

*Polemical Poetry*

Of Suffering and Bearing the Cross (Bodleian)

[fol. 7v] O, can that soul that loves her God,  
For very shame complain  
To any other than himself  
Of what she doth sustain?  
No way to him was ever found, 5  
Or ever shall there be,  
But taking up thy Cross,<sup>1</sup> my Lord,  
Thereby to follow thee.

This is the way, the truth, the life,<sup>2</sup>  
Which leadeth unto heaven, 10

[fol. 8r] None is secure, but only this,  
Though it seem ne'er<sup>3</sup> so even.  
Those that do walk this happy path,  
Jesus doth company;<sup>4</sup>  
But those who go another way 15  
Will err most shamefully.

And in this way do not think it much,  
If thou dost here endure  
Suffering even by saints themselves,  
For God doth this procure. 20  
That thou may'st seek himself alone,  
And put thy trust in him,  
And not in any creature living,  
How good soe'er<sup>5</sup> they seem.

For suffering by the means of ill 25  
Would little thee advance;  
But to be censured by the good,  
Goes near to thee perchance.  
Alas, we show but little love,  
If we must choose which way 30  
Our Lord shall try our love to him,  
And not in all obey.

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<sup>1</sup> "Then Jesus said to his disciples: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24, Douay-Rheims Bible).

<sup>2</sup> "Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me" (John 14:6, Douay-Rheims Bible).

<sup>3</sup> Never.

<sup>4</sup> Accompany.

<sup>5</sup> Soever.

[fol. 8v] We must submit ourselves to him,  
And be of cheerful heart;  
For he expecteth much of her 35  
That he gives Mary's part;<sup>6</sup>  
For she must bear a censure hard  
From all without exception;  
Yet thou, o Lord, will hear excuse  
Who art her soul's election. 40

If she will patiently sustain,  
And be to thee attent,<sup>7</sup>  
Thou favorably will judge of her,  
Who knows her heart's intent.  
For all but thee, as well she sees, 45  
May err concerning her;  
They only judge as they conceive,  
But thou dost see more far.

Complain not, therefore, loving soul,  
If thou wilt be of those 50  
Who love their God more than themselves,  
And Mary's part have chose.  
If all thou dost be taken ill  
By those of high perfection;  
And farther, if thou be accused 55  
To be of some great faction;

[fol. 9r] Our Lord will answer for thee, if  
Thou wilt but hold thy peace;  
And if that he do think it good,  
If not content, surcease;<sup>8</sup> 60  
Leave all thy care to this thy God,  
And him alone attend,  
Yet what is ill, reform in thee,  
And this will all amend.

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<sup>6</sup> Within the convent, the "better part" references the contemplative life of the cloister as opposed to the active life of the world associated with Mary's sister, Martha: "Now it came to pass as they went, that he entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? speak to her therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42, Douay-Rheims Bible).

<sup>7</sup> Attentive.

<sup>8</sup> Stop.

	As far as he doth think it good, Who is most just and wise, For by afflictions he doth purge What doth displease his eyes. Will thou, of all that love thy God, From suffering be exempt? O no, but bless, as others do, Thy God, and be content.	65       70
	Amidst the several accidents, That do to thee befall, Commit thyself and all to God, Who seeks our good in all. Thyself art blind and canst not judge What is the best for thee; But he doth pierce into all things, How hidden soe'er <sup>9</sup> they be.	75       80
[fol. 9v]	My heart shall only this desire: That thou, my Lord, dispose Of all things as thou pleasest best, Till these my eyes thou close By death, which I so much desire, Because it will procure Me to enjoy my God, my all, Where I shall be secure	85
	That none from me can take my Lord, But for eternity I shall enjoy my only good, And to him ever be United by a perfect love Which none can interpose, <sup>10</sup> Being by thee assured then That him I cannot lose.	90       95
	O happy hour, when wilt thou come And set my spirit free, That I may love and praise my God With all perpetually, Contemplating his glorious face With all that him adore, Singing with them his sweetest praise	100
[fol. 10r]		

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<sup>9</sup> Soever.

<sup>10</sup> Interrupt; come between.

For ever, ever more.

My God the summum bonum<sup>11</sup> is, 105  
Yea, all that's good is his,  
And those that seek himself alone  
Of him shall never miss.  
In thee, my God, my soul shall rest,  
Not in created things; 110  
For thou alone, O Lord of Lords,  
True peace to spirit brings.

All other things wished or desired,  
How good so'ere they be,  
Cause perturbation<sup>12</sup> to our heart, 115  
Nor can we rest in thee  
Whilst we do pleasure take in them  
Contrary to thy mind,  
And nothing prospers we attempt,  
Whilst we remain thus blind. 120

O God, the portion of my heart,  
Be thou my Lord for ever;  
In thee alone let me have part,  
And let nothing us sever;  
I do invite with all my soul 125  
All creatures thee to praise,  
And beg of thy celestial host  
To supply our delays.

[fol. 10v] But praise thyself, my blessed God,  
Yea, for them all and me; 130  
For thou alone canst give what's due  
Unto thy Majesty.

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<sup>11</sup> "The highest good."

<sup>12</sup> Trouble.