

A portrait of Izaak Walton, an elderly man with long white hair, wearing a dark coat and a white clerical collar. He is holding a fishing rod. The background is dark.

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Izaak Walton

Lives of John Donne, Henry Wooton, Richard Hooker and George Herbert

Izaak Walton

The full title of Walton's book of short biographies is, *Lives of John Donne, Henry Wotton, Rich'd Hooker, George Herbert, &c.* Sir Henry Wotton (1568 – 1639) was an English author, diplomat and politician who sat in the House of Commons in 1614 and 1625. He is often quoted as saying, "An ambassador is an honest gentleman sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." Richard Hooker (1554 – 1600) was an Anglican priest and an influential theologian. Hooker's emphases on reason, tolerance and the value of tradition came to exert a lasting influence on the development of the Church of England. In retrospect he has been taken (with Thomas Cranmer and Matthew Parker) as a founder of Anglican theological thought. George Herbert (1593 – 1633) was a Welsh-born English poet, orator and Anglican priest. John Donne (1572 – 1631) was an English poet, satirist, lawyer and a cleric in the Church of England. He is considered the pre-eminent representative of the metaphysical poets.

Walton's leisurely labours as a biographer seem to have grown out of his devotion to angling. It was probably as an angler that he made the acquaintance of Sir Henry Wotton, but it is clear that Walton had more than a love of fishing and a humorous temper to recommend him to the friendship of the accomplished ambassador. Walton completed and published the life of Donne, much to the satisfaction of the most learned critics, in 1640. Sir Henry Wotton dying in 1639, Walton undertook his life also; it was finished in 1642 and published in 1651. His life of Hooker was published in 1662, that of George Herbert in 1670. All these subjects were endeared to the biographer by a certain gentleness of disposition and cheerful piety; three of them at least—Donne, Wotton and Herbert—were anglers. Their lives were evidently written with loving pains, in the same leisurely fashion as his Angler, and like it are of value less as exact knowledge than as harmonious and complete pictures of character.

(Summary by Wikipedia and David Wales)

Read by David Wales. Total running time: 10:45:59

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Lives of John Donne etc.

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