

What Kind of Relationship Does Donne Want to Establish with God

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What kind of relationship does Donne want to establish with God in his sonnet "Batter My Heart Three-Personed God?"

In his sonnet "Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God," written between 1609 and 1611, John Donne (1571/72-1631) expresses a deep desire for a powerful and transformative relationship with God. He doesn't want a distant connection; instead, he pleads for God to enter his life and forcefully change him. Donne uses strong imagery to convey his longing for God.

Desire for Transformation: The speaker feels that God's previous attempts to reach him—through "knock," "breath," and "shine"—have been too gentle and ineffective. He believes that he can truly be transformed only through a dramatic and forceful intervention. As the poet begins the poem with this line,

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you

Donne asks God to "batter" his heart, to break, blow, and knock him over so that he can be a new person who is even more devoted to God. This shows his desperate and intense desire for a closer relationship with God.

Desire to be Loved: Donne describes his soul as a town that an enemy has taken over. It represents John Donne's sins and doubts. As the poet says,

I, like an usurp'd town to another due,

Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;

He feels trapped and unable to let God in on his own. His logical thinking, which should help him maintain his faith, has been captured and turned against him. Despite this, Donne profoundly loves God and wants to be loved in return.



Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,

However, he feels married to sin, and only God can break this bond.

To wrap up, Donne seeks a relationship with God that involves total surrender and transformation. He wants God to take control, to "imprison" him in divine love so that he can be truly free from sin.

LxNotes