



JOHN DONNE (c.1572 – 1631)

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## ON DEATH



Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE:

<sup>1</sup> Pat Alexander, *Eerdmans Book of Christian Poetry: A Treasury of Poems and the Stories of Their Writers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), p. 22

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ENGLISH POET (c.1572 – 1631)



John Donne is one of the greatest of the 'metaphysical' poets of the seventeenth century, whose poetry is marked by striking images, wit and intellectual complexity. Donne became an Anglican priest and was later appointed Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, London. There he preached a series of great sermons, many of them before King Charles I. His statue, for which he posed in his shroud, can be seen in St Paul's today.