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**"If You Were God---Would You Stop the War?"**

"No," Answers the Rev. Dr. Campbell, as He Explains Why God Permits "Human Folly and Wickedness to Fill the Earth with Horror and Flame, to Breed Misery and Injustice, to Crush and Trample Upon the Weak and Innocent . . . If You Were God You Would View the Struggle with 'Other Larger Eyes' Than Even the Angels Do."

Here lie I, Martin Elginbrod, As I would do if I were God, And Thou wert Martin Elginbrod.

THIS striking epiphany, quoted by George Macdonald, is said, though I cannot be sure, to have been placed on the tombstone of some individual of Norse extraction buried in the North of Scotland. The Norse element in certain parts of Scotland has contributed not a little to the characteristic sturdiness and independence of her people and to the great part they have played in the world in modern times.

I hope it is true that this inscription does appear, or once did appear, in a Scottish graveyard. Perhaps some reader can tell me. I may not have got it verbally exact, and have no means of verifying it, but it is near enough. To my mind there is something rather fine about it without a trace of irreverence or presumption.

Something similar is recorded as having been uttered in France in the fifteenth century or thereabouts by a famous captain of freebooters, named La Hire, though not with the simple dignity of the verse given above.

**Men Who Have Put Themselves in Place of God.**  
 According to Hallam, this worthy was not addicted to spending much time over his devotions, and was found fault with thereupon. He held, however, that his mode of praying was as effective as anyone else's. Before going into battle he would address Heaven thus: "So do with me this day, God, as I would do with Thee if I were God and Thou wert La Hire."

This bold, even audacious, anthropomorphism, this drawing of a likeness between man and God, makes one great assumption, namely, that divine goodness is at least equal to human and not different in kind. The crudity of the sentiment in other ways need not blind us to the value of this. That it puts man and God over against each other, as it were, as distinct entities, regarding God as a kind of larger man, but stronger, abler, and in possession of fuller information, holding a supreme managerial office to which we are amenable, need not disturb us.

Perhaps no religious proposition that has ever been framed has altogether escaped this inherent anthropomorphism or could do so. Do what we will, when we think of God, or rather when we think of the character of God (if I may be permitted the use of that not very satisfactory expression), we are more or less compelled to compare Him with man.

We do it as a matter of course, even when we are not conscious of it. And we have high authority for doing it; in fact, the highest authority that has ever found expression through human lips, that of Christ himself.

When He said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him." He was saying much the same thing as La Hire and Martin Elginbrod after all. He was bidding us estimate the goodness of God by the best we have learned to know of the goodness of man.

And yet we ought to be careful in our employment of this comparison. Obviously we cannot press it so far as to make it explain all the ways of God in His dealings with His creatures. God is not a larger man, viewing life from man's restricted standpoint and subject to the same limitations of feeling and action.

He is the life of all that is, the infinitely complex reality that is finding manifestation in the world of worlds, present in every grain of dust as in the farthest star. With Him nothing exists. In Him is all that is or ever shall be.

To quote the words of one of the greatest of the world's spiritual seers, words that everybody knows without stopping to ponder them, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." How can we, then, enclose Him in human categories when we want to discuss His attributes? At least we must keep our thoughts clear while we attempt it.

Of no man can it be said that others live and move, and have their being in him. No man indwells any other being than his own except in a very limited and special sense. No man is

the creator and sustainer of any universe, however small.

No man ever creates anything; he only discovers. He works with nature, and nature reveals her secrets to him. It is impossible for the human mind to imagine anything that does not already exist in some form. Picture as grotesque an animal as you please, you will still have to give it limbs, mouth, teeth, and eyes, or some of them. You may multiply the quantity, but you cannot invent an organ for it the life of which has never been seen or heard of before.

The telephone and the wireless telegraph were hidden in earth and air when Abraham marched to the rescue of Lot across the plains of Mesopotamia millenniums ago. But he did not know it and so could not advise his kinsman of his coming in the way a British force on the same spot is doing to-day.

Moses crossing the Red Sea used no aeroplanes to reconnoitre Pharaoh's host, nor had he ever heard of the submarine, but they were there all right if he had only known how to summon them forth.

**Trying to See God in a True Light.**  
 No man is not as God in relation to existence as a whole or in part. We have to reason from the known to the unknown. God does not. Our reason works within certain definite sharply defined conditions. It cannot be supposed that God's does.

As Henri Bergson tells us, the human mind is a by no means perfect instrument for enabling us to find our way about and do the best we can in a three-dimensional world, a world of up and down and to and fro, a world of material objects, of weight and gravitation, and dinners and teas and clothes and houses, and cold and hot, and wet and dry, and all such like.

Suppose a world of fifty dimensions—as there very well may be—or a world where none of these conditions held good at all, what then? Still it would be God's world, and His knowledge and power would pervade and control it as now. Clearly when we talk of any likeness between man and God we must make large allowances.

Let me point out that I am taking nothing for granted so far. I am not on my own ipse dixit dogmatically declaring that there is a God. I only say that if there be—and it is really undeniable in the last resort—He cannot be conditioned as we are, and therefore His ways of behaving must be to a large extent incomprehensible to us. Even the terms "He," "Him," "Him" as applied to deity are apt to become somewhat misleading. They at once call up the idea of a person of the male sex, like ourselves, but greater, wiser, better perhaps. Let us get that out of our heads. God is neither male nor female, and none of the other human qualities that depend upon earthly relationships can be exactly predicated of Him.

If I had a better pronoun where with to designate the divine being I would use it, but it is part of our limitations that we have none. We cannot call Him "it," for that suggests something less than human, not something more. And God must be more, infinitely more, than the greatest we have yet known as man, for surely we have nothing that has not come from Him. How could we have?

I think I could get on common ground with the most pronounced agnostic as well as the most assiduous church-goer by insisting on what I have said already—God is that, whatever it is, and it is far beyond the power of our intelligence and imagination to grasp whence all that proceeds directly or indirectly, except where our own wills come into play.

He is the eternal force that brings into existence and maintains the universe and everything in it. Hence He must be the source of everything in ourselves which we are accustomed to look upon as admirable—good, beautiful, sublime. Can one get away from that? I do not see how. In so far then, as we find anything fine and worthy of reverence in human nature, we are justified in affirming that that same thing is in God.

These considerations are suggested to me by remarks that have reached me concerning what I have previously written in these columns. They have not all reached me by post, likely to be purer than its fountain? Some of them, and these not the least, have been addressed to me in a

orally by our soldiers who have been reading my articles. But all the interrogations put together only amount to this—if God is good as man is good, or as man thinks of good, why does He permit evils to fall upon us from which we should do our best to shield our children? If I were God would I do it?

**How Would God Look Upon the Present Conflict?**

"There cannot be a God," cried a French essayist, "for if there were, the woes of humanity would break His heart." Are you sure of that? What if God knows, as we cannot know, that the woes of humanity are but as the trouble of childhood? The troubles of childhood are real enough to children, but what do their elders think of them? It is all a matter of perspective.

I can remember, as I dare say everybody can, that the griefs and fears of my childhood's days were as intense and poignant in their way as anything I have endured since. But they would not seem very serious to me now. They did not seem very serious to my preceptors then, though, no doubt I had their kindly sympathy in bearing them. They knew, as I could not know, that it was not so very important to save me from them but highly important that I should come through them rightly.

My playmates would have saved me from them perhaps, or those who cared most for me would. But as a rule they could not. They took my point of view and mourned their impotence. To them it really did matter a great deal that I had lost my biggest glass alley, or seen my favorite puppy drown, or been forbidden to go to the school treat, or being bowled for a duck in the cricket match. They knew all about the quarrellings and makings up again which constituted school politics, the smart of injustice at the hands of ruthless grown-ups, the humiliation and dismay of being plucked in exams, or given the cold shoulder by those whose favor one most ardently desired to win.

They were because they took my point of view. No adult either could or would, or if, through sheer kindness of heart, one here and there pretended to, they did it in such a way as to show me that they did not regard it in the same tragic light as I did.

Is not this the clue to the matter that puzzles so many people just now? Would we treat our children thus? We cry when tragedy, dark and dreadful invades our little world. No, we should not any more than one child would ordinarily condemn another to the experiences that to the childish mind are irksome and grievous.

If I were God would I allow mankind either to inflict or endure anguish as it is doing to-day on such a colossal scale? If I were God would there be all this cruel welter of blood and tears? With the immortal Omar we protest.

Alas, Love, could you and I with Him conspire To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire; Would we not shatter it to bits and then Remould it nearer to the heart's desire?

If I were God would I allow man to breed misery and injustice, to crush and trample upon the weak and innocent? Yes, if you were God. That is just the point: You are not God. If you were you would view the struggle and the pain "with larger other eyes," as Tennyson affirms, than even the angels do, or our sainted dead. You are not God, nor are you yet of the great cloud of witnesses who compass us about from the side of heaven. You are only a child at school, and with the eyes of a child you gaze upon this death in life, beholding not what lies beyond, and perceiving little of the reason why things are as they are in the sombre arena where

Man's inhumanity to man Makes countless thousands mourn. Let no one ask this question any more; it is a childish question, though it springs from a good impulse. All that is good in us is of God. It must be. Where else could it come from? You cannot get more out of the universe than is already in it somewhere. It is the stream of human tenderness that is to be purer than its fountain? That is the way some people talk, but it is patetically silly. The very

heart with which you protest against the ills of life is the product of the source of life. To the riddle of existence I have no answer for myself or thee. Save that I learned beside my mother's knee:

All is of God that is and is to be, And God is good. Let this suffice us still.

Resting in childlike trust upon His will Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by the ill. There is comfort in this, and inspiration, too. But, someone will object, if the good is of God so is the bad. We have no more right to say He is good because there is goodness in the world than that He is bad because there is badness in the world. No? Is that the way you reckon with your friends?

You do not expect the same man to be true and a liar, tender and brutal, faithful and treacherous. If your best friend is accused of dishonorable conduct, no matter how black the evidence may be, you refuse to credit it. You say: "I know him to be of strict integrity. Therefore I wait in confidence for the matter to be cleared up."

Quite right. God cannot be the

gentle heroism of Edith Cavell and the vile devilry of von Bissing. That the one derives from Him renders it impossible that He could be the other. He could not be both Christ and Pilate.

The other night a soldier thus addressed me publicly: "Sir, somebody has been saying in England that a man who dies for his country goes straight to heaven whatever his life may have been before hand. Do you think it is true that if a chap has been a bit racketsy, and yet gives his life in this way, he will be all right on the other side, or will he have to go to hell?"

Do not smile, reader, at the native simplicity of the question. I thought I detected a certain wistfulness behind it, and it had evidently been widely discussed among the men who heard it put.

I replied: "Probably the issue is not quite so sharp as you make it. Few of us are fit either for highest heaven or deepest hell. But what would you do if you were God?" "I think I should give a fellow a chance," was the instant response. Need more be said?

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**NOTICE OF REMOVAL AND PARTNERSHIP!**

Hon. R. A. Squires, K.C., LL.B.

ANNOUNCES the removal of his LAW OFFICES to the New BANK OF NOVA SCOTIA Building at the corner of Beck's Cove and Water Street, and the formation of a PARTNERSHIP for general practice as Barristers, Solicitors and Notaries, with MR. J. A. WINTER, eldest son of the late Sir James S. Winter, K.C., under the firm name of Squires & Winter.

Address: Bank of Nova Scotia Building, January 3rd, 1916. St. John's.