

CITY OF GOD

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Abstract: The poem consists of 30 four-line stanzas, reflecting the poetic scheme used by Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705) in *The Day of Doom*, which had 224 eight-line stanzas (the longest poem of the Colonial Period). The title and theme echo the work of St. Augustine (354-430) and are drawn from numerous passages of Holy Scripture that relate to the city of God in contrast to the earthly city.

The first half of *City of God*—fifteen verses—focuses on the earthly city, showing its transitory nature and constant rebellion against God, as evidenced in moral decline, materialism, rank unbelief, or false belief. This half of the poem concludes in the city of the false prophet Muhammad, Yathrib, better known as Medina, in Arabia. The second half of the poem—also fifteen verses—transitions into the better way and focuses on the heavenly city, with God’s final judgment (from which there is no escape), the rule of Christ over all creation, salvation in Christ, and the glory of heaven. This half of the poem ends in Jerusalem, which is above, our home where God’s perfect love reigns eternally.

An audio of the poem, with visuals, is available on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG9j58XJ-IE>); it was recorded and edited by Jacob Petrowsky and Lianna Brice, students at Concordia University Wisconsin, where Dr Ehlke teaches.

Behold: The sun its course has run;
Dark covers coast to coast;
In starless nights, the city lights
Are dim and all but lost.

As wrote the sage, the nations rage
Against God's chosen One.
They cast their lot; they scheme and plot,
Yet now their time is done.

REBELLION AND DOWNFALL

Earth's parliaments and presidents
From on his throne God sees.
At close of day, they float away
Like chaff upon the breeze.

An icy cloud, a wintry shroud
From North to South descends.
The world awaits, anticipates,
Disaster that impends.

It's not with guns, your unborn sons
And daughters die in wombs;
Abortion's knives cut short their lives,
Dispatch to early tombs.

MORAL DECLINE

Delusions reign with each sex change;
Confusion is widespread.
Distinctions slurred, while culture blurred
The sacred marriage bed.

At home, at school, emotions rule,
And self-esteem is king.
Hurt, lie, abuse—do as you choose,
Your existential thing.

For booze and drugs, the greedy thugs
Make red the streets with blood,
And neighborhoods lose all their goods—
Crime rises like a flood.

MATERIALISM

Your idol gold is hard and cold;
You are no longer free.
The gods of wealth, good times, and health
Demand you bow the knee.

You sip good wine, buy clothing fine.
Such worthless help can't save.
Like money crass and youth, they pass.
What else, pray, do you have?

“Oh, has God said?” you shake your head.
“That’s just for simple folk:
Good for a laugh, the Bible’s myth;
Its stories are a joke.”

UNBELIEF

“Psychologists and scientists
Prove Scripture wrong,” you say.
“Man’s but a beast, through ages vast,
Evolved from swampy clay.”

Nirvana high, the gurus sigh,
Enlightenment at last,
Comes only when good karma can
Release one from lives past.

FALSE BELIEF

The crescent moon glows at high noon
Where once the cross did stand.
The call each day bids people pray
Toward Mecca's desert sand.

Muhammad's bones 'neath Yathrib's stones
Lie dead and buried still,
Yet from his grave, commands he gave
Enslave to Allah's will.

Those teachers die, not edify;
They are but fleeting breath.
Seek rather peace that will not cease,
Through him who conquered death.

A BETTER WAY

The time is short; God will hold court
On each and every land;
Look to the sky; judgment is nigh;
The end is soon at hand!

FINAL JUDGMENT

Eyes of the blind the light will find,
When God comes on a cloud;
The deaf will hear—yes, every ear—
The trumpet blast so loud.

Each one alone, before the throne,
Must answer to the King,
For every thought and deed we've wrought,
As he knows everything.

Open your eyes, you scholars wise;
You, too, must face that day.
You think you know, but cannot show,
There is no hell to pay.

NO ESCAPE

And should you die before that day,
There still is no relief,
For you shall rise beneath the skies
In faith or unbelief.

Run toward the caves; hide in the graves;
There will be no escape,
When buildings tall and mountains fall
Into the oceans deep.

While nations fall in Satan's thrall,
The sun sets on the West.
But Christ shall reign, his name remain,
Above all of the rest.

CHRIST SHALL REIGN

Without, within, we're chained to sin,
Whose power Jesus breaks.
Cleansed in the flood of his pure blood,
A new heart he creates.

SALVATION IN CHRIST

“Come here; be blessed. I give you rest,”
Says Jesus, God’s own Son.
Upon the cross, Christ paid the cost;
Salvation he has won.

Hear church bells ring and voices sing
Of hope throughout the lands;
O glorious God, victorious Lord,
Take us in your strong hands.

Though sun and moon be darkened soon,
There shines a better light,
Beside the Lamb, the great I AM,
In splendor without night.

THE GLORY OF HEAVEN

O Jesus dear, be always near,
And guide us by your grace,
To that bright land where we shall stand
Before you face to face.

Behold: That day is on its way—
When tears no more are shed,
Beyond all strife, beyond this life,
The glory waits ahead.

At length set free, we then shall see
Jerusalem the gold,
Our home above of perfect love,
The city of our God.

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