

# Prelude

By Aleister Crowley

“I say fearlessly to the fanatics and bigots of the present day: You have cast down the Sublime and Infinite One from His throne, and in his stead have placed the demon of unbalanced force; you have substituted a deity of disorder and jealousy for a God of order and of Love; you have perverted the teachings of the Crucified One!”—*McGregor Mathers*.

Before the darkness, earlier than being,  
When yet thought was not, shapeless and unseeing,  
Made misbegotten of deity on death,  
There brooded on the waters the strange breath  
Of an incarnate hatred. Darkness fell  
And chaos, from prodigious gulphs of hell.  
Life, that rejoiced to travail with a man,  
Looked where the cohorts of destruction ran,  
Saw darkness visible, and was afraid,  
Seeing. There grew like Death a monster shade,  
Blind as the coffin, as the covering sod  
Damp, as the corpse obscene, the Christian God.  
So to the agony dirges of despair  
Man cleft the womb, and shook the icy air  
With bitter cries for light and life and love.  
But these, begotten of the world above,  
Withdrew their glory, and the iron world  
Rolled on its cruel way, and passion furled  
Its pure wings, and abased itself, and bore  
Fetters impure, and stooped, and was no more.  
But resurrection's ghastly power grew strong,  
And Lust was born, adulterous with Wrong,  
The Child of Lies; so man was blinded still,  
Garnered the harvest of abortive ill,  
For wheat reaped thistles, and for worship wrought  
A fouler idol of his meanest thought:  
A monster, vengeful, cruel, traitor, slave,  
Lord of disease and father of the grave,  
A treacherous bully, feeble as malign,  
Intolerable, inhuman, undivine,  
With spite close girded and with hatred shod,  
A snarling cur, the Christian's Christless God.  
Out! misbegotten monster! with thy brood,  
The obscene offspring of thy pignitude,

Incestuous wedlock with the Pharisees  
That hail the Christ a son of thee! Our knees  
Bend not before thee, and our earth-bowed brows  
Shake off their worship, and reject thy spouse,  
The harlot of the world! For, proud and free,  
We stand beyond thy hatred, even we:  
We broken in spirit beneath bitter years,  
Branded with the burnt-offering of tears,  
Spit out upon the lie, and in thy face  
Cast back the slimy falsehood; to your place,  
Ye Gadarean swine, too foul to fling  
Into the waters that abound and spring!  
Back, to your mother filth! With hope, and youth  
Love, light, and power, and mastery of truth  
Armed, we reject you; the bright scourge we ply,  
Your howling Spirits stumble to your sty:  
The worm that was your lie—our heel its head  
Bruises, that bruised us once; the snake is dead.  
Who of mankind that honours man discerns  
That man of all men, whose high spirit burns,  
Crowned over life, and conqueror of death,  
The godhood that was Christ of Nazareth—  
Who of all men, that will not gird his brand  
And purge from priestcraft the uxorious land?  
Christ, who lived, died, and lived, that man might be  
Tameless and tranquil as the summer sea,  
That laughs with love of the broad skies of noon,  
And dreams of lazy kissings of the moon,  
But listens for the summons of the wind,  
Shakes its white mane, and hurls its fury blind  
Against oppression, gathers its steep side,  
Rears as a springing tiger, flings its tide  
Tremendous on the barriers, smites the sand,  
And gluts its hunger on the breaking land;  
Engulphing waters fall and overwhelm  
Christ, who stood dauntless at the shaken helm  
On Galilee, who quelled the wrath of God,  
And rose triumphant over faith, and trod  
With calm victorious feet the icy way  
When springtide burgeoned, and the rosy day  
Leapt from beneath the splendours of the snow  
Christ, ultimate master of man's hateful foe,  
And lord of his own soul and fate, strikes still  
From man's own heaven, against the lord of ill;  
Stage thunders mock the once terrific nod  
That spoke the fury of the Christian God,

Whose slaves deny, too cowardly to abjure,  
Their desecrated Moloch. The impure  
Godhead is powerless, even on the slave,  
Who once could scar the forehead of the brave,  
Break love's heart pitiful, and reach the strong  
Through stricken children, and a mother's wrong.  
Day after darkness, life beyond the tomb!  
Manhood reluctant from religion's womb  
Leaps, and sweet laughters flash for freedom's birth  
That thrills the old bosom of maternal earth.  
The dawn has broken; yet the impure fierce fire  
Kindles the grievous furnace of desire  
Still for the harpy brood of king and priest,  
Slave, harlot, coward, that make human feast  
Before the desecrated god, in hells  
Of darkness, where the mitred vampire dwells,  
Where still death reigns, and God and priests are fed,  
Man's blood for wine, man's flesh for meat and bread,  
The lands of murder, of the obscene things  
That snarl at freedom, broken by her wings,  
That prop the abomination, cringe and smile,  
Caressing the dead fetich, that defile  
With hideous sacraments the happy land.  
Destruction claims its own; the hero's hand  
Grips the snake's throat; yea, on its head is set  
The heel that crushes it, the Serpent wet  
With that foul blood, from human vitals drained,  
From tears of broken women, and sweat stained  
From torturers' cloths; the sickly tide is poured,  
And all the earth is blasted; the green sward  
Burns where it touches, and the barren sod  
Rejects the poison of the blood of God.  
Yet, through the foam of waters that enclose  
Their sweet salt bosoms, through the summer rose,  
Through flowers of fatal fire, through fields of air  
That summer squanders, ere the bright moon bare  
Her maiden bosom, through the kissing gold  
Where lovers' lips are molten, and breasts hold  
Their sister bodies, and deep eyes are wed,  
And fire of fire enflowers the sacred head  
Of mingling passion, through the silent sleep  
Where love sobs out its life, and new loves leap  
To being, through the dawn of all new things,  
There burns an angel whose amazing wings  
Wave in the sunbright air, whose lips of flame  
Chant the almighty music of One Name,

Whose perfume fills the silent atmosphere,  
Whose passionate melodies caress the ear;  
An angel, strong and eloquent, aloud  
Cries to the earth to lift the final shroud,  
And, having burst Faith's coffin, to lay by  
The winding-sheet of Infidelity,  
And rise up naked, as a god, to hear  
This message from the reawakened sphere;  
Words with love clothed, with life immortal shod  
"Mankind is made a little part of God."  
Till the response, full chorus of the earth,  
Flash through the splendid portals of rebirth,  
Completing Truth in its amazing span  
"Godhead is made the Spirit that is Man."  
To whose white mountains, and their arduous ways,  
Turn we our purpose, till the faith that slays  
Yield up its place to faith that gives us life,  
The faith to conquer in the higher strife;  
Our single purpose, and sublime intent,  
With their spilt blood to seal our sacrament,  
Who stand among the martyrs of the Light;  
Our single purpose, by incarnate might  
Begotten after travail unto death,  
To live within the light that quickeneth;  
To tread base thoughts as our high thoughts have trod,  
Deep in the dust, the carrion that was God;  
Conquer our hatreds as the dawn of love  
Conquered that fiend whose ruinous throne above  
Broke lofty spirits once, now falls with Fate,  
At last through his own violence violate;  
To live in life, breathe freedom with each breath,  
As God breathed tyranny and died in death;  
Secure the sacred fastness of the soul,  
Uniting self to the absolute, the whole,  
The universal marriage of mankind,  
Free, perfect, broken from the chains that bind,  
Force infinite, love pure, desire untold,  
And mutual raptures of the age of gold,  
The child of freedom! So the moulder, man,  
Shakes his grim shoulders, and the shadows wan  
Fall to forgetfulness; so life revives,  
And new sweet loves beget diviner lives,  
And Freedom stands, re-risen from the rod,  
A goodlier godhead than the broken God;  
Uniting all the universe in this  
Music more musical than breezes' kiss,

A song more potent than the sullen sea,  
The triumph of the freedom of the free,  
One stronger song than thrilled the rapturous birth  
Of stars and planets and the mother, earth;  
As lovers, calling lovers when they die,  
Strangle death's torture in love's agony;  
As waters, shaken by the storm, that roar,  
Sea unto sea; as stars that burn before  
The blackness; as the mighty cry of swords  
Raging through battle, for its stronger chords;  
And for its low entrancing music, made  
As waters lambent in the listening glade;  
As Sappho's yearning to the amorous sea;  
As Man's Prometheus, in captivity  
Master and freeman; as the holy tune  
All birds, all lovers, whisper to the moon.  
So, passionate and pure, the strong chant rolls,  
Queen of the mystic unity of souls;  
So from eternity its glory springs  
King of the magical brotherhood of kings;  
The absolute crown and kingdom of desire,  
Earth's virgin chaplet, molten in the fire,  
Sealed in the sea, betokened by the wind:  
"There is one God, the Spirit of Mankind!"