T. 908
C.1

A CRITICAL STUDY OF WALTON'S LIFE OF DONNE

With Special Attention to the Seventeenth Century Tradition of Biographical Writing

by

Dajad Kassabian

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in the English Department of
the American University of Beirut
Beirut, Lebanon

October, 1967.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to extend my gratitude to Professor Benjamin Foster for his understanding, guidance and kind advisory help. I would also like to thank Professor John Munro for the valuable suggestions he made in the early stage of this essay.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

PREFACE iv

CHAPTER

I. SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TRADITION OF BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING 1

II. THE LIFE OF DR. JOHN DONNE 22

CONCLUSION 75

BIBLIOGRAPHY 84

PREFACE

Many people read Walton's Life of _Dr. John Donne_ to gather information on Donne, the famous English metaphysical poet and Anglican churchman. In this thesis however an attempt is made to clarify the other aspect of the _Life_: its importance in the art of English biography.

In the first chapter I shall deal with some major biographical trends and traditions which influenced Walton's art of writing biographies. In the second chapter I shall try to show the effect of these and other factors on his method of writing the _Life_. I shall also deal with Walton's artistic style of writing and his search for essential truth, two important ingredients for any successful biography.

A CRITICAL STUDY OF WALTON'S *LIFE OF DONNE*

With Special Attention to the Seventeenth Century Tradition of Biographical Writing

Dajad Kassabian

CHAPTER I

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TRADITION
OF BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

Izaak Walton, writing his Lives in the middle of the seventeenth century, shows the influence of two important traditions shaping the writing of biography. One tradition descends from the Middle Ages and comprises hagiography and royal chronicle; the other descends from Plutarch, whose Parallel Lives of Greeks and Romans exerted an especially powerful influence on English writers after Sir Thomas North's translation of 1579.

These two traditions of writing lives were frequently in conflict. The biographies of the Middle Ages were written because the Church needed them for commemorative purposes and for spreading Christian doctrine and virtue among its people. Such writing was panegyric: lavish in praise of the good deeds and virtues of the saints, while silent on weaknesses of character; and it was didactic, instructing the reader in his moral duties and holding up

for emulation the pattern of a good man's life. While Plutarch wrote his lives with a view to moral instruction (he says in the Life of Pericles: "Things not worthy of imitation are of little use to beholders" [1]), he wrote not just to praise goodness but to reveal character. He saw the flaws as well as the virtues of his subjects. He observed the weaknesses and failings of personality, and as a result he presented his subjects in greater psychological depth and complexity than did the Medieval biographers, whose subjects are often one-dimensional creatures of exaggerated goodness.

The Medieval biographers wrote two kinds of lives: hagiography, which is the lives of saints, and royal chronicle which is secular biography of kings and noblemen. Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England, originally written in Latin, is composed of five books and contains short lives of clergymen and kings from 54 B.C. up to his own time in 731 A.D. The Venerable Bede writes the

---

[1] Plutarch, Parallel Lives of Greeks & Romans, ed. Rev. Francis Wrangham and trans. John and William Langhorne (London: C. Baldwin, New Bridge Str., 1819), V, p. 4.

history of England by narrating events and incidents in the lives of saints and kings of different periods. In the "Life of Cuthbert, Bishop of Lindisfarne," Bede writes that his holy life is an example for other people to imitate, for "from his childhood he had been holy and venerable, and at his death he entered into a more glorious life." [1] In the lives of saints supernatural happenings and miracles are often performed. The seventh century Irish abbot, Adomnan, divides his Life of Columba into three main divisions or books, of which the first contains prophetic revelations, the second divine miracles and the third apparitions of angels. Adomnan tells us in his second book that Saint Columba performed many miracles and that by the help of Christ he procuced water from hard rock and then changed it to wine.[2]

In the later Middle Ages, many secular lives were published in England, such as John Lydgate's The Fall of Princes written from 1430 to 1438 and founded on Boccaccio's De Casibus Virorum Illustrium. Lydgate's work is a collection

---

[1] Bede, Ecclesiastical History of England, ed. and trans. A. Seller (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912), p. 288.

[2] Adomnan, Life of Columba, ed. and trans. A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961), p. 347.

of short verse biographies of noble men and women from antiquity up to his time who were to serve as living models of vices to be shunned and virtues to be imitated. He warns his readers against trusting capricious and fickle fortune by pointing out the crushing blows it has given to famous personalities throughout history. He writes that his aim is to teach princes and common men the virtue of wisdom and moderation by revealing as in a mirror the unfortunate fall of proud and inordinately ambitious princes.[1] At the end of each life Lydgate moralises, as in the fall of the Babylonian prince Nimrod, where "Lenvoy," the moralising agent, finds the cause of his disgrace in his inordinate pride. He depreciates pride and praises meekness, which "Off alle vertues man may most availe."[2] "The Monk's Tale" in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales is drawn on Boccaccio's De Casibus, and it consists of a number of tragedies of people fallen from high estate. Chaucer talks of "Fortune" and warns the readers in the prologue:

---

[1]John Lydgate, Fall of Princes, ed. Henry Bergen (Washington: Carnegie Ins., 1923), I, p. 35.

[2]Ibid., p. 39.

Let no man trust on blind prosperitee;
Be war by thise examples trewe and olde.[1]

In the "Tale of Samson," Chaucer's monk humorously has this advice to give:

That no man telle hir conseil til her wyves
Of swich thing as they wolde han secree fayn
If that it touch hir limmes or his lyves.[2]

The influence of Medieval life-writing on Walton's biographies is conspicuous. His Lives contain didactic, panegyric and commemorative elements. The Life of George Herbert is Walton's nearest approach to hagiography. He is panegyric when he presents Herbert as a holy man, a man of "primitive piety," whose life he adds is "the incredible story, of the great sanctity" (p.395). He is didactic when he invites the Anglican ecclesiastics of his time to imitate Herbert in holiness. He writes:

> But now, alas! who is fit to undertake it (The Life of Herbert)? I confess I am not; and am not pleased with myself that I must; and profess myself amazed, when I consider how few of the Clergy lived like him then, and how many live so unlike him now (p.395).

---

[1] Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Cressida and The Canterbury Tales (Great Books of the Western World edition; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1955), XXII, p. 434.

[2] Ibid., p. 436.

The life is also commemorative, because Walton says in the introduction that his work will serve "to preserve the memory" of Herbert so as it may not be "lost to posterity" (p.371).

The didactic, commemorative and panegyric qualities limit the scope of Walton's lives. We feel that Walton does not speak the whole truth when he highly praises the exemplary lives of his heroes and their better qualities. Dr.Samuel Johnson, author of the Lives of Poets, thought panegyric harmful to biography and refuted it by saying:

> If a man is to write a panegyrick, he may keep vices out of sight; but if he professes to write a Life, he must represent it really as it was. [1]

Walton describes and illustrates at length his hero's virtues, but he vaguely mentions the vices, which are equally important in revealing true character. By so doing, he fails to give an altogether true portrayal of a life as it was really lived.

---

[1] James Boswell, Life of Samuel Johnson (Great Books of the Western World edition; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1955), XXXXIV, p. 347.

Hagiography had no doubt its harmful influence on Walton's biography. However, when Walton makes the panegyric of the exemplary lives of his heroes, he is not merely following the example of the Medieval hagiographers, but he is expressing his sincere heart-felt sentiments for his subjects. The five eminent Anglican clergymen, whose lives he wrote, were all famous men endowed with many virtues. His heroes do not perform miracles like the saints of the Medieval lives. We lose the sense of reality which we look for in biography when we read about the performance of miracles and supernatural happenings in the lives of saints. J.A.Froude, author of the Life of Carlyle, says that when a modern reader sees these in hagiography he may think that there are many lies in the lives of the Medieval saints; yet the Church, in teaching the Christian doctrine, had to give concrete form to abstract ideas by the help of exemplary lives of saints. [1]

---

[1] J.A.Froude, Short Studies on Great Subjects (Everyman's Library edition; London: J.M.Dent and Sons Ltd., 1930), I, p. 124.

The Medieval form of writing lives continued in the seventeenth century, during Walton's lifetime, as the lives of clergy, funeral sermons and funeral elegies of the times testify. The century is one of the turbulent periods in English history because of the Civil Wars, which started in 1642 between the Royalists and the Anglican Church on one side, and the Parliamentarians and the Puritan Church on the other. [1] In times of religious controversy, ecclesiastical biography, i.e. lives of clergy, thrives as it did during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. John Fox in 1653 wrote the Book of Martyrs and Thomas Fuller in 1655 The Church History of Britain. In the first book we read about the holy life and holy death of the Protestant martyrs in the reign of Catholic Queen Mary, and in Fuller's Church History we find the brief lives of famous English ecclesiastics. The numerous publications of books on controversial religious disputes, between the Anglicans and the Puritans, in

---

[1]For further information on the Civil Wars see T.F.Tout, An Advanced History of Great Britain (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), II, pp.435-461.

the seventeenth century, were responsible for the popularity of ecclesiastical lives which were often prefixed as prefatory lives to the works of various churchmen. Walton writes, in his biography of Herbert, that a certain Mr. Barnabas Oley published George Herbert's The Country Parson with a Life of Herbert as a preface (p.400). [1] Walton himself prefixed his Life of Richard Hooker to Hooker's Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie and the Life of Dr. John Donne to Donne's Sermons.

A typical example of a seventeenth century funeral sermon or oration is Donne's sermon of commemoration on the occasion of the death of Lady Danvers, mother of George Herbert. Like contemporary funeral sermons, Donne's is panegyric and didactic. In it, he gives a brief biographical account of Lady Danvers, and then he writes:

> And as her house was a Court, in the conversation of the best, and an Almes-house, in feeding the poore, so was it also an Hospitall, in ministring releefe to the sicke. And truly, the love of doing

---

[1] All Quotations from Walton are from: Lives and The Complete Angler, ed. A.W.Pollard (London: Macmillan and Co., 1925).

> good in this kind, of ministring to the sicke, was the honey, that was spread over all her bread; the Aire, the Perfume, that breath'd over all her house. [1]

Donne presents Lady Danvers as a virtuous woman, an excellent wife and a loving mother, and ends his oration by exhorting the congregation to take a lesson from her exemplary life:

> Wake her not, with any halfe calumnies, with any whisperings; But if you wil wake her, wake her, and keepe her awake with an active immitation, of her Morall, and her Holy virtues. [2]

Together with such sermons, there were also the popular funeral elegies which were panegyric poems commemorating famous dead people. In his Life of Dr. John Donne, Walton quotes an elegy of this sort written by Henry King. King begins his elegy with the following praise of Donne:

> To have liv'd eminent, in a degree
> Beyond our loftiest thought; that is, like thee;
> Or, t'have had too much merit is not safe,
> For such excesses find no epitaph (p.240).

---

[1] John Donne, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1939), p. 572.

[2] Ibid., p. 576.

Despite the popularity of hagiography and its influence on biography in Walton's age, the followers of the scientific spirit of thinking in the seventeenth century looked upon it with disapproval, and as a result a new influence was beginning to be felt on biography which opposed the Medieval way of writing lives. Francis Bacon in his Advancement of Learning, published in 1605, deplored the bulk and questioned the veracity as well as the worth of hagiography, when he wrote: "It were to be wished the goodness and sincerity of it were equal to the bulk." [1] He further complained of the scarcity of lives and wished they were documented and written in a scientific way:

> For though, princes and great personages are few, yet there are many other excellent men who deserve better than vague reports and barren eulogies. [2]

Bacon, in his dissertation on biography, was pointing the direction the wind blew on the art of writing lives at the turn of the century. In 1662, the Royal Society of London for the advancement of studies in

---

[1] Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning and Novum Organum, ed. J.E.Craighton (New York: Willey Book Co., 1900), p. 60.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

experimental sciences was finally established, and the biographer John Aubrey, auther of Brief Lives, became one of its earliest members. Aubrey considered truth the most important factor in biography and he was an untiring searcher for it. In a letter to Anthony Wood, publisher of Athenae Oxonienses, a biographical dictionary of Oxfordmen, he writes thus about his brief lives:

> I here lay down to you . . . The Truth; (and as near as I can and that religiously) as a penitent to a confessor, nothing but the Truth. [1]

In the "Life of Thomas Hobbes," he is a diligent searcher for documents related to Hobbes. He writes: "Twenty odd years ago I searcht all old Mr. Latimer's papers," and then he adds, "the good housewives had sacrificed them." [2] Walton knew Aubrey and gathered for him material to be incorporated in his Brief Lives. [3]

---

[1] Vivian de Sola Pinto, English Biography in the Seventeenth Century (London: G.G.Harrap and Co., 1951), p. 44.

[2] John Aubrey, Brief Lives, ed. Anthony Powell (London: The Crescent Press, 1949), p. 240.

[3] Anthony Powell, John Aubrey and His Friends (London: Mercury Books, 1963), p. 186.

Aubrey had all the qualities needed for becoming like James Boswell, a great biographer. He was a great observer and had insight, humour and an untiring ability to collect gossip and anecdotes. His only weakness was his lack of ability for sustained work, and as a result he was unable to produce his works in a connected and continuous form. It was Walton who achieved success in his Lives when his contemporary biographer failed. Besides having Aubrey's qualities, Walton also had the ability to write a longer life in a continuous and connected mould.

The biographer whose methods of writing lives satisfied most the tastes of the seventeenth century scientific thinkers was Plutarch of Chaeronea, who wrote his famous Parallel Lives of Greeks and Romans in the first century after Christ. The biographer of antiquity had his beneficial influence not only on Walton and his contemporaries, but also on many biographers writing after the seventeenth century. Plutarch relates separately the lives of a Greek and a corresponding Roman general or politician, such as Alexander the Great

and Julius Caesar or Demosthenes and Cicero. At the end of each pair of lives, in the "Comparison," he makes an analysis of character, compares them to each other and passes his judgement on them. Sir Thomas North in 1579 translated the Parallel Lives into English from the French text of Jacques Amyot, and its influence on English literature was immediate. It was for many Elizabethan and seventeenth century English writers a source of inspiration. Shakespeare's proud and free genius was inspired by North's Plutarch, and he is highly indebted to it for his most natural and sublime scenes in his Roman plays, Coriolanus, Anthony and Cleopatra and Julius Caesar.

Walton read Plutarch, because in his introduction to the life of Donne he quotes from the Life of Pompey. The Greek biographer writes that when an old Roman saw Pompey's bondman, Philip, gathering "wood for the funeral-pile" of his master, from the "old remains of a fishing boat," he indignantly asked him: "Who are you that are preparing the funeral of Pompey the Great?" [1]

---

[1] Plutarch, Op. cit., IV, p. 228.

Walton compares himself to Pompey's slave, and speaks modestly about his literary abilities:

> And if I shall now be demanded, as once Pompey's poor bondman was, 'the grateful wretch had been left alone on the sea-shore with the forsaken dead body of his once glorious lord and master; and was then gathering the scattered pieces of an old broken boat, to make a funeral pile to burn it; which was the custom of the Romans — Who art thou, that alone hast the honour to bury the body of Pompey the Great?' So, who am I, that do thus officiously set the Author's memory on fire? (p.188).

Walton is indebted to the Greek biographer because some of the methods he used in his Lives are similar to those of Plutarch. The biographer of antiquity is an ordent follower of truth though he admits he may have unwillingly committed some mistakes. In the Life of Cimon he solemnly declares: "We shall adhere to truth." [1] He gives both the virtues and vices of his heroes. In the Life of Demetrius, he praises the military genius of the Greek general but then he also shows his debauchery with mistresses, female musicians and whores. [2] He uses all

---

[1] Ibid., III, p. 295.

[2] Ibid., V, p. 362.

kinds of documents and material connected to the life he is writing. In the Life of Alexander he quotes eighteen different authorities, in Coriolanus, Homer and in Fabian, Euripides. He quotes Cicero's letters and Sylla's memoirs in their respective lives.

Like Plutarch, Walton documents his lives. He uses humour and presents vivid images, which enrich the Lives. Above all, he follows Plutarch in his use of anecdotes or "little facts," which can tell more of a hero's character than his more famous achievements. In the Life of Alexander Plutarch makes the following important observation on biography:

> Neither is it always in the most distinguished exploits, that man's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but frequently an action of note, a short saying, or a jest, distinguishes a person's real character, more than field of carnage, the greatest battles or the most important sieges.[1]

Plutarch reveals the jealous nature of Crassus in his Life of Crassus by the help of a little "jest." He was told: "Pompey the Great is coming." To this he retorted: "How big is he?"[2] In the Life of Fabius Maximus, one

---

[1] Ibid., IV, p. 239.

[2] Ibid., III, p. 455.

"short saying" from the Roman general of "delaying tactics" to his Roman critics reveals his innermost soul and magnanimity of character more than his brilliant defeat of Hannibal at the battle of Cannae. To all criticisms he answers: "It is better to bear insults and reproaches than to abandon resolution." [1]

A brief study of Walton's Lives will reveal the important place which anecdotes or "little facts" hold in his art of biography. His anecdotes tell more of his heroes than tomes of learned discussions on theology or casuistry. In his Life of Richard Hooker, Hooker's students Edwyn Sandys and George Cranmer express great sorrow for his plight as he silently submits to the orders of Joan, his homely wife, to tend the sheep and rock the cradle. Hooker's short saying reveals his mild and humble nature when he answers them that he must not express dissatisfaction, but work to submit to God's will in patience and peace (p.311). His meeting with his parish clerk is a vivid image. Although we may smile as we read the passage,

---

[1] Ibid., II, p. 173.

we never forget Walton's description: "His poor parish clerk and he did never talk but with both their hats on, or both off, at the same time" (p.342).

No piece of information is too trivial for Walton if it helps reveal the character of his hero. Dr. Sanderson's elevated thoughts on marriage show his naive and sweet personality. He decided to marry because he thought it was a great pleasure to have "a complying and prudent wife," and children who would give "secret and unutterable joys to their parents" (p.441). Walton presents Dr. Sanderson, "the great scholar of logic and casuistical learning," with peculiarities which distinguish him from the other men. Though he was blessed with a strong memory, he would always read his sermons because his biographer says that the learned doctor suffered from "an innate invincible fear and bashfulness" (p.445).

The lives of Hooker and Sanderson are "Life and Times" biographies because Walton describes at length the controversial religious disputes of the two ecclesiastics. Instead of biography, we feel we are reading British ecclesiastical history of the late Elizabethan and Stuart Monarchy.

However, Walton's vivid images, humour and anecdotes lend charm to the lives.

Walton presents George Herbert as a devout and holy man, a man of "primitive piety." This life was not written as a preface to the creative works of his subject as were the other four lives. He wrote it for his own pleasure because the saintly life of the poet-priest suited his religiously inclined temperament. The Life of Herbert, like the lives of saints, sounds a little hollow, and Herbert is less individualized than Walton's other heroes. But even here Walton has vivid images, such as that of the peasants who leave their ploughs to pray with Mr. Herbert when his "Saint's-bell rung to prayers" (p.407), and return to work at the end of the service. In one anecdote, Herbert is a "Good Samaritan" (p.409), who puts off his canonical coat and helps a distressed peasant to lift his overloaded horse from the ground, while advising him to be kinder to his animal.

In the Life of Sir Henry Wotton, Walton shows his ability to write not only an ecclesiastical but also a secular biography. He portrays vividly the life of Sir Henry Wotton as British ambassador to the Republic

of Venice and as Provost of Eton College after taking holy orders at the advanced age of sixty. The biographer presents Wotton as a colourful Elizabethan diplomat and courtier, with all his brilliance, elegance and wit. The quotation of Wotton's pithy aphorisms lend a certain charm and vividness to the Life. Wotton's definition of the word "ambassador," with its pun on the verb "lie" is well known. He says: "An ambassador is an honest man, sent to lie abroad for the good of his country" (p.267). In another place we read that an ambassador must always speak the truth, because people will not believe him anyway (p.278).

Humour, which Walton uses extensively in this Life, serves to weaken the moralising effect. He writes that at Eton College, Wotton was short of money because he had always been careless in its use, and then he adds with "a jest" peculiar to him: ". . . as though our Saviour's words, 'care not for tomorrow,' were to be literally understood" (p.272). Whenever he tells something about his subject, he illustrates it with an anecdote which gives

of Venice and as Provost of Eton College after taking holy orders at the advanced age of sixty. The biographer presents Wotton as a colourful Elizabethan diplomat and courtier, with all his brilliance, elegance and wit. The quotation of Wotton's pithy aphorisms lend a certain charm and vividness to the _Life_. Wotton's definition of the word "ambassador," with its pun on the verb "lie" is well known. He says: "An ambassador is an honest man, sent to lie abroad for the good of his country" (p.267). In another place we read that an ambassador must always speak the truth, because people will not believe him anyway (p.278).

Humour, which Walton uses extensively in this _Life_, serves to weaken the moralising effect. He writes that at Eton College, Wotton was short of money because he had always been careless in its use, and then he adds with "a jest" peculiar to him: ". . . as though our Saviour's words, 'care not for tomorrow,' were to be literally understood" (p.272). Whenever he tells something about his subject, he illustrates it with an anecdote which gives

realism to his narration. He writes that the Provost hated "wrangling disputes" of religion because he was a broad-minded clergyman who firmly believed in religious toleration. Once when a man came to Wotton, railing against the Papists, he gave him the following witty answer: "And take heed of thinking the further you go from the Church of Rome, the nearer you are to God" (p.277).

Walton wrote in an age when the art of writing lives in English Literature was still in an early stage of development. As a result we can notice in his works the meeting of different biographical trends and traditions. The influence of Medieval hagiography which continued to flourish during his lifetime, as well as seventeenth century scientific thinking and Plutarch's methods of writing lives, can all be traced in his biographies of the five eminent Anglican ecclesiastics. He wrote ecclesiastical lives because the controversial religious issues of the seventeenth century required them; however, in his Life of <u>Sir Henry Wotton</u>, he proved that he was equally at home in writing a secular biography.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF DR. JOHN DONNE

In a letter addressed to the readers of his Life of Dr. John Donne, Walton wrote that when he heard the sermons of Donne were to be published in 1640 without a prefatory life, he felt a moral duty, a "necessity" to write it (p.184). He further added that after the death of Donne in 1631, Sir Henry Wotton, close friend to Donne and Walton, planned to write the life and so he asked Walton to collect relevant material, which he did. However, Wotton's sudden death in December 1639 put Walton under an obligation to write the Life himself, and as a result he presented it to Mariot, the publisher, in six weeks.

Walton knew Donne and his friends, and so he was in a good position to gather all the necessary in-

formation concerning the life. Donne became the vicar of Saint Dunstan in the West, and Walton was his parishioner. For seven years, he remained in contact with the man whose life he was to write, and he was present at Donne's deathbed in 1631. [1]

Walton's Life of Donne can be briefly summarized as follows: The period of youth from 1573 to 1601, when Walton presents Donne as an overactive youth, whose turbulent life is full of paradoxes. Everything he starts is left unfinished. He leaves Oxford University without a degree, for he was a Catholic and would not take the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance. His studies of law at Lincoln's Inn were left unfinished, and we next find him with the Earl of Essex on the Island Expeditions off the Spanish coast in the years 1594 and 1597. On his return he was appointed secretary to Lord Egerton, keeper of the Seal, only to be discharged in 1601 because of his secret elopment with Ann More, the niece of Lady Egerton.

---

[1] Martin Stapleton, Izaak Walton and His Friends (London: Chapman and Hall, 1903), p. 3.

Walton then covers Donne's life from his marriage in 1601 till his ordination in 1614, and according to Walton, this period was the most miserable in the life of Donne. He was always in debt because his wife had a child yearly and as a result his friends Sir Francis Wolly and Sir Robert Drury sheltered him and his family in their houses or gave financial help to him when his family moved to Mitcham, in Surrey. During this time he studied Civil and Canon Laws "in which he acquired perfection" (p.199), says Walton. Finally Walton describes Donne's life from his ordination in 1614 till his death in 1631.

In no where does Walton sum up his concept of biography as clearly as he does in his letter addressed to the reader of the 1666 edition of the Life of Mr. Richard Hooker. In the first paragraph he says that the Archbishop of Canterbury told him to write the life of Hooker and thinks there are neither "Material mistakes" nor "omissions" in his work. However, if his readers find mistakes he promises to correct them in his second "impression."

Walton then covers Donne's life from his marriage in 1601 till his ordination in 1614, and according to Walton, this period was the most miserable in the life of Donne. He was always in debt because his wife had a child yearly and as a result his friends Sir Francis Wolly and Sir Robert Drury sheltered him and his family in their houses or gave financial help to him when his family moved to Mitcham, in Surrey. During this time he studied Civil and Canon Laws "in which he acquired perfection" (p.199), says Walton. Finally Walton describes Donne's life from his ordination in 1614 till his death in 1631.

In no where does Walton sum up his concept of biography as clearly as he does in his letter addressed to the reader of the 1666 edition of the Life of Mr. Richard Hooker. In the first paragraph he says that the Archbishop of Canterbury told him to write the life of Hooker and thinks there are neither "Material mistakes" nor "omissions" in his work. However, if his readers find mistakes he promises to correct them in his second "impression."

Walton then covers Donne's life from his marriage in 1601 till his ordination in 1614, and according to Walton, this period was the most miserable in the life of Donne. He was always in debt because his wife had a child yearly and as a result his friends Sir Francis Wolly and Sir Robert Drury sheltered him and his family in their houses or gave financial help to him when his family moved to Mitcham, in Surrey. During this time he studied Civil and Canon Laws "in which he acquired perfection" (p.199), says Walton. Finally Walton describes Donne's life from his ordination in 1614 till his death in 1631.

In no where does Walton sum up his concept of biography as clearly as he does in his letter addressed to the reader of the 1666 edition of the Life of Mr. Richard Hooker. In the first paragraph he says that the Archbishop of Canterbury told him to write the life of Hooker and thinks there are neither "Material mistakes" nor "omissions" in his work. However, if his readers find mistakes he promises to correct them in his second "impression."

In the next paragraph he says that he diligently collected his material for the narration from all available sources, including nothing but the testimony of people who spoke the truth. As for his own observations or opinions in his work, he writes: "I shall not impose my belief upon my reader; I shall rather leave him at liberty." In the third paragraph he is sorry for the lack of lives and is humble about his abilities to write a biography which he thinks is an important and arduous task. [1]

In his introduction to the Life of Donne Walton stresses still more the primacy of truth over artistry. He claims, in the conventional way of authors, that his "artless pencil" is always "guided by the hand of truth" (p.188). He speaks about his simple education and plain language and then adds that people of this type usually speak the truth. However, Walton does not speak the whole truth, because he deliberately ignores Donne's dissipated life as a youth and his early writings. When Bishop Morton suggests that he join the Church, Donne humbly declines the offer. Walton presents a "penitential" Donne who

---

[1] The Complete Walton, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1929), p. 328.

gives the following answer to the bishop:

> . . . some irregularities of my life have been so visible to some men, that though I have, I thank God, made my peace with him by penitential resolutions against them, and by the assistance of his grace banished them my affections; yet this, which God knows to be so, is not so visible to man, as to free me from their censures, and it may be that sacred calling from a dishonour (p.198).

Walton speaks vaguely about Donne's irregular life as a young man, while he gives a more detailed narration of his life from ordination to death. He is primarily interested in his hero's studiousness and sanctity. Similarly Walton prefers certain works from Donne and quotes extensively from them. He says that Donne wrote worldly and sacred poems:

> It is a truth, that in his penitential years, viewing some of those pieces that had been loosely -- God knows, too loosely -- scattered in his youth, he wished they had been abortive, or so short-lived that his own eyes had witnessed their funerals: but, though he was no friend to tem, he was not so fallen out with heavenly poetry, as to forsake that; no, not in his declining age; witnessed then by many divine sonnets, and other high, holy, and harmonious composures (p. 220).

Like Donne, the biographer prefers the poet's sacred poems from which he often quotes in the Life. He does not quote from Donne's typical early poems, but only praises his young subject's poetic abilities:

> The recreations of his youth were poetry, in which he was so happy, as if nature and all her varieties had been made only to exercise his sharp wit and high fancy; and in those pieces which were facetiously composed and carelessly scattered, -- most of them being written before the twentieth year of his age -- it may appear by his choice metaphors, that both nature and all the arts joined to assist him with their utmost skill (p.220).

Walton's division of Donne's poems into early and later works is inadmissible. He thinks Donne is sinful in the former, and holy in the latter. J.B.Leishman, the twentieth century critic, in his Monarch of Wit, categorically opposes Walton's view. He writes that there is a "continuity" of thought in Donne's creations and that he sees no difference in the works of Jack Donne and Dr. Donne. He further adds that the strong element of "otherworldliness" is conspicuous in the creations of his wildest days as the deep sense of sin is in his divine works. [1] Donne's argumentative and passionate manner of writing are noticeable

---

[1] J.B.Leishman, The Monarch of Wit (London: Hutchinson, 1962), p. 268.

in his early and later works.

No doubt Walton is the first deliberate English biographer to use the creative works of his subject for documentary evidence. From the great mass of Donne's works, Walton makes use of the Letters, Pseudo-Martyrs, Book of Devotions and Biathanatos. As for the poetic creations, Walton quotes mainly from Donne's "Divine Poems" and "Holy Sonnets". The cause for his choice of certain material from his subject's works and omission of others lies in his purpose of presenting the Life. Augustine Jessopp, in his biography of Donne, says that Walton has an eye on his hero's change and as a result he emphasizes the holiness of Donne more that his earlier worldliness as a young man. Jessopp further says that Walton presents in his Life a "penitential" Donne who, with the passing of time, was "softened and sanctified".[1] Walton's purpose is to present to the clergy of the newly formed Anglican Church the exemplary life of a protestant "saint". He tries to give a moral lesson by praising his

---

[1] Augustine Jessopp, John Donne (London: Methuen and Co., 1905), p. 167.

his hero's good qualities: "Thus variable, thus virtuous was this life: thus excellent, thus exemplary was the death of this memorable man" (p.237).

Instead of illustrating Donne's earlier life, Walton emphasizes the change in him, something which Donne often does himself in his works. The biographer again follows his subject when he says that Donne anticipated a change in himself even during the period of his wildest days. He writes that he saw a portrait of Donne at the age of eighteen dressed in a fashionable manner with an inscription of his motto (rather enigmatic) under it: "How much shall I be changed, Before I am changed!" (p.235). Walton himself wrote a poem on Donne's change which clarifies still more his purpose in writing the Life. The poem with the portrain prefixed to the second edition of Donne's poems published in 1635 reads as follows:

> This was for Youth, Strength, Mirth, and wit that Time
> Most count their golden Age; but t'was not thine.
> Thine was thy later years, so much refined
> From youths Drosse, Mirth and wit; as thy pure mind
> Thought (like the Angels) nothing but the Praise
> Of thy Creator, in those last, best Dayes.
> Witness this Book, (thy Embleme) which begins
> With Love; but endes, with sighes, and Teares for Sins.[1]

---

[1] The Complete Walton, Op. cit., p. 578.

Together with the change in Donne, Walton emphasizes his subject's studiousness in the following way:

> Nor was his age only so industrious, but in the most unsettled days of his youth, his bed was not able to detain him beyond the hour of four in the morning; and it was no common business that drew him out of his chamber till past ten; all which time was employed in study; though he took great liberty after it (p.225).

Walton then illustrates his hero's "studiousness". He writes that Donne "left the resultance of 1400 Authors, most of them abridged and analysed with his own hand" (p.226). However, he deliberately avoids describing Donne's "great liberty" after his long hours of study, a matter which is explained by Sir Richard Baker, who, in his Chronicle of the Kings of England recalls his

> Old acquaintance . . . . Mr. John Donne, who leaving Oxford, liv'd at the Inns of Court, not dissolute but very neat: a great visitor of Ladies, a great Frequenter of plays, a great writer of conceited verses.[1]

Walton's use of Donne's letters sheds much light on his biographical technique. George Saintsbury, Twentieth

---

[1] As quoted in Evelyn M.Simpson's, A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 70.

century literary critic, says that Walton knew well the autobiographical value of letters and that he is the first Englishman to make deliberate use of his subject's epistolary works.[1] His method of using the letters is suggested by his purpose, which is to demonstrate Donne's "narrow fortune and the perplexities of his generous mind" (p.202) during the miserable period of his middle life, and in order to do this, Walton quotes what seem to be two "letters" of Donne.

R. E. Bennett, in an excellent essay, says that a comparison of these "letters" with the original ones of Donne shows that Walton freely paraphrases parts of letters, simplifies words or clarifies thoughts, puts certain matters into relief, omits details irrelevant to his aim and even adds a date.[2] Walton frankly stated from the start: "I shall present you with an extract collected out of some few of his many letters" (p.200). Bennett says the first of the two "letters" is a quotation and a paraphrase of Donne's

---

[1]Izaak Walton, The Lives (The World's Classics edition; London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. VIII.

[2]R. E. Bennett, "Walton's Use of Donne's Letters", Philological Quarterly, XVI (1937), p. 30.

letter which the biographer ends with the words: "From my hospital at Mitcham, Aug. 10." Bennett adds that it was neither written from Mitcham nor on August 10 and he further thinks that Walton took the date from another letter not used by him "in order to create a pleasing verisimilitude." [1] Donne's original letter mentions Lord Harrington's illness and the Earl of Somerset's marriage which Walton omits so as to be able to change freely the date and place of letter.

Bennett says that Walton's second "letter" is "synthetic," made of eight extracts from five letters. [2] These were sent by Donne to his dear friend, Sir Henry Goodyere, to whom he wrote forty letters, which are very subjective and self-revealing. Walton again adds a date, September 7, to the end of this "letter" to "create a pleasing verisimilitude." In one of the extracts which follows, we notice that Walton paraphrases Donne's lines,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 31.

[2] Ibid., p. 32.

clarifies the thought, and changes the general observations to personal by altering the personal pronoun "they" to "I." Walton's purpose in changing the extract is to demonstrate better Donne's despondency at Mitcham.

Donne writes:

> . . . but to be no part of anybody is to be nothing. At most the greatest persons are but great wens and excrecences; men of wit and delightful conversation but as moles for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world that they contribute something to the sustenation of the whole. [1]

Walton's version reads:

> . . . but to be no part of anybody, is to be nothing: and so I am, and shall so judge myself, unless I could be so incorporated into a part of the world, as my business to contribute some sustenation to the whole (p.200).

Donne speaks of his "hydroptic, immoderate desire of human learning and language," which he explains as "beautiful ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation." [2] Walton clarifies the thought by expanding it thus: "beautiful

---

[1] Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne (London: William Heinmann, 1899), I, p. 191.

[2] Ibid., p. 197.

ornaments indeed to men of great fortunes, but mine was grown so low as to need an occupation" (p.201). He simplifies Donne's "worldly encombrances" [1] to "worldly troubles" (p.200).

No doubt Walton's method of handling Donne's letters is unscientific. Besides, it creates an important critical issue: the question of the relationship between "truth" and "accuracy" in the Life. Walton speaks the truth, but he does not speak the whole truth. The extracts from the letters describe the miserable condition of Donne before his final decision to enter into holy orders, but they deliberately ignore the other aspects of Donne's life, which we can see in the omitted sections of the letters. As a result, the biographer's portrait of Donne is incomplete and somewhat distorted.

Walton succeeds well in his artistic arrangement of the extracts, by means of his clever use of phrase-tags like "But Sir," "And yet," I therefore," and the average reader probably would never suspect he was reading a "synthetic letter" if Walton had not said so. He gives effectively

---

[1] Bennett, Op. cit., p. 31.

the desired impression at a particular period in the life of his subject by means of his intelligent choice and paraphrase of extracts from Donne's letters. Sir Edmund Gosse says that Walton describes the miserable period of Donne's life very successfully by means of his extracts from the letters. [1]

In a method similar to his handling of the letters, Walton uses Donne's longer prose works as documentary evidence in the _Life_. Donne wrote the _Pseudo-Martyrs_, _Ignatius His Conclave_ and _Biathanatos_ at the time he was in the service of Bishop Morton. The tone Donne used in the _Pseudo-Martyrs_ is calm and reasonable and this is why Walton draws from it more than from the other works. In its preface which deals with the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, Donne invites his Catholic compatriotes to accept the King as the lawful head of Church and State. The main theme is that people who revolt against their legitimate rulers are rebels and false martyrs. [2]

---

[1] Gosse, _Op. cit._, p. 155.

[2] Simpson, _Op. cit._, p. 189.

Walton shows the same clear and sound reasoning in the Life:

> . . . common people, who in this nation think they are not wise, unless they be busy about what they understand not, and especially about religion (p.217).

We can notice Walton's calm and reasonable attitude in most of his works. In 1680, he published his Love and Truth, two letters dated 1657 and 1679 and "written from a quiet and comfortable citizen of London, to two busie and factious shop-keepers in Coventry." [1] In the second letter he tells his compatriotes:

> Remember, you and I are but citizens, and must take much that concerns our religion and salvation upon trust. [2]

As a Catholic, Donne experienced arduous mental struggles before finally joining the Church of England. In the preface to the Pseudo-Martyrs he writes:

> I had a longer work to doe then many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and wrastle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken.

---

[1] The Complete Walton, Op. cit., p. 565.

[2] Ibid., p. 569.

And further:

> I had survayed and digested the whole body of Divinity, controverted between ours and the Romane Church. [1]

Walton discusses the strong Catholic ties of Donne's family and then paraphrases the second part of the quotation as follows:

> He began seriously to survey and consider the body of Divinity, as it was then controverted betwixt the Reformed and the Roman Church.

Walton then adds with satisfaction:

> Truth had too much light about her to hid from so sharp an enquirer; and he had too much ingenuity, not to acknowledge he had found her (p.191).

Donne's next book, the _Biathanatos_, is an apology for suicide written during hisdispondency at Mitcham when he might, like Hamlet, have considered suicide. In the preface he justifies suicide: ". . . any affection assails me, methinks I have the keys of my prison." [2]

---

[1] Simpson, _Op. cit._, p. 188.

[2] Gosse, _Op. cit._, p. 207.

Walton quotes the title-page of this work but omits the line which reads: "Self-Homicide is not So Naturally Sinne, that it may never be otherwise." [1] He then hastily comments, saying: "a Treatise written in his younger days," and goes on praising Donne's knowledge of Civil and Canon Laws. Donne, in later years, did not approve his previous justification of "self-homicide" expressed in Biathanatos, and as a result in his letter of April 1619, he writes to his friend Sir Robert Ker: ". . . it is a Book written by Jack Donne, and not by D.Donne: I only forbid it the Presse, and the Fire." [2] Walton carefully abstains mentioning anything which might create in the reader a suspicion of Donne's apology for suicide.

Walton praises Donne's Sermons and says he enjoyed reading them. In his will, he bequeaths his copy

---

[1] Ibid., p. 252.

[2] Donne, Op. cit., p.470.

to Dr. Hawkins saying: "I have heard preacht, and read with much content." [1] Donne explains the duties of the preacher in his sermon of 12 Feb., 1618, where he tells that it should be delivered:

> . . . with consideration, with meditation, with preparation; and not barbarously, not suddenly, not occasionally, not extemporarily, which might derogate from the dignity of so great a service. [2]

Walton says that Donne usually preached once a week and that he worked very hard in the final preparation of his sermon:

> . . . so after his Sermon he never gave his eyes rest till he had chosen out a Text, and that night cast his sermon into form, and his Text into divisions; and the next day betook himself to consult the Fathers, and so commit his meditations to his memory, which was excellent (p.225).

Since he wrote the _Life_ as an introduction to Donne's _Sermons_, the reader might expect a classification or some criticism of the sermons. Instead Walton describes Donne's conversion which he says was from "a temporal to

---

[1] Stapleton, _Op. cit._, p. 184.

[2] Simpson, _Op. cit._, p. 257.

a spiritual employment" (p.236), something often mentioned in Donne's sermons. Again Walton's main interest lies in his hero's sense of sin and change, which the Dean describes very effectively by sermons delivered at Lincoln's Inn.

In 1616 Donne became a reader in divinity to the Benchers of Lincoln's Inn where he himself studied law in his youth. He delivered some thirteen sermons in which he makes constant allusion to his past sins. Many of the Benchers were his friends and they knew well the dissipated life he led as a youth. He would tell them that he and his friends had been sinners:

> Thou pursuest the works of the flesh, and hast none, for thy flesh is but dust held together by plaisters; Dissolution and putrefaction is gone over thee alive; Thou hast over liv'd thine own death, and are become thine own ghost, and thine own hell.[1]

He talks of his change and says that in the past he had been after worldly interest which according to him is "... but giddy, but vertiginous circle, but an elaborate and exquisite ignorance."[2]

---

[1]Donne, Op. cit., p. 690.

[2]Logan Pearsall Smith, Donne's Sermons, Selected Passages (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 105.

Walton uses the same words of Donne when he writes:

> . . . Dr. Donne would often in his private discourses, and often publicly in his sermons, mention the many changes both of his body and mind; especially of his mind from a vertiginous giddiness (p.236).

Walton reveals his strong imaginative power when he effectively illustrates Donne's situation as a preacher at Lincoln's Inn:

> . . . being most glad to renew his intermitted friendship with those whom he so much loved, and where he had been a Saul, -- though not to persecute Christianity, or to deride it, yet in his irregular youth to neglect the visible practice of it, -- there to become a Paul, and preach salvation to his beloved brethren (p.213).

He points out clearly the effect of Donne's sermons on his listeners:

> And indeed his very words and looks testified him to be truly such a man; and they, with the addition of his sighs and tears, expressed in his Sermon, did so work upon the affections of his hearers, as melted and moulded them into a companionable sadness (p.213).

Walton further says that Donne as a preacher was "... always preaching to himself, like an angel from a cloud, but in none; carrying some, as St. Paul was, to Heaven in holy

raptures .... " (p.210), and then he feels he has been over praising his subject's ability to deliver sermons, so he quotes as witness the "Funeral Elegy" on Dr.Donne, written by Mr.Chidley, "a gentleman of worth" (p.211).

Walton writes that the Dean suffered dangerously of "Consumption" in his fifty-fourth year and that in his sick-bed he wrote the Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions. The Devotions of Donne is the prose counterpart of his "Divine Poems" written some years earlier. The underlying theme in both is his deep spiritual conflict resulting from sins which he feels he is constantly committing. He meditates with awe on the purity and strict laws of God, and he is full of hope when he remembers Christ through whom he expects to get his salvation. In "Holy Sonnet XIII," he contemplates in front of "The picture of Christ crucified," and then is confident of his salvation, for he says:

"This beauteous forme assures a piteous mind." [1]

Walton, as in the Sermons, talks of the effect of Devotions

---

[1] Donne, Op. cit., p. 285.

on the reader:

> . . . in which the reader may see the most secret thoughts that then possessed his soul, paraphrased and made public: a book, that may not unfitly be called a Sacred Picture of Spiritual Ecstasies (p.219).

He also says that the book contains "Meditations, Disquisitions, and Prayers" but does not mention Donne's deep knowledge -- of metaphysical, medical and theological sciences -- that is revealed in the book.

Death is an important topic in the _Devotions_ and Walton gives preference to it in the latter part of the _Life_. Donne speaks of death in an elevated prose:

> . . . any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankinde; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee. [1]

Walton follows the idea expressed by Donne in the _Devotions_ when he describes the Dean's wish to die. He writes:

> And now he was so happy as to have nothing to do but to die, to do which, he stood in need of no longer time; for he had studied it long, and to so happy a perfection, that in a former sickness he called God to witness, 'He was that minute ready to deliver his soul into his hands, if that minute God would determine his dissolution' (p.236).

---

[1] _Ibid_., p. 538.

In the _Devotions_ we see that death and sickness fascinate Donne. Walton himself is fascinated by death in the _Life_.

Walton highly praises the "Divine Poems" of Donne. He then illustrates the beauty of Donne's heavenly poems by quoting two "Hymns." In the second of these, "A Hymn to God, My God, in my Sickness," he chooses those lines which directly show Donne's holiness and deliberately omits the lengthy cosmographer's conceit so as to be brief and effective. Furthermore, we notice lines of holy verse diffused in the _Life_. Walton writes:

> . . . and (Donne) was so far from fearing Death, which to others is the King of Terrors, that he longed for the day of his dissolution (p.234).

In the above lines, the biographer reflects the same attitude as that in Donne's poem "Death Be Not Proud." The poet writes:

> Death be not proud, though some have called thee
> Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not soe,
> For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow
> Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me. [1]

---

[1] _Ibid._, p. 283.

In the divine poem "To Mr. Tillman After He Had Taken Orders," Donne explains to Mr. Tillman the importance of his new position. The poet writes:

> What function is so noble, as to bee
> Embassadour to God and destinie ?
> To open life, to give kingdomes to more
> Than kings give dignities; to keepe heavens doors ?
> Maries prerogative was to beare Christ, so
> 'Tis preachers to convey him, for they doe
> As Angels out of clouds, from Pulpits speake;
> And blesse the poore beneath, the lame, the weake.[1]

Walton places a similar idea in the words of Bishop Morton, talking to Donne about the duty of a preacher. Morton says:

> Remember, Mr. Donne, no man's education or parts make him too good for this employment, which is to be an ambassador for the God of glory; that God, who by a vile death opened the gates of life to mankind (p.197).

Elsewhere in the Life, Walton praises Donne as a preacher, who, he writes, spoke " ... like an angel from a cloud" (p.210).

Besides the creative works of Donne, Walton uses other sources in writing the Life. They are oral references, parish records, Donne's will and his portrait. He gives great

---

[1] Ibid., p. 305.

importance to oral information he gathers from reliable people. Unfortunately, he does not gather information from Donne himself. Another good source for information would have been the mother of Donne, who died three months before her son. Sir Edmund Gosse says, "Had Walton questioned her, much that is obscure in the early life of her son would be known." [1] But he neither quotes Donne's conversations with him in the Boswellian manner, nor does he question his mother, but rather gives preference to the testimonies of "honourable" people. Such a person is Bishop Morton of Durham, a friend of Walton -- "My friend, from whom I received the following relation" (p.196), and then he reproduces the imaginary conversation between Morton and Donne on the subject of his joining the sacred orders. Though we may think Walton's method is unscientific, yet we do not doubt his sincerity and truthfulness when he presents the imaginary conversation on Donne's vision in Paris, which he says, was told to him by "A Person of Honour" (p.205).

Walton examines the records at **the Deanery and** he further quotes from the doctor's will. In the first he tries

---

[1] Gosse, Op. cit., p. 7.

to illustrate Donne's honesty in money matters, while in the second he presents him as an impartial father, a lover of friends and charitable to the poor. Another source from which he drew material was Donne's pictures. A picture is a great help for showing the appearance and to a certain extent the character of a subject. Walton also tries to impart a moral lesson to the reader by comparing Donne's picture of youth to that which was drawn in a winding sheet during his later years. He writes:

> And if that young, and his now dying picture were at this time set together, every beholder might say, Lord! how much is Dr. Donne already changed, before he is changed! And the view of them might give my reader occasion to ask himself with some amazement, 'Lord! how much may I also, that am now in health be changed before I am changed; before this vile, this changeable body shall put off martality!' and therefore to prepare for it (p.235).

Even though the Life is documented, Walton still admits that it may not be altogether free of errors both in dates and facts. He reports correctly the progress of events in his hero's life, but he is not exact when he dates a particular happening in his narration or a speical

incident in his subject's age. Donne's year of birth remains an unsolved mystery. Walton says he was born in 1573, a date which modern scholarship rejects, and puts somewhere in the latter half of 1571 or the first half of 1572. [1] He knows his dates are sometimes wrong so he proceeds in his narration by mentioning the age of his subject and even here he errs. He writes that at "about" twenty-one (p.191) Donne joined the Island voyages under the Earl of Essex in 1596, but surely he was twenty-three at this time, considering the fact that Walton himself fixed the date of Donne's birth as 1573. However, he is more exact with his dates from the time Donne came to the vicarage of St.Dunstan's. He mentions the false rumours about Donne's death circulating in London and gives its exact month and year, "January 1630" (p.230). He gives the year of his death, 1631, and ends his quotation of the will with the exact date, "Sealed December 13, 1630" (p.228).

---

[1] Simpson, Op. cit., p. 12.

Sir Edmund Gosse, in his study of Donne's life, has found many errors both of dates and facts in Walton's work. Walton says that immediately after Donne wrote his Pseudo-Martyrs in 1610, the king persuaded him to enter the sacred orders. He further adds that this happened at Theobalds in the presence of the Earl of Somerset, who was then "in his greatest height of favour" (p.207). Gosse corrects Walton by saying that Donne was ordained priest in 1614, Somerset was not at his height of power, nor was the meeting at Theobalds. [1] These errors of detail are not of "material" importance to Walton because the essential thing is that the king wished Donne to join the Church and Walton reports this correctly. Sir Edmund Gosse further adds that Walton does not create Donne's character in its full complexity. He writes that Donne bargained in the marriage of his daughter Constance, twenty- years old, to Alleyn, fifty-eight, demanded money and later called

---

[1] Gosse, Op. cit., II, p. 57.

him a fool.[1] He also made love to a married woman whose husband was an invalid.[2] Assuming that Walton knew these facts, he still would not record them in his Life. These truths would harm his portrait of a "softened and sanctified" Donne. They do not agree with his purpose of writing the biography of a Protestant "saint" whose exemplary life would teach "holy living" to the Anglican clergymen of his time. Besides, he had to take into consideration Donne's sons and the family reputation.

Walton never tired of revising and correcting his different editions of the life of Donne. The 1640 print was a prefatory life and a mere sketch; it was not written as a piece of literary work. Consequently in 1658, he edited it for a second time in a corrected and enlarged form. In 1670 he published a third edition together with the lives of Wotton, Hooker and Herbert,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 217.

[2] Gosse, Op., cit., I, p. 70.

and finally in 1675, he republished the four lives in a separate volume, which is called 'the fourth edition.' [1] His method of revision is similar to his handling of Donne's letters, as described earlier. The 1640 edition does not contain Morton's interview with Donne, while the 1658 print has this interesting news. Again, in the second edition, Walton calls him a "Picus Mirandula" (p.189), and by so doing he emphasizes his subject's intelligence and wisdom. [2] In the 1675 print, he tries to alleviate Donne's guilt in his clandestine elopement and marriage with Anne More, by putting the stress on his deep love for Anne. So he adds the "Valediction, Forbidding to Mourn," his vision of Anne in Paris and his deep grief at her death. In the 1640 print he had only mentioned the wife's death. [3]

---

[1] Gosse, Op. cit., II, p. 93.

[2] Gosse, Op. cit., I, p. 159.

[3] Gosse, Op. cit., II, p. 95.

In his quotation from "An Hymn to God, My God, in My Sickness," he deliberately omits parts of the poem and changes its date so as to render it more effective. Walton constantly tries to improve the language of his consecutive editions. The "Unimitable fashion of speaking," "the same month in which he was ordained priest" and the word "talking" of the 1640 edition [1] become in later prints "Unexpressible addition of comeliness" (p.238), " the very same month in which he entered into sacred Orders" (p.211) and"discoursing (p.207).

Although Walton belittles his artistry, we notice that in the life of Donne he tries to be truthful as well as artistic. He is aware of his errors in documentation and so he tries to win the confidence of his reader by consistently repeating the idea that his work is always "guided by the hand of truth" (p.188). On the other hand, he speaks modestly about his style and capacity to write, which he thinks is due to his humble and "mean abilities," and he further expresses surprise to see his works "publicly in print" (p.184).

---

[1] _Ibid._, p. 83.

* * *

Professor Ian A. Gordon, in his The Movement of English Prose, discusses the development of prose from its beginnings in the Anglo-Saxon period to modern times. He states that "The continuity of English Prose is a continuity of spoken English." [1] Commenting on seventeenth century writing, he further adds that with the establishment of the Royal Society in 1660, English prose "reverted" to the basically native and simple "speech-based" prose of the Anglo-Saxon homilies and chronicles. He writes:

> What the establishment of the Royal Society did was to give final printed authority, under distinguished patronage, for an English prose which rejected all Latin syntax (both Ciceronian and Senecan), rejected renaissance rhetorical figures, rejected metaphor and simile, and reverted to essentially Anglo-Saxon sentence-structure. [2]

---

[1] Ian A. Gordon, The Movement of English Prose (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1966), p. 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

A brief comparison of the predominantly Latin syntax of Milton's prose, and the Anglo-Saxon sentence-structure of Walton may help to clarify Professor Gordon's thought, and shed some light on Walton's prose style. The common sentence-structure of Milton is the Ciceronian periodic sentence, which has a complicated mechanism due to the intricately arranged interlocking subordinate clauses, the use of difficult Latin words and the delay of the main thought of a commonly lengthy sentence to its very end. The following lines from Milton's pamphlet "Areopagitica" will illustrate the point:

> Seeing therefore, that those books, and those in great abundance, which are likeliest to taint both life and doctrine, cannot be suppressed without the fall of learning and of all ability in disputation, and that these books of either sort are most and soonest catching to the learned, from whom to the common people whatever is heretical or dissolute may quickly be conveyed, and the evil manners are as perfectly learnt without books a thousand other ways which cannot be stopped, and evil doctrine not with books can propagate, except a teacher guide, which he might also do without writing, and so beyond prohibiting, I am not able to unfold, how this cautelous enterprise of licensing can be exempted from the number of vain and impossible attempts.[1]

---

[1] John Milton, Prose Writings (Everyman's Library edition; London: J.M.Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1958), p. 160.

Walton, on the other hand, commonly uses in his sentence, the usual native Anglo-Saxon word-order of subject, verb, object and complement. His prose is near to conversational English, and his many simple Anglo-Saxon words are those used by an Englishman of average education. Professor Gordon states that Walton, Dryden and the first Earl of Clarendon write "an easy, natural prose that has evolved from their conversation with their peers." [1] The following is an example of Walton's Anglo-Saxon sentence-structure:

> By this you have seen a part of the picture of his narrow fortune, and the perplexities of his generous mind; and thus it continued with him for about two years, all which time his family remained constantly at Mitcham; and to which place he often retired himself, and destined some days to constant study of some points of controversy betwixt the English and Roman Church, and especially those of Supremacy and Allegiance: and to that place and such studies, he could willingly have wedded himself during his life: but the earnest persuasion of friends became at last to be so powerful, as to cause the removal of himself and family to London . . . . (p.202).

The above resembles to the Ciceronian sentence only in length.

---

[1] Gordon, <u>Op. cit.</u>, p. 124.

Walton's sentence-structure, like the native Anglo-Saxon, is "paratactic or co-ordinate," [1] with the conjunctions 'and' and 'but' used as links between the successive clauses, which expand the meaning of the sentence as it progresses.

Walton writes the Life of Donne in a simple, pure and polished style. Professor Douglas Bush comments on this in the following way:

> He (Walton) is nearer to Attic prose than many scholarly writers of his age, yet he rises easily into poetry. [2]

His more famous contemporary writers -- Sir Francis Bacon, John Donne and Sir Thomas Browne -- present their works in a more developed prose. Bacon wrote his early essays in Senecan style. [3] His language in these essays is strong, compact, epigrammatic and free of ornateness. The following

---

[1] Ibid., p. 67.

[2] Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 223.

[3] Gordon, Op. cit., p. 108.

from "Of Studies" will illustrate Bacon's Senecan style:

> To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament is affectation; to make judgement wholly by their rules, is the humour of a scholar.[1]

Donne, on the other hand, often uses figurative language in his sermons and other works. While Browne presents his Urne Buriall in an elevated, latinised and ornamental style. Compared to these, Walton's style is nearer to the "speech-based" prose advocated by the Royal Society.

In his commentary on Walton's Lives, George Saintsbury states that the biographer's prose is charming, because he writes in an informal, intimate and conversational style.[2] Walton presents, in an informal ease his narration of events, digressions and imaginary conversations. A good example of his informal style is his narration of

---

[1]Francis Bacon, Essays (Boston: Little, Brown Co., 1900), p. 267.

[2]George Saintsbury, A Short History of English Literature (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1960), p. 456.

Donne's vision in Paris which ends thus:

> The twelfth day the messenger returned with this account -- That he found and left Mrs. Donne very sad, and sick in her bed; and that, after a long and dangerous labour, she had been delivered of a dead child. And, upon examination, the abortion proved to be the same day, and about the very hour, that Mr. Donne affirmed he saw her pass by him in his chamber (p.203).

After ending his narration of the vision, Walton writes a lengthy informal digression in which, like Plutarch, he expounds his philosophy and observations on the existence of supernatural happenings:

> . . . for most of our world are at present possessed with an opinion, that visions and Miracles are ceased. And though it is most certain, that two lutes being both strung and tuned to an equal pitch, and then one played upon, the other, that is not touched, being laid upon a table at a fit distance, will -- like an echo to a trumpet -- warble a faint audible harmony in answer to the same tune; yet many will not believe there is any such thing as a sympathy of souls (p.204).

Walton successfully explains the question of the vision in terms of the image of the two equally pitched lutes and the "sympathy of souls". Like the Medieval Schoolmen, he also brings examples from various authorities and reliable sources by quoting from antiquity, the Church Fathers and the Bible.

Walton's digression is refreshing. His copious quotations from literature show that he knew well how to illustrate his statements effectively, something of great importance in the art of writing lives. His many quotations also testify that he had read much. Furthermore, his clever management of the digression keeps the reader in suspense. He starts his digression after notifying the reader with the following words: "This is a relation that will beget some wonder" (p.204). He ends it with another notice, saying: "I forbear the Reader's further trouble" (p.205). By this method, he keeps the attention of the reader in suspense and under control so as to resume later the narration of events in his subject's life. Walton's use of suspense in the life is a proof that he considered the writing of lives an art.

Besides his informal style, Walton also writes the Life in an intimate manner. He always has the interest of the reader in mind, and he ever endeavours to do his best to satisfy him. When he feels he has tarried long

on Donne's vision, he apologises for it, and begs the reader's kind permission to halt --" I forbear the Reader's further trouble, as for the relation" (p.205). In another digression he appeals to the kindness and patience of his reader, saying:

> Reader, this sickness continued long, not only weakening, but wearying him so much, that my desire is, he may now take rest; and that before I speak of his death, thou wilt not think an impertinent digression to look back with me upon some observations of his life, which, whilst a gentle slumber gives rest to his spirits, may, I hope, not unfitly exercise thy consideration (p.220).

Together with his intimacy, naiveté is a characteristic of his manner of writing and sometimes he is amusingly simple in his statement. In the digression after the vision, Walton deplores the fact that his contemporaries do not have faith in the existence of supernatural happenings and he says that history is full of wise men who did believe in visions and miracles. He then writes: " ... and I am well pleased, that every Reader do enjoy his own opinion" (p.204).

In spite of his long sentences, Walton seems to talk like an able conversationalist, whose descriptions

are beautiful. His lengthy sentences, in the digression after Donne's vision in Paris, flow naturally and with ease due to his artistic use of elliptical phrases such as " -- like an echo to a trumpet," or " -- too many to name" (p.204). Furthermore, his parenthetical phrases lend continuity and flexibility to his sentences, which otherwise would seem long and tedious.

Walton's colloquial style can be seen in his construction of complete dialogues for his characters, as in the imaginary conversations between Drury and Donne. These conversations which begin with such phrase-tags as "to which Mr. Donne said", "To which Sir Robert replied" (p.203), render the narration of Donne's dream vivid and credible. In these conversations spoken in the first person, Walton reveals the innermost thoughts of his characters. Donne talks to Sir Robert Drury about his wife's apparition as follows:

> I have seen a dreadful vision since I saw you: I have seen my dear wife pass twice by me through this room, with her hair hanging about her shoulders, and a dead child in her arms: this I have seen since I saw you (p.203).

In the above quotation, we see Donne's troubled conscience and his deep sorrow for the sad plight of his wife in London. The language of the passage is colloquial, as its words are peculiar to the vocabulary of everyday talk.

Walton often uses imaginary conversations in his lives. Their beneficial influence on his works is obvious, yet since their use is unscientific, they have a doubtful place in biography. Walton did not follow his hero everywhere like a Boswell, nor did he keep a special diary to write down the real conversations. We notice the style of the imaginary conversations is Walton's, and consequently the characters often seem to talk in the same manner. We are at times unable to distinguish one speaker from the other in the lives, as it is Walton who puts in their mouths the words which they utter.

Walton, writing in a conversational style, is at times talkative. The story of Donne's vision is simple but the biographer is wordy in his narration. He explains every point in detail and does not leave anything for his reader to imagine. He remains long in the descriptions

of an event which another writer perhaps would finish in fewer lines. Like a gossipy life-writer, he says that the story of the vision was told to him by a "Person of Honour" (p.205) and then he explains at length the honesty and truthfulness of the person. He avoids naming the "Person of Honour," and loquaciously attempts to prove to his skeptical readers, the honesty of the person from whom he got the anecdote of the vision.

Walton often writes lengthy informal sentences, but he can also express himself in terse aphorisms similar to the Senecan prose of seventeenth century essays and Characters. [1] By the help of the epigramme, he clearly expresses his opinion on a matter, so as to create the desired effect on the mind of his reader. In the <u>Life of Donne</u>, he says that in spite of his erudition and abilities, Donne was often financially in an unenviable condition. He then sums up his thoughts in an effective aphorism:

> It has been observed by wise and considering men, that wealth has seldom been the portion, and never the mark to discover good people (p.196).

---

[1] Gordon, <u>Op. cit.</u>, p.111.

When he feels the need of giving his observations on a matter, he inserts an aphorism in his narration, which otherwise is written in a conversational style. He describes in detail Donne's clandestine marriage and Sir George More's anger, which Donne's humility gradually helped to abate. He then comments on it in the following pithy sentence: "It is observed, and most truly, that silence and submission are charming qualities, and work most upon passionate men" (p.194).

Like his aphorisms, Walton's antithetical sentences are terse and to the point. The last sermon of Donne was "Death's Duel," delivered at Whitehall during his sickness. Walton considers this sermon as the doctor's own funeral oration. He depicts the occasion beautifully and describes the thoughts of Donne's amazed congregation by means of an antithesis. He writes:

> And when, to the amazement of some beholders, he appeared in the pulpit, many of them thought he presented himself not to preach mortification by a living voice, but mortality by a decayed body, and a dying face (p.231).

In the above quoted lines, Walton's language is smooth and

and concise, free from superfluity. Furthermore, the antithesis at the end explains fully his subject's sickly condition.

The portrait-sketch at the end of the *Life* reveals Walton's ability to depict Donne's outward appearance and character in a restrained and economical language:

> He was of stature moderately tall; of a straight and equally- proportioned body, to which all his words and actions gave an unexpressible addition of comeliness. The melancholy and pleasant humour were in him so contempered, that each gave advantage to the other, and made his company one of the delights of mankind (p.238).

The phrases "moderately tall" and "equally-proportioned body" portray successfully Donne's appearance, while the phrases "unexpressible addition of comeliness" and "melancholy and pleasant humour" explain effectively his subject's general behaviour and character.

Walton sometimes writes parallel sentences, which reinforce each other, and the rhythm of these sentences, the repetition of words and alliteration give a poetic flavour to his prose style. He describes Donne's

condition after his wife's death in the following emotional manner: "Thus he began the day, and ended the night; ended the restless night and began the weary day in lamentations" (p.213). The balanced sentences together with the coupled adjectives "restless" and "weary" strengthen Donne's despondency for the death of his wife. As a result his days and nights are spent in "lamentations." The repetition of the idea of grief in the four parallel sentences as well as the words "day" and "night," and the recurrent alliterative sounds of the letters 's' , 'b' and 'd' raise the emotive power of Walton's prose, rendering it poetic.

In a masterly manner, Walton creates the atmosphere and then, like an able painter, he portrays in a few lines an image which remains ever impressed in the minds of his readers, long after other details of the life are no longer remembered. He knows how to work an event to a climax, as in the case of Donne's struggles prior to his entry into holy orders. Walton describes in

detail the miserable condition of Donne and his ever-increasing family at Mitcham. He further mentions the constant suggestions of the King and Bishop Morton for him to join the Church and Donne's hesitation to take a decision. However, after lengthy meditations he finally did accept the clerical dress, and Walton describes the climax in his subject's career by an impressive and striking passage:

> Now the English Church had gained a second St. Austin; for I think none was so like him before his conversion, none so St. Ambrose after it! and if his youth had the infirmities of the one, his age had the excellencies of the other; the learning and holiness of both (p.209).

In the above extract, the adverb "now" strikes the note of Donne's change from temporal to spiritual employment, and by means of the comparison of Donne to the great Church Fathers Saint Augustine and Saint Ambrose the attention of the reader is focussed on it. The parallel sentences reinforce each other and present in full relief Donne's religious and spiritual merits. Walton ends the

passage with an antitheses which efficiently conveys to the minds of his readers a true image of Donne at the time of his conversion. Furthermore, the rhythm of the balanced sentences adds to the poetic tincture of his prose style, which is eloquent.

This quotation also shows Walton's ability to tell much in a few words. The choice of the right words and comparisons makes his sentences forceful and graceful. It also reveals his great artistry in form, which is an element of great importance in the art of writing lives. As the climax, it divides the Life artistically into two parts, and serves to link effectively Donne's earlier mental as well as spiritual struggles and the ensuing period of "softening and sanctification."

Walton sometimes uses metaphors and similes to impress his readers, and lend variety as well as colour to his prose. His metaphors express his thoughts effectively and clearly. He describes Donne's desire to die by means of the following metaphorical language:

> . . . and his patient expectation to have his immortal soul disrobed from her garment of mortality, makes me confident he now had a modest assurance that his prayers were then heard, and his petition granted (p.236).

In another metaphor borrowed from medicine, Walton says that Sir George More was not satisfied with the dismissal of Donne from Egerton's service, and that he had him also thrown into prison. He then writes: ". . . for the bitter physic of Mr. Donne's dismission, was not enough to purge out all Sir George's choler" (p.194). When he wants to eulogize the good schooling Donne had in his young days or his academic excellencies, Walton uses a metaphor borrowed from agriculture. He writes: "About the fourteenth year of his age, he was transplanted from Oxford to Cambridge; where that he might receive nourishment from both soils . . . ." (p.189). The metaphorical use of the words "transplanted," "nourishment" and "soil" focus effectively the attention of the reader on Donne's education.

Besides the metaphors, Walton's similes secure variety in his prose style. In the Life, he says that men always yearn for glory and that Donne was not an exception to this. We read that in spite of his humility and holiness his hero easily yielded to the suggestion of Dr. Fox to have a monument made for him. Walton explains the human

desire for fame in these words: "It is observed, that a desire for glory and commendation is rooted in the very nature of man ...." He then ends his observation by an effective simile saying that this desire for fame is "like our radical heat, it will both live and die with us" (p.234). In another place he writes that when Sir George More's choler against Donne was abated, he thought of improving the financial condition of his son-in-law. Walton then explains Sir George's change of mood with the following simile:

> . . . for love and anger are so like agues as to have hot and cold fits; and love in parents, though it may be quenched, yet is easily rekindled, and expires not till death denies mankind a natural heat (p.195).

In the above extract, the metaphorical use of the words "quenches," "rekindled" and "expires" together with the simile explain efficiently in colourful language the idea of parental love.

Walton often quotes from the Holy Bible or refers to it, and as a result his style becomes Biblical. He sometimes freely paraphrases complete verses from the

Holy Scriptures. In the "Book of Job" IV. 14-15, Bildad tells his dream as follows:

> Fear seized upon me, and trembling: and all my bones were affrighted. And when a spirit passed before me, the hair of my flesh stood up.

In the digression after the story of Donne's vision, Walton writes that Bildad, in the "Book of Job", speaks the following:

> A spirit passed before my face; the hair of my head stood up; fear and trembling came upon me, and made all my bones to shake (p.204).

Elsewhere, he emphasizes Donne's feeling of unworthiness for the clerical calling by comparing him to the two Old Testament Patriarchs Moses and David, with whom his subject would ask: "Lord, who am I, that thou art so mindful of me?" Walton then writes Donne's thoughts in the following manner:

> So mindful of me, as to lead me for more than forty years through the wilderness of the many temptations and various turnings of a dangerous life: so merciful to me, as to move the learnedest of Kings to descend to move me to serve at the altar! So merciful to me, as at last to move my heart to embrace this holy motion! (p.209).

In the above quotation Walton's style is Biblical and his

language, which is simple and impressive flows naturally. The words "wilderness," "temptations" and "forty" create vivid associations in our minds relating to the temptations of our Lord who suffered for forty days in the desert. Besides, the metaphorical use of the word "wilderness" focusses our attention on Walton's notion of the sinful and barren life of Donne up to the age of forty, during which time he had always been after temporal advancement. Furthermore, his efficient comparison of Donne's sinful life to Christ's temptations proves that Walton was a writer of imagination.

By means of forceful comparisons borrowed from the Bible, Walton effectively reveals his subject's sad condition after his wife's death. In a style akin to the Scriptural, he compares him to Job "in the day of his affliction," or to the prophet Jeremiah saying, "Lo, I am the man that have seen affliction" (p.213). In an extended comparison, Walton likens Donne's grief to that of the exiled Israelites. He writes:

> Thus, as the Israelites sat mourning by the rivers of Babylon, when they remembered Sion; so he gave some ease to his oppressed

> heart by thus venting his sorrows: thus he began the day, and ended the night; ended the restless night and began the weary day in lamentations (p.213).

Walton understood well his characters and the working of their minds, something that is essential for any successful biographer. He writes that Sir George More would not openly admit his fault in the dismissal of Donne from his employment to the Lord Chancellor. He then gives an interesting insight into human nature by the following pithy sentence: " . . . for men do more naturally reluct for errors, than submit to put on those blemishes that attend their visible acknowledgement" (p.195).

Elsewhere in the _Life_, Walton writes that Donne wished to give financial help to a destitute friend, who in the past had been well off and generous too. The biographer explains the reluctance of the latter to receive Donne's gift and discusses the nature of certain men who conceal rather than confess their poverty. He then writes that the doctor finally succeeded in convincing his friend to accept the gift. In Walton's imaginary conversation,

Donne speaks thus:

> I know you want not what will sustain nature; for a little will do that; but my desire is, that you, who in the days of your plenty have cheered and raised the hearts of so many of your dejected friends, would now receive this from me, and use it as cordial for the cheering of your own (p.228).

In the above passage, Walton reveals the doctor's noble nature. Donne talks frankly and gives generously, as if he were himself the recipient and not the donor.

Walton's knowledge of human nature, his intimate manner of writing the life, his effort to reach at truth as well as his artistic style, render the Life of Dr. John Donne one of the best biographies written in English up to the end of the seventeenth century.

CONCLUSION

Walton is important in the history of English biography because he unites in his art different biographical trends and traditions. The influence on Walton's biographies of Medieval hagiography, seventeenth century scientific thinking and Plutarch's methods is conspicuous. Moreover, he wrote his lives in an intimate manner and with sympathy for his heroes, who were famous Anglican ecclesiastics. He introduced the original letters of his subjects in his lives, which he based on documents and information gathered from reliable people. He wrote sincerely and honestly with careful consideration of facts and material. He used humour to temper moral earnestness. His imaginary conversations, which have a doubtful place

in biography, enliven his narrative. His use of anecdotes give individuality to his five worthies.

Sir Harold Nicolson, in his The Development of English Biography, praises Walton's intelligent methods in biography and calls the lives of the five worthies "literary masterpieces," but then he adds:

> Where Walton fails is in truth: he fails to present us with complete or even probable portraits; the intrusion of his own feelings and predilections is too apparent; he is too confident of his own values; he surrenders too readily to the deductive method. [1]

The "deductive method" in biography of which Nicolson speaks is a characteristic of Medieval hagiography, and its influence on seventeenth century biographers was harmful. Walton sometimes infers certain conclusions about Donne from premises, which are dogmatically made and not supported by satisfactory facts respecting Donne's life. He writes from the start that at fourteen, Donne was a brilliant student in French and Latin lang-

---

[1] Harold Nicolson, The Development of English Biography (London: The Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 65.

uages. He then infers that Donne was another "Picus Mirandula," (p.189) the famous Renaissance humanist and philosopher. Later when Donne enters into holy orders, he calls him "a second Austen" (p.209). These dogmatic assertions create, in the minds of the readers, doubts concerning the soundness of some of Walton's facts and inferences.

Donne's literary abilities, exceptional Anglican piety and learning fascinated Walton and many of his contemporaries. As a result he did not hesitate to express his "feelings and predilections" in the _Life_. Walton writes that after carefully studying the Catholic and Anglican religious teachings, Donne came out in favour of the latter. The biographer shows his own satisfaction on the matter, saying:

> . . . and indeed, Truth had too much light about her to be hid from so sharp an enquirer; and he had too much ingenuity, not to acknowledge he had found her (p.191).

It was a natural thing for seventeenth century people to express their "predilections" in favour of the church to which they belonged. For the same reason, Walton praises

Donne's method of clear thinking in the Pseudo-Martyrs and quotes from it in the Life more than he does from the rest of Donne's creative works.

Nicolson in his comment on the Life of Donne says that the portrait of Donne as a young man is inaccurate because the biographer does not tell the truth about his hero. [1] Certainly Walton narrates and explains in detail the good sides of Donne's character, but he vaguely mentions the weaker sides. He only says that his hero lived a "sinful life" as a young courtier and man about town, but he deliberately refrains from illustrating the poet's "sins" from his poems or any other available source. Walton's vagueness about Donne's "sinful past" was inevitable and was in agreement with his purpose of writing the Life, as described earlier in this essay, and the background of the times in which he wrote it. No doubt he read the poems of Donne and he knew more than anybody else the details of his hero's dissipated

---

[1] Ibid., p. 66.

life. Even if he had wanted to illustrate the "irregular life" of his hero, he would have met with the censure of the Anglican Church and the disapproval of the Dean's sons.

The important subject of truth remains a controversial issue in the art of writing lives. How far should a biographer go in revealing the truth about his subject and are there no limits on the biography of the key-hole? Walton must have again followed Plutarch, who treats the matter in his Life of Cimon:

> So in our present work, since it is very difficult (or rather impossible) to find any life whatever without its spots and blemishes, we must set the good qualities in full light with all the likeness of truth. But we consider the faults and strains, which proceed either from sudden passion or from political necessity, rather as defects of virtue, than signs of a bad heart; and shall therefore cast them a little into shade, in reverence as it were to human nature, which produces no specimen of virtue absolutely immaculate and unimpeachable. [1]

James Boswell, the great English biographer, in the Life of Samuel Johnson, thinks like Plutarch and Walton when he

---

[1] Plutarch, Op. cit., iii, p. 296.

says:

> . . . and though I tell nothing but the truth, I have still kept in my mind that the whole truth is not always to be exposed. [1]

Some modern biographers, like the French writer and thinker Andre Gide, are uncompromising in their approach to the question of truth. Gide holds the extreme view in his autobiography If It Die and says that a biographer should speak the complete truth, even at the cost of seeming immodest or hurting the feelings of certain people. He writes: "If it is indecent to relate, it would be still more dishonest to pass it over." [2] Gide then continues narrating in sincere frankness his sensual experiences in Algeria.

Walton's art bears the influence of the biographical methods operating in his time. In the life of Donne, he tells like Plutarch a story in a straightforward manner with relevant anecdotes which help to reveal personality, and then at the very end he gives a brief character sketch. Walton does not analyse the development of Donne's character in the light of the facts and incidents which he gives,

---

[1] Boswell, Op. cit., p. X.

[2] Andre Gide, If It Die , trans. Dorothy Bussy (New York: Vintage Books, 1935), p. 250.

nor does he interpret Donne's behaviour by these as he proceeds in his narration of the life. Had he done so he would have probably succeeded in presenting a truer portrait of Donne.

The psychological analysis of a character is a late development in the art of biography. Many modern biographers take a central theme in the lives of their heroes and analyse character and action in the light of that theme. Andre Maurois in his Ariel: The Life of Shelley connects the poet's spirit of revolt to his liberal ideas. Maurois says that Shelley became a rebel from an early age because in his family and at Eton ". . . any originality of thought, of dress, or of language was the most heinous of crimes." [1] Lord David Cecil, in his Stricken Deer, has as his central theme the poet Cowper's sense of loneliness. He writes in the life that at the early age of six William Cowper lost his mother, who was everything to him. In the school at Berkhamsted, the sensitive and

---

[1] Andre Maurois , Ariel: The Life of Shelley, trans. Ella D'Arcy (New York: D.Appleton and Co., 1924), p. 3.

forlorn child hid himself from his bullying schoolfellows. Lord Cecil then makes the following analysis of Cowper's character:

> Cowper the child was like Cowper the man; a defeatist hating decisions, frightened of the unknown; the creature not the creator, of his destiny; liking someone or something on which to lean. [1]

Walton does not analyse character and behaviour with the help of a central theme in his hero's life. Yet we can hardly find his equal among the seventeenth century English biographers. George Cavendish and William Roper wrote in the Tudor period two lives which were first published in the Stuart reign and widely read. There is neither documentation nor dating of events in Cavendish's The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey and Roper's The Life of Sir Thomas More. Roper mentions in

---

[1] Lord David Cecil, The Stricken Deer or The Life of William Cowper (London: Constable and Co., 1944), p. 18.

his life one single date, the year 1535, when More died.[1] The two biographers base their works solely on personal knowledge. Cavendish often writes: ". . . the truth wherof I perfectly know"[2] or, ". . . at the which I was myself present."[3]

In the seventeenth century, the art of biography was still in its transition period, and as a result the greater part of Walton's shortcomings (from our point of view in the twentieth century) are those of the age in which he lived. However, his documentation and constant revisions of the Lives, his search for essential truth, his artistry in form and style secure for him an honourable place among the English biographers who lived up to the end of the seventeenth century.

---

[1] George Cavendish and William Roper, Two Early Tudor Lives, eds. R.S.Sylvester and D.H.Harding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 252.

[2] Ibid., p. 152.

[3] Ibid., p. 153.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adomnan. Life of Columba . Edited and translated by A.O.Anderson and M.O.Anderson. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1961.

Aubrey, John. Brief Lives. Edited by Anthony Powell. London: The Crescent Press, 1949.

Bacon, Francis. The Advancement of Learning and Novum Organum. Edited by J.E.Craighton. New York: Willey Book Co., 1900.

______________. Essays. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1900.

Bede, The Venerable. Ecclesiastical History of England. Edited and translated by A.M.Seller. London: G.Bell and Sons, 1912.

Bennett, R.E. "Walton's Use of Donne's Letters," Philological Quarterly, XVI (January, 1937), 30-34.

Boswell, James. The Life of Samuel Johnson. Vol.XXXXIV. Great Books of the Western World edition. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1955.

Browne, Thomas. Urne Buriall and The Garden of Cyrus. Edited by John Carter. Cambridge: At the University Press, 1958.

Bush, Douglas. English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1948.

Cavendish George and Roper, William. Two Early Tudor Lives: The Life and Death of Cardinal Welsey. The Life of Sir Thomas More. Edited by R.S.Sylvester and D.H. Harding. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.

Cecil, Lord David. The Stricken Deer or The Life of Cowper. London: Constable and Co., 1944.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. Troilus and Cressida and the Canterbury Tales. Vol. XXII. Great Books of the Western World edition. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1955.

Donne, John. Complete Poetry and Selected Prose. Edited by John Hayward. London: The Nonesuch Press, 1939.

Fox, John. Book of Martyrs. Edited by E. Forbush. London: R. and W. Holt, 1954.

Froude, J.A. Short Studies on Great Subjects. London: J.M.Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1930. II Vols.

Gide, Andre. If It Die. Translated by Dorothy Bussy. New York: Vintage Books, 1935.

Gordon, Ian A. The Movement of English Prose. London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1966.

Gosse, Sir Edmund. The Life and Letters of John Donne. London: William Heinmann, Ltd., 1899. II vols.

____________. Father and Son. London: William Heinmann, Ltd., 1910.

Jessopp, Augustus. John Donne. London: Methuen and Co., 1905.

Keynes, Geoffrey (ed.) The Complete Walton. Bloomsbury: The Nonesuch Press, 1929.

Leishman, J.B. The Monarch of Wit. London: The Nonesuch Press, 1929.

Lydgate, John. Fall of Princes. Edited by Henry Bergen. Washington: Carnegie Ins., 1923. IV Vols.

Maurois, Andre. Ariel: The Life of Shelley. Translated by Ella D'Arcy. New York: D.Appleton and Co., 1924.

Milton, John. Prose Writings. Everyman's Library edition, London: J.M.Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1958.

Nicolson, Harold. The Development of English Biography. London: Hogart Press, 1927.

Pinto, Vivian de Sola. English Biography in the Seventeenth Century. London: G.G.Harrap and Co., 1951.

Plutarch. Parallel Lives of Greeks and Romans. Edited by Rev. Francis Wrangham. Translated by John Langhorne and William Langhorne. London: C.Baldwin, New Bridge Str., 1819. VI Vols.

Saintsbury, George. A Short History of English Literature. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1960.

Simpson, Evelyn M. A Study of Prose Works of John Donne. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.

Smith, Logan Pearsall. Donne's Sermons. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946.

Stapleton, Martin. Izaak Walton and His Friends. London: Chapman and Hall, 1903.

Stauffer, Donald A. English Biography Before 1700. Harvard University Press, 1930.

Strachey, Lytton. Eminent Victorians. London: Chatto and Windus, 1920.

________________. Queen Victoria. London: Chatto and Windus, 1937.

Tout, T.F. An Advanced History of Great Britain. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947. II Vols.

Walton, Izaak. The Complete Angler and The Lives. Edited by A.W.Pollard. London: Macmillan and Co., 1925.

______________. The Lives. The World's Classics edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1927.