

# Dr. Anthony Tomasino, The Ten Commandments

## Session 2: No other gods

### NotebookLM

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#### 1) Abstract:

Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino explores the **first commandment**, "You shall have no other gods," explaining its historical context for the Israelites. He differentiates between **monotheism** (belief in one God) and **henotheism** (worship of one God among potentially many), asserting that ancient Israel initially practiced henotheism. Tomasino contrasts Yahweh with other ancient Near Eastern deities, highlighting Yahweh's uniqueness as a **creator, sustainer, and moral example**. He argues that Israel's failures stemmed from violating this commandment, a pattern that largely ceased after the Babylonian exile. Finally, Tomasino applies the commandment to modern life, redefining "god" as anything people **cling to or rely on** besides the Lord.

#### 2. Briefing Document: Detailed Briefing Document: The First Commandment - "No Other Gods"

##### Overview

This briefing document synthesizes key themes, historical contexts, and modern interpretations of the first of the Ten Commandments: "You shall have no other gods before me." Drawing from Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino's teaching, "The Ten Commandments, Session 2: Commandment 1: No other gods," it explores the ancient Israelite understanding of "god," the unique demands of Yahweh, and the enduring relevance of this commandment in contemporary society.

##### Main Themes and Important Ideas/Facts

##### 1. The Revolutionary Nature of the First Commandment in Ancient Israel

The first commandment, "You shall have no other gods," was a radical departure from the polytheistic norms of the ancient Near East.

- **Polytheistic Milieu:** The Israelites emerged from a world, particularly Egypt, where "many, many gods" were worshipped. As Joshua 24 highlights, the Israelites themselves had likely worshipped Egyptian gods or Mesopotamian gods before the covenant with Yahweh.
- **Specialist Gods vs. Yahweh the "Jack-of-All-Trades":** Ancient Near Eastern gods were typically specialists, each with their own domain (e.g., green god for crops, storm god for rain, goddess of childbirth). People would pray to specific deities for specific needs. In contrast, Yahweh's demand was revolutionary: "if you're going to be my people, you are going to have to give up all those other gods, and you are going to worship me and me alone." Yahweh presented himself as the "jack of all trades," capable of fulfilling all needs, from successful harvests to winning battles and safe childbirth.
- **Monotheism vs. Henotheism:** In the early period, particularly at the time of Moses, the first commandment called for *henotheism* – the worship of only one God, Yahweh, even if other gods might exist. This was distinct from *monotheism*, the belief that only one God exists, which became a clear theological assertion later in prophetic texts like Isaiah 44:6: "I am the first, and I am the last, apart from me there is no other God."

## 2. Ancient Near Eastern Conception of "God"

Understanding what "God" meant to ancient Israelites and their neighbors is crucial.

- **Power as a Defining Attribute:** The typical Semitic word for God, "El" (Elu in Akkadian), is related to the word meaning "powerful." In the Middle East, the idea of a god was primarily "attached to the notion of power, of might, rather than the notion of eternity or the notion of holiness or righteousness."
- **Created, Not Eternal:** Unlike the later Israelite understanding of Yahweh, most ancient Near Eastern gods were believed to have "came into existence," being "born" or "created somehow." They did not eternally exist.
- **Supercharged Humans:** Gods were often conceived as "supercharged humans who lived in the heavens," possessing "magical energy" (heka in Egypt). They were like "people, particularly being like kings," but with special powers and often immortality (e.g., Greek definition: "What is a god? An immortal man. What is a man? A mortal god.").

- **Varied Attitudes Towards Humanity:** The attitudes of gods ranged from creating humans to do their unwanted work (Babylonian flood myth) to paternal/maternal care, or even animosity.
- **Divine Councils and Plurality:** Several Old Testament passages, such as the beginning of the Book of Job or Psalm 82, suggest a "divine council" or "plurality of divinities," where Yahweh "is being, of course, above all of those divinities, but not denying the possibility of other divine beings existing."

### 3. Key Differences of Israel's God (Yahweh) from Other Deities

- **No Theogony:** Unlike other gods, there is "no official theogony" or story of Yahweh's origin preserved in the Bible. This implies Yahweh's eternal and uncreated nature.
- **Creator and Sustainer:** Yahweh is uniquely understood as "the creator and sustainer of all things," not just Israel.
- **Ethical Modeling:** A crucial distinction is Yahweh's ethical nature. While ancient gods often behaved immorally (murder, adultery, rape), Yahweh demands holiness and models ethical standards for his people: "You are to be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." This links God's character directly to the behavior expected of his followers.

### 4. Interpretation of "Before Me" and the Centrality of the Commandment

- **Meaning of "Before Me" (lifni):** This phrase has several possible interpretations: "prior to," "with precedence, over," or "in my presence." The broader biblical context, including the Pentateuch and the prophets, clarifies that it means "to worship one and only one God" and "no other gods in Israel."
- **The Shema as Positive Formulation:** The Shema ("You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your might") is presented as the positive formulation of the first commandment. It implies complete devotion to Yahweh, leaving "no room for worshiping any other gods."
- **Root of Israel's Failures:** The consistent failure to keep the first commandment—worshipping other gods—is identified as "the heart of all of Israel's failures." Biblical narratives, particularly in Kings and the prophets

(Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea), attribute Israel's exile and defeats primarily to this apostasy, rather than other sins like murder or adultery.

- **Impact of Babylonian Exile:** The Babylonian exile seems to have purged Israel of its "infatuation with foreign gods." Post-exilic prophets and books like Chronicles show a marked decrease in concern about polytheism within Israel, indicating a shift towards stricter monotheism.

## 5. The First Commandment in the New Testament and Modern Application

- **Jesus and the "Greatest Commandment":** Although the first commandment is never explicitly quoted in the New Testament, Jesus affirms its positive formulation, the Shema, as "the greatest commandment."
- **Paul on Pagan Gods:** Paul's writings, while sometimes seemingly contradictory (pagan gods are "nothing" vs. "demons"), ultimately urge Christians to avoid participation in pagan worship, reflecting the core principle of exclusive worship of God.
- **Modern Relevance – Identifying Our "Gods":** In modern America, with its diverse religious landscape, the commandment's application extends beyond literal polytheism to identifying anything we "cling to and rely on" as our "god."
- **Martin Luther's Definition:** "Whatever your heart clings to and relies on, that is your god." This shifts the focus from literal idols to objects of trust and reliance.
- **Modern Idols:** Examples include "the almighty dollar," government, science, or even other people (codependents). These become "fake gods" if relied upon to meet needs that only God can fulfill.
- **Exclusivity of Worship:** While tolerance of other religions is appropriate in a pluralistic society, participation in their religious rituals crosses a line, as they do not worship "the same God that we do." True worship should be reserved for the Lord alone, who is the "only" one with the power, authority, and ability to meet all needs.

## Conclusion

The first commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," is not merely an archaic prohibition but a foundational declaration about the exclusive nature of

humanity's relationship with the one true God. Its historical context reveals a revolutionary demand for singular loyalty in a polytheistic world, emphasizing Yahweh's unique attributes as creator, sustainer, and ethical model. Its enduring relevance challenges individuals to identify and reject any modern "gods"—be they money, power, science, or human relationships—that usurp God's rightful place as the ultimate object of trust and reliance.

### **3) Study Guide:** Study Guide: The First Commandment - "No Other Gods"

This study guide is designed to help you review and deepen your understanding of Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino's lecture on the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods."

#### I. Core Concepts and Historical Context

- **The Analogy of the House Builder (Bob):** Understand how this analogy illustrates the demand for exclusive trust and reliance on one God, paralleling the First Commandment's requirement for the Israelites.
- **The Ancient Near Eastern Milieu: Polytheism in Egypt and Mesopotamia:** Recognize the prevalence of multiple gods in the lands where Israelites lived or from which they originated.
- **Specialization of Gods:** Understand the concept of gods having specific domains or responsibilities (e.g., god of rain, god of war, god of childbirth).
- **Conceptions of Divinity:** Explore the ancient world's understanding of what constituted a "god," often linked to power, immortality (in their own way), and a human-like or king-like nature.
- **Gods and Natural Phenomena/Life Processes:** Identify the common association of gods with elements of nature (sun, moon, wind) and processes like childbirth or plagues.
- **Attitudes of Gods towards Humanity:** Recall the varied portrayals of gods' interactions with humans, from indifference to paternal/maternal care, and even animosity.

- **Israelite Understanding of God (Yahweh) in Early Periods: Popular Conception:** Recognize that early Israelites might have initially viewed Yahweh as one powerful god among many.
- **Anthropomorphic Descriptions:** Understand how Yahweh was often described in human terms (hands, face, backside), even if not conceived as purely human.
- **Yahweh as a "Specialist" and "Jack of All Trades":** Grasp the revolutionary idea that Yahweh was not just a national god but the sole, all-sufficient deity for all needs.
- **Divine Council Passages:** Be aware of biblical references that suggest a plurality of divine beings, with Yahweh supreme among them.

## II. Distinctions of Israel's God (Yahweh)

- **Absence of Theogony:** Understand that, unlike other ancient Near Eastern gods, there is no official biblical story of Yahweh's origin.
- **Creator and Sustainer:** Recognize Yahweh's unique role as the one who brought all things into existence and sustains them.
- **Moral Character and Ethical Demands: "Holy as I am Holy":** Comprehend the concept that Yahweh's ethical nature is the basis for Israel's own ethical demands.
- **God as a Moral Model:** Understand that Yahweh sets and models the standards of morality for his people, unlike many other ancient gods.

## III. Interpretation and Evolution of the First Commandment

- **"Before Me" (לפני - lifni):** Explore the possible interpretations of this phrase (prior to, with precedence over, in my presence) and the ultimately clear intent of exclusive worship.
- **Henotheism vs. Monotheism: Early Israel (Moses' Time):** Understand that the call was primarily henotheistic – worshiping only one God, even if others might exist.
- **Later Prophets (Isaiah):** Recognize the shift to definitive monotheism, explicitly denying the existence of other gods.

- **Archaeological and Biblical Evidence of Polytheism:** Be aware of the historical reality of Israel's struggle with worshiping other deities, despite the commandment.
- **Impact of the Babylonian Exile:** Understand how the exile seemingly ended Israel's widespread infatuation with foreign gods.
- **Post-Exilic Period:** Note the changed focus of prophets and biblical books (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Malachi) regarding idolatry within Israel.
- **Syncretism:** Identify instances of syncretism, both within and outside of Israel (e.g., Amarna letters, Intertestamental period).
- **New Testament Perspective: Absence of Direct Quotation:** Note that the First Commandment is not directly quoted.
- **The Shema as Positive Formulation:** Understand Jesus' emphasis on loving God with all one's being as the "greatest commandment."
- **Paul's View on Pagan Gods:** Recognize Paul's varying statements on the existence/nature of pagan gods (nothing vs. demons) and his prohibition against participating in their worship.

#### IV. Modern Application

- **Religious Pluralism in Modern Society:** Understand the context of diverse religions in contemporary society and the distinction between tolerance and participation in other religious rituals.
- **Defining "God" (Martin Luther's Perspective):** Grasp Luther's definition: "Whatever your heart clings to and relies on, that is your god."
- **Modern Idols:** Identify contemporary "gods" that people cling to or rely on (e.g., money, government, science, other people) and how these can violate the First Commandment.
- **Exclusive Reliance on the Lord:** Reiterate the commandment's call for exclusive trust and reliance on Yahweh as the "jack of all trades" and the only one capable of meeting all needs.

#### Quiz: The First Commandment

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Explain the "Bob the Builder" analogy and how it relates to the First Commandment.
2. What was a common understanding of "gods" in the ancient Near East, particularly regarding their power and origin?
3. How did the Israelite understanding of Yahweh differ from typical ancient Near Eastern gods concerning a "theogony"?
4. According to Dr. Tomasino, what was unique about Yahweh's ethical demands on Israel compared to the gods of surrounding nations?
5. Distinguish between "henotheism" and "monotheism" as explained in the lecture.
6. How did the perception of the First Commandment's application to Israel evolve from the time of Moses to the later prophets like Isaiah?
7. What evidence does the lecture provide to suggest that early Israelites struggled with polytheism, despite the First Commandment?
8. According to the lecture, what major historical event in Israel's history seemed to largely end their widespread infatuation with foreign gods?
9. How does the New Testament, particularly through Jesus and Paul, address the essence of the First Commandment?
10. Based on Martin Luther's definition, what are some examples of "gods" in modern society that might violate the First Commandment?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The "Bob the Builder" analogy describes one contractor offering to do all the specialized jobs of house building himself, but only if all other specialists are dismissed. This illustrates the First Commandment's demand for exclusive trust and reliance on Yahweh alone, requiring the Israelites to abandon all other gods.
2. In the ancient Near East, gods were often associated with power and might, rather than eternity or holiness. They were typically understood to have come



into existence (born or created), and many were linked to natural phenomena or life processes, conceived as "supercharged humans" with special abilities like "mana" or "heka."

3. Unlike most ancient Near Eastern gods who had "theogonies" (stories of their origin), the Hebrew Bible contains no official story depicting Yahweh's beginning. If such stories existed, the Bible rejected and did not preserve them, emphasizing Yahweh's unique, un-originated existence as the creator.
4. Yahweh's ethical demands were unique because God based the people's ethics on His own holiness and expected His people to model His ethical standards. In contrast, many ancient Near Eastern gods were depicted as immoral, committing acts like murder or adultery, yet still expected justice from humans.
5. Henotheism is the belief in and worship of only one god at a time, without denying the existence of other gods. Monotheism, on the other hand, is the belief that only one God exists, denying the existence of any other gods whatsoever. Early Israel was called to be henotheistic, while later prophets proclaimed monotheism.
6. In Moses' time, Israel was called to be henotheistic, meaning they were to worship only Yahweh, even if other gods might exist. By the time of the later prophets, particularly Isaiah, the message evolved into definitive monotheism, explicitly stating that there is "no other God" apart from Yahweh.
7. The lecture points to Joshua 24's challenge to worship Egyptian or Mesopotamian gods, the widespread worship of Baal, and archaeological evidence supporting the prophets' claims of polytheism in Israel. It also highlights the frequent condemnations in the prophets of Israel's consistent drawing to other deities.
8. The Babylonian exile is identified as the major historical event that seemingly ended Israel's widespread infatuation with foreign gods. After enduring the "ringer" of exile and returning home, post-exilic prophets and biblical accounts (like Chronicles) no longer emphasize idolatry as a primary problem within Israel.

9. The New Testament does not directly quote the First Commandment but affirms its essence through Jesus' declaration of the Shema ("Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind") as the greatest commandment. Paul also urges Christians not to participate in pagan worship, recognizing that such gods are either nothing or demons.
10. Based on Martin Luther's definition ("Whatever your heart clings to and relies on, that is your god"), modern "gods" that violate the First Commandment could include the almighty dollar, government, science (expecting it to solve all problems), or even other people (in cases of codependency), as they become objects of ultimate trust and reliance instead of God.

### Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the evolution of the understanding of "God" (specifically Yahweh) among the ancient Israelites, tracing the shift from an initial, possibly henotheistic, perspective to the definitive monotheism proclaimed by later prophets. What historical and theological factors contributed to this development?
2. Compare and contrast the typical characteristics and behaviors of gods in the broader ancient Near Eastern context (e.g., Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek) with the unique attributes and demands of Yahweh as presented in the lecture. Focus on aspects like origin, moral character, and relationship with humanity.
3. Analyze the significance of the phrase "before me" (לִפְנַי - *lifni*) in the First Commandment. How does its interpretation, along with the broader biblical narrative (especially the Pentateuch and Prophets), clarify the commandment's ultimate demand for exclusive worship?
4. Explore the concept of "modern idols" as presented by Martin Luther and applied in the lecture. Identify specific contemporary examples of what people might "cling to and rely on" as their god today, and discuss the implications of such reliance in light of the First Commandment's call for exclusive trust in the Lord.
5. The lecture suggests that the failure to keep the First Commandment was at the root of many of Israel's troubles and ultimately led to exile. Discuss the

evidence presented for this claim and explain why the exclusive worship of Yahweh was considered so crucial for Israel's well-being and covenant relationship.

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Amarna Letters:** A collection of ancient Egyptian diplomatic correspondence, some of which provide evidence of syncretism among Israelites living in Egyptian colonies.
- **Anthropomorphic:** Attributing human characteristics or forms to non-human entities, particularly a deity. The lecture notes early Israelite conceptions of Yahweh in human terms.
- **Apostasy:** The abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief or principle. In the context of Israel, it refers to turning away from Yahweh to worship other gods.
- **Baal:** A prominent storm god worshipped across the ancient Near East, often in various forms. Israelites frequently struggled with the worship of Baal.
- **Cosmogonies:** Theories or accounts of the origin and development of the universe, or in this context, the origin of gods. Most ancient Near Eastern gods had creation stories, unlike Yahweh.
- **Cult (Cultic):** A system of religious belief and ritual. Refers to the practices and ceremonies of worship for a deity.
- **Dinger:** A Sumerian word for "god," whose meaning is not fully known.
- **Divine Council:** A concept found in several ancient Near Eastern mythologies and some biblical passages (e.g., Psalm 82, Job 1) depicting a group of divine beings over whom the supreme deity presides.
- **El:** A generic Semitic word for "God," apparently related to the word meaning "powerful," found in Hebrew and Canaanite dialects.
- **Elohim:** The Hebrew word for God, which is plural in form but often refers to a singular God (plural of majesty or might). It also appears in contexts suggesting a plurality of divine beings.

- **Ephod:** A type of garment or object associated with priestly functions and divination in ancient Israel. Micah used an ephod alongside teraphim.
- **Heka:** An Egyptian word for magical energy or power, believed to imbue gods and make them powerful.
- **Henotheism:** The belief in and worship of one god while accepting the possible existence of other deities. It means one only worships one god at a time.
- **Ishtar:** A prominent goddess in Mesopotamian mythology, associated with love, war, and fertility. Esther's name is based on Ishtar.
- **Marduk:** The chief storm god of the Babylonians, who in some poetry was described as having overarching power over different realms. Mordecai's name is based on Marduk.
- **Mithras Cult:** A mystery religion popular in the Roman Empire, centered around the god Mithras, mentioned as an example of pagan religions in the New Testament era.
- **Monotheism:** The belief in the existence of only one god, denying the existence of any other gods.
- **Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy).
- **Polytheism:** The worship of or belief in multiple gods.
- **Sabaoth:** A Hebrew word meaning "armies" or "hosts." Yahweh Sabaoth (Lord of Hosts) is a common title for God in the Old Testament, often implying a god of war.
- **Shamash:** The sun god in ancient Babylon, also associated with justice because the sun reveals and makes things clear.
- **Shema:** A central Jewish prayer from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, beginning "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Jesus called its core principle ("love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind") the greatest commandment.

- **Syncretism:** The combining of different beliefs, often contradictory, while melding practices of various schools of thought. In the context, it refers to blending the worship of Yahweh with other gods.
- **Teraphim:** Hebrew word for household idols or images, often associated with personal gods or divination. The lecture notes its plural form often refers to a single object, similar to *elohim*.
- **Theophoric Element:** A component within a name that refers to a god. For example, "Yah" in Jeremiah refers to Yahweh.
- **Theogony:** A story or account of the origin of a god or gods.
- **Yahweh:** The personal name of the God of Israel, often translated as "the Lord."
- **Zoomorphic:** Having or representing an animal form or gods that look like animals. Egyptian gods often had zoomorphic representations.

## 4) FAQs:

### What is the core meaning of the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods"?

The First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods," is fundamentally about exclusive worship and trust in one God. Historically, for the ancient Israelites, this was a radical departure from the polytheistic norm of the ancient Near East, where people worshipped many specialized gods. The commandment required them to forsake all other deities and place their entire reliance on Yahweh alone, who promised to be their "jack of all trades," capable of addressing all their needs, from successful harvests to victory in battle. This demand for exclusive devotion is further emphasized by the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), which calls for loving the Lord with all one's heart, soul, and might, leaving no room for other gods.

How did the ancient Israelites' understanding of "God" differ from modern conceptions?

For ancient Israelites and other cultures in the ancient Near East, the concept of "God" was primarily associated with power or might, derived from the word "El."

Unlike modern theological understandings, they didn't necessarily conceive of God as eternally existing or omnipotent in the absolute sense. Gods were often seen as "supercharged humans" living in the heavens, sometimes associated with natural phenomena (like the sun or wind) or life processes (like childbirth or plagues). They were specialists with distinct realms of influence. The Hebrew Bible, notably, doesn't offer a direct definition of God or a list of divine attributes like omnipresence or omniscience, as later theologians might.

What was the prevalent view of gods in the ancient Near East, and how did Israel's God stand out?

In the ancient Near East, gods were typically viewed as specialists, each with a specific domain or power, similar to how one would hire different contractors for various parts of building a house. They were often believed to have come into existence (not to be eternal) and could be human-like or zoomorphic (animal-shaped), possessing a special magical energy. Their attitudes toward humans varied widely. Israel's God, Yahweh, was distinct because, unlike the specialized gods, He demanded exclusive worship and presented Himself as capable of fulfilling *all* needs. Furthermore, while other mythologies detailed the origins of their gods, the Bible has no official "theogony" for Yahweh. Crucially, Yahweh was understood as the creator and sustainer of all things, and uniquely, He modeled morality for His people, expecting them to be holy as He is holy, a contrast to the often immoral behavior of other ancient deities.

Did early Israelites understand the First Commandment as strict monotheism (only one God exists) or henotheism (worship only one God among many)?

In the early period, particularly during Moses' time, the Israelites likely interpreted the First Commandment through a henotheistic lens. This meant they were called to worship only Yahweh, even if they believed other gods might exist. This was a radical idea for the time, as polytheism was the norm. Over time, particularly by the later prophets like Isaiah, a clear shift towards monotheism emerged, explicitly denying the existence of other gods ("apart from me there is no other God"). However, archaeological evidence suggests that despite the commandment, polytheism and syncretism (worshipping other gods alongside Yahweh) were persistent issues in Israel and Judah, which the prophets consistently condemned as the root of Israel's failures.

How did the failure to uphold the First Commandment impact Israel?

Violating the First Commandment was considered the most significant failure for Israel, leading to severe consequences. The source emphasizes that abandoning Yahweh and worshipping other gods was the primary reason for Israel's defeat, exile, and God's anger. Prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea consistently highlighted this apostasy as the fundamental cause of Israel's troubles, rather than other moral failings like murder or adultery, as exemplified in 1 Kings 9:6-9. The Babylonian exile, in particular, seems to have been a turning point, as post-exilic prophets generally stopped emphasizing idolatry, suggesting the lesson was learned within the land of Israel.

How is the First Commandment echoed in the New Testament?

While the First Commandment is not directly quoted in the New Testament, its essence is profoundly present. Jesus identifies the positive formulation of this commandment – the Shema, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind" – as the greatest commandment. Paul, in his writings, asserts that pagan gods are nothing or are demons, urging Christians to avoid participating in their worship. The early Church upheld a strict adherence to worshipping one God, with many Christians willing to die rather than violate this principle.

How can the First Commandment be applied to contemporary life?

In modern society, the First Commandment extends beyond literal worship of other deities. Martin Luther's interpretation, "Whatever your heart clings to and relies on, that is your god," offers a powerful contemporary application. This means anything people place their ultimate trust, hope, or reliance in, apart from God, can become an "idol." Examples include money, government, science, or even other people (as in co-dependency). The challenge today, as in ancient times, is to identify what we truly cling to and rely upon, ensuring that only the Lord occupies that supreme position in our lives, fulfilling all our needs.

What is the stance on interfaith relations from the perspective of the First Commandment?

While modern society values religious tolerance and understanding, the First Commandment implies a distinction in worship. The source suggests that Christians can be humble guests and learn from other religions, gaining insight into

their neighbors and even their own faith. However, it draws a line at actively participating in the religious rituals of other cultures, as "they are not worshiping the same God that we do." While not advocating for purging society of other religions, it emphasizes purging one's *own heart* of "pagan gods," affirming that not all religions worship the same God despite common claims to the contrary.