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## Herbert's Poems

Herbert's chief work, 'The Temple', consists of over one hundred and fifty short poems suggested by the church, her holidays and ceremonials and the experiences of the Christian life. The first poem 'The Church Porch' is the longest and though polished with a care that foreshadows the classic school, the least poetical. It is a wonderful collection of condensed sermons, wise precepts and moral lessons, suggesting Chaucer's "Good Counsel", Pope's "Essay on Man", and Polonius's advice to Laertes, in Hamlet, only it is more packed with thought than any of these. Of truth - speaking he says:

"Dare to be true. Nothing can need a lie;  
A fault - which needs it  
most grows two thereby!"  
and of calmness in argument:

"Calmness is great advantage; he that lets  
Another chafe may warm  
him at his fire."

Among the remaining poems of 'The Temple' one of the most suggestive is "The Pilgrimage". Here in six short stanzas, every line close-packed with thought, we have the whole of Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

The poem was written probably before Bunyan was born but remembering the wide influence of Herbert's poetry it is an interesting question whether Bunyan received the idea of his immortal work from this "Pilgrimage".

Probably the best known of all his poems is the one called "The Pulley", which generally appears, however, under the name "Rest" or "The Gifts of God".

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 dispersed lie,  
contract into a span.

So strength first made a  
way;

Then beauty flowed; then  
wisdom, honor, 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 repi-  
ning restlessness:  
Let him be rich and

weary, that at least,  
If goodness lead him not,  
yet weariness  
may toss him to my  
breast."

Among the poems which may be read as curiosities of versification, and which arouse the wrath of the critics against the whole metaphysical school, are those like "East-er wings" and "The Altar", which suggest in the printed form of the poem the thing of which the poet sings. More ingenious is the poem in which rime is made by cutting off the first letter of a preceding word, as in the

five stanzas of "Paradise",  
"I bless thee, Lord,  
because I grow  
Among thy trees, which  
in a row

To thee both fruit and  
order ow."

And more ingenious still are odd conceits like the poem

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"Heaven" in which echo, by repeating the last syllable of each line, gives an answer to the poet's questions.

The end. //

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