

Favorite poems

by [Mark Noll](#) in the [November 16, 2004](#) issue

When George Herbert (1593-1633) was near death, he asked that the manuscript later published as *The Temple* be passed on to his friend Nicholas Ferrar. According to Izaak Walton, Herbert then added these words: "Tell him, he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual Conflicts that have past betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the woof of *Jesus my Master*: in whose service I have now found perfect freedom; desire him to read it; and then, if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected poor Soul, let it be made publick: if not, let him burn it: for *I and it, are less than the least of God's mercies*." Perhaps for the only time in Western Christian history, the evident quality of a poet's sanctity paralleled the acknowledged quality of his art. This poem, one of the most direct from *The Temple*, was a revelation when I first read it. Especially at celebrations of the Lord's Supper it indicates for me the path to perfect freedom.

[The agonie](#), by George Herbert