other matters might they fail to understand in the same way that I do?

This book is a series of glimpses into some of the things I believe in. If you only find this book "somewhat interesting", then, perhaps, in your prayerful seeking after the basic truths of life, you might set your values more solidly. If you find it helpful in your life, then I thank God.

Note: I am extremely grateful for friends and relatives who sent suggestions for "topics". What I believe about each subject, however, is really my own thought and belief. I have tried to be positive and not list negative things that I do NOT believe in.

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The contributors include: Javier Chapa, Rae F (from Georgia), Lourdes Fonseca, Daniel Jaeger, Joanna Liberacka, Beverly McDonald, Bobbie Simmons, Colleen Taylor, Miguel Valdes Villarreal, Agnes Van Antwerp, George Van Antwerp (my son) and Ann Wyers.

I am also extremely grateful for my proof reader and critical Assistant Editor, Dr. Dacia Van Antwerp, Ph. D..

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Chapter I *Accepting people as they are*



I don't know how my Dad came to accept people as they are. He didn't pass judgment on people based on their dress, nationality, politics, color, or even their opinions. I remember him talking about a friend who was a Communist. Dad liked the man, as a person, though clearly he disagreed with the man's politics.

I also recall my Dad, when he was mayor of Detroit, treating an intoxicated man so politely. We were surveying on Cass Avenue near the railroad, just south of the former General Motors headquarters building. Dad saw this man staggering and falling several times as he waited for the Dexter bus. Dad worried about him. It was a bitter cold wintry Saturday morning. Dad said, "Wait here". He crossed the street, talked with the man, all the while supporting him. Dad stayed with him until the bus came and then Dad spoke to the driver while he helped the man find a seat.

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That ability to accept others as they are was shared with. Father Clem Kern of Detroit and Brazil's Archbishop Dom Helder Camara, two others I greatly admired.

Father Kern was called the "Saint of Skid Row" and he treated every homeless person who lived on Detroit's Skid Row with the dignity that each person deserves but few receive.

In Brazil, when we had a project to clean up the trench that ran through our neighborhood, Dom Helder came, grabbed a shovel and joined all the men in shoveling cans, bottles, garbage and lots of human waste. The men were the poorest of the poor, and here was a world-famous archbishop, chatting with them as brothers, while standing in wet, muddy, stinking garbage mixed with human waste!

Obviously, the secret to such noble behavior is simply not to think of yourself as better than others. Money, fame, beauty are not as important as what is inside each one of us.

And, after all, if God is our Father, then aren't we all simply sisters and brothers?

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Chapter II Care of the elderly



I wonder what she's thinking?

The days go by so fast! Life, indeed, dear reader, is very short. The time we spend in this life on earth counts but as very few years.

However, during our years on earth, we are members of a family, we make many friends at work and as neighbors, and we participate in many events, joyful and sad. We keep on aging, and, someday, we find ourselves old, perhaps alone, maybe even friendless.

In your old age, you are fortunate enough if you still have a clear brain, even though your ability to walk or climb stairs is limited. Then, you have a mind filled with thousands of memories, and you can recall some events clearly, and some people as if they were here right now.

Old age has its blessing and its curses. The worst things are not the pains and the aches, the hard things are the loneliness and helplessness.

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Those of you, who serve as “caretakers” for the elderly, either part-time or full-time, are truly blessed by God. What an honor to care for someone in their last days on earth.

When we pray, we ought to remember to pray for the elderly, especially the lonely and the helpless. But please include in your prayers, those dedicated people who care for the elderly!

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Chapter III Care of the sick



"I was naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you took care of me. I was in prison, and you visited me."— Matt 25:36

Visiting the sick is listed as one of the corporal works of mercy. That means it is considered an important part of living for all truly human beings. It is a very *human* act of kindness.

I don't think anyone needs to question the value of visiting the sick. After all, those who are ill are often isolated from the rest of the community, they are usually confined and to one extent or another, they are helpless and must depend on others to meet their needs. Sick people are sometimes forgotten or ignored, usually unwittingly, by friends and neighbors. Because of this, the infirm can get lonely, even depressed, because they think they are forgotten, no longer valuable, not even wanted.

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When we think of all these things, only then can we see the value of a simple visit to a sick person. Even a telephone call, or sending a “cheer up” card, flowers, or a box of candy – these are all signs that someone cares, someone loves them, someone thinks of them. Wouldn’t you feel better if you received several cards, visits and flowers from your friends and loved ones?

As we get older, we seem to have more friends who are ill. But no matter what your age, you should keep some “Get Well” cards ready to mail whenever a friend is ill,

And, most of all, keep a list of those you want to include in your daily prayers!

Chapter IV
Charity



What is charity? The English dictionary defines charity as 1) benevolent goodwill toward or love of humanity or 2) generosity and helpfulness especially toward the needy or suffering ; *also* 3) aid given to those in need or 4) an organization that serves those in need.

I have found that most people are “charitable” towards others who are less fortunate than themselves. As a matter of fact, I have noticed that individuals who serve as volunteers for all sorts of “causes” are people who seem to have wonderfully generous hearts. I’ve seen doctors and nurses, firemen and policemen, secretaries and housewives

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– all “types” of people who give of themselves, in time and in money, to help others.

At the same time, all of us need to be careful not to judge those who are less fortunate than ourselves. We should look at their need and not their appearance. I remember one group wanting to help a certain family more than another saying, “Look how neat and clean she keeps her children!”

Let’s not classify the poor into the “worthy poor” and the “unworthy poor”! Let’s not even speak of the poor who are citizens as against the “undocumented” poor. If we are really charitable as God would want, we will simply look at the needs of these individuals and try our best to help them.

Charity doesn’t simply include volunteer act, or money donations. Charity also includes what is in our minds when we think of others. “Charitable thoughts” include how we think of others, how we avoid judging others, how we tend to speak and think well about others.

Let charity, above all, be in you mind and in your heart and then it will come out in your actions!