

IF I WERE GOD?

I would do many things differently

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A long time ago there was a wise old man in Baghdad who used to say "If I only had a very long ladder I would go up there, for I have so many things to tell Him." I have often thought about what the old man in Baghdad said and for the longest time I have begun to wonder why so many things are the way they are. Surely there could have been a better way for living things to find sustenance. Did animals have to adhere to such brutal means to acquire their food? After all you created all living things. Was it necessary that nourishing food had to be other living things, the weak, the young, or the fledgling tiny yearling? I don't know how others feel about it but the sight of the crocodile that attacks and tears apart the wildebeest trying to cross the river; or the violent butchering of helpless live animals by other animals is repulsive to me. I know there are humans who enjoy the sight of such mayhem. These sights are displayed on television for entertainment. They actually enjoy seeing a pile of huge wild dogs tearing apart a young deer that is still alive and is calling for his mother. They are called hunters and they love to see blood. You created them. But then they claim that they hunt for food. In a way they think it is your fault and they blame You for it. It is repulsive to think of those cowardly individuals who participate in 'canned hunts' where exotic animals are tied to a tree for the spineless hunter to shoot them and claim a trophy. People considered among the most respected members of societies, depending in what country they are in, use the slaughtering and mutilating of animals such as bulls, foxes, roosters or dogs for their recreational entertainment. They are macho men and their favorite toy is the military style assault weapon. They love to see blood and you created them.

American naturalist Henry David Thoreau was deeply interested in the idea of survival in the face of hostile elements. In one of the best known parts of his book *Walden* he vividly describes the battle of the ants. "I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. . . . "The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vise to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle cry was "Conquer or die."

Even in the world of microorganisms there is murder and carnage. Predatory germs kill each other and digest any bacteria they encounter. The murderer and the act of killing is often admired and glorified. To quote from the program notes of my composition *The Soldier Returns*, for viola and piano: "The sight of rows of flag covered coffins always delivers a dauntingly tragic message. Brave men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice and have given their lives for their country. Many will join others who came before them and will be known as the Unknown

Soldier. These brave soldiers were taught to obey orders and they did. They did not question why they were asked to go to war. War is a curious exercise and at times it is necessary for deterring the dangers of malevolence and for the defense against evil aggressors. And then there are times when a self serving egomaniac wants to prove his importance and to acquire a place in history by sending his troops to battle. He will somehow find a justification for his actions. Many of his soldiers, as well as those of his enemy, will perish. But, he will join the ranks of the celebrated and admired warriors. History is replete with names such as Hannibal, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Napoleon and a long list of others. Rarely do we hear about the individual soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice.”

Throughout human history there have been numerous societies that have created their own Gods and Goddesses of War. The function of these Gods has been to command wars in order to spread their own specific religion. As a result often religions have been spread by the sword in the name of a specific God. In wars of religious fanaticism a standard operating procedure was to kill all the vanquished inhabitants including women and children. It is disturbing to hear about the battle of Jericho in which the destructive and vengeful God of Joshua by divine order “destroyed with the sword every living thing in it – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.” How can we justify the slaughtering of innocent babies as an excuse for punishing the transgressions of their adult parents? There are many in charge of religious institutions who abuse their power. Often those who acquire positions of authority in religions bestow themselves a divinely inspired status and assume the personality of deity. In the Catholic Church the Pope is supposed to be infallible in questions of morality and religious dogma. It becomes disconcerting that Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) and Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503) became examples of human degradation and depravity. Preachers on television with phony tears threaten the listening public with eternal damnation and yet they themselves are caught in ridiculous situations in houses of ill repute. There are religions that evolve in the form of cults that are usually led by a strong willed, charismatic and oversexed individual who takes advantage of his position and abuses members of his congregation. How is it that some countries can destroy and decimate thousands of Christian churches and get away with it? The country of Turkey has done just that, tearing down thousands of Christian churches. And why is it that tornadoes destroy houses of worship?

According to recent world census figures women constitute less than half of the world’s population. Female infanticide and the practice of killing infant girls at birth have decreased the number of women. The status of women in societies throughout the world has always been secondary to that of man. Some religions decree specific evaluations of a women to be worth only half that of a man. Women are denied to receive education. In wars it is common for a conquering army to rape all the women of the vanquished. There are societies that expect women to cover their heads to circumvent sexual arousal of men. Women of the vanquished were often given as trophies to the conquering army. In India women are being raped in the streets, on public buses. The *Davidasi* tradition in India advocates donating juvenile girls of the poor to Hindu temples. These children are sexually abused and molested by the prominent men of the community who support the temple. There are religions that approve husbands to beat their wives and a man who drops his pants at the sight of women becomes the president of the United States; A Cardinal who covers up for child molesting priests becomes Pope.

It is unbearable to witness the innocent children of the world be victimized, abused and molested. Why do we have to have plagues? Yes, it is unbearable to see a sick child dying. Children have the least protection and have no means of defending themselves. They are molested in places where they are supposed to be safe and protected such as in churches and in schools. Yet, we often hear about thousands of children who are abused by the clergy and by teachers. Even the Boy Scouts organizations are not safe for children. Child molestation has become the favorite pass time for millions of people in the world. Why did you create people like Talaat, Pol Pot, Hitler, Stalin and Mao? These twentieth century villains were responsible for the Genocidal annihilation of millions of innocent people. There are those who argue that God has given humans the brains, the will power and the ability to judge. That it is the responsibility of humans to chose between good or evil. And therefore it is humans who are accountable when they perpetrate evil. At times this premise becomes very hard to accept especially when unbearable suffering is experienced by the most innocent, such as babies. How about the terrible suffering that is caused by what is known as 'Acts of God'?

And then there are those who call themselves Atheists. They don't believe you exist. They are growing in numbers. They justify their position by arguing the lack of empirical evidence and the problem of evil. They argue that if God is omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent, why does evil exist? They somehow know how our existence came about but they can't explain it. I have yet to understand their point of view. They can't explain some of the most precious phenomena, the best of your creations – The smile of a child seated in a cart at the supermarket cashier's line. I have to admit a baby's smile is one of the many masterpieces you have created. I always smile whenever I see a baby. Can you imagine a world consisting of babies only? What a wonderful world of innocence that would be.

I have been unfair not to list many of your creations that are admirable. It is true that there are many humans that you have created that do good deeds live virtuous lives and help others; but we rarely hear about them. They don't make the news. My final remark is that you should not allow someone like me to tell you how you should run your business.