

*Polemical Poetry*

O can that soule that loues her God (1658)<sup>1</sup>

- [5] *O can that soule that loues her God*  
*For very shame complaine*  
*To any other then himselfe*  
*Of what she doth sustaine!*  
*No way to her was euer found,* 5  
*Nor euer shall there be,*  
*But taking vp thy Crosse my Lord,<sup>2</sup>*  
*Thereby to follow thee.*  
*This is the Way, the Truth, the Life,<sup>3</sup>*  
*Which leadeth unto heauen,* 10  
*None is secure, but only this,*
- [6] *Though seeming nere so euen.*  
*Those that do walke this happy path,*  
*IESVS doth company;*  
*But those who go another way,* 15  
*Will erre most miserably.*  
*And in this way do not think much,*  
*That thou dost much endure;*  
*No, though it be from holy men;*  
*For God doth this procure,* 20  
*That thou maist seeke himselfe alone,*  
*And putt thy trust in him,*  
*And not in any creatures liuing,*  
*How good so ere they seeme.*  
*For suffring by the meanes of th'ill* 25  
*Will little thee aduance;*  
*But to be sensur'd by the good,*  
*Goes neere to thee perchance.*  
*Alas we shew but little loue,*  
*If we must choose which way,* 30  
*Our Lord must try our Loue to him,*  
*And not in all obey.*  
*We must submitt our selves to him,*  
*And be of cheerefull hart;*

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<sup>1</sup> This poem is a fragment from "Of Suffering and Bearing the Crosse," lines 1-104.

<sup>2</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>3</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).

	<i>For he expecteth much of them</i>	35
	<i>Who be of Maries part.<sup>4</sup></i>	
	<i>For she must beare a censure hard</i>	
	<i>From all without exception;</i>	
[7]	<i>But thou, O Lord, wilt her excuse,</i>	
	<i>Who art her soules election.</i>	40
	<i>If she will patiently sustaine,</i>	
	<i>And be to thee attent,</i>	
	<i>Thou favourably willt iudge of her,</i>	
	<i>Who know'st her harts intent.</i>	
	<i>For all but thou, as well she sees,</i>	45
	<i>May erre concerning her;</i>	
	<i>They only iudge as they conceiue,</i>	
	<i>But thou canst neuer erre.</i>	
	<i>Complaine not therefor, louing soule,</i>	
	<i>If thou wilt be of those,</i>	50
	<i>Who loue their God more then themselus</i>	
	<i>And Maries part haue chose.</i>	
	<i>If all thou dost be taken ill</i>	
	<i>By those of high perfection;</i>	
	<i>And further if thou be accus'd</i>	55
	<i>To be of some great faction,</i>	
	<i>Our Lord will answere all for thee,</i>	
	<i>If thou wiltt hold thy peace,</i>	
	<i>And from contentions, and complaints</i>	
	<i>Willt patiently surcease,</i>	60
	<i>Leauing all, care vnto thy God,</i>	
	<i>And only him intend;</i>	
	<i>Yet what is ill, reforme in thee,</i>	
	<i>And this will all amend.</i>	
	<i>As farre as he doth thinke it good,</i>	65
[8]	<i>Who is most iust, and wise,</i>	
	<i>He will thee by afflictions purge,</i>	
	<i>From what displease his eyes.</i>	
	<i>Willt thou of all that loue thy God,</i>	

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<sup>4</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).

	<i>From suffring be exempt?</i>	70
	<i>O no, but blisse, as others do thy God, and liue content!</i>	
	<i>Amidst the various accidents, That do to thee befall,</i>	
	<i>Commit thy selfe, and all to God</i>	75
	<i>Who seekes our good in all. Thyselfe art blind, and cannot iudge</i>	
	<i>What is the best for thee; But he doth pearce into all things,</i>	
	<i>How hidd so ere they be.</i>	80
	<i>My hart shall only this desire, That thou my Lord dispose,</i>	
	<i>Euen as thou pleasest in all things, Till these myne eys thou close</i>	
	<i>By death, which I so much desire,</i>	85
	<i>Because it will procure Me to enioy my God, my all.</i>	
	<i>Where I shall be secure That none from me can take my Lord;</i>	
	<i>But for eternity,</i>	90
	<i>I shall enioy my only good, And to him euer be</i>	
[9]	<i>Vnited by a knott of Loue, Which nothing shall vntiy,</i>	
	<i>But will remayne, as permanent</i>	95
	<i>As his Diuinity. O happy houre, when willt thou come,</i>	
	<i>And set my Spirit free, That I may loue and prayse my God</i>	
	<i>For perpetuity,</i>	100
	<i>Contemplating his glorious face With all that him adore,</i>	
	<i>Singing with them his sweetest prayse, For euer, and euer more!</i>	