

## A Selection of Poems by George Herbert

October 14, 2014

### Redemption

Having been tenant long to a rich lord,  
Not thriving, I resolvèd to be bold,  
And make a suit unto him, to afford  
A new small-rented lease, and cancel th' old.

In heaven at his manor I him sought;  
They told me there that he was lately gone  
About some land, which he had dearly bought  
Long since on earth, to take possession.

I straight returned, and knowing his great birth,  
Sought him accordingly in great resorts;  
In cities, theaters, gardens, parks, and courts;  
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth

Of thieves and murderers; there I him espied,  
Who straight, Your suit is granted, said, and died.

## The Pulley

When God at first made man,  
Having a glass of blessings standing by,  
“Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can.  
Let the world’s riches, which dispersèd lie,  
Contract into a span.”

So strength first made a way;  
Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.  
When almost all was out, God made a stay,  
Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,  
Rest in the bottom lay.

“For if I should,” said he,  
“Bestow this jewel also on my creature,  
He would adore my gifts instead of me,  
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;  
So both should losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,  
But keep them with repining restlessness;  
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness  
May toss him to my breast.”

## Sin's Round

Sorry I am, my God, sorry I am,  
That my offences course it in a ring.  
My thoughts are working like a busy flame,  
Until their cockatrice they hatch and bring:  
And when they once have perfected their draughts,  
My words take fire from my inflamed thoughts.

My words take fire from my inflamed thoughts,  
Which spit it forth like the Sicilian hill.  
They vent their wares, and pass them with their faults,  
And by their breathing ventilate the ill.  
But words suffice not, where are lewd intentions:  
My hands do join to finish the inventions.

My hands do join to finish the inventions:  
And so my sins ascend three stories high,  
As Babel grew, before there were dissensions.  
Let ill deeds loiter not: for they supply  
New thoughts of sinning: wherefore, to my shame,  
Sorry I am, my God, sorry I am.