



The Temple: The Poetry of George Herbert

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George Herbert, a priest at Salisbury Cathedral in seventeenth-century England, is known as the author of the most famous religious poem in the English language, The Temple. This collection contains a mild modernization of Herbert's complete poems.

The Temple: The Poetry of George Herbert Details

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From Reader Review The Temple: The Poetry of George Herbert for online ebook

Douglas Wilson says

Read this in another edition. But always fantastic. Some glorious lines in here.

Katherine Cowley says

George Herbert was my favorite poet in the Early British Literature class that I took, and so I was delighted when my book group to read him. We read about thirty of his poems and I loved revisiting his works. In particular, what I find striking is the nuances and challenges of faith, and his notions of God and spirituality, which really speak to me and encourage me. Sometime I plan to read the entire book.

Jim Leckband says

This is why I read random books from lists of the great books - that dirty word - (sound effect here...duh duh duuuuuuh...) the canon.

Herbert's poetry is on the surface about God, religion, devotion and other mind-numbing (to me) generalities. However, these doctrinal MacGuffins are only there (in my secular reading) for Herbert to jump-start his creativity. His fecund display of wit, craft, rhyme and meter are in almost every poem. He dabbles in concrete poetry (and makes a masterpiece). He sneaks in word-play like acrostics and hidden words. He uses "tricks" like using the last word of a line to begin the next line to great effect. And above all, you can understand and appreciate what he is doing (unlike *cough* John Donne).

All in all, I get the feeling that the religion biz was just his beard to get his serious creativity out. Thank God.

J. Alfred says

Full of well known works like "Love (III)" and "Easter Wings" (which, together with cummings' "I(a," is one of the only concrete poems I've ever liked) and other gems like "the Dawning," this is one of the absolute masterpieces of Christian poetry. It is a prolonged demonstration that word play and wit are not mutually exclusive with a devotional work. For example, here's a stanza from "Evensong": "But thou art Light and darkness both together:/ If that be dark we cannot see:/ The sun is darker than a Tree,/ And thou are more dark than either." So good, right?

Devin Becker says

The book The Temple is structurally, poetically, religiously, and many other ways adverbially amazing. The

history of the book's printing, layout, etc., especially in regards to Herbert's pattern poems ("Easter Wings") is fascinating as well. This book is a good place to start thinking about the book's history; it includes pictures of the manuscript from which the first edition was printed. Get it from your library.

Becky says

Do I read a lot of poetry? I wouldn't say that I do. Perhaps two or three books per year, usually. And often those "poetry books" are poems for the very young. So reading George Herbert, in many ways, was going outside of my comfort zone. Yet, it was good for me to go outside my comfort zone in reading. I assumed--presumed--that it would be an intimidating read: at best a bit boring, at worst, incomprehensible. But I really enjoyed reading this one.

I enjoyed "The Sacrifice" which is a poem written from the point of view of Jesus Christ. It has a refrain of "Was ever grief like mine?" and it would be a timely read for Lent and Easter. (Another timely read would be "Good Friday.") Though I think believers would profit from it year round.

"The Call" would probably be in my top three. Here's how it opens:

Come, my way, my Truth, my Life: Such a Way, as gives us breath: Such a truth, as ends all
strife: And such a Life, as killeth death.

Though I'm just sharing the first stanza, I really adore this one from start to finish.

"Colossians 3:3" is a fun little poem, and, definitely in my top three.

My words and thoughts do both express this notion, that **Life** hath with the sun a double motion. The first **Is** straight, and our diurnal friend, the other **Hid** and doth obliquely bend. One life is wrapped **In** flesh, and tends to earth: The other winds towards **Him**, whose happy birth Taught me to live here so, **That** still one eye Should aim and shoot at that which **Is** on high: Quitting with daily labour all **My** pleasure, To gain at harvest an eternal **Treasure**.

I love the "hidden" message: My life is hid in Him, that is my treasure.

I also appreciate Herbert's "The Twenty-Third Psalm" which opens like this:

The God of love my shepherd is, And he that doth me feed: While he is mine, and I am his,
What can I want or need?

Dave Mankin says

i keep a copy of this in my satchel.

Fergus says

VIRTUE

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky,
The dew will weep your fall tonight
For you must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Makes the rash gazer wipe his eye,
Your root is always in its grave,
And you must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie,
My music shows you have your closes,
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul
Like seasoned timber never gives,
But though the whole world turns to coal
Then chiefly lives.

When I discovered the great George Herbert - seems strange, doesn't it, to 'discover' someone whose soul has been at peace for 400 years? - I was humbled!

Here I had been, 50 years ago, riding the merry coattails of the boisterous, rambunctious throng of 'great writers' who enlivened the seventeenth century with their testosterone-charged vigour - and ignoring the still, silent voices of such virtuous quietists as this!

He was the Jan Vermeer of Elizabethan word-painting.

My hat's off to you, dear friend and ange gardien of my youth - the still waters you were trying to lead me to were infinitely clearer, deeper and more satisfying than those tempestuous storm-tossed oceans of Shakespeare & Co.!

If only I had known.

dthaase says

Herbert offers the reader some of the best spiritual poetry ever written.

Simon says

Marvellous!

Ben Zornes says

A really wonderful collection of devotional poetry. George Herbert's poetry sinks deep roots into the glorious doctrines of the Christian faith, and then raises us up to soar with poignant praise. He is witty, lucid, and demonstrates that good doctrine with a beating heart is a potent combination. Herbert alsomingles in a healthy dose of that good, ol' fashioned earthiness of English poets. In almost every selection you find some sort of proverbial statement which are often quite Solomonic. I'd highly suggest leaving a copy on your nightstand and read a selection each evening. Really good stuff.

Here are a few of my favorite lines:

Pick out of tales the mirth, but not the sin.

A verse may find him, who a sermon flies,

The way to make thy son rich,
is to fill His mind with rest,
before his trunk with riches.

Do all things like a man, not sneakingly.

Laugh not too much: the witty man laughs least.

Towards great persons use respective boldness.

Be calm in arguing: for fierceness makes
Error a fault, and truth courtesy.

All worldly joys go less
To the one joy of doing kindnesses.

Restore to God his due in tithe and time.

Praying's the end of preaching.

Churches are either our heav'n or hell.

Sum up at night, what thou hast done by day.

And praise him who did make and mend our eyes.

The bloody cross of my dear Lord
Is both my physic and my sword.

What Adam had, and forfeited for all,
Christ keepeth now, who cannot fail or fall.

Michael Arnold says

An amazing collection from a great, and I think under valued, metaphysical poet. I do like George Herbert a lot.

Aneece says

Ew. Did not realize that "modernized" meant "rewritten for the dull reader". I'm all for normalized spelling and punctuation, but this was gag inducing. Am now in the market for a different edition.

Jaran says

Herbert and I share thoughts, but the potency of his words far exceed that of mine.

The lines are of impeccable form. The prayers are honest, somewhat erratic, and saturated with devotion.

Mark says

The first time reading any one of Herbert's poems, I confess I am lost. I can't even tell you what the poem is about. Reading a second time, I understand the general topic or theme, but no specifics. The third time, I begin to see how the ideas in the poem fit the language he uses. The poem becomes more worshipful as I understand it and I start to delight after the fourth reading. It takes that long.

I highly recommend George Herbert. He influenced C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and many others. Me too.
