

# THE CITY OF GOD

## A RHAPSODY

by

ALEISTER CROWLEY

"In Macrocosmo ELIOS PHALLUS in Microcosmo,  
Lucis, Vitae, Libertatis, Amoris est Fons Deus"  
cui testis Aedes Moscoviae Kremlin.  
Marius de Aquila.

Christ = IPSOUS CHRISTOS THEOU \_ \_ \_ S SOTER = IChTh \_ S = Pesce  
LAMOS BASILE \_ S TELEPYLOU

Dedicated to

Alexander, Aleikhin, Alapin and Azev;  
Blavatzky, Bakunin, Boris and Boguljuboff;  
Dostoevsky, Dmitri and Diaghileff;  
Gogol, Gregory, Gapon, Glinka and Gorky;  
Ivan and Ilyitch;  
Katherine and Kropotkin;  
Lenin and Lermontoff;  
Mendeljeff, Maisky, Mussorgsky, and Moiseivitch;  
Pushkin, Pavloff and Peter;  
Rurik, Rimsky-Korsakoff, Rasputin, Rachmaninoff and  
Rostopschin;  
Timoshenko, Tschaikovsky, Troitsky, Tschigorin, Trotsky,  
Turgenieff, Tolstoi, and Tchekoff;  
Vassily and Verestchagin;  
Zosimoff and Zimbalist;

and so on through all the thirty-six letters of  
the Alphabet; stones of honour and dishonour  
that go to the building of the City of God.

## PREFACE

Poetry is the geyser of the Unconscious.

Poetry is the intelligible musical expression of the Real whose mirror is the phenomenal Universe.

Poetry is the Hermes to lead the "soul" Eurydice from the murk of illusion to the light of Truth; "and on Daedalian oarage fare forth to the interlunar air".

A living poem must effect a definite magical excitement-exaltation in the hearer or reader, similar to the experience of "falling in love at first sight" with a woman. Analysis and argument cannot convince, and may inhibit the reaction, which is above emotion and reason.

The reception of a poem, being a ritual Magical initiation, suffers no interruption. The music must be perfect; hard, maybe, to appreciate, as is Beethoven, but unmistakably sublime when fully understood. Technical perfection, in the absence of Creative Energy, is vanity, like the playing of "Exercises".

The "work of art" which appeals to contemporary judgement can never, save some rare accident, be of the timber of Yggdrasil. For one main factor of its immediate success must be its amalgam with the Zeitgeist, a mercurial element corrosive of true gold. Hermes Trismegistus distinguishes three degrees: (1) true, (2) certain beyond error, (3) of all truth. "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever". Great Art is independent of conditions.

T.S. Elliot, Ezra Pound, W.H. Auden, haec turba taeniarum omnis, have log-rolled their heads and their styles until Bloomsbury, Brixton, Balham, Bournemouth and Baaston believe them to be poets. Pendants and preciousness, push and peacockry, are not the stuff of song.

Go (with some trifle of aid from Socrates) and challenge their sycophants! It is easy to compel them to define "poetry" so as to exclude John Keats - fed, by the way, on honest porridge, not on "cereals" out of a can. And one will not impossibly be content to leave it at that!

Here, then, is your chota hazri, fellow-pilgrims to the City of God, with the first blast of a challenge to the critics. Expect a fanfare, OLLA it shall be called; Reistafel for your breakfast dish! At the Solstice, with a bit of luck!  
ALEISTER CROWLEY.

## THE CITY OF GOD

Day after day we crawled  
Beneath the leaden, flat,  
Featureless heaven, across dull emerald  
Field after field, whereon no aureate  
Sunrise awakened earth's Magnificat,  
Save at the marge where, rimmed with duller pines,  
Dun earth mixed with black heaven, there unsealed  
A red eye glowing through that furtive field,  
As if the bloodhound of Eternity  
Tracked the thief Time. Remorseless rain  
Beat down, pale piteous monotony,  
Upon the inexplorable plain.

A gnome that staggers under the grim load  
Set on his back by God,  
Might pity our weak jolting as we moved  
Hopelessly, yet inevitably, on,  
Under who knows what senseless goad,  
Unlovable as unloved,  
Towards the evasive horizon  
That mocked us without laughter, wrapped  
In its own cynic sleep,  
Careless of the vitalities it trapped,  
Not sanguine from the blood it lapped,  
Not living from the life it sapped,  
But in eternal gloom,  
Its own soul's tomb.  
This was the sombre way we went --  
Not eloquent of death, since death is change,  
But of some tideless ocean sad and strange  
Beneath a mute, immobile firmament,  
The sun himself struck silent at the nod  
Of some more awful God.  
We were so far from the one city we sought  
That we had never hoped; and so despair  
Never built bastions against the thought  
That we might -- in some ultimate -- be there.  
Sunset and dawn were but the same red eye,  
The first behind us and the last before,  
Nor was the night more leaden than the day,  
Since -- to see less no worse than to see more,  
Sight's limit being that monotony  
Of grievous green and grey!

Wonder could no more touch the soul. The dawn  
Broke as it peers had broken -- when we found  
Ourselves in an enchanted ground  
Where all the plain was suddenly withdrawn,  
And we were in the midst of alien races  
And monstrous market places  
Where no man marked us. An armed man stood out  
From the bright-coloured rabble: he was black  
From head to foot, save for the peacock's plumes  
That were his crest -- then was this wonderland  
Storied Baghdad or silken Samarcand?  
Kashgar the envied? Yarkand the yak's mart?  
Himis of holy men beyond utmost wrack  
Of Himalaya? Pride of Jhelum's strand,  
Srinagar, happiest hope of every heart?  
Oh! but the warrior signed for us to loose  
Our shoes, for that the ground whereon we trod  
Was holy already from profaner use,  
Being the outskirts of the City of God.

## II.

Close-ranked, the legions of the spear-bright rain  
Roared as they charged; we came incontinent  
Within a space: a threshold of twin spires,  
Topaz and jade, confront the firmament,  
And 'twixt them nestled the babe fane,  
Formed with blue canopy, the golden fires  
Of stars about it; there we stayed and there  
Put up petitions well and thorough to fare,  
Whirls of faint smoke that soared in the thin air.  
Lo! suddenly we felt our feet unshod  
Bleed with the sharp bliss of the City of God.

### III.

Towered above the abyss, the red wall ran  
Mightily forth, its crenellated crest  
A square-toothed saw, God's luminous azure  
Poured through each palpitant embrasure,  
Save where, crown over crown, fan over fan,  
Dome upon dome, cupola beyond cupola,  
Great gland, sun, moon, cross, crescent, breast  
And mightiest breast and gland and vesica  
Heaving with natural and unnatural longing,  
Crowding, coalescing, thronging,  
Mixing their magic, clouding over all  
With pale, pure gold, the spring sun's thrall  
Thrilling with ecstasy to burst the blue --  
Oh! all our hashish dreams came true  
When we beheld the jewel of the city,  
Its nine glands colour'd like all manner of fruit  
And flowers with stripe and trellis, whorl and spire,  
Even like all manner of beast and bird that be,  
And every gland stood bare, disdain'g pity,  
Each shaft a column of fire,  
And its vibration was a lyre,  
And the echo of it a lute,  
So that a mighty melody  
Shone out thereof, a maze of moon in the gloom  
All inexpressibly dowered with perfume.  
And this was molten, this was living stone,  
This was the very flesh and blood of God,  
Incarnate Christ, the Saviour, hailed alone  
Artifex, martyr, the reviving god  
That on itself begat the one true vine  
And from its own breast drew the only wine.  
And all was rainbow and aurora blended  
In fluent colours interchanged and splendid  
Pure water whirled into pure fire and flecked  
With miracles of form,  
Wheels upon wheels expiring and erect,  
Colour and sound in storm,  
The heart of God within a frame of blue:--  
Our hashish dream come true!

#### IV.

And all this hung above a mighty river.  
Curve after curve, an amphisbaena, wound  
About the base of those pale precipices  
That cut the clouds, whose curtained eyelids quiver  
In their absorb'd gaze into that profound,  
The abyss of height confronting the abysses  
Of East and North.--Oh! but the fiery fan  
Of burning water that made molten love  
To the fiery face of the fair fane above,  
Whose pure and whose palingenetic plan  
Was older than all worlds, than that hot hour  
When Christ Ischyros capped the topmost tower  
About whose root the royal river ran.

#### V.

Gold upon gold, dome above dome, faint arrow  
Kindling sharp crescent, as the sunrays swept,  
Save for one midnight moment when one narrow  
Fierce ray, exhaling from no eye that slept  
Of God, our God, the sun - gold upon gold,  
Fronde upon fronde, fold upon fold  
Of walls like leaves and cupolas like flowers,  
And spires and domes that were as fabled fruit  
Of the low lands beyond the pillared seas  
O hercules!  
Silver, sharp showers  
Swept on the city, and made mighty suit  
To the great god whose amorous hours  
Were housed in those eternities  
Within, where, by the frescoes and the gold,  
Musical, manifold,  
Carven like lace, by malachite  
And pophyry and chrysolite,  
Where in their copper cold sarcophagi  
Hundreds of emperors lie,  
And in their reliquaries bediamonded  
Thousands of saints still watch their jewelled bones;  
And beneath canopies of precious stones  
Invoked archangels, each an armed host,  
Hold ready to defend with glaive and spear

The frontiers of the city, there appear  
The emblazoned ensigns of the Holy Ghost  
That all invisible pervades the whole,  
Being its secret soul.  
There, in that sanctuary of silences,  
There is a Word,  
The Word that built the city, never heard  
By any of those archangel phalanxes,  
Unuttered even in the holy heart  
Of God, or breathed by its own lightning breath,  
Since from all being it stands ever apart,  
Its name being Life, and that name's echo Death.

## VI.

Then when I was caught up into rapture -- yea!  
From heaven to heaven was I swept away.  
And all that shadow city past,  
And I was in the City of God at last.  
This city was alive, athrob, astir,  
Shaped as the sacred, secret place of Her  
That hath no name on earth, whose whisper we  
Catch only in the silence of the sea.  
And through it poured a river of sunset blood,  
Pulsing its choral and colossal flood  
Throughout the city, and lifting it aloft,  
Too subtle-strenuous and too siren-soft,  
So that the very being of it did swim  
Into Herself, bliss to the buoyant brim,  
And rose and fell as only rise and fall  
The blossoms of those maids ecstatical  
Whom Gods caress with giant spasms --  
Red orgiastic dawns of the orgasms  
Wherein the soul, beneath its own feet trod,  
Spends itself in the sanctuary of God!

## VII.

And in that heart of hearts was no more I,  
No more the heart; but sobbing through the sky,  
Came trembling the more awful beat, the blast  
Of a million trumpets blazoning the past,  
Heralding the to-be, and on their wings  
Whirred incommunicable things.  
And in their wake, tremendous and austere,  
A form of fear,  
Awe in the shape of the Most Holy One,  
A globe, an eye, a hawk, a lion, a lord,  
A bowl of brilliance, a winged globe, a sword --  
All these in one, and one beyond all these,  
Mute, ithyphallic, caryatides  
Like gods about his car, came crested on  
The one true God, the Sun!  
Instant, the city swirling to its brim  
With Life unthinkable, dissolved in Him.  
Instant, explosion shook the bounding night,  
Smote it but once, and left but one thing, Light.

Oh, but the scarlet swallows up the blue--  
Our hashish dreams come true!