

Elizabeth Melville, *A Godlie Dream* (1606).

Edited by Claire Longing, Colin Sproles, Katherine Christy and McKenzie Vines (2025).

A3v

With sighs and sobs as I did so lament,
Into my dream I thought there did appear
A sight most sweet which did me well,
An angel bright with visage shining clear.

With loving looks, and with a smiling cheer,
He asked me, "Why are you now so sad?
Why do you groan so? What are you doing here?
With careful cries in this thy baleful bed."

Baleful: Sorrowful

I hear your sighs. I see your twinkling tears,
You seem to be perplexed:

What do your moans mean, what is the thing you fear?

Who would you have, in what place would you be?

Faint not so fast in your adversity:

Mourn not so sore, since mourning may not mend:

Lift up your heart, declare your grief to me,

Perchance your pain brings pleasure in the end.¹

Perchance: Perhaps

I sighed again, and said, "Alas, for woe,

My grief is great, I can it not declare:

[Gap in transcription—4-5 letters]² this earth I wander to and fro,

A pilgrim sore consumed with sighing sore.

¹ This is a Christian paradox of hardships over all leading to a spiritual reward.

² The original manuscript is unclear here; the word missing is assumed to be 4-5 letters.

My sins a [Gap in transcription—2 characters]³ increases more and more,
I loath my life I weary wandering here;
I long for heaven, my heritage is there,
I long to live with my Redeemer⁴ dear.”
“Is this the cause,” said he, “Rise up anyone
And follow me, and I shall be your guide:
And from thy sighs leave off thy heavy moan,
Refrain from tears and cast your care aside.
Trust in my strength, and in my word confide,
And you shall have your heavy heart’s desire:
Rise up with speed, I may not tolerate long,
Great diligence this matter requires.”

A4r

My soul rejoiced to hear his words so sweet,
I looked up and saw his face most fair:
His countenance revived my weary spirit,
Incontinent, I cast aside my care.
With humble heart I praise him to declare
What was his name, he answered me again:
“I am your God for whom you sigh so sadly,
I now am come, your tears are not in vain.⁵
I am the way, I am the truth and life,

Incontinent: Without delay

³ This is another gap where the original manuscript is unclear and missing 2 letters/characters

⁴ Refers to Jesus Christ from the Christian theology.

⁵ often linked to biblical themes like Psalm 56:8

⁶{Handwritten addition: Thomas Murray with his hand}⁷

end of handwritten addition

I am thy spouse that brings you store of grace:

I am your Lord that soon shall end your strife,

I am your love whom you would gladly embrace.

I am your joy, I am your rest and peace,

Rise up alone and follow after me:

I will guide you to your dwelling place,⁸

The Land of rest⁹ you long so much to see."

With a joyful heart I thanked him again,

"Ready am I", said I, "and well content:

To follow you, for here I live in pain,

A wretch unworth my days are wasted.

Not one is just, but all is fiercely bent

To turn to bad habits, I have no strength/will to stand:

My sins increase, which makes me greatly lament,

Make haste, O Lord; I long to see that land."

"Your haste is great, he answered me again,

Thou thinkst thee there, thou art transported so:

That pleasant place must be purchased with pain,

The way is arduous¹⁰, and you have far to go.

Are you content to wander to and fro,

⁶ "An explicit allusion to Christ's declaration in John 14:6 ('I am the way, the truth, and the life')."

⁷ "Thomas Murray with his hand" is a later handwritten addition and not a part of the original text.

⁸ This is referring to God's presence, and it is found in Psalms 43:3

⁹ A reference to Heaven

¹⁰ Narrow; an allusion to Matthew 7:14 "strait gate"

Through great deserts through water and through fire:
Through thorns and briars, and many dangers more,
What say you now? Your feeble flesh will tire.”

A4V

“Alas,” said I “although my flesh be weak,
My spirit is strong and willing for to flee:
O leave me not, but for thy mercies sake¹¹
Perform your word, or else for dule I die.

Dule: Grief

I fear no pain since I should walk with you¹²,
The way is long, yet you bring me through at last:
“You answered well, I am content,” said he,
“To be your guide, but see thou grip me fast.¹³”

Then up I rose, and made no more delay,
My feeble arms about his neck I cast¹⁴:
He went before, and still did guide the way,
Though I was weak, my spirit did follow fast.

Through mosse and myre, through deep ditches we passed,

Mosse: Bog/Marsh Myre: Swamp

Through pricking thorns, through water & through fire,
Through dreadful dens which made my heart aghast,

He lifted my spirits when I began to tire.

Sometimes we climb on craggy mountains high,
And sometimes stayed on ugly grains of sand

¹¹ An urgent appeal from the Bible found in Psalm 6:4

¹² Implies spiritual companionship with a divine guide

¹³ Hold tightly

¹⁴ A gesture suggesting complete dependence still Sometimes

They were so stay that wonder was to see,
But when I feared he held me by the hand.
Through thick and thin, through sea and eke through land
Through great deserts we wandered on our way.
When I was weak and had no strength to stand,
Yet with a look he did refresh me.
Through waters great we were compelled to wade,
Which was so deep that I was like to drown,
Sometime I sank, but yet my gracious guide
Did draw me up half dead and in unconsciousness.
In woods most wild, and far from any town,
We thirsted through, the breares together stack:
I was so weak their strength did beat me down
That I was forced for fear to flee aback.

Breares: thorny bushes

B1r

“Courage,” said he, “thou art midway and more,
You may not tire, nor turn aback again:
Hold fast your grip, on me cast all your care,
Assay your strength you shalt not fight in vain.
I told you first that you should suffer pain,
The nearer heaven the harder is the way:
Lift up your heart and let your hope remain,
Since I am your guide, you shall not go astray.”

Forward we passed on narrow brigs of tree¹⁵,
Over waters great that hideously roared:
There lay below that fearful was to see,
Most ugly beasts that gaped to devour.

My head grew light and troubled wondrously so,
My heart did fear, my feet began to slide:
But when I cried, he heard me evermore,
And held me up, O blessed be my guide.

Weary I was, and thought to sit at rest,
But he said “No, you may not sit nor stand:
Hold on thy course, and thou shalt find it best
If thou desire to see that pleasant land.”

Though I was weak, I rose at his command,
And held him fast, at length he let me see
That pleasant place, that seemed to be at hand,
“Take courage now, for you art near”, said he.

I looked up unto that Castell fair,
Glistening like gold and shining silver bright:
The satellite towers did mount above the air,
They blinded me; they cast so great a light.

My heart was glad to see that joyful sight,
My voyage then I thought was not in vain:
I asked him to guide me there aright,
With many vows never to tire again.

¹⁵ Brigs is the Scots version of bridges, and this is saying that the speaker is crossing bridges over dangerous waters, which represents the dedication needed to get to Heaven.

B1V

“Though you are near, the way is wondrous hard,

Said he again, therefore you must be stout:

Faint not for fear, for cowards are debarred,

Faint not: do not lose heart

That have no heart to go their voyage out.¹⁶

Pluck up your heart and grip me fast about,

Out through this trance together we must go:

Trance: a hazardous passage

The way is low, remember for to look,

If this were past we have not many more.”

I held him fast as he did give command,

And through the trance together then we went:

Where in the midst great spikes or iron did stand,¹⁷

Where with my feet were all torn and rent.

“Take courage now,” said he, “and be content,

To suffer this, the pleasure comes at last:”

I answered not, but ran incontinent

Out over them all, and so the pain was past.

When this was done my heart did dance for joy,

I was so near I thought my voyage ended:

I ran before and sought not his convoy,

Convoy: guidance

I did not ask for directions because I thought I knew the way.

On staillite steps most stoutlie I ascended,¹⁸

¹⁶ Have no courage to finish their journey

¹⁷ Symbolic of painful spiritual obstacles

¹⁸ Steps leading to a lofty or noble place

Without his help I thought to enter there:

He followed fast and was quite offended,

And hastelie did draw me down the stair.

What haste said he, "Why did you run before?

You think you could climb so quick without my help?

Come down again, you yet must suffer more,

If you desire to see that dwelling place.

Dwelling place: the desired home

This statelie stare it was not made for you,
stair

Statelie stare: steep, lofty

¹⁹If you hold that course you shall be thrust aback;"²⁰

"Alas", said I, "long wandering wearied me,

Which made me run the nearest way to get there."

¹⁹ A warning against attempting exalted spiritual heights before proper readiness.

²⁰ A warning against presumption