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## The Congress of the Gods (trans. by Ari Kokko)

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## The Congress of the Gods

This story was originally published  
in a book called *Book*, written  
by Tage Danielsson.  
Translated by Ari Kokko.

It became time for the Congress of Gods, and gods from all corners of heaven came along the Milky Way toward the festively illuminated House of Gods, which is right next to the Andromeda Galaxy, the first turn to the left, and there it is, the large house on your right hand.

It was an important Congress coming up. The first item on the agenda was namely the question of whose fault World War II was — this was the first Congress after the end of the war, because there is, as you all know, no hurry out there in the universe.

The speaker, an insignificant little wrinkled traditional god, who had gotten into the Congress because some wild tribes in Bechuanaland believed in him (one has to have at least 10,000 votes to become a god with a seat in the Congress) hailed everybody welcome. Right thereafter Buddha demanded the floor.

—Your Honor, Gentlemen! The Christian party has again proved itself unworthy of the confidence it enjoys among the voters by letting a World War break out. Is it negligence, or is it general incompetence, or does My Lord (he took off one of his shoes, hit it on the table and pointed it at the God of Christianity) does My Lord think it is the way it should be? Don't you have peace on Earth on your program, do you? Now lots of innocent Buddhists and others have to give their lives just because My Lord doesn't take care of his job. We demand an explanation and a guarantee it doesn't happen again! Otherwise we will use all our resources to mission you off the surface of the heavens!

General mutterings of approval and scattered applause. The attacked Lord looked wrathful (although good and forgiving at the same time of course). Buddha's plump face regained its usual content wrinkles, and he sat down with his legs crossed.

Our Lord scratched his beard and demanded the floor.

—Your Honor, Gentlemen! It is not my fault! It is not my fault! How could I know it would end that way? This guy Hitler wasn't really any ungodly fellow from what one could see in the beginning, and wasn't Mussolini a pretty nice dude to, or so my own pope in Rome said. What is one supposed to believe. (He began to loose his temper — it takes a while for gods, but it comes!) And by the way, what do you really expect? How in heaven's name can I be all over and everywhere? One must trust one's co-workers, mustn't one? And one is getting old too! One forgets things. And not even a computer to keep count of all the souls. No no, one is supposed to memorize them! Who do you think I am? A magician? You Gents can go home and mind your own business, because I can't stand any criticism. If one is almighty, then one is. Go to Hell, heathens!

The mood was now quite agitated among the Princes of Peace.

—Shame on you! And another thing: what is My Lord doing in South Africa? Aren't all people supposed to be equal, isn't that too part of your post-war-program?

Our Lord subdued the tone somewhat.

—Yes, yes, but that's none of my business. Africa is almost a Christian colony, in the periphery, you know, so I let them mind their own business. But I don't eat their oranges, I really don't!

The Speaker cleared his voice.

—Would the congregation agree that we can write off the Second World War on our Christian brother's account, because, after all, his followers were the ones who began it?

Everyone voted yes, except for Our Lord, who voted "don't know".

The Speaker stood up with a serious look on his face.

—My Christian Lord! I have the honor to inform you that there now are ten major wars on your account since you last did penance.

The congregation held its breath.

—No, don't tell me that! Is it really ten? Oh, my, my!

Everybody applauded expectantly. The Speaker continued:

—My Lord, you know what this means. You have to pay up again. This time, you jump on one leg and crow like a rooster at least a hundred times.

—Bravo! a voice from the congregation exclaimed.

Our Lord stood up in grief, pulled up his gown which was hanging all the way down to his feet, stood up on one leg, and started to jump and crow, at first hesitantly, then with more zeal.

Buddha slapped his knees and yelled of laughter. A South American Indian god was caught in ecstasy of laughter and scalped himself, rolling around on the floor. The heaven was filled with a roar of laughter, so that the stars were flashing and the satellites feel down.

When Our Lord had finished jumping and crowing, the congregation broke up, and the gods went back home, each to his own. Buddha left the Congress with the words: —I haven't had this much fun since the Trojan war when Zeus had to stand up and say "I'm a shithead! I'm a shithead!"

Thereafter everything was, as usual, quiet in the heavens.