
Spirituality and the Poetry of John Donne

An article from the *Cathedral Times*.

Brought up a Roman Catholic just after the English Reformation, John Donne (born 1573) did not intend to become a priest or a theologian. He studied law and apparently had a way with women. His early poetry surely reflected that tendency! When he fell in love with Ann More, her family did not give consent to a marriage, and so he eloped with her. Her father, therefore, threw Donne into prison. It was only later that their marriage was declared valid. A friend urged ordination, and so he was ordained in 1615. Sadly, two years later, his wife died. Donne would go on, however, to become dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, and write some of the most sublime poetry of England.

This Sunday, at the Dean's Forum, I will review some of Donne's life and poetry. Like much poetry, his words were able to carry various meanings at the same time, and so he contributed to the growth of both the church and English literature.

Below is one of his great sonnets. Join us Sunday for more!

Batter My Heart, Three-Person'd God

*Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.*

John Donne

Faithfully,



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