

## A Selection of Poems by George Herbert

November 4, 2014

### Prayer (I)

Prayer the church's banquet, angel's age,  
    God's breath in man returning to his birth,  
    The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,  
The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth  
Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tow'r,  
    Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
    The six-days world transposing in an hour,  
A kind of tune, which all things hear and fear;  
Softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,  
    Exalted manna, gladness of the best,  
    Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,  
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,  
    Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
    The land of spices; something understood.

## Prayer (II)

Of what an easy quick access,  
My blessed Lord, art thou ! how suddenly  
    May our requests thine ear invade!  
To show that state dislikes not easiness,  
If I but lift mine eyes, my suit is made :  
Thou canst no more not hear, than thou canst die.

Of what supreme almighty power  
Is thy great arm which spans the east and west,  
    And tacks the centre to the sphere !  
By it do all things live their measured hour:  
We cannot ask the thing, which is not there,  
Blaming the shallowness of our request.

Of what unmeasurable love  
Art thou possessed, who, when thou couldst not die,  
    Wert fain to take our flesh and curse,  
And for our sakes in person sin reprove ;  
That by destroying that which tied thy purse,  
Thou mightst make way for liberality!

Since then these three wait on thy throne,  
*Ease, Power, and Love* ; I value prayer so,  
    That were I to leave all but one,  
Wealth, fame, endowments, virtues, all should go ;  
I and dear prayer would together dwell,  
And quickly gain, for each inch lost, an ell.

## Church Monuments

While that my soul repairs to her devotion,  
Here I intomb my flesh, that it betimes  
May take acquaintance of this heap of dust;  
To which the blast of death's incessant motion,  
Fed with the exhalation of our crimes,  
Drives all at last. Therefore I gladly trust

My body to this school, that it may learn  
To spell his elements, and find his birth  
Written in dusty heraldry and lines ;  
Which dissolution sure doth best discern,  
Comparing dust with dust, and earth with earth.  
These laugh at jet, and marble put for signs,

To sever the good fellowship of dust,  
And spoil the meeting. What shall point out them,  
When they shall bow, and kneel, and fall down flat  
To kiss those heaps, which now they have in trust?  
Dear flesh, while I do pray, learn here thy stem  
And true descent: that when thou shalt grow fat,

And wanton in thy cravings, thou mayst know,  
That flesh is but the glass, which holds the dust  
That measures all our time; which also shall  
Be crumbled into dust. Mark, here below,  
How tame these ashes are, how free from lust,  
That thou mayst fit thyself against thy fall.