



AN ALTERNATIVE FLOWER FESTIVAL

Had things been as planned this weekend, there would have been a Flower Festival in Fillongley Church to commemorate the end of WW2 in Europe. Like so many of our plans for this year this event has been postponed.

We now have plenty of time to think about Flowers and to read George Herbert's poem, THE FLOWER.

In this poem Herbert describes life as a garden, where we are each given space as a flower to grow towards the sun (heaven). Some are allowed to flourish while others wither and die. Herbert says that when anger comes to him, he falls back and grows no more. It is in essence a joyful poem, a celebration of God's 'returns' – or rather, the speaker's rediscovery of God's presence after a period of spiritual barrenness. The tone is one of amazement at how simple and natural this recovery is: 'Grief melts away / Like snow in May, / As if there were no such cold thing'.

The Flower.

How Fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shrivel'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness? It was gone
Quite underground; as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they have blown;
Where they together all the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quickning, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
Making a chiming of a passing-bell,
We say amisse, this or that is:
Thy word is all, if we could spell.

O that I once past changing were;
Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!
Many a spring I shoot up fair,
Offering at heav'n, growing and groning thither:
Nor doth my flower want a spring-showre,
My sinnes and I joining together;

But while I grow to a straight line;
Still upwards bent, as if heav'n were mine own,
Thy anger comes, and I decline:
What frost to that? what pole is not the zone,
Where all things burn, when thou dost turn,
And the least frown of thine is shown?

And now in age I bud again,
After so many deaths I live and write;
I once more smell the dew and rain,
And relish versing: O my onely light,
It cannot be that I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide:
Which when we once can finde and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.
Who would be more, swelling through store,
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.

George Herbert (3 April 1593 – 1 March 1633) Poet, Orator, and Anglican Priest