

*Let not my love be called idolatry,  
 Nor my beloved as an idol show,  
 Since all alike my songs and praises be  
 To one, of one, still such, and ever so.  
 Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,  
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence;  
 Therefore my verse to constancy confined,  
 One thing expressing, leaves out difference.  
 Fair, kind and true is all my argument,  
 Fair, kind and true, varying to other words;  
 And in this change is my invention spent,  
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.  
     Fair, kind and true have often lived alone,  
     Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.*

**B**ecause of the word *idolatry* and the prominent use of threes, readers have been tempted to find religious significance in this sonnet. But as we saw in Sonnet 104, the use of threes in poetry was part of the tradition. Inevitably in a Christian context three suggests the Holy Trinity, but, as in Shakespeare's plays, the secular dominates the religious. Here the speaker plays with another supposition: no one has necessarily called his love for his friend idolatry, but he imagines such a situation. His tone varies from playful to serious, in keeping with his argument. He cannot be condemned as idolatrous, and his loved one cannot be condemned as an idol because that implies pagan pluralism. No, he says, I sing of one and one only. Boldly he insists that all he writes is "To one, of one, still such, and ever so." (l. 4) This is unquestionably intended as a parody of the Christian Gloria. Indeed, to the devout it might seem blasphemous.

Sonnet 105 is not addressed specifically to the friend, and the focus is on what constitutes the ideal person. As the speaker says, his "argument" (l. 9) is that his verses are "to constancy confined" (l. 7). His sole purpose is to celebrate the lasting virtues of his love, who is "fair, kind, and true" (ll. 9-10), and all three traits blend into one as do the Trinity and the Platonic ideals. Plato's ideals were beauty, truth and goodness; Shakespeare's "fair" is synonymous with beauty, but

kindness is his own version of goodness. His variations in wording from the traditional triads end his search for needed changes. By creating his new triad and making his friend the paragon he raises his love to the highest pinnacle of the ideal. And his friend is unique; never before have these virtues been present in one person.

The irony is lurking in the background. His friend has not always been kind or constant, as we already know.