

22nd November 2021

Best

“You have to accept whatever comes, and the only important thing is that you meet it with courage, and with the best that you have to give.”

Eleanor Roosevelt, This I Believe

This I Believe was a US radio show which was launched by the legendary broadcaster, Edward R Murrow, in 1951. Each programme contained an interview with someone in the public eye – such as the activist and author, Helen Keller; Supreme Court Justice, William O Douglas; Nobel Prize winning writer, Pearl Buck; world-renowned physicist, Albert Einstein; President Harry S Truman – a veritable litany of fame and influence.

Many years ago, a patient in my hospice shared with me the inspiration she'd gained from one of the *This I Believe* interviews. The personality was Eleanor Roosevelt, first lady from 1933 to 1945, and later the US delegate to the UN. For her human rights achievements, her husband labelled her as “the first lady of the world”. Some tribute!

In the interview, Eleanor Roosevelt concerns herself with spiritual questions. She begins the interview by affirming: “It seems to me a very difficult thing to put into words the beliefs we hold and what they make you do in your life.” But it was a statement in the middle of Eleanor Roosevelt's interview that made most sense to my hospice patient in the final days of his life. I can do no better than to quote it in full here – as he had been able to do, word for word, in a moment of beauty and wonder:

I don't know whether I believe in a future life. I believe that all that you go through here must have some value ... there must be some reason ... some “going on”. How exactly that happens I've never been able to decide. There is a future – that I'm sure of. But how, that I don't know. And I came to feel that it didn't really matter very much because whatever the future held, you'd have to face it when you came to it, just as whatever life holds you have to face it in exactly the same way. And the important thing was never to let down doing the best you were able to do – it might be poor because you might not have very much within you to give, or to help other people with, or to live your life with. But as long as you did the very best that you were able to do, then that was what you were put here to do. That was what you were accomplishing by being here.

“With the best that you have to give”? Sounds like a good place for any *This I Believe* interview to start and finish – mine included.

A prayer for today

Today, I resolve to give my best. It's what I was put here to do. Amen

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>