Polemical Poetry

O thou thyself dost say to us¹ (1658)

[285]	O thou thyself dost say to us:	
[207]	Thou will not sinners' death,	
[286]	But that we do convert and live ²	
	even while our souls have breath,	5
	And no more then to cease to be	5
	canst thou (O God) refuse	
	To pardon humble penitents	
	that do themselves accuse,	
	Being no excepter ³ of persons	1.0
	all having cost <i>thee</i> dear,	10
	Yes even thy very life itself;	
	how can I therefore fear?	
	If ever yet <i>he</i> did disdain	
	sinners that fled to him,	
	Then had I little cause of hope	15
	but this was never seen.	
	For if they do return to <i>thee</i> ,	
	thy hart thou will not close,	
	As witness can my wretched soul,	
	who was so like to lose	20
	All grace and goodness (if thou hadst	
	not me with help prevented)	
	By sins that would with bloody tears	
	be while I live lamented,	
	If I as grateful were to <i>thee</i> ,	25
	as thou deservest I should,	
	Or as another in my case	
	unto <i>thy</i> mercy would.	
	But <i>thou</i> while that thou livedst here,	
	by tokens plain didst show,	30
	That none should be refused by <i>thee</i> ,	
	who dost in mercy flow.	
	And that my wicked heart did prove,	
[287]	who after sins so many,	
	Hath found much favor in thine eyes	35
	without deserving any.	
	O blessed ever be my <i>God</i> ,	

¹ This poem is a fragment of "Amor Ordinem Nescit," lines 237-288.

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² "Say to them: As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways: and why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezechiel 33:11, Douay-Rheims Bible).

³ Rejecter.

for this preventing grace,4 Which I unworthy have received in this most happy place. 40 I fled from thee by many sins and thou didst follow me, As if my ruin would have caused some detriment⁵ to thee. How can this choose but wound my heart 45 When I remember it, And ever serve to humble me while at thy feet I sit?6 From whence my Lord, my God, and all, permit me not to rise, 50 till I do love thee as thou wouldst, the which doth all comprise.

⁴ A reference to the doctrine of prevenient grace, in which God's grace occurs before a human being takes any action.

⁵ Loss.

⁶ "And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard his word" (Luke 10:39, Douay-Rheims Bible).