

## A Selection of Poems by George Herbert

November 11, 2014

### Conscience

Peace prattler, do not lour:  
Not a fair look, but you do call it foul:  
Not a sweet dish, but you do call it sour:  
    Music to you does howl.  
By listening to thy chatting fears  
I have both lost mine eyes and ears.

Prattler, no more, I say:  
My thoughts must work, but like a noiseless sphere;  
Harmonious peace must rock them all the day:  
    No room for prattlers there.  
If thou persistest, I will tell you,  
That I have physic to expel you.

And the receipt shall be  
My Savior's blood: when ever at his board  
I do but taste it, straight it cleanseth me,  
    And leaves thee not a word;  
No, not a tooth or nail to scratch,  
And at my actions carp, or catch.

Yet if thou talkest still,  
Besides my physic, know there's some for thee:  
Some wood and nails to make a staff or bill  
    For those that trouble me:  
The bloody cross of my dear Lord  
Is both my physic and my sword.

## Death

Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,  
Nothing but bones,  
The sad effect of sadder groans:  
Thy mouth was open, but thou couldst not sing.

For we considered thee as at some six  
Or ten years hence,  
After the loss of life and sense,  
Flesh being turned to dust, and bones to sticks.

We looked on this side of thee, shooting short;  
Where we did find  
The shells of fledge souls left behind,  
Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort.

But since our Savior's death did put some blood  
Into thy face,  
Thou art grown fair and full of grace,  
Much in request, much sought for as a good.

For we do now behold thee gay and glad,  
As at Doomsday;  
When souls shall wear their new array,  
And all thy bones with beauty shall be clad.

Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust  
Half that we have  
Unto an honest faithful grave;  
Making our pillows either down, or dust.

## **Love (I)**

Immortal Love, author of this great frame,  
    Sprung from that beauty which can never fade,  
    How hath man parcel'd out Thy glorious name,  
And thrown it on that dust which Thou hast made,  
While mortal love doth all the title gain!  
    Which siding with Invention, they together  
    Bear all the sway, possessing heart and brain,  
(Thy workmanship) and give Thee share in neither.  
Wit fancies beauty, beauty raiseth wit;  
    The world is theirs, they two play out the game,  
    Thou standing by: and though Thy glorious name  
Wrought our deliverance from th' infernal pit,  
Who sings Thy praise? Only a scarf or glove  
Doth warm our hands, and make them write of love.

## **Love (II)**

Immortal Heat, O let Thy greater flame  
    Attract the lesser to it; let those fires  
    Which shall consume the world first make it tame,  
And kindle in our hearts such true desires.  
As may consume our lusts, and make Thee way:  
    Then shall our hearts pant Thee, then shall our brain  
    All her invention on Thine altar lay,  
And there in hymns send back Thy fire again.  
Our eyes shall see Thee, which before saw dust,  
    Dust blown by wit, till that they both were blind:  
    Thou shalt recover all Thy goods in kind,  
Who wert disseized by usurping lust:  
All knees shall bow to Thee; all wits shall rise,  
And praise Him Who did make and mend our eyes.

## **Love (III)**

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,  
    Guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack  
    From my first entrance in,  
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning  
    If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here”:  
    Love said, “You shall be he.”  
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,  
    I cannot look on thee.”  
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,  
    “Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame  
    Go where it doth deserve.”  
“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”  
    “My dear, then I will serve.”  
“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”  
    So I did sit and eat.