

# THEOCRACY, *AS THE WORLD BLEEDS*

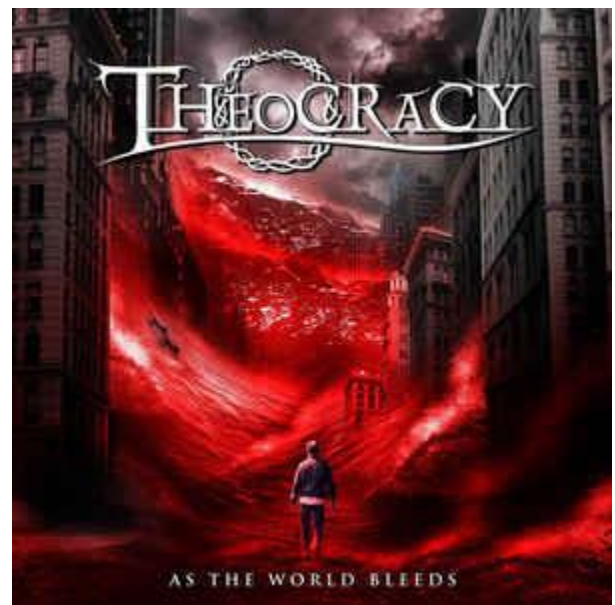
*As the World Bleeds* is the third studio album by Theocracy. Theocracy uses stylings from symphonic metal, progressive metal, and power metal to weave together music that is fast paced, loud, and dramatic; it imposes a sense of great importance. The combination of musical techniques with the lyrics in the vocals multiplies the effect. The songs are woven together in a way that ties the vocals to dramatic shifts in melodies and pitch, through clever timing, to demand the listener's attention at key points. The band started in 2002 in Athens, Georgia, with only Matt Smith; he played each instrument on the band's first self-title album. Over the years, Theocracy added musicians Jonathan Hinds and Val Allen Wood on guitar, Jared Oldham on bass, and Shawn Benson on drums. It was this line up that produced *As the World Bleeds*, just one of Theocracy's works which show a deep commitment to making spiritual music for metal fans.

## Spiritual Music in Modern Times

Many people think of pop music when they think of Christian music, and very few would hear of a metal band and assume that their music is spiritual. The reality though, is that a lot of modern Christian pop songs tend to sound generic and have shallow lyrics. On the opposite side, metal has a vast amount of diverse sounds to offer, and tends to have strongly pointed lyrics. So some Christian musicians who had a fondness for metal, formed bands to make intricate music with lyrics that tackle deeper theological or philosophical issues. A common theme in these songs is rebuking commonly accepted heresy, and calling believers to look inward and reflect on why they have grown tepid in the faith.

## As the World Bleeds

Starting with the title of Theocracy's *As the World Bleeds*, we can see the desire to deliver a deeper spiritual message. There is a clear concern about the state of affairs the world is currently in; even back when the album was made in 2011. The third song on the album, "Nailed" describes the futility of



***As the World Bleeds* album cover, Copyright unknown, presumed to be Ulterium Records (2011). Used under Fair Use 17 U.S.C§ 107.**

legalistic religious practices meant to earn salvation. Another, “Drown,” recalls the classic Christian story of Peter walking on water, and ties it to the original point; the issue of doubt. The song “Light of the World” considers how Christians are meant to be set apart, but many have fallen in with living a life of darkness. We will look at the first song on the album, “I Am,” in more depth. It is a song of praise from the perspective of God, a bit unorthodox, but effective at stressing certain truths.

## I Am

The song begins with a strong and intricate instrumental, varying in tempo and complexity to illustrate a sense of serious and mighty, yet sober and complex power. The first section focuses on abstract descriptions, representing the Holy Spirit; for example “I am the bread that feeds a starving man upon the street.” This line represents both the literal act of charity and the symbolic bread of life that feeds the soul.

The key lyrics are often stressed with musical effects. One such line, “I am the Alpha and Omega, First and Last, Eternally” displays the omnipresence of God; the principle that He has no beginning and no end. The music intensifies on “Eternally.” In another lyric, “I Am the Thunder and the Glory and the Blinding light,” the music again increases in power and volume to mirror the principle of God’s omnipotence. The choir and percussive notes sync when “Thunder” is sung, to create an aural effect mimicking the sound of thunder. Immediately following this, the tempo slows and the density lightens up to a soft melody for the line “I am the still-small voice that tells you what is wrong and what is right,” to show the tender and loving side of God. To display the strong desire that God has to welcome back his lost children, the musical intensity becomes strained and dramatic as the singer sings “I am the Father ever waiting for his lost and wayward child,” especially becoming loud as he stresses “wayward child” in a tone that portrays a sense of desiderium, an intense desire for something lost.

After the chorus and an instrumental, in the next section fast paced vocals kick in, continuing to describe various things that God is famously known as. A second and then a third singer join in, to represent God’s triune nature of Father, Spirit, and Son; with the addition of creating an aural effect to show how the complex mysteries of God can beautifully harmonize together, in a way that is yet often distinct and not a direct harmony. Still after, we hear the three singers harmonize directly, as the Trinity also does at times. The line “I am Three and One and Only” directly describe the mysterious truth and unknowable complexities of God’s nature. The lyric “I am that I am,” reflecting His unchanging and eternal nature, leads to a lengthy instrumental with a variety of melodies and tones; quick and intense, slow and peaceful, and all around intricate.

The vocals resume with the story of Jesus, who “Traded a crown of kings for a crown of thorns” to be “the crimson stain that washes all the souls faded to black.”

These lines are sung over an intense melody played at a slower tempo to portray a sense of somber importance; they tell the story of Jesus sacrificing himself to save mankind. “I am the Word who spoke no word, with a thousand angels waiting for my call,” refers to Jesus’ willingness to die, despite having the power to save himself at any time instead. The song ends with a faster tempo and a tone of comfort, with the lines “All hope that was, All hope that is, All hope to be; I Am” closing on the basis of Christian ideals, that we have hope through God.

Musical Examples	Link
“I Am” by Theocracy	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4H4j83FikM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4H4j83FikM</a>

## Listening Guide

Time Stamp	What to listen for
1:46	The vocals begin, the beat and melody remain calm.
3:08	The vocals lead into a faster, stronger melody, stressing the word “Eternally.”
3:50	A fast metal guitar riff queues a short instrumental to impress the significance and let the lyrics sink in.
4:00	The vocals resume, with a slowed tempo and calm melody again.
4:19	The tempo increases and the melody becomes denser and powerful to mirror the vocals.
4:23	The tempo decreases and the melody becomes soft, also mirroring the vocals.
4:33	The intensity of the melody and tempo increase with a lyric that is sang intensely to match a feeling of desiderium, or intense longing.
5:19	An instrumental solo plays, with influence from Irish folk music.
5:45	Vocals resume at a fast tempo as the high energy melodies from the instrumental carry over.
6:12	Three fast paced singers overlap each other, representing the intense and triune nature of God.
6:25	The three singers harmonize in perfect sync, representing the harmony of the Trinity.
7:06	Begins a long, intricate instrumental with variations in tempo and melodic complexities. Illustrates how majestic complexity can be.

9:20	Final vocal segment begins, after the majority of the song describes God's power, this section describes His love and mercy.
9:53	The choir emphasizes how Jesus chose to die out of love when he had the power to escape the entire time.
10:23	The singer ends on the topic of God's sacrifice, and the hope we have in him.
10:41	The song ends with a single, deep, piano chord; illustrating a peaceful contentment.