

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

A plea for the Christian faith
in the so-called postmodern era

by

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I dedicate this booklet to my children, grandchildren, children-in-law and to everybody with a 'hearing ear' and a 'seeing eye.'

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

PREFACE

You have heard the Name of God often enough as a curse, as well as the Name of Jesus. I wonder why it is that people that do not even believe in God, use His Name as an expletive! Sometimes they blame Him for all kinds of problems in the world. Others have heard the Scripture that God is love, but when they observe all the troubles in the world they wonder how you can harmonize that. Still others blame the devil for everything. Personally I think that that is rather cheap. These are often people that think that in God's Name you can solve all problems just like that. And some of them even claim that in the Name of God you can come to immediate health and even riches.

Indeed God has been used for just about anything! In fact it is probably so that in God's Name the worst and perhaps most wars and crimes have been committed. Unfortunately. Why would one even think about God in this day and age? Scientists reason that He does not even exist and that the universe has come from the Big Bang. But yet, how is it that we suffer so much and why do we often display such awful characteristics? Is that than simply the product of imperfect evolution? In the late communistic paradise of the USSR they thought that people are born perfect. Criminals and dissidents were simply considered sick or they were treated as victims of old and bad ways of thinking that had been disproved by science already for a long time. At any rate it is not so fashionable to think about the God of the Bible and what is written in the Book of books, let alone to share things like that with your friends. That is something to be ashamed of. And if not, we all have enough trouble. We can be sick, bills can accumulate, your job can be too demanding or be experienced as rotten. Simply speaking, what do I have to do with God? He does not get involved with me, why then would I pay attention to Him! And even if He is the Creator of the universe, I certainly did not ask to be born. But yet . . .

So many questions life can call up! Some so-called scientists claim that one must not even ask such things. According to them such questions are 'a priori' illogical. Everything that exists, is simply a form of matter. In their reasoning such questions are in fact nonsense. For God is not made out of matter. Therefore, everything you cannot see with your own eyes, does not exist and to inquire for it must be nonsense. Yet, there have been people that claim that they have seen God.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

'In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord! He was seated on a high throne and the temple was filled with His glory. Above Him hovered mighty angels with six wings. With two wings they covered their faces; with two they covered their feet and with two they flew. They called out to one another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of the heavenly armies; the whole earth is filled with His glory." The temple was shaken on its foundations and the sanctuary was filled with smoke. Then I said: "I am a dead man, for I belong to those that sin with the mouth. And now I have seen the King, the Lord of the heavenly armies." Then one of the angels flew to the altar and picked out a live coal with a pair of tongs. With it he touched my lips and said: "Now this coal has touched your lips, your iniquity has disappeared. All your sins have been forgiven." '

This was written by a certain Isaiah in the eighth century B.C. You can read it in the bible in Isaiah 6.

This section raises questions. Isaiah thought that he would die, because he had seen God. But the angel said that his sins had been forgiven, after he had been touched by a live coal. Actually what are sins? In the Dutch language the expression 'that is a sin' is used in the sense of 'That is a pity', 'C'est dommage', 'Das ist Schade'. The French and the German can be translated with 'That is a loss'. Would sin also be a form of damage or loss? Somewhere in the bible Jesus says: "What would it profit a man if he won the entire earth, but lost his soul?" (See Matthew 16 verse 26, in the first book of the New Testament, that is the second part of the bible) . Jesus therefore warned that one can lose one's soul, or 'suffer the damage of one's soul'. Therefore He believed that everybody has a soul. What would He mean by that, losing your soul? Let us listen to Him again.

"Be not afraid of those that indeed are able to kill your body, but not your soul. Only fear God Who can destroy both your soul and your body in hell".

And if your hand causes you to sin, chop it off; it is better to enter (eternal) life maimed than to go off to hell with two hands, into the inextinguishable fire . . . where the worm (of their conscience) keeps on gnawing".

Of course we laugh about this. An eternal coal fire? Humbug! But yet . . .

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

Almost everybody has heard the expletive G.D. Like the Dutch curse G.V.D. it actually means 'may God damn me (or anything) '. With other words 'may He let me and anything else go to hell!' I said once to a young man that used this curse, "If God does condemn you, then He can say that you asked for it yourself." Not only in English, but also in other languages expressions are used that are very graphic; such as 'verdammt will ich sein, wenn . . .', 'I'll be damned if . . .', 'I'll go to hell for . . .' Why is it that we pronounce such curses over ourselves? At any rate it shows our indifference about our eternal destiny.

Somebody said once to me: "Life is simply a waiting room. I just remain seated on my behind and I will see what happens". And indeed whether you are rich or poor, famous or unknown, learned or ignorant, popular or hated; we all need to go to the bathroom and we are all mortal. Once we will have to face God as the supreme judge. Solomon put it this way:

"Young man, it is fantastic to be young! Enjoy every minute! Do all your heart desires; get hold of what you can get hold of, but do not forget that about all your actions you will have to give account to God."

In this booklet we zero in on subjects such as these. Of course we cannot promise to have an answer for everything. But we will try to pass on a little of the wisdom found in the bible. From your side we ask that you open your heart and not to bear a grudge against the faults of (so-called) Christians, but to focus on what Christ Himself intended His message to be. For in the end not what the followers of Christ made of it, but what Christ wanted to teach; is what counts.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

CHAPTER I

The Eight Main Religions; why God exists

Theologians ("God-knowers") have attempted to prove God's existence throughout the centuries. The bible itself does not try this, but simply states that God's 'eternal power and deity (His invisible characteristics) ' are understood by observing the visible things of creation (from stars to subatomic particles; Romans 1.20) . In other words, we should be able to know God from nature just as a gorgeous palace presupposes an architect.

According to a scientist like Stephen Hawking man will know God's mind, as soon as he cracks the mathematical supercode of nature. Just as if God could be identified with matter and energy in all its forms! In fact according to the bible God is the maker of the universe. The universe is not on one footing with God. In this some rationalistic physicists are like eastern mystics that claim that everything is divine. But perhaps you will counter: "What is truth?" For there are also people that argue that there are many gods, as in Hinduism. That so many persuasions abound does not mean that in the end there cannot be only one all inclusive truth; which is the Person of Christ (not an ideology, christian organization or elaborated theology) .

Let's put the different ideas in a row.

1 God does not exist. Everything is matter. Atheism.

2 God does not exist. There are many gods. Polytheism.

3 Everything, matter and spirit, is divine. Pantheism.

4 One cannot either prove or disprove God's existence, nor does it matter. Life is all about fighting for one's own (material) well-being. Materialism/ agnosticism.

5 God is the maker of everything, matter and spirit, but he does not maintain a relation with his work. Deism.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

6 God is the ultimate mystery. Becoming one with Him, e.g. with the help of angels, is the highest good. Mysticism.

7 God is our maker, but he is evil. Satan can deliver you from his yoke. Actually God is the real devil that thwarts us. Satanism.

8 God is the Maker of everything, matter, mind, soul, spirit and personality. Everything exists by virtue of His continuous, sustaining power and He thrones above His Creation. Monotheism.

All these ways of looking at God and the universe can be divided into detailed differences, but I think that we can safely distinguish between all mainstreams in the above way. In passing we point out that a person's philosophico-theological world view also determines his or her lifestyle. An atheist most of the time will also be more or less a hedonist. A polytheist searches through magic for the power over matter to make him one with the gods. The pantheist seeks guidance in mysticism and meditation. A deist tends to think that he can solve his problems primarily through reason. The Satanist attempts to make demons, that is fallen angels, serve him. And the monotheist attempts to be reconciled with his Maker through forgiveness, worship and observing the wisdom of the bible.

Now we have reduced all religions (atheism is not really a religion, but could be called an antireligion) to only eight, we will attempt to show which one is truthful. In this we employ this criterium (test or touchstone): The truth must make sense. Christ Himself said: "The truth will set you free" (John 8.32) and elsewhere the apostle Paul speaks about the 'rational or logical' service of our religion. All religions promise you freedom. The communists promised freedom to the slaves of the Czar and mystics promise you freedom through yoga or whatever. But what is real freedom?

What is the freedom of the atheist? Carpe diem. Pluck the day! "Let us eat and drink and make merry, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor.15.32). The atheist must find his luck (read: satisfaction) in the here and now. For according to him everything stops upon death. Death is the great enemy. If you really hate somebody, you wish him dead. Death is only friendly if life has become totally hopeless and therefore pointless. Then death liberates you from a senseless existence. Every atheist attempts to realize the sense of life now. For one person that is music, for the other

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

money. For most a combination of everything available. Enough food and drink, health and finally self-realization.

But can this kind of world view stand the test of time? If death is written over everything, what then is the usefulness of such a lifestyle? Do not atheists deceive themselves? Whence for that matter the morbid obsession for death and violence in films and books? If all ends in death, why then would I give life my best? Away with such thoughts! Where people used to say: "Memento mori;" "Remember to die," now we say: "Live! Be happy with your partner. And if life turns against you, try to save what you can." However, who shall help me to determine how to live? Well, that is up to you! Good, says the pedophile, I like young children. Good, says the rapist, I love violence. Good, says the gangster, I love much money. No, says the atheist society, let's keep it neat and tidy and decent at any rate. But what is a decent life? Is it not I that decide that? If I desire to put a dog chain or collar on my partner's neck, because that gives me a kick; then that is good. All that matters is that you have fun and that you reach your kick, your personal high. If I cannot kick, then I kick you out of my life.

Nietzsche, Freud and Marx have rationalized God away. We all have become gods unto ourselves. If a psychiatrist tells you as a hard working murderer that you are sick, on what does he base his reason? Is it not your full right as atheistic, self-governing homo sapiens to create pleasure out of snuffing out other lives? The murder of God by atheists ends in the murder of your fellow men. Mao, Stalin and Hitler, each in his own way, chose murder to realize their atheist or fascist paradise. One must murder to be able to live. "Live and let die!"

Fortunately this is too extreme for most people. But why did the twentieth century of so-called modern man witness so many dead? Why will almost any policeman tell you that crime is on the rise? Is it not time that atheists at least begin to wonder about their amoral philosophy?

Let us now take a brief look at the peoples that worshiped many gods. The ancient Greek and Roman peoples and the Hindus of today have an entire pantheon of saviors available. In the end human life is governed and determined by the gods. If you placate the gods, then life will be good to you. They will assist you to live now and upon death you will be rewarded or you will even become one with the gods. There is then life after death. I hope that is a relief for you. The Greeks did not have cars or color televisions, but they understood, or at least believed, that mortal life is

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

not everything. Personally I would have preferred to be a Greek rather than a Roman and certainly not a Hindu. The Athenians were thinkers, but the Romans ruled with an iron fist. However Hindus leave rats, holy cows and sometimes even insects alive, because they could house the spirits of their late ancestors. Now that is respect for life, if you allow rats to eat your hard worked harvests so as to let your poor parents live! Why do these people not realize that humans die here in the name of the hereafter?

The Greeks and the Romans had gods and goddesses for just about anything. Then you had also the 'president': Zeus or Jupiter. In India that is Brahma. Killing causes bad karma and is the reason one must yet suffer for a long time in the death and life cycle of the mortal body. "Soma sèma" (the body is a grave) the Greek taught. Death means liberation. There once was a Greek thinker that could preach this philosophy so well that many among his audience committed suicide. Euthanasia in the case of a toothache!?

But now all joking aside. The atheist seeks satisfaction in the here and now, the polytheist in the end in the hereafter. I hope the feeling does not escape you that in both cases there is something wrong, something desperately wrong. Would there be a happy medium?

Yes, the pantheist or holist says, for everything is divine. Yes, the rationalistic theologian says. God is the Creator, but He suffers along with us. He cannot help it that we suffer. He has done his best, now we have to co-operate to find his salvation for us. Yes, the agnostic materialist says; the happy medium is that we 'simply' do our best and give to everybody his own. As to God and the hereafter, that we will find out later. Yes, the mystic says, the happy medium is that we prioritize the 'holy' and the 'ideal' above everything else. Temporary things and setbacks we 'simply' have to overcome.

Let us begin with the pantheist. What is his salvation in the end? Nirvana. What is that? The unio mystica, becoming one with the impersonal divinity. The transition from the finite, limited and suffering ego to the infinite, endless and salvific 'all.' As a dew drop is dissolved in a lake, so your ego will be taken up by the divinity. But then I ask: If I am to vanish as snow before the sun, what does remain of myself? That does not matter of course. Everything is impersonal. If you want to sense yourself, then you are doing something totally wrong. Through meditation you must do the opposite, you must empty yourself. Everything that is in you, is unnecessary weight

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

that sits in the way. Death is serious, but in the end only maya, mere sham. Empty yourself and the truth will come in automatically. I know there is a lot of junk in my heart, but pumping myself totally empty through yoga or whatever, that goes too far. Particularly if the end is a personless all-spirit. Such a god I decline. Where is the true God?

About the materialists I want to be short. In general they are agnostic. "God cannot be proven. He may exist, or he may not." The materialists unite through the prosperity philosophy of materialism. (That in my opinion is also the weakness of capitalism. Materialistic ambition for profit as a life style makes for a cold-hearted ideology) . But an endless stream of goods and services is a dream. More and more and yet again still more! And so we are caught in a treadmill of work not so as to LIVE, but simply for mere possession . . . This also is a dead end and only possible for the rich.

Is God then to be found with the deists? Voltaire said: "If God does not exist, then we should make him!" He said that because he found that the universe points to a grandiose architect. There are many different deists, just like there are many kinds of atheists, pantheists and polytheists. The deists have in common that they loosen God from His creation. God put the clock work into motion and now he lets it wind down. We will exist until the universe collapses onto itself. Then maybe there will be another big bang. A god who plays yo-yo? The Stoics already claimed that everything will end in a great conflagration and then will start anew exactly alike.

I now point out to you the similarities. The atheist believes in love, the polytheist in Amor. The atheist reckons with social whores, the polytheist with the temple servants of Venus. The atheist works with the forces of nature, the polytheist with the gods. Both desire to harness or control them in some way. So the materialist believes in matter and the pantheist in the soul or spirit. The materialist and the atheist strive to make life give its best now, with or without God. The polytheist and pantheist predict salvation in the hereafter. In materialism and atheism the idiosyncratic pantheon of the human being reigns supreme. We must, they say, respect each other as much as possible. We must allow a person his or her own 'kick.' In polytheism the idiosyncratic pantheon of demons (1 Cor. 10. 20) reigns supreme.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

This brings me to the seventh group, the Satanists. Do they really exist? Why not! If there are Christians that worship God, why would there not be persons that venerate the devil? Aleister Crowley said that the devil is life, light and love and that the only valid law is: "Do whatever you wish." Indirectly he has influenced more people than Brown, Jones and Robinson even can begin to understand. How can you believe in God and not in the devil? Atheistic theologians babble that God stands for what is good in us and that the devil is merely the personification of evil. The satanist laughs this off. He also believes in both as persons, just like the Christians. For if God is not more than just an idea, then death in the end is the destiny of the entire universe. And if God is absolutely good, holy actually that is, from where then all evil? "He is a liar and the father of one," Christ spoke of the devil (John 8. 44) . Christ also makes clear that Satan is the murderer of humans from the start. What did the devil make himself believe (Is. 14 & Ezech. 28) ? That he could be like God. This lie he also instilled into Eve, our first mother. Why is the satanist satanist? For God murdering jealousy. Satan does not want to recognize God, but he has to. The satanist follows satan in this rebellion. Where the atheist rationalizes God away, there the satanist rebels. Albert Camus concluded that life is pointless, a punishment inflicted by the gods or the forces of nature. Here the satanist advances blaming the Maker of the universe openly.

What does a Christian say of this? God is good and made us good as well, but we willingly chose evil. That is why we lost paradise (the garden of Eden) . Was the God of love unrighteous in testing Adam and Eve in the matter of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? No, He had every right to see whether we would answer His love. He did not make us robots, but people with a will to choose. If God is not good, but yet almighty; then there is no hope. What awaits us is an eternal nightmare of senseless nihilistic suffering. If God is schizophrenic, pardon the language, then he is worse than the devil and all we can expect is everlasting torture. What does the satanist have to offer us anymore than an eternal unrighteous hell under the sway of a whimsical tyrant who is infinitely more powerful than satan? For He made satan. But the bible says: "Will not the Judge of all the earth do justice!"

In passing we mention the idea of Zoroastrianism according to which good and evil have existed side by side from all eternity. In the end light will overcome darkness. But then God and the devil are brothers! Perhaps Cain will slay Abel again.

We want to be short in this essay, therefore we generalize: The atheist tends to seek the sense of life in a form of pleasure or at the best in some form of self-fulfilment.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

But he is confronted by death and that robs all his accomplishments of meaningfulness. The polytheist honors the gods and desires to be one with them. The atheist is a god to himself, autonomous in everything; the polytheist is subject to all gods. The former overly accentuates the here and now with the result that everything ends in death and meaninglessness. The latter overly accentuates the hereafter with the result that the here and now is experienced as meaningless. The only thing you can save from it is food for the hereafter. To soften timely life magic must offer outcome. Magic is knowledge of the gods that makes you surpass your own limits. The atheist uses technology to assuage his pain. The powers of nature are there to serve us. One can conquer them, be it temporarily.

The pantheist actually also overemphasizes the here and now in an opposite way to the atheist. And the god of the deists is in fact just as impersonal as the god of the mystics. The rationalist deist attempts to help God a little and searches for the perfect politics, economics or psychology. But the human also here disappears when he desires to establish his own paradise. Rationalist reason is everything but salvific. The mystic tries to empty himself, the thinker wants to fill himself. Neither reason nor mysticism can save us.

Eventually every human system will subside into oblivion. Why is this? Because man simply refuses to recognize God as the Sovereign, All-good, All-knowing, All-powerful, All-holy and All-present Lord over us all. People are like children that want to live without their father and mother. God, our Creator, Who loves us more than a mother her child, is unconsciously experienced as very threatening. We want to do our own thing.

But you might say, "You have ridiculed just about everything by now, but what does your God have to offer?" Everything! If all of humanity would cease their fights now and were to beseech God for forgiveness; then God would be merciful to us as in the days of Nineveh (see the book of Jonah in the Old Testament) ! Why is life so hard? Because we live it without God. Even most of the so-called monotheists are just as mad as the atheists. The atheist says and does, the monotheist says God and acts on his own 'kick.'

Do we then all have to be the same as if we were robots? No, just as God is personal, an 'individual', the highest one, so humans and angels are also individuals. But as long as we humans, individually and collectively do not give God His full rights and recognize Him in this; so long He cannot recognize us fully. God is not a

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

bogeyman, but neither a Saint Nick. And in this way we will lose out on the true sense of life. As long as we blame God for WW II and for our handicapped child, for our whatever frustration; so long we will stray like sheep without a shepherd, exposed to the wolves of suffering, senselessness and death. What the atheist, the materialist, the deist, the mysticist, the pantheist and the polytheist covers up, the satanist does openly and with all his heart to the utter consequence. "Away with God; I am my own god." The satanist is conscious of the bottle-neck. We simply refuse to give God His due. 'Al am like a motherless child, a long way from home...'

Perhaps you consider this but a poor way of reasoning. Where is the great proof of God's existence? Nobody can see God and live! Isaiah saw God and only could live because he exclaimed that he was lost and because the grace of God forgave him. I can see you shrugging your shoulders. But think on this: If God could be shown to exist in His highest divinity, either we would have to be like Him, or He like us. There are indications enough that point to His eternal power and godhead (that is His unique character as Maker of the universe) . Only a fool claims that everything has come to be by itself and that out of nothing or out of some imaginary cloud of gaz. But where did that come from then? "The fool says in his heart: 'There is no God'." I quote the writer of the psalm. Anselm said that God is the highest being one can think of, greater than Him nothing can be imagined.

I do not appeal to your intelligence only, or to your feelings. I attempt to address your heart. I take it upon myself to show you that all religions are pointless. Why? Because the creature is indifferent to the Creator and actually, in the deepest recesses of the heart, hates Him and openly challenges Him. Both in words and in deeds we embrace nihilistic nonsense. And in turn we fight that by escaping into some kind of temporary satisfaction and comfort ourselves with useless ideas about the future and a possible afterlife.

I am a sinner
Turning my back.
I am no winner
Living I lack.

I am a loser
Seeking my gain.
I am a soother
Missing the train.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

Where is the action
What is this life
Where is attraction
What is my wife.

Where is the motion
What is the rhyme
Where is commotion
What is just mine.

Is there a difference
Is there a sense
What is true reverence
What is no nonsense.

This booklet is written in first instance for people that realize that they need God (although I hope and pray that the lone sinner will listen) . Since humans have turned their backs on their Maker in the Garden of Eden, the soul experiences a vacuum. God did not create this vacuum to make us search for Him, as some pious authors have claimed. This emptiness is a direct consequence of our godless attitude.

I do not at all feel the need to advance intellectual proof that would have to serve to establish that God must have created the universe and that therefore the evolution theory must have been thought up. The missing links, that is the fact that links are missing, indeed show that the human being did not develop over millions of years, but that there have been basic species from the very start; with the genetic possibility of variation within the different species. This is called polyphyletic (or polygenetic) over against monophyletic development, or micro-evolution versus macro-evolution, for those in the know. In other words, God made various basic types of animals out of which all the other ones developed. Evolutionary theory claims that all species developed out of one archetype through the process of endless speciation. Nor do I desire to employ the old proofs for the divinity by Thomas Aquinas (who was inspired by Aristotle, called the philosopher by him) . I attempt to point out to you that all major streams within the so-called great religions are useless as far as our

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

salvation is concerned and that they are at least ridden with inconsequences. In the end religion is the invention of your own god. In this Feuerbach was right: "Everybody makes his own god(s) ."

Does this mean then that we have to throw all religion overboard? No, of course not. For then we turn ourselves into gods, with all the ensuing evil. Is this too heavy for you? You do not want to think about this? Consider well that if you reject all religion, you make yourself your own divinity. You are then responsible for your own code of conduct and for your children's lives and ultimately you will have to answer to the entire global village. I do not exaggerate. If you are totally autonomous, then there is no absolute cadre of reference in which man can live. Dostojevski understood this very well. Also the existentialists realized this, but as non- or even anti-christians. And their children now opt madness. We simply are doing our own thing, fix the environment where necessary and further are waiting when disaster will strike. Human life is a ship at sea with a thousand, no a million helmsmen, who all think they know what they are doing. Is it strange then that things are the way they are? That we can exist at all we owe to the grace of God. You see, God simply must be there, because without Him we are like sheep without a shepherd. Who else but God can reign over us? Who else than our own Maker can tell us the who, why, when and how?

I am very well aware that we so-called christians have not lived up to our name. Often we have run amuck and have ruined things. Protestants are just about all their own theologians. Yet there is a difference of day and night between true christians and non-christians or merely nominal ones. The christian knows him- or herself in the hand of Christ. The non-christian is doomed to either some form of superstition or some form of scepticism; both are disastrous.

If you are a thinker, then you will find my proof for God's existence rather cheap. You might hold it against me that I jump to conclusions. Maybe you are a physicist that has learned to trust his own eyes. You know about atoms and quarks and you once asked yourself where the divinity could be. Well, I dare argue that the christian faith is reasonable and 'logical' (Rom. 12.1) . It is not a leap into the dark á la Kierkegaard, as if the bible were irrational. Faith is not nonsensical, but transcends the limits of reason. "As the heavens are higher than earth, so My ways are above yours," the Lord says. Yet God bows down and puts a staircase between heaven and earth.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

I have already pointed out that there is no mathematical proof for either God's existence or His character. If we could prove God by means of mathematics or the laboratory, then His Person would be no different from ours, or even would be like a plant or a stone. But there are indications that He must exist. Mathematics is for the material world, faith and emotion is for a higher world. Therefore the laboratory will always be down to earth, earthy. But faith belongs to a spiritual world that cannot at all be comprehended by math or the lab. Neither can your emotions and deepest motivations be represented by an equation. If you insist in a headstrong fashion that the universe began with the Big Bang, then I turn the tables on you and reproach you with being irrational. Whence then came the material, energy, conditions and all the necessary things to develop an intricate human as yourself? Geneticists argue that intelligence is determined partially or mainly by biology; where then is the biological determination in the Big Bang? Whence all the superbly accurate order witnessed in the universe? Did this all arise through dumb luck? Yes? Then you are irrational, not I.

I doubt that man will ever find conclusive proof beginning with math or the lab and ending with the divinity. God and creation do not fit in one formula; for then both would be part of a still higher world. God is living in an unapproachable light and being the highest does not fit in an equation with matter. God being the Maker of matter, however, must have its equation! Therefore it remains a question of faith, a leap of emotion as it were; just as a child leaps into the arms of his father to be saved out of a house on fire. But it is a far crazier leap to deny God. For then you jump into the hopeless, senseless and godless world of your own responsibility; into the flames. I repeat: if the divine does not exist, then in fact we are all our own gods. In that case you can restrain a mass murderer out of self-defense, but you do not have the right to condemn him. For he is his own god, with his own feelings no matter how strange they may seem. However, if you want to believe with me in God, you can appeal to the rule: "Thou shalt not murder."

Kant and other philosophers attempted to establish ethics or a code of conduct. But the central problem they all faced was the extrapolation of the human dimension into the divine. Reasoning from the human dimension one cannot possibly conclude to a universal law. For what human are we to take as an example for all the others? Therefore, every philosophy is the product of the philosopher that proposes it. There is only one human that is worthy for such an endeavor and that is Christ Jesus. If we take Him as the paragon of virtue, then we can begin to undertake it to establish

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

rules for comportment. Not Muhammad, not Buddha, not Confucius are apt or worthy for this. Christ cannot be accused of a single weakness or sin.

Faith then is indeed a kind of leap, from your own individual, limited ego into the Other, into the divinity Who wants to be your All in all.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

CHAPTER II

Why we Humans are Lost in Ourselves

Perhaps you will say, "Very well, to each his own." But that is exactly the problem. If we do not recognize God, then we are left to our own devices. Throughout the ages the Lord not only has given chances to any form of religion, but also to any form of politics. They all end. They all dissolve and evaporate into nothing. At best they take on another form again. Why? Because man wants to live without his Maker. As if planet earth could exist without the sun as its powerhouse. So also one culture after another bites the dust, one philosophy, one theory after another. 'Panta rhei: Everything is in motion and changes.' Yet "God is the same, yesterday, today and for ever," the Scripture states.

I am not against change per se, but I argue that the human being is so unstable because he tries to go his own way in everything. Would you trust your car to a three year old? Would you trust your jumbo jet to somebody that has had only a few flying lessons? How arrogant and unwise then are you to think that you and a few of your buddies can rule planet earth! I do not incite readers to political agitation against the political establishment, but I am personally convinced that there is something very much wrong with the human being, and with his systems; including with myself.

What then is wrong? I call it autotheism, selfidolatry in the sense of being your own god. Our own ego elevates itself to deity and seeks its way independently from the real deity. That is the crux of the problem. That is essentially what is wrong with us. We refuse to recognize God above ourselves and they that claim they do often cannot be trusted. "There is a way that seems right to a person and the end thereof is death," Solomon said. Death now and eternal death and punishment in hell later, I may add. God tells us that in ourselves we are lost. That is to say, we are totally wrong and eternal disaster is to follow as a consequence.

We are lost, because we are insulting God. Would you accept it if you were ignored all the time? Perhaps you would not succumb under a temporary overpowering influence, but a continuous dead panning silence probably would make you mad. If then it is mean to pester a human, how sinful is it then to blaspheme the Lord and Maker of the universe!

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

In the first chapter we mentioned the Fall of man already. Now we want to elaborate on that. What actually happened? Satan persuaded Eve that she would be as God, with knowledge of good and evil. Adam fell into transgression willingly, but Eve was seduced. In Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezechiel 28:9, 11-19 faithful bible commentators see the person of satan himself. It was his sin to want to be equal to God. God is absolutely unique and exalted, infinite in infinitudes and without any weakness. Deep in our hearts we want to be like that. Eve desired the forbidden. Moreover she did not realize that if we all are like God, then there is no God. She did not understand that it is theologically impossible. Essentially what she desired was the moral death of God's uniqueness; spiritual murder of her Creator, deicide.

God simply had to plant that test tree in the garden of Eden to remind the first human couple Who was in charge and to see whether or not they would choose to obey Him out of love. And the result of murder of God was then indeed death, first spiritual and finally physical. God is not unrighteous in this as I will attempt to make clear. Moreover when I remember the arms of my beloved one, or when I see a healthy baby at its mother's breast; then I simply know that God created the universe and all therein, so as to embrace us with countless blessings.

Original sin, or autotheism, is found in all of humanity and in all demons. It is this original pride that is the root of all sin, while the love of money is a root of all sin. Sayings like 'living as god in France' or 'he is playing god over us' show us this. Let us take a look at the symptoms of autotheism. The soccer fanatic that berates the other team with all kinds of abuse, uses soccer to play god. The chess player that attempts to destroy everybody else on the 64 fields of the checker board, is definitely trying to play god as well. Or not to leave anything intact of somebody's character, that is indeed putting yourself on the throne. But another way also enables us to play god, for instance by identifying with what we perceive to be a champion; be it a film star, singer or anybody that is good at something. He or she is then our god and we are actually him or her, or are one with them in our subconscious.

If we fail to satisfy our original sin then we become frustrated. Actually we all are more or less frustrated. And that should be no surprise. For only One can really be God. Frustration can take the form of both a superiority and an inferiority complex. What is the latter but the nauseated feeling of 'I fail to satisfy myself.' And what is the first but the deception of ourselves. We then attempt to compensate. Anything

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

can serve to take the emptiness away, such as food, sex, drugs or some kind of psychological game. Uncontrolled smoking and drinking are obvious symptoms of the powerless rage that wells up in the sinner that sought himself but to no avail. Hurt pride can take the form of depression or jealousy. It can even show itself in exaggerated guilt. If I feel guilty because I stole ten bucks and then give a thousand in return; then I am overcome by a proud conscience. Yet it is possible to experience the healing power of forgiveness. But then we have to stop with our autotheism. "For everybody that wants to save his life, will lose it, but he that loses his life because of Me or the gospel, will preserve it (Mat.16. 25) ." We can only learn to forgive others and ourselves if we obey the example of the cross. Christ suffered for sin there, absolutely without evil gain.

Perhaps you think I must be naive to think that behind various psychological phenomena hides the pride of original sin. But probably you will pay attention to psychologists that reason about our deep rooted aggression and/or Eros à la Freud, that can crop up in all kinds of ways. Why then not go a step beyond that and wonder whether that deep seated aggression may be a feeling of frustration that haunts all of us since the Fall of man!? For an ideally healthy person would not be bothered by such foibles.

Original sin shows itself in all kinds of moral sins. The megalomania of Napoleon is clear to many, particularly because he himself said that a million soldiers meant little to him. If he had had space ships, then he would have desired to conquer the universe and be proclaimed god instead of just emperor. But when somebody keeps going on and insists to annoyance that he is right at whatever, is that not the same thing in small! When a man entertains a mistress, is he not degrading the womanhood of his once true love and is he not exalting his macho ego above both? And so actually he also degrades himself. Mostly when a woman grows tired of her husband's unmannerliness and demands a divorce, she not only gives up on him, but actually herself. Many divorced people fail to recuperate and keep making a mess of it.

Indeed we are everything but perfect and if we were to take a close look at those that are called popular, great, or so-called saints among us and if we could read their thoughts; then we would recoil in horror. The bible is very realistic in this. Nobody is a saint. "For the word of God is living and powerful and cuts sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and perceives the thoughts and deliberations of the heart, "(Hebr.4.12) . In other words, the bible gives us the deepest motivation of humankind, or is the best depth psychology. Examples of our sinful motivation

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

abound for somebody that has spiritual discernment. It seems that we humans are infinitely inventive to find out psychological games, tactics and objects. Job said it thousands of years ago to his friends: "Why are you guys playing God over me?" (Job 19. 22) .

All religions are in fact autotheistic groups that all are gods unto themselves and over and over against the others. The rationalist uses the ratio to accomplish this, the atheist matter, the mysticist the soul and the polytheist the spirit. Because this booklet is not an anthropology, I cannot enter into this material any further; but hopefully you can see that there is something to be said for this. For it is the spirit that makes contact with the spirits of polytheism, the fallen angels that stand behind these traditions; it is the feeling of the soul that searches for the ultimate enlightenment; reason that seeks out the perfect science; and it is the body that must be nourished with comfort.

"Why would this have to be sinful?" somebody will object. It is rather that we do this in a sinful way. We use part of ourselves so as to be gods unto ourselves. In all this no due respect is awarded to the real God. If you give something very dear and special to your child, do you not expect some measure of respect, thankfulness and even love in return? It is no different with God. Not that He is dependent on us, but He deserves our all as He gave us our all. And the good thing is, if we choose to surrender to our Maker, Christ, then He gives us eternal life.

A disadvantage of our games is also always that it focuses on something and doing so neglects other things; particularly the heavenly destiny, but also all kinds of practical matters. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be," the Lord said. Where is your treasure, dear reader? Is that your car, your career, or new partner? Or is Christ Himself your treasure?

"The heart is more crooked than any thing, yes mortally sick it is; who can know it?" (Jer.17. 9) . Satanism is the actualized consciousness of our deeply rooted rebelliousness against God. That is also its curse. A rationalist or atheist can still hide behind his idols and ideals, but the satanist is ravished by hatred against his Maker. Yet Satanism possesses a certain measure of consequence in itself. It could be called the ultimate humanism. "We are it; God is our enemy. "

Why do we experience so much difficulty when we are caught in mistakes, particularly moral flaws? God is perfect and we are so as well in our foolish hearts! It is simply too much for our evil nature to admit that we are very wrong, let alone to

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

be accused of sinfulness or even to be convicted of guilt of eternal perdition. But if you insist on rejecting the eternal Creator Who in His holiness must visit home any form of lack and wrong, is it not righteous then that at a certain point He rejects you in return?

Even the highest feats of altruism are often done by a philanthrope to aggrandize himself or for some other ulterior motive and not in the first place to serve God and fellow men. This also is a symptom of pride and therefore sin.

In this time when individualism is just about the most important manifesto of society, this is difficult to explain. Other cultures make people to play gods unto themselves through for instance some kind of exaggerated team spirit. But in the Western world people consider themselves numero uno. I do not want to claim that people should look at me as preserving the right balance in this, but I do conclude that the bible is right in that God is the odd one out; both in worldly forms of collectivism and individualism. In the one case you play god thanks to the group and in the other one thanks to yourself. In both cases the autotheistic heart attempts to be satisfied at the cost of Him to Whom we owe our very existence.

Autotheism gives one a false feeling of completeness and of having arrived. "This is it; here is where it's at!" But that this feeling is very insecure, may be inferred from the fact that we fail to find complete satisfaction. Always more money, more sex, more power, learning or whatever.

Until we find rest in God, we must wander as if in a desert. Why? Because only Christ can alleviate our thirst and He does offer help, but we stubbornly refuse!

As long as we avoid our Maker, we are bound to look for a surrogate. This always entails the necessary trouble. For if something is your idol, you will sooner or later fear that something will happen to it. And that will inevitably take place, just because we neglect other things that will demand attention in due time.

Critics might argue that the idea of original sin and of autotheism explains everything and therefore nothing. But if God really is at the center of the universe and also exercises His rights, then the bible declares all our behavior since the Fall of man sinful. For deep in our hearts we are jealous of God and we imitate Him in ways great and small.

That we really want to be gods unto ourselves and play god over others, may be abundantly clear from the lives of megalomaniacs like Napoleon and Hitler. But also

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

people that are struck with a psychosis are evidence of this. All forms of criminal behavior prove that our sinful heart desires to extol itself. Moreover it adds the extra flavor of going beyond social boundaries.

Because of original sin our hearts are actually autistic. We have been imprisoned in a monomania of 'How do I satisfy myself?' Mormons go so far in this that they dare claim that we can become gods.

At the risk of ridicule I have to say that even films like the ones of Laurel and Hardy satisfy a morbid desire in us to view others as irreparably dumb. What do these films give us more than a halfhearted security that we are not that stupid after all; no matter how brilliant it is to act in such a laughable fashion?

Without God there can be no hope. Hence the endless series of horror movies. For if we are totally left to our own devices, we can fall victim in any possible way.

Rationalizing a personal God and a personal devil away, simply demands a surrogate. Batman and the Joker, God and the devil; we and the Taliban, God's nation and the godless! Pushing away the real, opens our heart up to all kinds of deceit and sops to keep us busy.

Among atheists it is an ideal to be beautiful or strong, a model or an athlete. Among rationalists genius is praised. Among mystics the enlightened one or holy one is the leader and among polytheists the guru is the one where it is at. But among Christians Christ receives all honor.

Christ humiliated Himself to the status of servant of all. But we fight like animals in a picking order for a place on the social ladder of our little world. Those at the bottom have the hardest time. Those in the middle are mean. Below them are the weaklings, but for those above them they have at best identification, adulation, or false humility. If we were to imitate Christ, all this hypocrisy would disappear.

The expression 'Brown, Jones and Robinson,' is again an indication of autotheism. A comparable expression is 'the man in the street.' Millionaires use such expressions to point to the workers, the mathematicians to put down the dumbos that do not know the difference between tangent and co-tangent. The Hollywood stars use them for the outsiders. Then there is the contempt by urban dwellers for the 'peasants' and the other way around. In this way we all cancel each other out and prove ourselves guilty of deifying what is our own.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

We christians are guilty of the same. Too often the world is not loved in the good sense (as in "God loved the world" John 3. 16) , but is simply and self-conceitedly considered to be those that are on their way to hell. And why is it so difficult to love one another with uprightness and to forgive each other whole-heartedly? Because the other is seen as the evil party which like the devil deserves total destruction, as if they had committed the unpardonable sin against us.

At the moment when somebody becomes a world champion or is elected for something important, there is no more or hardly no more attention for all other things. That is repressed in most cases. "Now I am on top of the world!" The junkie, sex addict, gambler and alcoholic attain to the same thing in their way!

Must I be even more explicit in my explanations about the Fall of humankind and its consequences? It is very likely, in my opinion, that original sin also causes us to have all kinds of memory lapses and difficulty with learning anything. For God does not have to learn anything and understands everything already! That is why it is so hard to convey any new theory, particularly to those that self-conceitedly think they are completely in the know. (Adam, before the Fall, did not experience difficulty with language, but discerned the animals and gave them a fitting name) .

Let us rather talk about God Himself. He cannot really just and simply condone our mistakes and foibles. He chooses to bear with us, but He is not some kind of Saint Nick. That would be totally inappropriate, first and foremost because our behavior equals murder.

It has not been simply ignorance that caused the Jews, Romans and the Greeks to kill the Christ. They knew very well that He claimed to be the Son of God and therefore divine Himself; just as the son of a king is also royal. Therefore we are not only psychologically but also historically guilty of deicide, the murder of God. And just like Germans again and again are conduced to rectify their historical behavior and cannot hide behind the argument that they have nothing to do with the murder committed by their ancestors, for they are their own parents, so also we, everybody for him or herself, must disassociate ourselves from the historical murder of God by the then religious, political and cultural world. Particularly, because by your own behavior you confirm this murder.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

God is holy. That is to say, he has nothing to do with sin. He is light and love and life. How sin entered the world at the level of satan and his angels (satan was the highest angel) , the bible only says about that that satan thought to equal or even rival God. It is clear that also angels are no robots, but beings with responsibility and the freedom to reject that responsibility; just like us.

In connection with this a satanist could reason that God is guilty, because satan could fall prey to evil. But who are we, who call the evil of autotheism good, and therefore call what is good in God's eyes evil in our own eyes; to accuse God? God did not create robots (either angels [and satan was the highest one], or humans) , but beings that continue to choose Him, or reject Him: according to their own choice. God is looking for volunteers, not forced or paid labor. And God gives you daily the opportunity to opt for Him.

If God were a Saint Nick, then we had nothing to fear. But it should be clear He is not, for the consequences of the Fall of Adam, such as death, disease and natural disasters, visit us. These consequences should remind us that we are dependent on His grace and mercy and that life is a temporary gift. These stark realities should induce us to take better care of ourselves. But war after war show that we learn nothing. We actually use death to destroy the other to our own advantage.

When I count my blessings, despite all heavy disappointments, then I do see through all things that He means well and that He has my good at heart. But I often choose wrong and foolish things. This is a battle that characterizes even the greatest christians and the sad thing is that often or perhaps most of the time we are 'blissfully' unaware of the fact how we unconsciously opt for the bad.

That God is righteous, does not only mean that He owes us nothing anymore after we chose against Him, but also that He must separate us from Himself for ever; which is eternal perdition. For the spiritual murder of the Infinite and Eternal One demands an infinite and eternal punishment. He could have judged Adam and Eve right after the Fall and so have stopped history. But only His righteousness and power would have been proven then, not His Love.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

CHAPTER III

God as Judge and Savior

That we are all guilty before a holy God, should be clear. For, are you better than all those so-called civilized German husbands that changed into killing machines? Or is only the German nation historically guilty of the murder of six million Jews? Today even the word race is suspect--particularly because of how the Nazis used it. And indeed, as far as our conscience is concerned all of humanity stands as one race. It is not for nothing that so many Neo-Nazis want to deny this genocide (and so the Turks the Armenian one) . The conscience is burdened by it. And who wants that?

We people do not want to feel guilty and insist that our lives are correct to our own knowledge. Almost all criminals therefore claim to be innocent or at least justified. Prisons are full of upright inmates! And you, are you better? Do you not understand that our being so-called worthy citizens is just a veneer? Where the universe is proof positive of God's greatness, there human sinfulness--in various degrees of craftiness--is negative proof of God's Holiness.

Because God is holy--not therefore some kind of Saint Nick, neither indeed a bully--He cannot forgive anything, no matter how small in our eyes, just like that. Let us take a quick look again at the various points of view. The sociological and atheist stance is that there is no God and that people in general do their best. Criminals are sick and must be taught some kind of (moral) decency. According to this ideology we must be tolerant one to the other. The concept of forgiveness here is hollowed out and brought down to a so-called tolerance in the idiosyncratic plurality of humankind. In the first place there is no question of guilt, let alone sinfulness towards each other and over against the divinity.

The internal tensions inherent to such an attitude are found exactly in that so-called tolerance. In practice it usually boils down to this that birds of a feather flock together. The others are not understood and can go to hell when push comes to shove. Actually tolerance is impossible here when things become really serious. It consists merely in a dubious live-and-let-live psychology. This ideology therefore

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

produces a kind of melting pot where people like loose sand are stuck together and where all kinds of fights flare up with the necessary regularity.

The rationalistic and deistic stance holds that God either is not almighty and therefore He is very forgiving and tolerant towards us, or He is almighty but He has left us more or less to our own devices and lets us free to make the best of it. In this kind of theology our mistakes towards each other and towards God are not in the first place a question of guilt, but of necessary imperfection. God simply has to forgive us, because we are unable to perform better. Inherent in this point of view is a complaint in God's direction, or an haughty sympathy for His good will. This causes the necessary tensions. For either we have to do with an imperfect God, or with a God that seems to abandon us to our own troubles. Both are a lie of Satan who wants people, even the religious, to be blinded with naive visions.

The mystical stance is opposite to this. According to it there would be question of a kind of mysterious and pantheistic mix of good and evil, which is however so binding on our guilt that an almost endless cycle of life and death is required to liberate us from negative karma. The inner tension of this point of view is the question why we seemingly have to suffer endlessly because of our guilt. For we desire what is good, but we have to pay spiritually to no end. Another problem inherent to this theology is among other things a selfish indifference to the suffering of others, for they are considered to be punished for their own deeds in another life.

The polytheist stance is the most unbearable of all. For an endless array of divinities must be placated. Offerings and daily attention to many superstitious details, must be the means to make the gods favorable to us. That indeed demons stand ready here to confirm people in their beliefs, is definitely true. The intrinsic tension and inconsequence of this kind of theology, is that one can simply never honor all the gods and that therefore your own guilt and/or failings can come home to hit you any time. It is impossible to remain faithful here to the end.

Both points of view have a paradoxical identity, even though they are mutually opposite. The one rationalizes guilt away and the other makes it unconquerable. In this they have in common that the truth of the real God is suppressed. So also the mystical and rationalistic theology, even though mutually opposite, have this in common that in both cultures forgiveness and tolerance are cheap in the end.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

In passing I mention the main tensions of materialism. An endless stream of goods and services remains an illusion for most people. Moreover in the end it cannot really make anybody happy.

In short we can conclude that in deism and mysticism (including all forms of Islam and Judaism) the Person of God is either too supreme and aloof or too meddling and interfering and therefore in mutually opposing ways equally distorted. In materialism and pantheism God has been equally put away into the background and in atheism and polytheism, God has equally been reasoned out of the picture.

After this detour I would like to show you something of the true theology and theodicy. Of course the Lord of lords Himself only is the true theodicy. According to Hebrews 1.1 "God spoke through His Son." Therefore Christ is the Revelation of God as presented in the bible, the living Word of God. False religions cause false conversions, without fruit for eternity and without real freedom for your life. "The truth will set you free," Christ said. And that indeed will happen when all true believers are clothed with their eternal and glorified bodies. But also earthly life in our temporary tents can have a peace, freedom and wholesome joy without the tensions of pseudo philosophies. True conversion is at once the most easy and the most difficult of all conversions and therefore the work of the Holy Spirit. Easy because all God demands is that you confess your guilt uprightly. Difficult to impossible because true faith demands the abrogation, the setting aside of all your pride.

Contrary to this, in the case of the various world views we passed, it boils down to your own input alone. God however testifies that we in ourselves are totally unable to save ourselves from ourselves. We all fall short of His righteous standards. We stand naked, guilty and alone. There awaits us an abrupt perdition, just because we keep hanging on to our own supposed righteousness. We are totally lost, because consciously or subconsciously we saddle our Maker with our problems. We tend to blame Him rather than ourselves. Even mysticism and polytheism are guilty of this, because they lay an impossible burden upon us and therefore subconsciously leave our Maker stuck with the problems we caused for ourselves.

The problem is that since the fall of Adam we do nothing else but attempting to satisfy ourselves and to honor ourselves. We are our own gods; everybody is his own god. However, it is the God of the Bible Who alone is worthy of all honor and dignity. He created all things well, but we turn on Him. Therefore, every theology

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

that does not see and recognize this, is a false theology, taught by demons, despite whatever face value in wisdom and piety.

Now we can also see what transpires everywhere. The devil fools people into believing all kinds of lies and so leaves them in a pit with false tensions. The true tension between God and man is denied and the true solution--the gospel--is raped. How? By promising something else: the workers' paradise, the terrorists' paradise, the technology paradise, or whatever Nirvana thought up by men.

The true tension is that we begrudge God's greatness and that we put ourselves on His throne like blinded, autistic and dumb ostriches. If we could, we would kill Him, but all we can succeed at is to rationalize Him out of our lives. Actually we did kill Him, namely when He manifested Himself on earth in the Person of Christ. Our decide inevitably leads to homicide and even genocide, for even the most insignificant amount of indifference is in fact the murder of the other and in the first place of God.

There are only two possibilities: either God is your Judge, or He is your Savior. In the first case there awaits you an eternal perdition as punishment for your unrelenting pride, in the second case He already has been your judge and Christ has borne endless pain for you on the cross of Golgotha. The punishment in both cases is endless, for our pride is directed against the Infinite One. But Christ Himself is God and could take this pain upon Himself.

We can also understand now that Judaism and Islam are actually rationalistic and deistic philosophies, or they subside in some kind of mystical belief. For without Christ there is no real forgiveness and therefore Jews and Muslims are forced to believe that it all depends on their own efforts of humility and subjugation towards the deity. This attitude is however actually hypocritical, for no true confession has been made. Without the precious blood of Christ and without a pleading of God on this basis there can be no true confession and forgiveness at all. We can understand the apostle Paul now who taught that Mosaic law is a kind of pedagogic leader up to Christ (see Galatians 3. 24) and that the sacrifices that God instituted in ancient times are types of Christ (cf. Hebrews 8) . God demands from you also a sacrifice. And that is that you give yourself over to Christ come in the flesh as the eternal Son of God and that you do so with a totally repentant heart. The giving up of your pride is no sacrifice, but a first necessity. Pleading on basis of Christ's sacrifice, that is your just offer and pleasing to God the Father.

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

Being Born Again

True confession of guilt, honoring Christ as Lord and the belief in one's heart that Christ has been raised from among the dead, is the true conversion wrought by the Holy Spirit, by which one is born again. Other points of view can only effect change, whether it be in criminals, soldiers, or through whatever program of education. In some mystical religions there even is question of being born again, but these are only changes of character. 1 John 5. 1 and John 1. 12, 13; 3. 3-8 witness to the fact that true conversion means being born again out of God. The human being as we are by fallen nature, is so corrupt that God does not even attempt changing it, let alone renewing it. Together with Christ we must die unto this world and then one day we will also rise with Him at the resurrection of our bodies that have fallen asleep.

Let us take a look again at the various points of view within the Christian pale; realizing at the same time that the history of Christian faith is so varied that a smorgasbord of opinions and theologies is presented to us. However, somewhere in this wild forest the golden truth is to be found and we will see again that most ideas either fall short of truth or exaggerate it.

The Roman Catholic does not emphasize conversion the way the Protestant does that. With them it is a question of being saved through the sacraments, which are a means of obtaining grace and through which we can exist in front of the Almighty. Upon death one is subjugated to the purifying fire of purgatory, which is a kind of gateway or antechamber to heaven. I am therefore afraid that most Catholics are totally unaware of true conversion, for in practice the central message of the gospel does not reach their minds, let alone their hearts. For grace is hindered here by means of a host of so-called saints and by a manmade ecclesial hierarchy, and personal responsibility for a positive choice in God's direction is neglected or exaggerated. Also the doctrine of purgatory shows that they do not really believe in the sufficient and one-time atonement of Christ. A Roman Catholic is not allowed to believe that he or she has been saved for ever by the precious and efficacious blood of Christ. One is condemned to remain in spiritual limbo here. However, Christ did not do half a job, which even upon death must be completed by an endless seeming period of suffering in purgatory.

Where the Catholic is fooled into believing that it all depends on the sacraments, there some evangelicals can be fooled into believing that with a simple sinners' prayer they are saved from eternal wrath. But also here the heart often remains

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

untouched and one fools oneself that everything is alright. In practice such people simply carry on and in fact still without God.

Some very conservative christian thinkers go to the opposite extreme and are fooled into believing that only a kind of letter out of heaven addressed to their very own persons, can assure them of eternal salvation. In practice this usually means that after years of spiritual toiling and sighing after that ever elusive true conversion, one reaches a crisis point, a veritable valley of the shadow of death, in which God seems to address them personally to tell them that they can now count themselves among the blessed.

However, God has spoken sufficiently through His Word and I dare claim that the above is just another emotional game that the wicked heart is playing. Where the Roman Catholic spreads out grace to the masses, making it cheap, here grace becomes as it were more expensive than God has made it. Yes, this is possible. One indeed can exaggerate God's demands and make His costly grace look like something as the ever evasive holy grail. But what does Scripture say? "Everyone that is thirsty, let him come and take for nothing!" And also: "Buy bread and wine (that is spiritually 'sustenance and joy') for nothing!" The Godly simplicity of the gospel stands over against those that want to picture it as a lonesome privilege and that want to turn it into something that as it were is forced from up above only upon some hypercalvinists. What are their efforts better than a misplaced penance in the tradition of Roman Catholicism that they so hate! This is in fact a kind of mysticism. Truly it is said to the church of Sardis (Protestantism) : "Thou hast the reputation of being alive, but thou art dead!"

Ephesians 5.14 says: "Therefore He says: Wake up, you that sleep and stand up from the dead; and Christ will shine over you." In fact this admonition is made powerless by some very conservative brothers and sisters, who have been indoctrinated with a morbid passivity. Often, in their case, only the Pastor dares partake at the table of the Lord and in some sectarian churches nobody does so. Such people think that they are all on their way to hell and that practically salvation is nearly impossible. No wonder that so many become psychologically depressed.

The wicked subconscious heart uses this theological indoctrination to not have to respond to the human side and responsibility of conversion; of which Jesus said that that is a basic condition belonging to the earthly things (John 3) . And then they even dare state with devilish hypocrisy that if only God will come to His honor, even if

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

that means that they are condemned for ever. But exactly in that case God does not come to His honor, for Scripture states that God has no satisfaction in the death of the godless.

Roman Catholics are spoken to personally to repent and convert only little, for emphasis falls on good works in combination with piety toward a hierarchy of saints and Mary who have to appease Christ and must intercede on behalf of the believers. But many Protestants are taught a conversion, under influence of a hypercalvinistic election doctrine, that thwarts the work of the Holy Spirit. Paradoxically both points of view, although mutually opposed, have this in common that one is under the law and therefore under judgment and abiding wrath. In both cases people do not respond in a simple and yet adequate way to the call: 'Repent!' The Catholics overly accentuate the responsibility of the church and the Protestants, particularly the hypercalvinists, overemphasize the responsibility of the individual. This makes the first group superficial and the latter group exaggerated, ending in an endless effort to theologize and psychologize themselves.

One cannot rightly state that to be not elected equates to being lost for ever. Nobody will ever be able to accuse God of suffering the eternal pains of hell, simply because God did not elect him or her. Yet hypercalvinism does imply this blasphemy.

The blessed truth of election and human responsibility to bow down for Christ, goes beyond the law of non-contradiction and therefore is a mystery that transcends human reason; just like the mystery of the Trinity and of the two natures of Christ: which also have been deflated by reasoning theology. God is suprarational, but not irrational. That is a paradox appearing in our eyes as a contradiction.

Just as hypercalvinism stands over against Roman Catholicism, so Calvinism is opposed to too light an evangelicalism. The Calvinist claims that one should keep to the law out of thankfulness and the evangelical usurps, supposedly through Christ, a freedom that is often akin to levity. Where the first one unfortunately runs the danger of putting himself (against the epistle to the Galatians) under law, there the latter runs the danger of putting himself more or less above the law. Paul simply says: "To live for me is Christ and to die is gain." For the apostle Paul, as is expounded in the N.T. clearly, Christ is the fulfilment of the law. Instead of abusing this truth, or instead of going to the opposite extreme, supposedly out of love, we are called to let Christ take over and let Him govern our lives directly and not through ourselves, nor through the law. "The letter killeth, the spirit maketh alive."

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

Also, then, these two points of view are mutually opposed. The one subsides in law, the other in false freedom. The paradoxical identity is that in both cases the true law of Christ remains unfulfilled, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. True freedom is to give one's heart, soul and strength entirely in devotion to Christ; not to the old system of law--which was meant as a pedagogue up to Christ, nor to a self proclaimed freedom that can only lead astray.

"But what then is true conversion according to you," you perhaps will wonder. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3) and cannot be explained by a simple, theological formula. Although in all Christian circles there are true converts, often without themselves realizing it, conversion is not preached correctly. In many cases even the need to repent is not stressed. Scripture teaches that both human responsibility and God's Providence play a role and together co-operate in a person. It is unprofitable to argue that man can resist God's grace. For if one were to answer this question negatively or positively, then one is forced to conclude that the human being is either a puppet, or is equal to God in the exercise of his will. But God does not throw dice, nor is the human being a robot. Conversion is a great mystery after the metaphor of the wind (John 3) . In practice a preacher must stress our own responsibility and afterwards one can show a true convert (one who has orally confessed that Christ is Lord and has believed in his or her heart that God has raised Him from the dead [Romans 10. 9]) that he or she has been elected from before the foundation of the earth.

But if you personally have not bowed before Christ yet and not yet have confessed Him Lord of lords and King of kings, come in the flesh as the eternal, incarnate Son of God and so raised; then all God says to you now is: "Repent NOW, before it is too late!"

EVERYBODY HIS OWN GOD?

EPILOGUE

The main rule of humanism is: 'Tolerate one another and respect one another.'
In practice this means the following:

'Let everybody play his/her own god till their very last breath.' To question the divinity or even some part of that divinity is sacrilege. Of course your own god, yourself in the end, is the only true god for you. But if it works for the other person, then why not, as long as they let you be. However if it does not appear to work and everybody has problems, then of course one can always attempt to convert them to your own deity.

I am not saying that by an about-face one now must become intolerant then. A seriously loving Christian should be able to tolerate a lot more than the 'cruel mercies of the godless' are capable of. Christ Himself plunged His own cross as a knife into the heart of idolatrous religiosity. As the apostle Paul confirms: 'I have been crucified to this world and this world has been crucified to me.' Only we should plunge this knife all over into our own 'heart of hearts.' Sacrifice and/or renew and rededicate it all, politics, empty religiosity, sexuality, economics and so on and so forth and become a true pilgrim for Christ, renewed according to spirit, soul and body.

The bible does not preach anarchy, or terroristic destruction, however. (In fact the bible teaches in Romans 13 that we should be obedient and subject to the powers that be) . What do you think the city of Nineveh faced when they converted upon the preaching of Jonah? Not transformation or renewal of their murderous and idolatrous system. The entire population was 'born again!' But as long as this world keeps rejecting the true Christ, we can only be a pilgrim church, through which we as strangers and temporary sojourners follow a rejected Christ.