



# George Herbert 1593 -1633

## 2. The Writer

Praised be the God of love, here below, and here above

George Herbert was a great lover of words. We only need to look at his poetry to see this. His poems were mainly about God and the Christian faith.

He was interested in how words could be used. His poems and writings are in many styles: conversational, persuasive and reflective, for example. People enjoy his sense of fun and wit in his works. Some poems are written in 'picture form' or have clever hidden patterns. Sometimes there is a message waiting to be found in the lines. Find the poem, written by Herbert, called *Colossians 3:3*.....can you see its message?

**M**y words and thoughts do both express this notion,  
That **L**ife hath with the sun a double motion.  
The first **I**s straight, and our diurnall friend;  
The other **H**id, and doth obliquely bend.  
One life is wrapt **I**n flesh, and tends to earth.  
The other winds towards **H**im, whose happy birth  
Taught me how to live here so, **T**hat still one eye  
Should aim and shoot at that which **I**s on high;  
Quitting with daily labour all **M**y pleasure,  
To gain at harvest an eternal **T**reasure



People all over the world have found inspiration reading Herbert's poetry. Often his poems are like listening to 'conversations' with God. He was very honest about his faith and sometimes struggled with his beliefs. Christians today may also have doubts from time to time. He expressed his own struggles in his poetry and hoped other people might be helped by reading it.

Despite this, his poems celebrated God's love and through them he shared his delight with his readers. George Herbert was inspired by the Easter story and tried to create a feeling of 'soaring' with great joy. He wrote a poem called *Easter Wings*. (left) You can see how the two verses look like larks' wings as if the poem was a bird 'soaring in the sky'.



Lord, who created man in wealth and store,  
Though foolishly he lost the same,  
Decaying more and more,  
Til he became  
Most poor;  
With Thee  
O let me rise  
As larks, harmoniously,  
And sing this day Thy victories;  
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:  
And still with sicknesses and shame  
Thou didst so punish sin,  
That I became  
Most thin.  
With Thee  
Let me combine,  
And feel this day Thy victory,  
For if I imp my wing on Thine,  
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.



George Herbert was quite ill for most of his life but still wrote some wonderful poems. He was only 40 years old when he died. Just before he died he gave his writings to a great friend and scholar, Nicholas Ferrar. Herbert remembered all the times he had found it difficult to understand his faith and thought his poems might help others who felt the same, giving them hope. He said to publish the poems 'only if he thought they might do good to any dejected poor soul'.

On the right you can see Nicholas Ferrar and George Herbert in the windows at Bemerton St Andrew's Church, with Ferrar holding Herbert's writings.



### Trinitie Sunday

Lord, who hast form'd me out of mud,  
And hast redeem'd me through thy bloud,  
And sanctifi'd me to do good;

Purge all my sinnes done heretofore:  
For I confesse my heavie score,  
And I will strive to sinne no more.

Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,  
With faith, with hope, with charitie;  
That I may runne, rise, rest with thee.

The poem *Trinitie Sunday* seen here on the left is a cunning use of words and structure which invites the reader to become familiar with the concept of 3.....to remind them of the three-fold nature of God as described in the Trinity: God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is written in the original spelling.

Encourage learners to look for 'threes' in, for example, the rhymes, alliteration and ideas found in the poem.

This exploration could include art work on symbolism of the Trinity found in many churches.

### Activities

- When people die there is often an 'obituary' - a chance for people who have known them to write good things to celebrate their life. Write an obituary for George Herbert.
- Paint or draw an Easter picture which celebrates the joy of the occasion, just as Herbert did in words.
- Find out about life in Salisbury in the 1630's.....poverty?.....disease?.....discovery?.....rural life?
- Write a poem which praises God and could be used in your school worship or local church.
- Create a poem in the shape of an object. Try out some ideas here and then make a beautiful version for display!
- For interest! Longest poem: *The Sacrifice* Shortest poem: *Bitter-Sweet* Puns: *The Sonne*

Wise Words: When a friend asks, there is no tomorrow

*Good friends will do anything as soon as possible because of their care and loyalty for each other*

A moment to Reflect.....

\*Display a range of writing 'equipment' \*Think about what would YOU want to write about? What is so important that you might want to share it in a poem or story? \*Read *Trinitie Sunday* and think about what it means to lead a good life \*Light a candle Think about the sort of person you want to be and what is important to you