

No faith in 42?

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Eric Metaxas's [take on the absence of faith in the film 42](#) is curious. He is right that the film downplays the role of faith in Branch Rickey's and Jackie Robinson's lives. But faith is not absent, "a mysterious hole at the center of this otherwise worthy film."

When Rickey chooses Robinson to be the first black Major Leaguer, he notes that he is a Methodist, Robinson is a Methodist, God is a Methodist, so it must be right. In their first meeting, Rickey mentions that "like our savior" Robinson must "turn the other cheek." When Rickey asks his manager by phone whether he has any problem with Robinson, the manager—in bed with a woman not his wife—says no. Rickey points out that the Bible commands love of neighbor more than anything else, and adds for good measure that it "says a thing or two about adultery."

And when an opposing owner threatens not to let his team take the field if Robinson plays, Rickey brings up Judgment Day. He suggests that when the owner has to explain his actions to God, refusing to play against the Dodgers because Robinson is black "may not be a sufficient reply."

To be sure, any sort of obvious piety is absent from the film's portrayal of Robinson. But not from the portrayal of Rickey. Metaxas's piece reads like he was certain faith would be excised, wrote the criticism and timed it for the film's release without seeing it. Or perhaps faith was not portrayed in a manner in line with Metaxas's taste.

Whatever the case, Metaxas's failure to mention the film's portrayal of Rickey's faith at all suggests that he was ready to be offended before he even saw the film and wrote accordingly. Robinson refused to fight back. Here Metaxas throws a punch before the show began.