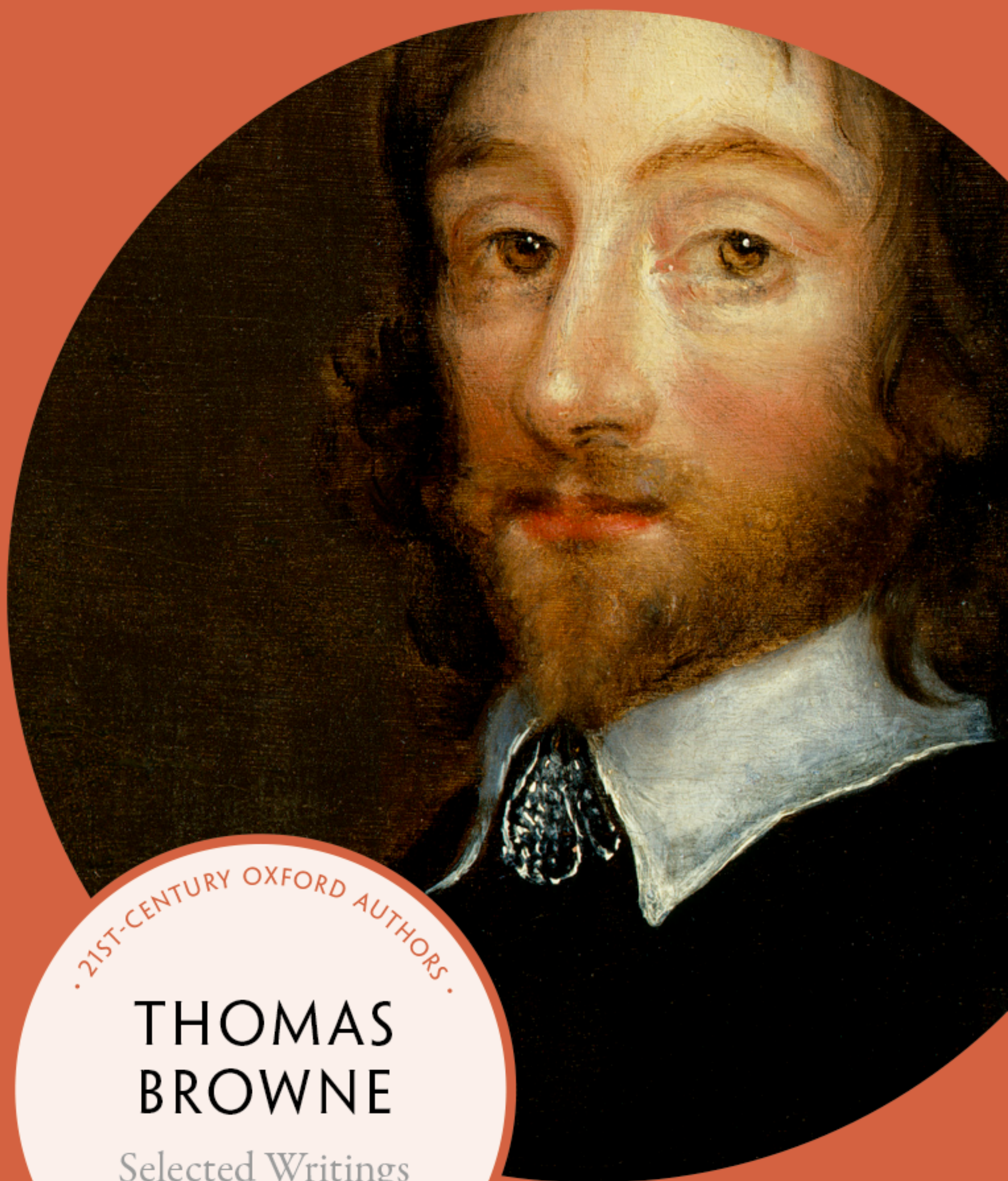


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• 21ST-CENTURY OXFORD AUTHORS •

THOMAS
BROWNE

Selected Writings

Edited by
Kevin Killeen

21ST-CENTURY OXFORD AUTHORS

GENERAL EDITOR

SEAMUS PERRY

This volume in the 21st Century Oxford Authors series offers students and readers an authoritative, comprehensive selection of the work of Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682). Accompanied by full scholarly apparatus, the edition demonstrates the breadth of the author of some of the most brilliant and delirious prose in English Literature.

Lauded by writers ranging from Coleridge to Virginia Woolf, from Borges to W.G. Sebald, Browne's distinct style and the musicality of his phrasing have long been seen as a pinnacle of early modern prose. However, it is Browne's range of subject matter that makes him truly distinct. His writings include the hauntingly meditative *Urn-Burial*, and the elaborate *The Garden of Cyrus*, a work that borders on a madness of infinite pattern. *Religio Medici*, probably Browne's most famous work, is at once autobiography, intricate religious-scientific paradox, and a monument of tolerance in the era of the English civil war. This volume also includes his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, an encyclopaedia of error which contains within its vast remit the entire intellectual landscape of the seventeenth century—its science, its natural history, its painting, its history, its geography and its biblical oddities. The volume enables students to experience the ways in which Browne brings his lucid, baroque and stylish prose to bear across this range of diverse material, together with a carefully poised wit. This volume contains almost all of the author's work that was published in his lifetime, as well as a selection of writings published after his death.

Explanatory notes and commentary are included, to enhance the study, understanding, and enjoyment of these works, and the edition includes an Introduction to the life and works of Browne.

Kevin Killeen is Senior Lecturer in English and Related Literature at the University of York. He has written extensively on Thomas Browne and the intellectual culture of the seventeenth century, as well as the history of science and religion. Among his books is the prize winning *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern Culture: Thomas Browne and The Thorny Place of Knowledge* (2009).

Seamus Perry is the General Editor of the 21st-Century Oxford Authors series. He is Professor of English Literature at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of Balliol College. His publications include *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* and *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection*, and, co-edited with Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Tennyson Among the Poets* (all OUP).



FIG. 1 Thomas Browne—Engraving from 1672 works.

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Thomas Browne



EDITED BY
KEVIN KILLEEN

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Dedication

To Molly Rose Killeen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have had great support in putting this volume together. The Department of English and Related Literatures at the University of York has provided me with funding for editorial assistants and I'm very grateful to David Atwell and Helen Fulton for help with this. I would like to thank Tamsin Badcoe, Rachel Willie, and Amritesh Singh for their excellent editorial skills. Particular thanks to Tania Demetriou, who checked and stabilized the Greek, to Christine Phillips, Elizabeth Tyler, Michele Campopiano, and Henry Stead, who provided me with information and translations that saved me from some wilder mis-rendering of the text, and to Hannah DeGroff for indexing. Thanks also to my colleagues in the Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies, Brian Cummings, Tania Demetriou, Mark Jenner, John Roe, Richard Rowland, Bill Sherman, and Helen Smith, as well as staff in the Old Palace Library at York Minster, University of York library, the British Library, and the Brotherton Library.

This one-volume edition of Browne puts all his major published work into a single volume, and is to be followed over the coming years by a major eight-volume *Complete Works of Sir Thomas Browne* from Oxford University Press, bringing a full scholarly treatment to his writings. Such a large and international venture has meant that I have benefitted from a group of scholars working on all aspects of Browne, and I would particularly like to thank Claire Preston, the general editor of the edition, as well as Katherine Murphy and Reid Barbour. Previous editors of Browne have provided superb models of scholarship and I have made full use of their unwaveringly reliable source-referencing to guide me to the appropriate places. I have tried on the whole to amplify their references into description or direct quotation of the passages, though this could not be a uniform policy in a one-volume edition.

I have made frequent use of the complete editions of Browne, by Simon Wilkin (4 vols., London: Pickering, 1835–6) and Geoffrey Keynes' four-volume *Works* (London: Faber, 1964), and earlier selections of his work including, L. C. Martin, *Religio Medici and Other Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Norman Endicott, *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne* (New York University Press, 1968), Robin Robbins, *Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia and the Garden*

of *Cyrus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), and C. A. Patrides, *Sir Thomas Browne: The Major Works* (London: Penguin, 1977). Among the single-work volumes that have been particularly useful, it is worth noting the following: *Religio Medici*, ed. Jean-Jacques Denonain (Cambridge University Press, 1953), *Hydriotaphia*, ed. W. Murison (Cambridge University Press, 1933), and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. Robin Robbins (Oxford University Press, 1981). We are perhaps at the tipping point where it is no longer possible to suppose that the internet is just a passing fad that will not really take off, but despite its ephemera, it is worth noting LacusCurtius, whose online bilingual editions of out-of-copyright Loeb editions has been a wonderful tool, as has Tufts University Perseus Project, with its searchable classics, and the online editions of Browne by James Eason, based at the University of Chicago. Thanks are also due for the excellent editorial support from Oxford University Press, in particular, Jacqueline Baker, Seamus Perry, Rachel Platt, Rosie Chambers, Elizabeth Chadwick, and also to Malcolm Todd.

Thanks mostly to Molly Killeen, and to the wonderful Sharon Holm.

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INTRODUCTION

G. K. Chesterton, comparing Thomas Browne with Oliver Cromwell, remarks that, all things considered, it was 'highly probably that the religious ideals of Oliver Cromwell were infinitely inferior to those of Sir Thomas Browne'. He explains that whatever Cromwell's policy genius, 'his religious ideals practically united him with the meanest drummer in his army'. In contrast, 'we should laugh at the mere idea of Browne's archaeological emotions and mystical charity being shared by his butler or keeping his gardener awake at night'. Though Chesterton strangely underestimates the numinous gardeners who occupy Browne's work, and though it is both unrecorded and unlikely that an early modern physician employed a butler, his point is the particular religious finery of an author who so steeped himself in the ineffable, who in an age of ardent religiosity, saw the paradox of the divine unknowability everywhere.

Chesterton's comments occur in a review of Edward Dowden's *Puritan and Anglican*, who, in speaking about Browne, 'is just and sympathetic, but not frantic with admiration, as he ought to be'. This is not, of course, frantic in the Cromwellian manner or that of his mean drummer, but rather with the zeal of a crusading literary critic, whose task is to recognize in Browne a writer in whom, quite singularly, style was the conduit of mysticism:

Style, in his sense, did not merely mean sound, but an attempt to give some twist of wit or symbolism to every clause or parenthesis: when he went over his work again he did not merely polish brass, he fitted in gold. This habit of working with a magnifying glass, this turning and twisting of minor words, is the true parent of mysticism, for the mystic is not . . . a man who reverences large things so much as a man who reverences small ones, who reduces himself to a point, without parts or magnitude, so that to him the grass is really a forest and the grasshopper a dragon. Little things please great minds.¹

This account of Browne's style, intricate, opulent, performed with tweezers and microscope, describes a malleable prose, in whose minutiae, every object, and each twist of the pen has theological purpose. But he is less mystical jeweller than mystical anatomist, who finds in his

¹ G. K. Chesterton, *The Speaker: The Liberal Review*, December 15, 1900, p. 301, reviewing Edward Dowden, *Puritan and Anglican* (London: Kegan Paul, 1900).

relentless microcosmic manoeuvres all creation reiterated in the form of the body, natural philosophy yielding natural theology. It is as a physician rather than knight that Browne—Dr Browne—was known, the knighthood being an apparently accidental conferment towards the end of his life, when the mayor of Norwich turned down a no doubt affronted Charles II, who sought a nearby alternative.² Browne's work is saturated with the medical—with the body, and its unfathomable complexity, with plants, and the impalpable dynamics of growth, with death, and the poetics of rebirth.

Browne was a significant, if perplexing, natural philosopher and scholar, a figure whose experimental acumen could be trusted by Robert Boyle and whose amalgams of knowledge in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) were widely admired.³ An emergent generation of natural philosophers in the 1650s and 1660s—Joseph Glanville, Henry Power, Henry More, and Robert Boyle himself—all derive something of their tendency to theological and scientific amalgamation from Browne, though not without some reserve.⁴ His writing, proposing, as it so often did, the dislocation of reason at the vital moment of submerging itself into the divine, was at odds with the direction of science as it was represented in the pages of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. His mannered rhetoric and his humanist habits of reference were increasingly alien to the more terse and functional prose of scientific writing. But Browne's supposition that both soul and body were the proper objects of natural philosophy was the working presumption of many if not most contemporaries. *Religio Medici* (1643) had announced Browne as a writer of some importance in this respect. Though later readers have focused on its tolerance and his habits of dazzling paradox, the immediate responses to Browne's first work were as interested in its depiction of the soul.⁵

² Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, 10 vols. (1805), vol. 3, p. 414.

³ Robert Boyle, *Certain Physiological Essays* in Michael Hunter and Edward B. Davis (eds.), *The Works of Robert Boyle*, 14 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000), vol. 2, p. 78.

⁴ Comment on Browne's scientific acumen is found in Walter Charleton, *A Ternary of Paradoxes* (1650), sig. B3r; Henry Power, *Experimental philosophy, in Three Books* (1664), p. 58; Nehemiah Grew, *The Anatomy of Plants with an Idea of a Philosophical History of Plants* (1682), p. 31; John Ray, *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby* (1678), preface; Thomas Vaughan, *A Brief Natural History* (1669), p. 94.

⁵ Browne's account of the soul is given detailed attention in Kenelm Digby, *Observations Upon Religio Medici* (1643); Alexander Ross, *Medicus Medicatus* (1645).

However, it was Browne's later works, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, that earned him his reputation in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a writer of the sublime, whose texts were both luminous and opaque, nugatory and all-encompassing, moving to and fro between the local and the universal. This sometimes exuberant admiration is illustrated in miniature by a volume of Browne's works, which served as a much-sought-after autograph book for the Romantics. Owned by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who annotated Browne extensively, it has 'Mr Wordsworth, Rydal Mount' inscribed on the title page of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, while the flyleaf contains the note 'C. Lamb 9th March 1804, bought for S. T. Coleridge'. Under this, in Coleridge's hand are the words 'Given by S.T.C to S. Hutchinson March 1804', followed by the note 'N.B. It was the 10th, on which day I dined and punched at Lamb's—& exulted in his having procured the Hydriotaphia & all the rest lucro posito'.⁶

The basis of such admiration was, according to a letter sent to Sara Hutchinson, because Browne 'has brains in his Head, which is all the more interesting for a *Little Twist* in the Brains'. The twist was that identified also by Chesterton, Browne's habitual and vertiginous shifts in scale, moving from the tiny to the infinite. Praising *Hydriotaphia or Urne-Buriall* for its 'Sir Thomas Browne-ness', Coleridge goes on to define this as an impulse to totality, that 'we wonder at and admire his *entireness* in every subject which is before him—he is *totus in illo* . . . for whatever happens to be his subject, he metamorphoses all Nature into it'.⁷ Commenting on *The Garden of Cyrus*, Coleridge continues, 'There is the same attention to oddities, to the remotenesses and *minutiae* of vegetable terms—the same *entireness* of subject.'

In these two strangest of works, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, Browne moves from intricate scholarship to a delirium of fact upon fact piled up, but it is a delirium in perfect rhetorical order, never for a moment missing the solemn pace that the decorum of his subject matter enjoins, but never entirely, in its impulse to draw

⁶ This Folio *Works* is in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. Reproduced in Coleridge, *Marginalia*, ed. George Whalley (London: Routledge, 1980), vol. 1, p. 761. We can, I think, presume this to be drinking punch rather than fighting.

⁷ Letter to Sarah Hutchinson, *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley (Duke University Press, 1955), pp. 447–8. A version of this letter appears in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 6:32 (Nov 1819), 197–8; Coleridge, *Marginalia*, pp. 762–4.

everything into its orbit, being free from the madness of infinite pattern. These are works of elaborate architecture, both in relation to each other and in their own construction. But it is an Escheresque architecture, whose singular quality is its geometric impossibility—they are works that could not exist in the real world.

Browne's writings cover a vast terrain, from the earthy mineral underworld and its airs to angels, from the Aristotelian to the Platonic, from the fantastical Plinyesque to the meticulous Baconian. His is a landscape of knowledge that is vast, complicated, and fragile—that takes its extensive biblical learning as unimpeachable and yet also poetically flexible, that views its manner of enquiry as faithful to classical traditions in natural philosophy and at the same time as the embodiment of all things new, of anatomical and experimental daring. Few subjects escape Browne's pen, and as such, his writings constitute a field-guide to what was worth knowing in the seventeenth century. If he is a repository of ideas and an ossuary of knowledge, however, he is also the most poetic and playful of writers. His liquefying prose provokes the suspicion that the subject matter is mere fodder for style, and yet this is not the case—when he is an antiquarian, he does not stint in full-bookish antiquarianism, just as Browne the enquiring doctor-scientist can weigh his dragms and grains experimentally with scrupulous attention.

Browne inhabits and characterizes an era in which knowledge was not quite fissured in the ways it was to become in the following centuries, when natural philosophy, religion, classicism, and meditative flight settled into their divided and distinct areas. His writings have that quality of poetry that they are immune to paraphrase, that their meaning is embodied in their tone, form, and pace. Such a claim is true (but differently true) of all his major writings. Tone is everything in *Religio Medici*. The subject matter is protean, formless, and ephemeral, while all the time, the under-hum of Browne's voice maintains the quasi-autobiographical unity, whether deemed soft and flexible or, as others will have it, slippery and cunningly uncommitted. But it is in Browne's paired enigmas, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, where tone as content is raised to its highest pitch. In what follows, this introduction gives something of a survey of works, with an eye to Browne's amalgams of knowledge, then, more briefly, a biographical note, though introductions are, of course, there to be skipped for the works themselves.

WORKS OF BROWNE

(i) The Garden of Cyrus

The Garden of Cyrus is a work animated by an obsessive and capacious seeking of the quincunx (the shape of a domino five), in nature, in design, in universal pattern. Quincuncial forms are found everywhere, in orchards and fish scales, in brick-wedgings and diamond windows, in crucifixions and the webbing of beds, military formations and doctors' forceps, even before coming to the stuff of nature, the webs of spiders or the seeds of sunflowers as they sit podded on their flower. This for Browne is the 'fundamental figure', prompting Samuel Johnson's comment 'so that a reader, not watchful against the power of his infusions, would imagine that decussation was the great business of the world, and that nature and art had no other purpose than to exemplify and imitate a Quincunx'.⁸ Garden design is very briefly the subject, though gardeners on a mythological scale: the vineyards of Noah, the Babylonian designs of Nebuchadnezzar, and the eponymous Cyrus the Elder. What might be a treatise on gardens, however, turns out to be a work of 'arithmetical divinity', whose sweep takes in its collateral subject matter by the merest of connections, some more and some less tangible. It might be suspected that given the right prompt, three or six or seven would serve Browne as well. He cheats on his geometrical rules, twisting and bending shapes so that they qualify as quincuncial—lozenge or rhomboid, dissected, sliced, and 'decussated' half-shapes, anything strung crossways will serve his compulsive gorging on geometry and figure.

Always, with *The Garden of Cyrus*, we are mid-enquiry, this being the dynamic of a work in which everything is digression and whose numerous instances of five-foldedness exist almost without syntax, strung together with trick grammar. Browne builds his text via long instances of *occupatio* (describing what will be omitted, in the process of which, it is discussed), or long paragraphs of *problemata* (thought-lists of things to be investigated later).

For to omit the position of squared stones, cuneatim or wedgewise in the walls of Roman and Gothick buildings; and the lithostrata or figured pavements of the ancients, which consisted not all of square stones, but were divided into

⁸ Samuel Johnson's 'Life of Browne' prefaces his edition of *Christian Morals* (1756), p. xxv. Similarly, Coleridge, *Marginalia*, p. 764.

triquetrous segments, honey-combs, and sexangular figures, according to Vitruvius.

The detailing of what one is forced to omit is a standard rhetorical and oratorical trick in the Renaissance, but in *The Garden of Cyrus*, it comes to seem almost an epistemological necessity—that pattern occurs fleetingly and the knowledge of fives comes to mean anything only when it is shown to be multiplied throughout nature and human design. Similarly, *problemata* served as a way of thinking and a mode of enquiry: Browne uses them as a wall of questions, in which they come to seem the very structure of nature, a universe constructed in question form:

whether seminall nebbes hold any sure proportion unto seminall enclosures, why the form of the germe doth not answer the figure of the enclosing pulp, why the nebbe is seated upon the solid, and not the channelled side of the seed as in grains, why since we often meet with two yolks in one shell, and sometimes one egge within another, we do not oftener meet with two nebbes in one distinct seed.

There is a breathlessness in this, the truncated first clause of the grammatically unfinished sentence never meeting any answering second part, and the paragraph continues for some span before allowing any syntactical rest, these being ‘quæries which might enlarge but must conclude this digression’. This is not unfamiliar Brownean territory. Indeed it is not unfamiliar in Renaissance thought, rooted in Aristotle’s *Problemata* for speculative, sometimes scientific enquiry, a way of coordinating queries for investigation. Browne’s notebooks are filled with such conjectural questions-in-waiting, a distant relative of the scholastic *quaestio disputata*, whose form seems to propose a suspension of enquiry, the description of the natural world by the questions that might be asked of it.

The Garden of Cyrus depends for its strategies of accumulation upon an intricate knowledge of natural philosophy in its many forms, along with mathematics, natural history, and anatomy, so much so that it has been seen as Browne’s most scientifically astute, if obtuse, work.⁹ It is meticulous in its observation and its habits of discovery, finding the quincunx in the forms of plants, ‘the pendulous excrescences of several trees’, in leaves and the textures of the vegetable world, in

⁹ The amorphous philosophical purposes of the text are best explored in Claire Preston, *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 175–210.

pine-cones, and in the movement of plant generation, the proscribed order by which nature produces leaves on the stalk, and in the plastic, propulsive power or 'fructifying principle' that generates plant-growth. Scientific precision, for Browne, was underlain by theological purposes. It provided a reprise and reproductive image of the original creation, a slow-motion glimpse of divine explication, the layer-by-layer unfolding of the world in process. Likewise, in the search for the quasi-theological, quasi-philosophical imprint of God, the animal world provided quincuncial fodder for mysticism, from honeycombs to anatomical structures, from the multiple stomachs of cows to the dynamics of limbs in motion, from Vetruvian figures inscribed in a circle to Platonic hermaphrodites divided in two, all of which contribute to a polyformous and protean theology of shape.

For long stretches of Chapters 3 and 4, the job of preserving the ubiquity of decussation in nature is mathematical: the tapering cylindricality of trees, Archimedes on conic shapes, squaring the circle, and the pyramids of light through the aperture of the eye. If *The Garden of Cyrus* is an almost mathematical work, suffused in the Euclidean pleasures of number and form, Browne also dwells on the near-tactility and texture of his geometrical vocabulary, 'helicall or spirall roundles, volutas, conicall sections, circular Pyramids, and frustums of Archimedes', before closing, in his final chapter, on the number 5 itself, magically, mystically, even magnetically considered, bowing in passing acknowledgement to Plutarch's *De E Apud Delphos* (*The E at Delphi*), which may be the one work which could be considered in its skittishness the generic predecessor of *Cyrus*.

If *The Garden of Cyrus* is a work of natural philosophy, however, it also stretches any definition of science. It is latticed with humanist and historical reference, with a poetics of creation and an aesthetic of endemic digression. Its observational science of plants is at the same time precise and deranged. Browne imagines, in diagrammatic form, how a tree extending above ground is mirrored under the earth by its roots, thus forming a quincunx in profile. But it goes further. The tree-tops exude an effluvia to meet with the rays of sun, stretching out beyond their uppermost leaves, while underneath there is a corresponding rooty effluvia, and together these constitute the light and dark of growth. Exploring throughout the chapter how shadow and light alternate, Browne moves from the example of a forest with its 'intercolumniations' of trees, whose canopy protects against the light, onto a parallel with the hand cupped above the eye, and Browne's discovery that optics encapsulates the working of the quincunx, in the

diagrammatically figured crossing of the rays of light as they pass through the pupil:

for all things are seen quincuncially; for at the eye the pyramidal rayes from the object, receive a decussation, and so strike a second base upon the retina or hinder coat, the proper organ of vision; wherein the pictures from objects are represented, answerable to the paper, or wall in the dark chamber.

Browne's remarkable claim here is that the design of light, in its rays rather than its general effusion, makes reference to the great quincuncial pattern of the world, that the quincunx occurs in every act of sight. Rarely can the anatomy of the eye have been put to such irrelevant purpose. Reference to shadow and light also serves theology, and what is true for physical light is equally so for an allegorical light of the soul:

life it self is but the shadow of death, and souls departed but the shadows of the living: all things fall under this name. The sunne it self is but the dark simulachrum, and light but the shadow of God.

Rosalie Colie called upon Browne for the title of her study of the Renaissance paradox tradition, *Paradoxia Epidemica*, though he is only an honorary presence there in the more formal traditions of literary paradox.¹⁰ *The Garden of Cyrus*, however, might seem wholly imbricated in the era's palpable interest in verbal illusion and paradox, a discussion of optics becoming, by a typological trick, an account of the fugitive presence of the divine. Browne's design is to represent, as Frank Huntley put it, a passing glimpse of the 'mind of the Infinite Geometrician',¹¹ the unknowable shadowed forth dimly by the profusion of the natural world. In doing so, *The Garden of Cyrus* superimposes on its relentless pattern a delirious variety, as disorderly a text as can be imagined, whose argument is endless order.

(ii) Hydriotaphia or Urne-Buriall

Hydriotaphia, or Urne-Buriall was published together with *The Garden of Cyrus*, and that they bear some relationship, that the one is in concert with the other, is very probable, but is it a fleeting and

¹⁰ Rosalie L. Colie, *Paradoxia Epidemica, The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox* (Princeton University Press, 1966).

¹¹ Frank L. Huntley, 'Sir Thomas Browne: The Relationship of "Urn Burial" and "The Garden of Cyrus"', *Studies in Philology*, 53:2 (1956): 204–19 (205).

elusive relationship. We might suppose, for instance, the fecundity of *Cyrus*, its immense and irresponsible profusion of life multiplied by a virus of quincuncial geometry to have its counterpart in the proliferation of death, through the ages of burial practices, multiplied till death seems as profuse and animate as life. We might see the five-part structures in conversation with each other. The prose of both is rich and both texts are fugal, depending upon the delirious modulation of their initial theme, their rhetorical effect achieved by the sheer bulk of atonal song, in augmentation and cacophony, which, when it resolves and its wave of sound ceases, closes in a monumental calm.

Hydriotaphia (with the 'taph' as in 'Cenotaph') is about burial, and the ceremonies of death, opening with an almost antiquarian account of comparative burial, in earth, fire, air, or water—almost, but not quite antiquarian. *Hydriotaphia* is driven as much by its musical qualities, its particular measure of lament—restrained in tone, long in the phrasing of its prosody, with something of the funeral sermon about it. It can be seen among the era's many experiments in the form and formality of mourning, whether the literary and exegetical weave that went into orations for the dead at the hands of Lancelot Andrewes, Joseph Hall, or Edward Reynolds, or the unprecedented emergence and outpouring of poetic elegy: Henry King producing his formally-perfect, guttural wail of strewn verses upon the grave of his wife; John Donne's revisiting the grave of Elizabeth Drury in the holy and gruesome autopsy of his *Anniversaries*, or Milton's *Lycidas*, where the formal pastoral elegy melts into a vatic swell of political prophecy. Browne's dead, however, are long gone, and while it borrows something from the dynamics of elegy, this is a collective dead and philosophical mourning. Its sources are those of scholarly antiquarianism, such as Johannes Kirchmann's *de Funeribus Romanorum* (1625) or Antonio Bosio's *Roma Sotteranea* (1632). Browne's work remains *sui generis*, however, with its own and remarkable digressive manoeuvres across its five chapters.

It takes its cue, initially at least, from a capaciously anthropological tour of the dead and habits of burial—Indian 'Brachmans', Chaldeans, 'Persees', Egyptians, and Scythians—cultures whose distance lent them a quality of the mythological and lost. The cataloguing of nations divides them by what element they rely upon to best obliterate the dead. While English and Western customs of earthy burials ('centrall interrment') are taken to be the oldest and biblical manner of disposing of bodies, the animating motive of the work is the profusion in the ceremonies of death: 'men have been most phantasticall in the singular

contrivances of their corporall dissolution'. Trojan, Roman, and Norse accounts of cremation vie with those who attempt to dispose of the dead by water or by dissolution in the air, or, in the case of the Balearians, by the fossilizing weight of having heaps of wood press the body to dissolution. Christian cultures, he notes, may disdain the burning of the dead, but are less concerned with immolating the living: 'though they stickt not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, detested that mode after death'.

This tour is at once scholarly and mournful. It moves from its account of the historical and long-gone dead to the newly discovered 'field of old Walsingham' full of urns, occasioning an account of Roman Norfolk—the Saxon Urns wrongly attributed to the long imperial occupation—and their relations in passing with Druids, Danes, and ancient Britons. Browne notices the necks of urns to resemble wombs 'making our last bed like our first' and how, connoisseur of death that he is, the brick covering of Yarmouth Urns differs from the 'Homericall urne of Patroclus' wrapped in its 'purple peece of silk'. There are lamps to consider and 'lachrymatories'—bottles to fill with the tears of the mourners. There are the ceremonies and monuments to ephemera, hills heaped upon the dead, inscriptions and anonymity. Nor are the dead insulated from humiliation—whether dissection, the 'provocatives of mirth from anatomies', or 'tricks with skeletons' performed by jugglers. The opportunities are multiple: 'To be gnawed out of our graves, to have our sculs made drinking-bowls, and our bones tuned into pipes'. Some nations burn better and some rot better than others—he reports upon an 'hydropicall body' from a churchyard which had coagulated into the consistency of 'the hardest castle-soap'.

Dying, in early modern thought, was as much to do with the soul as the body and their philosophically baffling division and promise of reunion. Funeral rites had the task of emblematically representing and prefiguring resurrection, while pagan rites served for what meagre comfort they could manage. At the death of a child in Roman culture, 'mourning without hope, they had an happy fraud against excessive lamentation, by a common opinion that deep sorrows disturbed their ghosts'. The state of the soul in the 'Hades of Homer' and 'Latin Hell' is one of terrifying ghostly suspension, retaining only confused half-connections to the earth, in a thronging and unhappy crowd of souls, the hell of it being not a Dantesque afterlife, but rather a state of bodiless eternal senility. This is Browne's Pascalian Wager—Christian death being better to believe in and, after all, there being nothing

to lose. If at times, the voice is that of an antiquarian, studying with precision the widely disparate cultures of death and the archaeology of disturbed urns, *Hydriotaphia* imperceptibly shifts, through the documentary to the ethical and onto an epistemology of oblivion.

Browne's final chapters take paradoxes of time, eternity, and immortality to task. The urns may have survived, but the manner of life and the mode of death that they memorialize are beyond our knowledge: 'wrapt up in the bundle of time, they fall into indistinction'. 'The long habit of living indisposeth us for dying', Browne explains, even while some might wish themselves unborn, like the 'male-content of Job', who 'lived here but in an hidden state of life, and as it were an abortion'. There can be few such misanthropic descriptions of life that match Browne's sense here of one's years as a deferred and long miscarriage. Urns lack names and names alone mean little: 'who cares to subsist like Hippocrates patients, or Achilles horses in Homer, under naked nominations . . . who had not rather have been the good thief, then Pilate?' But individual extinction is little compared with the incalculable mass of those dying, whose names pass unrecorded. 'The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy', Browne muses, in considering the unbalanced 'arithmetic' whereby 'The number of the dead long exceedeth all that shall live'. *Hydriotaphia* is a rising lament to the dissolution of memory, the vanity of 'pyramids, arches, obelisks' against the loss, and the unknown moment of the apocalypse, to which Browne brings the hope of an almost creedal nothingness: 'annihilation, extasis, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kisse of the spouse, gustation of God, and ingression into the divine shadow'.

(iii) Religio Medici

Browne's late paired works are like little else, at once abstruse and moving, pedantic and orotund, works of spectacular pointlessness, nit-pickingly precise and lavishly meditative. *Religio Medici*, Browne's first work, shares something of this elusive impulse, but attracts admiration and reservation, for quite different reasons. It is similarly difficult to characterize by subject matter, is digressive and diffuse, self-regarding and impressively tolerant, politically tetchy and philosophically capacious. It is a work often thought of as autobiographical, though biography as life-writing is only fitfully present. Its version of the self is rather a responsive style: put what you will in front of the author—be it foreign food or Platonic mystery, a piece of music or a passing beggar—and he will respond with a torrent of magnanimity.

Structurally speaking, this is a boneless text, oozing between religion, doctrine, body and soul, snippets of the self, the bible, and philosophy. Its logic is less a progression of ideas than a relative tonal unity and emotional equanimity in response to its vast range of subject matter. It embodies the kind of philosophical theology that so characterizes the era, the compendious attention to the microcosm and 'cosmography of [the] selfe' (sec. 1.15), the conceit of the two books of Scripture and nature in antiphonal relationship to each other (sec. 1.12), God as a 'skillful geometrician' of the world (sec. 1.16), who in artfulness produced time as a miniature model, to replicate eternity, in which there is 'no distinction of tenses' (sec. 1.11), the latter borrowing Plato's dictum, that Time is 'a moving image of Eternity' (*Timaeus*, 37d).

Religio Medici is neither a work of philosophy or theology if by those we mean systematic exposition. But, in its thoroughgoing attention to the fleeting presence of the invisible in the visible and natural world, it is both Platonic and Pauline. The value of what can be scrutinized, the purview of the physician and the natural philosopher, is, firstly, its use as the shadow and type of that which is unthinkable and unknowable, evoked only via the transitory—time instead of eternity, object instead of Form—our natures being such that we see 'but asquint upon reflex or shadow' (1.13). Browne's endemically protean text catches sight, again and again, of what is there, if at all, for a mere instant: the angelic diffused and melted in light, or what happens on the cusp of creation and the soul *in potentia* awaiting 'the opportunity of objects' (1.39), or the moment the soul sloughs off its body. Browne's rhetorical throb is such that we never encounter more than a glimpse of his subject matter before the text shifts again. Angels, whose absence from the creation narrative of Genesis is often noted, are 'the best part of nothing' (1.34), brought into existence *ex nihilo*, and yet barely seeming to have ascended from that state, only to be conceived as a particular kind of light, whose quality is that it is unseeable: 'conceive light invisible, and that is a spirit' (1.33).

Browne's cascade of the ethereal into the earthy has it that the medial point of existence is the human: 'we are onely that amphibious piece between a corporall and spirituall essence, that middle forme that linkes those two together' (1.34).¹² The intellectual ripples of

¹² The glancing biblical references here being to Hebrews 2:7 and Psalm 8:5, humans being 'a little below the angels'.

this human position as epitome of the world are everywhere in *Religio Medici*, that 'there is all Africa, and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies, wisely learns in a compendium, what others labour at in a divided piece and endlesse volume' (1.15). The shrinkage of everything being in everything, folded up and reiterated—Coleridge's 'entireness in every subject'—produces Browne's most ambitious statement of the ineffable:

In the seed of a plant to the eyes of God, and to the understanding of man, there exists, though in an invisible way, the perfect leaves, flowers, and fruit thereof: (for things that are in posse to the sense, are actually existent to the understanding.) Thus God beholds all things, who contemplates as fully his workes in their epitome, as in their full volume, and beheld as amply the whole world in that little compendium of the sixth day, as in the scattered and dilated pieces of those five before. (1.50)

To note an ingrained Platonism in Browne's work speaks to no more than a passing alliance with contemporaries' use of Plato, that of Henry More, Nathaniel Culverwell, and the others in the loose grouping who came to be known as Cambridge Platonists, whose works deploy a philosophical register and rhetoric that is wholly impersonal. Browne's first work, by contrast, is all *credo*: I believe, I concede, I confess, I hold, I wonder. Given that it is so endemically fleeting a text—ranging across doctrinal fideism and nascent scepticism, from iconoclasm to the role of fate in wealth, from the whiff of heresy to the chemistry of the resurrection—it is a work that revels in its chief paradox: in what way can such a conglomerate of questions and statements of the unthinkable be subject to the impress of *credo*?

Belief, in *Religio Medici*, is less a matter of positive assent than a capacity for and indeed a revelling in bafflement, a succumbing to inevitably fragmentary glimpses of truth. Belief only comes into play at the point beyond which we cannot know things, and Browne courts this sacred ignorance and nescience, not constituted by lack of enquiry, but by a surfeit of questions, the close and experimental scrutiny of the natural world. Browne takes it upon himself, for instance, to think through (and get lost in) the physics of the final and post-apocalyptic resurrection. The dissolute and meandering particles of each human, 'scattered in the wilderness of forms', must resolve themselves into their original state—this much may be theology, but study of the natural world, for Browne, provides a model for how this will happen. He considers, in turn, the 'artificiall resurrection and revivification of

Mercury' that rolls itself up into 'its numericall selfe' (1.48), and that when a leaf is burnt to ashes, it may seem utterly gone. But Browne insists that its fundamental forms remain, 'withdrawne into their incombustible part', and moreover, that natural philosophy can model the resurrection in palingenesis: 'This is made good by experience, which can from the ashes of a plant revive the plant, and from its cinders recall it into its stalk and leaves againe' (1.48). The burden of such experiments is that the ability of things to revive and return to their original state gives a hint of the resurrection. It is not the case that in exploring the mechanics of this, Browne aims to make last things more comprehensible, but rather to augment its unintelligibility, and confound the mind. Miracles are mere baubles in comparison with the bafflement that can be garnered from careful and scientific study of the world: 'Those strange and mysticall transmigrations that I have observed in silkwormes, turn'd my philosophy into divinity' (1.39), he explains, as a summary of his creedal unknowing: '*certum est quia impossibile est*', he quotes from Tertullian. It is certain because it is impossible (1.9).

Browne is not consistently the philosopher-in-mysticism that he sometimes appears. For all that he vaunts his own openness to the multiplicity of humanity, he recoils with horror from its political and monstrous actuality: 'that great enemy of reason, vertue and religion, the multitude, that numerous piece of monstrosity, which taken asunder seeme men, and the reasonable creatures of God; but confused together, make but one great beast' (2.1). *Religio Medici* is on the one hand a work of mystical latitude, lavish with its seeing the divine everywhere, and on the other, a work that is peevish about the capacity of others to do so. He complains about the vulgar's unlearned appreciation of beauty: 'The wisdom of God receives small honour from those vulgar heads, that rudely stare about, and with a grosse rusticity admire his workes' (1.13). But the rude and wrong-headed staring of some is balanced by the near infernal knack of others, the 'master mendicants', who discern and target those whose dispositions are generous, whose natural inclination to charity is written, inscribed like signatures, on their faces:

whereby they instantly discover a mercifull aspect, and will single out a face, wherein they spy the signatures and markes of mercy: for there are mystically in our faces certaine characters which carry in them the motto of our Soules, wherein he that cannot read *A.B.C.* may read our natures. (2.2)

Browne's beggar is a masterly rhetorical creature, a Quintilian upon misery, deciphering the shadowed languages of the face and the marks

of mercy and weakness there. In the first part of *Religio Medici*, the reader of signatures in nature is engaged in an act of theology, 'to joyne and reade these mysticall letters...these common hieroglyphicks' (1.16). Here, the hieroglyphical reader is reduced to picking out the likely candidate from whom to beg alms, like some Faustus who, though he might penetrate all the secrets of nature, exercises his talent on lowbrow slapstick. There is an august history of suspicion about *Religio Medici*—from Kenelm Digby's complaint about its autobiographical intrusions, to Samuel Johnson's account of its 'self-love', and on, more mischievously and recently, to Stanley Fish's doubting of its sincerity, or Michael Wildings' withering account of its politics.¹³ However, the longer and labyrinthine first part of the work remains remarkable, as an epitome of seventeenth-century tropes of thought and in its theology of nescience that seems quite alien to an era that so battled over its rival interpretations of right religion.

(iv) Pseudodoxia Epidemica

Browne's habits of incongruity are at work across his writings. The most elaborate of these is the vast miscellany that is *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), a work of breathtaking scope, intricate scholarship, and hyperbolic irrelevance, a Plinyesque assortment of things that are not true. Nobody, it is probable, has ever considered *Pseudodoxia* to be Browne's masterpiece. When set alongside the mesmerizing fugues of *Urne-Buriall* or *The Garden of Cyrus*, it can appear an ungainly patchwork, rhythm-less, and staccato in comparison to the torrential walls of sound in the later works. After *Religio Medici*, it can seem mundane in its eschewing the mystical and the poetics of paradox. But any such response misses its very particular (and very entertaining) understanding of the miscellaneous, its vast orchestral annals of ignorance. It is a cornucopia of all things early modern. The contents list reads, to modern ears at least, like a vast and ironic tissue of formal nonsense—that 'a diamond is made soft, or broke by the blood of a goate', 'that a badger hath the legs of one side shorter then of the other', 'of the pissing of toads', 'that storkes will onely live in

¹³ Stanley Fish, *Self Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth Century Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Michael Wilding, *Dragon's Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 89–114.

republicks and free states'. It takes and inverts the long lists of imponderable and unknowable events, many of which were listed in *Religio Medici* as characterizing futility in knowledge—scriptural 'stories that doe exceed the fable of poets' (1.21) and which are here subjected to improbably serious scrutiny: whether Adam had a navel, how the animals fitted and were peaceful in the ark at the deluge, the antediluvian population of the world, all, as he puts it in the earlier work, 'a catalogue of doubts . . . a bundle of curiosities . . . not worthy our vacant houres, much lesse our serious studies' (1.21). It is hard to tell if Browne is being serious in his vast second work, or if serious, whether pedantic, and if pedantry, whether parodic. *Pseudodoxia* takes error to be encyclopaedic, and proceeds with scrupulous precision across many hundreds of instances, in natural philosophy, in natural history, in anatomy, in biblical painting, in geographical and historical and anthropological minutiae.

It is by far Browne's longest and most learned work and the book that established him among his contemporaries as a figure of some scholarly weight. Though it has the running header of 'vulgar errors', it is not primarily designed to correct simple falsehood, or those of the 'vulgar' per se, any more than *Urne-Buriall* is designed as an archaeological account of Norfolk shards. Neither is it a guide to what the benighted and pre-enlightenment seventeenth century believed in its poor and huddled superstition, even if at times it suggests the chronic gullibility of its own and past ages. *Pseudodoxia* exercises its sometimes censorious, sometimes indulgent eye on errors that arrive, by and large, already corrected. The criterion for inclusion is less that something is merely and straightforwardly wrong, but rather that a belief demonstrates and is the occasion of poor interpretation, when symbolic, poetic, or hieroglyphic ideas come to be believed in a literal sense. This practice of poor exegesis is, for Browne, endemic across every area of learning and, if there can be a unifying principle in a work of such encyclopaedic form, it is that error stems from interpretative practice, receiving 'precepts in a different sense from his intention, converting metaphors into proprieties, and receiving as litterall expressions, obscure and involved truths', as Browne puts it in partial defence of Pythagoras (1.4). Browne's typically cavernous rhetoric works in *Pseudodoxia* on a smaller and more precise scale in its many and miscellaneous chapters, but his majestic habits of phrasing remain, together with a cabinet of curious vocabulary. There is grandeur also in its design, bordering on hubris, that it aims to trace a repeated dynamic of error across all creation, from the mineral, plant

and animal worlds and on to a political and cultural encyclopaedia of pictures, history, and geography.

Somewhere between a third and a half of this large work is concerned with natural philosophy, natural history and scientific truth, and its investigations throughout are shot through with the concerns of Browne the physician, the compulsive anatomist and observer of the natural world. Contemporaries place him almost unanimously as a figure of scientific repute, and the roll-call of references to his 'ingenious' explorations in error is impressive: Robert Boyle, Walter Charleton, Henry Power, John Ray, John Evelyn, Nehemiah Grew all respond to him as a figure of some intellectual authority, and he corresponds at the edges of the Royal Society.¹⁴ But for all the admiration, Browne is never quite part of the same conversation in which such figures engage. *Pseudodoxia* is a work with its own peculiar rhetorical and literary sweep, with its idiosyncratic writing of natural philosophy and its rag-bag of tools: forensic logic, philology, Aristotelian first principles, Augustinian seminal principles, together with its deep-rooted habits of experimental logic. If there is a Baconian heart to the work, it is perhaps less in any shared practices of austere empiricism than it is in a shared magpie impulse, the Bacon who, as Graham Rees characterized it, 'raided disparate natural philosophical traditions for attractive titbits which he refashioned and spatchcocked together to form a curious hybrid which embodied, even by the standards of the early seventeenth century, some very peculiar alliances of ideas indeed'.¹⁵ Bacon rivets his philosophical universe together with breathtaking metaphor, where Browne (rhetorically speaking) deploys sumptuous oratory as the strategy by which to hide the awkward philosophical seams.

Browne is not distinct from his contemporaries in his insistence that the demands of truth, such as they are, remain rooted in the theological, or that God acts as the ultimate guarantor that the world is reasonable. This is not the manoeuvre of the mystic we encounter in *Religio Medici*, where philosophy encounters the pleasure of paradox too dark to fathom, too deep to entertain. In *Pseudodoxia*, God and devil battle over every syllogism. The kinds and criteria of truth we encounter in *Pseudodoxia* are various. At times empirical and mere fact

¹⁴ See notes 3 and 5.

¹⁵ Graham Rees, 'Bacon's Speculative Philosophy' in *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 122.

is enough, but there are other dynamics at work as well, in which God is the daunting yardstick of truth:

In briefe, there is nothing infallible but God, who cannot possibly erre. For things are really true as they correspond unto his conception, and have so much of verity, as they hold of conformity unto that intellect, in whose Idea they had their first determinations: And therefore being the rule he cannot bee irregular, nor being truth it selfe conceivably admit the impossible society of error. (1.1)

How the phenomena of the natural world should be applied to and measured against the ineffable mind of God is Browne's not inconsiderable task, and he provides, in his opening book ('The General Part') a toolkit of seventeenth-century thought on the perusal of truth. Some of these tools are scholastic—that error emerges from such verbal and logical fallacies as 'æquivocation and amphibologie'; some are the commonplace decrying of dependence on authority and testimony, 'supinity or neglect of enquiry' (1.5). The book is framed, however, around the delusive and ubiquitous 'endeavours of Satan . . . the first contriver of error, and professed opposer of Truth, the Divell' (1.10). Browne's devil is hardly Miltonic or Marlovian, but Browne takes him seriously nevertheless, as almost synonymous with error itself. Browne's devil makes one think askew, 'distorting the order and theorie of causes perpendicular to their effects'. He is content to work away on the tiniest of error, 'maligning the tranquility of truth' (1.11), in the manner of a Cartesian demon, all the time aiming merely to disturb the somewhat mysterious attribute of God that is uppermost in *Pseudodoxia*, divine oneness. Muddying this essential unity, 'the inseparable and essentiall attribute of Deitie', is the chief Satanic purpose, to blur one's belief into atheism or polytheism, which, 'were to make Euclide beleeve there were more then one Center in a Circle, or one right Angle in a Triangle'. (1.10). This devil's temptations are epistemological rather than ethical.

As the books open onto their wide vistas of individual errors, however, the pulse of the work changes, theology recedes and Browne begins to engage with the whole of the world and all its error. At times the individual topic can be the mere springboard from which to leap, having collected together the necessary classical, patristic, and contemporary precedents for the question. It is rare that Browne moves directly to empirical disproof, though experiment, or testimony of experiment, is generally a part of his armoury. As a rule, he wants firstly to reason his way out of error, but wants equally to swill its

delicious waters first. In disproving that crystal is concreted ice (2.1), Browne embarks upon a theory of mineral origin and the growth of stones. The intellectual pedigree of such theory can be traced, via figures such as the Belgian Boëtius de Boodt and the German Georgius Agricola, back to Aristotelian understandings of mineral exhalations, but *Pseudodoxia* remains only briefly with its sources. It is, rather, an elaborate lecture on changes of physical state, and the chemistry of flux. A collateral pleasure of his study is the wallowing in a quasi-tactile language of natural philosophy, the ‘lapidificall principles of . . . congelation’, the ‘salinous spirits, concretive juyces, and causes circumjacent’, the ‘exsiccation . . . humectation . . . fiery siccity’ and ‘colliquation’ of earth. The natural world demands, for Browne, its own poetics. Crystal, he concludes, is formed from its inner impulsive form, forcing itself into shape and stone by its own stony principle. It is:

made of a lentous colament of earth, drawne from the most pure and limpid juyce thereof, owing unto the coldnesse of the earth some concurrence or coadjuvancy, but not its immediate determination and efficiency, which are wrought by the hand of its concretive spirit, the seeds of petrification and Gorgon within it selfe. (2.1)

The Gorgon of the earth hardens, if not frightens, its liquid self into petrified form, an Ovidian metamorphosis as much as a raw process of nature, the poetics and theology of which prove indistinguishable from the scientific. Browne’s scope and purpose becomes evident as the work proceeds, and the endlessly variegated forms of error begin to replicate themselves across not only what might be encompassed in the term ‘natural philosophy’, but in the medical and anthropological, the pictorial and the scriptural, the chronological and geographical, though for many readers, it is his third book on animals that best exemplifies Browne’s practice in *Pseudodoxia*, a collection of errors so preposterous that their intricate disproof seems itself to be an act of mockery and spoof, but without ever revealing itself to be so.

(v) Posthumous Works

Browne’s remaining works, quite considerable in length and variable in quality, were published posthumously. *Certain Miscellany Tracts* (1683), *A Letter to a Friend* (1690), and *Christian Morals* (1716) are included in full here, though the 1712 antiquarian *Miscellanies*—including Repertorium and Brampton Urns—are not. Browne’s

earlier *Miscellany Tracts* share the sense of monumental irrelevance that characterizes his best work (such as ‘Of the fishes eaten by our saviour’), and has Browne assuming the role of letter-writing agony-aunt for tortuous queries in scholarship and natural philosophy. *A Letter to a Friend*, containing advice on a good death, has a good deal of direct overlap and borrowing from *Christian Morals*, which is among the most neglected of Browne’s writings, in large part because is a work of relentless didactic intent. However, the work also contains some wholly Brownean and dizzying prose, even if accumulated *sententiae* and gathered aphorisms tend to pale quickly as a form. Neither is it a commonplace notebook, however, being far too stagey for that, composed with stylized antiquarian forms of ‘thee’ and ‘thou’, and a narrator who comes to seem a kind of baroque Polonius. This volume, then, contains the vast majority of Browne’s published writing.

BIOGRAPHY

Biographical information on Browne is relatively slender, and much of what there is to say of his life comes from amplifying these few and limited sources, and producing a life by proxy, in concert with the biography of institutions—schools, universities, professions—he was associated with, but it is worth saying something of his early life.¹⁶ He was born in 1605, trained as a doctor, and lived most of his adult life in Norwich. Where knowledge of his later years grows thin, it can of course be added to from his works, which contain a degree of autobiographical material and intellectual autobiography, and we have a good stock of letters from after 1660, particularly to his sons. The picture of Browne we might derive from his work, all even-keel and calm of temper, is not necessarily the product of early familial tranquillity, his childhood being (at its most dramatic) a tale of financial and military skulduggery—and we might choose to add maternal abandonment. He spent his early years in Cheapside, the broad, chaotic, opulent centre of London’s market life, where wealth and poverty vied in ostentation. His father was a mercer, was taken into livery in the company in 1604, but died in December 1613, with probate granted

¹⁶ See the definitive biography by Reid Barbour, *Sir Thomas Browne: A Life* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

to his wife, Anne.¹⁷ As executrix, she was required to present an inventory of property, debts, and business affairs to the Court of Orphans, the body of the City of London that administered the will of a freeman with minor children. This she did in March 1614, with debts of £11,209 4s. 1d. and a set of roughly equivalent 'doubtful and desperate debts' owed in turn to the estate of Browne, leaving it valued, initially, at £5,722 7s. 7½d.¹⁸

However, this accounting of affairs was brought into question by the brother of the deceased, Edward, and the Court of Aldermen was called to investigate, a matter both hindered and fuelled by Anne's marriage, with Hamletesque hastiness, to the soldier Sir Thomas Dutton. The court expressed concern at the profligate spending that had occurred in the brief period between the marriage and the hearing and, moreover, concern with Dutton's putting himself beyond the jurisdiction of the court, in his foreign activities. Dame Anne, as she now was, was forced to relinquish her part, and not have 'any further meddling or dealing' with the affairs of the estate, though in August 1614 Anne protested the costs of her lying-in, having given birth to a daughter, Thomas's sister, Ellen.¹⁹ According to an account by John Whitefoot, prefacing the 1712 *Posthumous Works*, 'He was likewise very much defrauded by his guardians', which Johnson describes as the 'common fate of orphans'. Such nefarious tales are the bare remains of his early childhood.

However, Browne's stepfather, the impressively scurrilous Sir Thomas Dutton, provides his own dark interest, as a brawler and skinflint, on the edges of Browne's childhood. The story is told by Arthur Wilson, in his interregnum annals of the reign of James I, how in 1610, a truce in the Low Countries left a restless English army of some four thousand soldiers without immediate action, and in the twitchy lull between fighting a quarrel arose between Sir Hatton Cheke, next in command to Edward Cecil, and Thomas Dutton, the latter 'a man of crabbed temper', but with enough control not to break rank by attacking his superior officer. 'Instantly quitting his command' instead, Dutton returned to England and began his defamatory

¹⁷ Mercers' Company, Acts of Court, 159501629, f. 57v.

¹⁸ Corporation of London Records Office (CLRO), Repertory 31 (2), f. 224v; Orphanage, Common Serjeant's Book 1, f. 417v. See Trevor Hughes, 'The Childhood of Sir Thomas Browne: Evidence from the Court of Orphans', *London Journal*, 23 (1998): 21-9 (23).

¹⁹ CLRO, Rep. 31 (2), ff. 372v-375, 386v-387.

venting against Cheke, 'both in court and city'. Cheke, hearing of this, called Dutton 'to account the large expence of his tongue against him', giving Browne's now decommissioned stepfather the opportunity he sought to duel on Calais Sands, dramatically related by Wilson:

Cheek ran Dutton into the neck with his Rapier, and stab'd him in the neck back ward with his Dagger, miraculously missing his windpipe; And at the same instant, like one motion, Dutton ran Cheek through the body, and stab'd him into the back with his left hand, locking themselves together thus with four bloody keys.²⁰

Despite, or perhaps because of this outrage against his military superior, Dutton received the post of Scoutmaster-General in Ireland in April 1610. Before his departure, however, the matter came to the attention of James I and according to the State Papers 'The King said Sir Thomas was to be punished according to a maxim in his Basilicon Doron, that "faults in war are of all others straightest to be looked into." Dutton arrived at the Court to excuse himself, but was arrested', the report continues.²¹ In 1611, writing to Lord Salisbury he 'begs favour for his offence in killing his foe in self-defence'.²² Apparently forgiven, Dutton appears regularly over the following two decades in the State Papers, and in the Correspondence of the Commissioners for Irish affairs, engaged in a seemingly relentless haggling over money, and new sources of income in Ireland, where he was living with Browne's mother. The King seeks advice in relation to Dutton's Gogolesque suit for the wages of the army dead, in which he 'seeks an increase of his pay by being granted one dead pay out of every company of horse and foot in the list of the army there'.²³ There are ongoing disputes over the fees for entertainments he was required to bear as army General, wrangling over the income from forts, with Dutton attempting to claim rights to inland as well as sea-forts.²⁴ In 1619, his problems were at least temporarily eased by the granting of a plantation of seized land in Longford, though this came back to haunt the family.

²⁰ Arthur Wilson, *The history of Great Britain: being the life and reign of King James the First* (1653), pp. 49–50.

²¹ SP 63/240/2, f. 18, 25 April 1610.

²² SP 14/64, f. 61, 17 June 1611.

²³ The King to Sir Arthur Chichester, in Calendar of State Papers relating to Ireland, Entry 413, p. 239, Jan. 1612.

²⁴ PC 2/32, f. 83, 23 July 1623 'A letter to the Lord Deputie of Irelande'.

Browne seems likely to have visited Ireland in mid 1629, in the company of his stepfather, when according to Whitefoot he made 'a visitation of the forts and castles of that Kingdom'.²⁵ The State Papers contain 'A Passe for Sir Thomas Dutton, knight, one of his Majesties Counsell in Irelande, to retourne into Irelande with his whole family and retinue', and Browne makes occasional, if unrevealing reference to his brief travels to Ireland at this time.²⁶ Dutton seems not to have absorbed the generally benign attitude to religious tolerance that his son-in-law later shows, but religion did impinge upon his money-raising strategies, around the time of Browne's visit, with his letters to the king in 1629–30 raising the spectre of 'Jesuits and schoolmen' in every Irish barn, with a particularly rich crop, as he explains, in Wexford, Longford, and Leitrim, a claim that segues effortlessly into financial affairs.²⁷

Unless the Papists and seminary schools are rooted out and destroyed, it will be impossible to plant the Gospel here . . . The admitting of recusants to be justices and captains weakens the Government greatly. These Papists forswear themselves in juries and sway all causes throughout the Kingdom. I hope I may still have my company. When I left England my debts were 2,500l, which I hope your Majesty will confer on me.²⁸

Browne's connections with his mother in Ireland are obscure, though he maintained contact with his sisters, the younger two of whom lived in Longford. The lack of letters documenting this period means we have no record of his response to the dramatic affairs of the early 1640s, by which time Browne himself was in Norwich. Dutton had been awarded possession of the confiscated lands of the Farrell family in Longford, to create a 2,000-acre plantation and, at the rebellion of 1641, some time after Thomas Dutton's death, a general revenge upon the English enveloped Anne, Browne's mother. The uprising was of unparalleled enormity, and the enquiry into it sought out some 8,000 mostly Protestant statements. According to the 1641 deposition by John Stibbs, the Longford rebellion resulted in the lynching of the English guard and the ousting of Anne Dutton from her estate by Oliver Fitzgarrett and Lishagh Farrell: 'ladie Ann Dutton, and her

²⁵ Whitefoot, *Life*, in *Posthumous Works* (1712), p. ii.

²⁶ Acts of the Privy Council of England: A.D. 1542–June 1631, Vol. 45: 1629 May–1630 May; Vol. V (P.C. 2/39), 289a; f.365, 19 July 1629.

²⁷ Sir Thomas Dutton to the King. SP 63/249, f. 296, 20 Dec. 1629.

²⁸ SP 63/250, f. 170, 4 April 1630.

daughter & Mrs Elenor Browne, her man her mayd and this deponents wiffe were threatened to be putt to death: & the warrant was signed to that purpose by those of the Cabinett Counsell & by them sent to Capitaine ffergus fferrall to see them executed'. They were saved, however, by Sir James Dillon, who took the 'said lady Duttons & divers other poore English protestants from those parts to his owne howse, and from thence sent them all saffe to Athlone'.²⁹ The Roscommon deposition of Edward Peirson likewise blames Fitzgarret 'whoe hanged 16 of the English there: & stript the lady Dutton of all her goodes and clothes'. The apparent trauma of this does not, however, find any corresponding ripple in Browne's writing, who mentions only some observations of spiders and burnt trees, along with a sea-sickness he endured coming from Ireland, though he does tell his daughter, late in his life, the dramatic story: 'I came once from Dublin to Chester at Michaelmas and was so tossed, that nothing but milk and Possets would goe down with me 2 or 3 days after.'³⁰

It may be that Browne, brought up in England, had little connection, emotional or otherwise, with his mother and stepfamily in Ireland. The brief facts of Browne's younger life, as we have them, are that he was 'educated in Grammar Learning, in Wykeham's School near Winchester; he was entred a Commoner of Broadgates Hall (soon after, known by the Name of Pembroke College) in the Beginning of the Year 1623'.³¹ In Oxford, he was tutored by Thomas Lushington, mathematician, churchman, and reputed Socinian, and who would be instrumental in Browne's move to Norwich.³² Lushington translated the philosophical and mathematical commentaries of Proclus on Euclid, and involved himself in a notorious attack on the

²⁹ Deposition of John Stibbs, MS 817, ff. 203r–206v (f. 204r), Trinity College Dublin, MSS 1641, TCD, 1641 Depositions Project, online transcript: <<http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=<?php echo 817203r162?>>>; Deposition of Suzan Steele, MS 817, ff. 203r–206v (f. 204r) <<http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=<?php echo 817213r169?>>>. Deposition of Edward Peirson, MS 830, ff. 012r–013v <<http://1641.tcd.ie/deposition.php?depID=<?php echo 830012r016?>>>]. See also Hughes, 'Childhood of Thomas Browne', p. 26; N. J. Endicott, 'Sir Thomas Browne as "Orphan"', with Some Account of his Stepfather, Sir Thomas Dutton', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 30 (1961): 180–210 (191–201).

³⁰ 15 Sept. 1681, in *Works*, ed. Keynes, 4.200.

³¹ Whitefoot, *Life*, in *Posthumous Works* (1712), p. ii. The date was in fact 5 Dec. 1623.

³² Frank Huntley, 'Dr. Thomas Lushington (1590–1661), Sir Thomas Browne's Oxford Tutor', *Modern Philology*, 81:1 (1983): 14, *Procli Elementa & Prologica* (BL Sloan 1838), Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691), v. 2, p. 535.

typical parliamentary ‘peasant’ who ‘under pretence of his privilege in parliament . . . would dispose of kings and commonwealths’, this being a response to parliament’s pressing the new King, who had for some years been attempting a much despised Spanish Match, to involve himself in the Continental wars.³³ The other key Oxford figure for Browne was Thomas Clayton, Regius Professor of Physic, on whose shoulders most of the teaching of medicine fell.

Oxford had a relatively unimpressive reputation for medical training, however, and Browne’s visit to Ireland, after receiving his MA in 1629, was the beginning of some extensive travel, following the not uncommon path of prospective physicians to the more prestigious European universities.³⁴ If his purpose was, in addition to training as a physician, an early version of the Grand Tour, his travels were constrained by the tides of the Thirty Years War, which limited travel in central Europe, at least, but the medical fraternities of the Continent remained mobile. He spent time in three important centres of European medicine—Montpellier, Padua, and Leiden—each of which had its distinct traditions and priorities in medical training, and whose variety was in large part responsible for Browne’s elaborate interlacing of the humanist, the theological, and the scientific. Browne did not produce any specifically medical writings, for all that *Religio Medici* suggests the presiding presence of a physician over its theological stew, but medicine and anatomy pervade his voluminous notes and more obliquely underwrite all his work.

Montpellier, Browne’s first destination, was among the preeminent medical schools of France and Europe. It maintained, quite staunchly, its independence from the university and its theological faculty, and had inherited the richest stock of medical knowledge from Muslim and Jewish Spain, and hence from the classical world.³⁵ Montpellier was a formerly Huguenot city and broadly receptive to Protestants. His studies would have centred on the botanical gardens, established in 1593, which were particularly impressive and central to a rapidly shifting landscape of pharmacological ideas, out of which was

³³ Lushington, *The Resurrection of our Saviour Vindicated* (1741); Huntley, pp. 14–15; Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1691), v. 2, p. 172.

³⁴ Robert G. Frank, in *The History of the University of Oxford*, vol. 4: *The Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nicolas Tyacke (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 516–18.

³⁵ Jack Goody, *Renaissances: The One or the Many?* (Cambridge University Press, 2010); H. Bonnet, *La Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier: huit siècles d’histoire et d’éclat* (Montpellier: Sauramps, 1992).

produced Lazare Rivière's influential *Praxis Medica* (1640).³⁶ Various traditions of medical theory had to be mastered by the aspiring physician—the Galenic, Hippocratic, and Arabian inheritance of medical care, along with more practical, sometimes domestic, sometimes military and surgical traditions, buttressed by an increasing knowledge of pharmacology, anatomy, and occasional surges of interest in physiognomy. There was, on the whole, no stark division or conflict between approaches, though the stirring polemic of Paracelsus against classical traditions did temporarily raise the rhetorical stakes.

Padua, which Browne arrived at in 1632, was the most important Italian centre of medical studies, home to the anatomical theatricality of Andreas Vesalius (1514–64) and a host of impressive medical writers, including the figure of Hieronymus Fabricius of Aquapendente (1533–1619), whose practices of 'philosophical anatomy' sought the relationship of the body to the soul.³⁷ Anatomy became something of a philosophical spectator sport, occasionally even accompanied by music, and with the border between body and metaphysics becoming ever more blurred.³⁸ In a retrospective critical comment on the practices of Paduan anatomy, Johann Veslingus (1598–1649), who was appointed to the medical faculty in 1632, complained that the philosophizing around the body had turned its study of anatomy into a practice like 'contemplating the siege of Troy'.³⁹ If Browne does not quite describe the body in terms of its Homeric themes, he was certainly concerned to seek its associative meanings and metaphysics.

Browne finished his studies at Leiden, whose reputation centred on its chemical medicine, under Jan Baptista van Helmont (c.1579–1644), but which had its own and independent traditions of anatomy,

³⁶ Charles Coury, 'The Teaching of Medicine in France from the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century', in C. D. O'Malley, *The History of Medical Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 121–72; Anna Pavord, *The Naming of Names: The Search for Order in the World of Plants* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

³⁷ Andrew Cunningham, 'Fabricius and the "Aristotle Project"', in Andrew Wear, Roger French, and I. M. Lonie (eds.), *The Medical Renaissance of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 195–222.

³⁸ Cynthia Klestinec, 'Medical Education in Padua: Students, Faculty and Faculties', in Ole Peter Grell, Andrew Cunningham, and Jon Arrizabalaga (eds.), *Centres of Medical Excellence?: Medical Travel and Education in Europe, 1500–1789* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 214.

³⁹ Johann Veslingus, *Syntagma Anatomicum* (Padua, 1647), to the reader, cited in Klestinec, p. 219.

developed under Petrus Paaw (1564–1617), who was succeeded in the professorship of anatomy in Browne's time by the curious pairing of Otho Heurnius (van Herne, 1577–1652) and Adrianus Valckenburg. Heurnius proved a reluctant anatomist, but flamboyant collector and orchestrator of Leiden's impressive assemblage of anatomical curiosities, while the phlegmatic Valckenburg, forgoing the theatricalism that had come to be expected of anatomy, petitioned the university to be allowed bodies for private anatomy, without ever producing the promised illustrated book that he had claimed would derive from it.⁴⁰ Heurnius' contribution to the practicalities of anatomy and its teaching may have been relatively slight, but his design of and additions to the emblematics of the anatomy theatre were splendid—rarities, paintings and engravings, skeletons, embalmed bodies of animals and children, Japanese tea-sets, the winding linens of mummy—all contributing to a moral, philosophical, and theological montage, in counterpoint to the practice of dissection.⁴¹ If Browne could take relatively little from his short stay in Leiden, one thing that would emerge was its concern with the emblematics of the body, as a correlate to medicine, a theme that proves so constant a presence in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.

Browne matriculated and then graduated MD in quick succession at the end of 1633, having undergone a doctoral process involving a private examination on the fundamentals of medicine, a public viva, in which a defence of Hippocratic aphorisms would be demanded of the candidate against questions put by members of faculty, followed by a presentation of his doctoral thesis on smallpox.⁴² He is noted in the Leiden Archives as 'Thomas Braun, Anglus Londinensis, apud Ricardum Monck in Sonneveltsteeg', the latter being the English tobacconist, Richard Monck, with whom Browne lodged and who was affiliated to the Separatist movement that constituted a large

⁴⁰ Tim Huisman, *The Finger of God: Anatomical Practice in 17th-Century Leiden* (O: Primavera Pers, 2009), pp. 43–9.

⁴¹ Harold J. Cook, *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 168–9; Huisman, *The Finger of God*, p. 45.

⁴² Reid Barbour, 'Discipline and Praxis: Thomas Browne in Leiden', in Kathryn Murphy and Richard Todd (eds.), *"A man very well studied": New Contexts for Thomas Browne* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 21–9; Reid Barbour, 'The Topic of Sir Thomas Browne's Dissertation', *Notes & Queries*, 252 (2007): 38–9.

proportion of the exiled English community in Holland.⁴³ So Browne's European travels ended and he returned to England, probably early in 1634.

He may have begun his medical practice in Oxfordshire, according at least to Anthony à Wood and after him Samuel Johnson, though he settled in Shibden Vale, Halifax, where it is likely he wrote the first draft of *Religio Medici*.⁴⁴ Browne was incorporated as a doctor of physic on 10 July 1637 and moved to Norwich in 1637, where he remained for the rest of his life. He married Dorothy Mileham (1621–85) and they had eleven children, four of whom survived beyond childhood. Fame and admiration arrived after the 1643 publication of *Religio Medici* and the 1646 *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, although our knowledge of Browne's life from this point on recedes. His young medical practice and his young family no doubt occupied his time and his notebooks make clear his ongoing habits of home-anatomy and botany, experiment and labyrinthine reading.

In part through his marriage, and in part via his role as physician, Browne was acquainted with many of the gentry, politically active and wealthy families of Norfolk. Over the years, he tended to and was friends with the Hobarts, Pastons, Tenisons, and Astleys, as well as successive Bishops of Norwich, including most closely Joseph Hall, the brilliant satirist and scholar, whose bishopric in Norwich before his ejection was brief, but who remained in the area for many years after the sequestering of his property. Norwich itself held broadly parliamentary sympathies and sided against the king during the simmering years of the civil war. Browne attended the parish of St George Tombland, and from 1650 St Peter Mancroft (where his portrait now hangs), both of which were subjected to intermittent acts of iconoclasm, with echoes, oblique and direct, in Browne's writing on pictures.⁴⁵ Though both *Religio Medici* and *Pseudodoxia* can be seen in relationship to events of the 1640s, Browne was not a

⁴³ University Library Leiden, Archief Senaat en Faculteiten 9, Volumen inscriptionum 1631–1645, in Harm Beukers, 'Studying Medicine in Leiden in the 1630s', in Murphy and Todd (eds.), 'A man very well studied'. On Monck, C. W. Schoneveld, *Sea-Changes: Studies in Three Centuries of Anglo-Dutch Cultural Transmission* (Amsterdam: 1996), p. 340; Barbour, 'Discipline and Praxis', p. 40.

⁴⁴ Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, vol. 2 (1691), p. 535; W. Rye, 'What Brought Sir Thomas Browne to Norwich', *Norfolk Antiquarian Miscellany*, 2nd ser., 1 (1906): 33–5.

⁴⁵ Kevin Killeen, *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 202–3.

writer who addressed the quotidian and the contemporary, except by implicit and circuitous routes. His later works, *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, with their arcane and scholarly flights, have often been taken to indicate a retreat from the world, melancholic, but abstractly so, unallied to particular circumstance, though in their searing rhetoric, knowledge becomes lament that can hardly be separated from the upheaval of the times.

Our knowledge of Browne at this time comes primarily from the intellectual life of his books, though it can be augmented by a reasonably rich stock of letters, from exchanges with Kenelm Digby and Henry Power on natural philosophy, on to correspondence with John Evelyn, Hamon L'Estrange, William Dugdale, Henry Oldenburg, and John Aubrey, through to, most extensively, his letters to his sons, Thomas and Edward. These are on the whole domestic, with occasional news, much advice, and detailed discussion of medical matters with Edward, who, after his travels in Europe, became a successful physician and member of the Royal College of Physicians. Thus, Browne's later life seems relatively quiet. All we can be sure of was his interest in bowls, Browne being listed among the benefactors of the 'Great Ward of Mancroft', on the curious condition that the city did not revoke the licence for his bowling-green: 'Thom Browne sealed a bond to the curst, to pay 12*d.* a week to the overseers, to be laid out in bread for the poor, so long as the city continue to license a certain house and bowling-green of the said Thomas, which was then occupied by one Lancelot Rigsby.'⁴⁶ He died in 1682 and reporting his death, Horatio Townsend wrote: 'Sr. Tho: Browne is dead & as hee lived in an eaven temper without deep concerne with how the world went & was therein very happy so hee died like a wise old philosopher . . . All scholars allow him to have the most curious Learning of all sorts & that his fellow is not left.'⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Blomefield, *Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, vol. 4, p. 165.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Sir Thomas Browne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), epigram.

NOTES ON TEXT AND ANNOTATION

The primary texts used in this book are, in all cases, the first authorized edition: *Religio Medici* (1643), *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), *Hydriotaphia or Urne-Buriall* and *The Garden of Cyrus* (1658), and for the posthumous works, *Certain Miscellany Tracts* (1683), *Letter to a Friend* (1690), *Christian Morals* (1716). In the case of *Pseudodoxia*, some chapters of particular interest from later editions are also included—Browne responds to developments in European natural philosophy—and the first date of such chapters is given in the textual notes. Textual variations are noted in *Religio Medici*—based on manuscript and the first two editions—and in *Hydriotaphia* and *The Garden of Cyrus*, based on the uncorrected *errata*. The original does not present any significant difficulties and changes are made only where it seemed to be intrusive upon the meaning, in which case there is some light modernization; u/v and i/j have been regularized, to reflect modern orthography; in cases where an ambiguity is created by early modern spelling, punctuation or apostrophe-use in plurals, I have regularized them, but on the whole, I have preferred to let the original remain, even when spelling is inconsistent within a particular chapter, so we can encounter Plinie and Pliny, Atheneus or Athenæus, crystall and chrystall, wee or we, without any ambiguity. One change that has been made is a standardization of the somewhat arbitrary capitalization and italics. Endnote references are collected at the end of the sentence or after the colons and semi-colons that serve, frequently, as syntactical stops, except where it is one of Browne's notes or a textual matter or the length of the phrase makes for a lack of clarity.

The style and purpose of the annotations differ from text to text, however, and it is worth explaining the rationale. Browne's writing is symphonic and does not bear well the interruption and necessary pedantry of footnotes. It is very much dependant on its surge-force. However, his writing is also consummately learned and, with its habits of half-reference or its embedded quotes, it is demanding material and requires extensive annotation. However, each of Browne's works is scholarly in a different way, which has necessitated for each a particular mode of endnoting. The notes gloss, firstly, unfamiliar language—and given his frequent invention and adoption of orphan Latin words, there is a fairly large volume of

such annotation. Second, the glosses note what I take to be unfamiliar ideas and the many points of reference, classical or biblical, that inhabit the text. The notes are not primarily interpretative, however, and do not necessarily seek buried references too fully.

Beyond this, there is a specificity to the notes on each of his works. The history of reading *Religio Medici* has frequently involved a parallel engagement with his early commentators—Kenelm Digby's *Observations upon Religio Medici* (1643), Alexander Ross's *Medicus medicatus* (1645), and Thomas Keck's *Annotations upon Religio Medici* (1654), published with the 1672 edition—so it has seemed worthwhile to feature their comments in reasonable detail. Given that they all work as section-by-section animadversions to particular passages, their comments appear in the endnotes. This has bulked up considerably what is intended, in general, to be glossatory material and this differentiates the editorial involvement with *Religio Medici* from that given to Browne's other works. The text of *Religio Medici* is the 1643 first authorized version, which announces itself a hastily constructed correction of a pirated 1642 version. There are some interesting and important changes between these that are tracked in the notes when they seem significant to the meaning, but by no means exhaustively—most significant is the addition of several sections (8, 28, 43, and 56). There is no authorial manuscript of *Religio Medici* as such, but eight non-authoritative manuscript versions in other hands, with variations, as well as two slightly different printed editions of the 1642 pirated and sectionless edition. The 1643 text has various errors, either Browne's or the printers, lending it a complex textual history, traced in superlative detail in Jean-Jacques Denonain's 1953 edition of the work. Denonain proposed a good number of textual changes, based on the manuscript variations (chiefly the Pembroke MS, but keyed to the other seven), to produce an excellent, if patchwork text. These variations are useful, but not authoritative and are included as textual notes.⁴⁸

On *Hydriotaphia*, the kind of annotation needed is different. Browne's margins in this work are thick with notes supplementing the main text. This is very much part of a textual polyphony and they are included on the page as marginalia (see illustration on p. 518). The

⁴⁸ On Browne's revisions, see also Brooke Conti, 'Sir Thomas Browne's Annotated Copy of His 1642 *Religio Medici*', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 67:3 (2006): 594–610.

level and indeed the obscurity of reference is important, in a work about the fleeting nature not so much of life as of death. I have annotated the origins of stories, of names and emperors, of burial and cremation ceremonies alluded to in the writing. However, there is every possibility that the oblivion into which they so quickly pass in the text is the very point—the prose in torrent sweeps aside the individual and their circumstances—and to delay their passing in the form of endnotes may be merely the accumulation of dust. The text itself is (relatively) straightforward. First published in a 1658 octavo edition by Henry Brome, it was reprinted with *Pseudodoxia* (in quarto) in the same year, though there are some differences in the marginalia between the two texts, and additions from the quarto are included in square brackets. It was reprinted in 1659 and 1669. A list of *errata* (either 18 or 24 lines) was added to some copies of the first edition, but these were not corrected in subsequent editions. Such *errata*, when adopted, are glossed in the textual notes, preceded by (Er). References to the 1658 octavo are noted by (58). Obvious and minor printer's errors are silently corrected, with reference to L. C. Martin's 1964 edition of Browne's works, as well as Keynes (1964), Robbins (1972), and Patrides (1977), who is more sparing in the emendations he adopts. There is also an additional set of *errata*, in the quarto 1658 edition, correcting both new errors and errors not corrected in the octavo. Where significant, these are noted. Following Martin, these are designated (Er2). In addition, there are some authorial handwritten corrections in a number of printed copies, collated first in John Carter's 1932 edition of *Hydriotaphia* and *Cyrus*, and these are also gathered into the textual notes under (C).

The Garden of Cyrus is particularly luscious in its vocabulary and its syntax, the sheer foliage of verbal texture that the work creates. The general intention behind the annotations is to gloss those words and terms which may not be familiar to a reader coming to the text for the first time, or to elucidate terms that may have variant early modern meanings. This extends also to clarifying how we might parse the sentence, on occasion. Here too, there is rhetorical purpose in the fabric of the dense prose, the unaccommodating sentence and the dazzling barrage of things and stories that constitute the text, and Browne's endemic practices of half-reference are traced as far as possible. *Errata* are incorporated, as with *Hydriotaphia*. One variant upon the 1658 edition is that the dedicatory letter to Nicholas Bacon, which prefaces *The Garden of Cyrus*, has been moved to that prefatory position, whereas, in the original, it is placed before *Hydriotaphia*.

Pseudodoxia Epidemica is a work too little known, and is included almost, but not quite, in full. Browne's vocabulary in this work is heavily idiosyncratic and the OED is awash with obscure words whose definitions are exemplified (if not deduced) from *Pseudodoxia*. This conscious obscurity is mitigated somewhat by Browne's frequently incorporating doublet-phrasing, whereby the Latin form is paired with its own English equivalent, 'eructation or belching', 'tollutation or ambling'. This is very much part of the rhythm and prosody of *Pseudodoxia*, which aims to create, or animate a vocabulary for the sciences, naturalizing Latin roots, but also luxuriating in their verbal textures. Such a stylistic habit, the continual invention and manipulation of words, is not to all tastes: 'The style of Sir Thomas Browne is not English,' complained Noah Webster, the lexicographer, in lambasting Samuel Johnson's frequent reference to Browne.⁴⁹ In referencing Browne's sources for *Pseudodoxia*, I have taken much more of a light touch, noting the source, by and large, only of works directly mentioned. Browne quotes a bewildering range of classical and patristic authorities in *Pseudodoxia*, along with medical, travel, and philosophical writing. He is not averse to citing contemporary authors, but the longevity of the errors is in large part his point, and it is the classical manifestations of error that tend to preface the chapters. It is also true that in many cases these have been collated elsewhere and he makes ample use, for instance, of de Boodt on gems or Aldrovandi on animals. The dizzyingly full notes of Robbins, *Pseudodoxia* (1981) pursue these in glorious detail. The size of *Pseudodoxia* is such that some excisions had to be made, largely from the long sixth book on chronology and the origin of the world, and two chapters from book 4, though I quote at least a part of every chapter. The 1646 edition of *Pseudodoxia* was, according to Keynes, 'very accurately printed' though the tale in subsequent editions was one of increasing debasement, until the 1672 compositor who 'surpassed all his predecessors in villainy . . . was stupid, careless and impertinent' (1964, vii). This is somewhat harsh, and that the 1646 edition was so accurate may be questioned,⁵⁰ but there is only minimal tracing here of the changes. Printer's errors, caught in later editions, are corrected without comment. Variants from later editions are included on the basis of their

⁴⁹ Noah Webster: 'Letter to Dr David Ramsay' (Oct. 1807) in James Boulton (ed.), *Samuel Johnson: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1971), p. 129.

⁵⁰ Endicott, *Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, p. 516; and in Robbins' textual notes.

intellectual interest. Books 2 and 3, for instance, with their more scientific subject matter, clearly respond to Browne's reading in natural philosophy, and so some passages that replace the 1646 text are included in the notes.

Christian Morals is edited from its first edition of 1716, overseen by Browne's daughter, Elizabeth Lyttleton, and John Jeffrey, Archdeacon of Norwich, but the notes include a good selection from Samuel Johnson's second edition of 1756. *A Letter to a Friend* (1690) shares a number of passages with *Christian Morals*. *Certain Miscellany Tracts* (1712) is included in full, but annotated very lightly.

Classical references, by default, follow Loeb translations, and use English titles. Exceptions to this are Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1984); Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper (Hackett, 1997) and Galen, *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body*, trans. Margaret Tallmadge May (Cornell, 1969). Albertus Magnus is cited from *On Animals*, trans. Kenneth F. Kittell Jr. and Irven Michael Resnick, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1999). Biblical references are taken, except where there is a reason not to, from the King James Bible. Early modern works, where possible, are referenced to the Sales Catalogue of Browne (1711), which contained the libraries of Browne and his son, Edward, rather than first editions of works, though if it is merely a generalized reference, the original publication date seems more useful. The standard points of reference for Patristic writings are: J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina* (PL, 1862–5); J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca* (PG, 1857–66), though particularly with the latter, I have also used the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1867–73) and the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Phillip Schaff (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1886–1900).

RELIGIO MEDICI



FIG. 2 Title page from *Religio Medici* (1642).

To the Reader

Certainly that man were greedy of life, who should desire to live when all the world were at an end; and he must needs be very impatient, who would repine at death in the societie of all things that suffer under it.¹ Had not almost every man suffered by the presse; or were not the tyranny thereof become universall; I had not wanted reason for complaint:² but in times wherein I have lived to behold the highest perversion of that excellent invention; the name of his Majesty defamed, the honour of Parliament depraved, the writings of both depravedly, anticipatively, counterfeitedly imprinted;³ complaints may seeme ridiculous in private persons, and men of my condition may be as incapable of affronts, as hopelesse of their reparations.⁴ And truly had not the duty I owe unto the importunitie of friends,⁵ and the allegiance I must ever acknowledge unto truth prevayled with me; the inactivitie of my disposition might have made these sufferings continuall, and time that brings other things to light, should have satisfied me in the remedy of its oblivion. But because things evidently false are not onely printed, but many things of truth most falsly set forth; in this latter I could not but thinke my selfe engaged: for though we have no power to redresse the former, yet in the other the reparation being within our selves, I have at present represented unto the world a full and intended copy of that piece which was most imperfectly and surreptitiously published before.

This I confesse about seven yeares past,⁶ with some others of affinitie thereto, for my private exercise and satisfaction, I had at leisable houres composed; which being communicated unto one, it became common unto many, and was by transcription successively corrupted untill it arrived in a most depraved copy at the presse. He that shall peruse that worke, and shall take notice of sundry particularities and personall expressions therein, will easily discern the intention was not publike: and being a private exercise directed to my selfe, what is delivered therein was rather a memoriall unto me then an example or rule unto any other: and therefore if there bee any singularitie therein correspondent unto the private conceptions of any man, it doth not advantage them; or if dissentaneous thereunto, it no way overthrowes them.⁷ It was penned in such a place and with such disadvantage, that (I protest)

from the first setting of pen unto paper, I had not the assistance of any good booke, whereby to promote my invention or relieve my memory; and therefore there might be many reall lapses therein, which others might take notice of, and more than I suspected my selfe. It was set downe many yeares past, and was the sense of my conceptions at that time, not an immutable law unto my advancing judgement at all times, and therefore there might be many things therein plausible unto my passed apprehension, which are not agreeable unto my present selfe. There are many things delivered rhetorically, many expressions therein meerely tropicall, and as they best illustrate my intention;⁸ and therefore also there are many things to be taken in a soft and flexible sense, and not to be called unto the rigid test of reason. Lastly all that is contained therein is in submission unto maturer discernments, and as I have declared shall no further father them then the best and learned judgements shall authorize them;⁹ under favour of which considerations I have made its secrecie publike and committed the truth thereof to every ingenuous reader.

Thomas Browne.

Religio Medici

SECTION I

For my religion, though there be severall circumstances that might perswade the world I have none at all, as the generall scandall of my profession, the naturall course of my studies, the indifferency of my behaviour, and discourse in matters of religion, neither violently defending one, nor with that common ardour and contention opposing another;¹⁰ yet in despight hereof I dare, without usurpation, assume the honorable stile of a Christian:¹¹ not that I meerey owe this title to the font, my education, or clime wherein I was borne, as being bred up either to confirme those principles my parents instilled into my unwary understanding;¹² or by a generall consent proceed in the religion of my countrey: but having, in my riper yeares, and confirmed judgement, seene and examined all, I finde my selfe obliged by the principles of grace, and the law of mine owne reason, to embrace no other name but this;¹³ neither doth herein my zeale so farre make me forget the generall charitie I owe unto humanity, as rather to hate then pity Turkes, infidels, and (what is worse) Jewes, rather contenting my selfe to enjoy that happy stile, then maligning those who refuse so glorious a title.

SECTION 2

But because the name of a Christian is become too generall to expresse our faith, there being a geography of religions as well as lands, and every clime distinguished not onely by their lawes and limits, but circumscribed by their doctrines and rules of faith; to be particular, I am of that reformed new-cast religion, wherein I dislike nothing but the name,¹⁴ of the same believe our saviour taught, the Apostles disseminated, the fathers authorised, and the martyrs confirmed;¹⁵ but by the sinister ends of princes, the ambition and avarice of prelates, and the fatall corruption of times, so decaied, impaired, and fallen from its native beauty, that it required the carefull and charitable hand of these times to restore it to its primitive integrity:¹⁶ now the accidentall occasion whereon, the slender meanes whereby,

the low and abject condition of the person by whom so good a worke was set on foot,¹⁷ which in our adversaries beget contempt and scorn, fills me with wonder, and is the very same objection the insolent Pagans first cast at Christ and his Disciples.

SECTION 3

Yet have I not so shaken hands with those desperate resolutions, who had rather venture at large their decayed bottome, then bring her in to be new trim'd in the dock;¹⁸ who had rather promiscuously retaine all, then abridge any, and obstinately be what they are, then what they have beene, as to stand in diameter and swords point with them:¹⁹ we have reformed from them, not against them;²⁰ for omitting those impropriations and termes of scurrility betwixt us, which onely difference our affections,²¹ and not our cause, there is between us one common name and appellation, one faith, and necessary body of principles common to us both; and therefore I am not scrupulous to converse and live with them,²² to enter their churches in defect of ours, and either pray with them, or for them: I could never perceive any rationall consequence from those many texts which prohibite the children of Israel to pollute themselves with the temples of the heathens;²³ we being all Christians, and not divided by such detested impieties as might prophane our prayers, or the place wherein we make them; or that a resolved conscience may not adore her Creator any where, especially in places devoted to his service;²⁴ where if their devotions offend him, mine may please him, if theirs prophane it, mine may hallow it; holy water and crucifix (dangerous to the common people) deceive not my judgement, nor abuse my devotion at all.²⁵ I am, I confesse, naturally inclined to that, which misguided zeale termes superstition; my common conversation I do acknowledge austere, my behaviour full of rigour, sometimes not without morosity; yet at my devotion I love to use the civility of my knee, my hat, and hand, with all those outward and sensible motions, which may expresse, or promote my invisible devotion.²⁶ I should violate my owne arme rather then a church, nor willingly deface the memory of saint or martyr.²⁷ At the sight of a crosse or crucifix I can dispence with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my saviour; I cannot laugh at but rather pity the

fruitlesse journeys of pilgrims, or contemne the miserable condition of friers; for though misplaced in circumstance, there is something in it of devotion: I could never heare the *Ave Marie* bell* without an elevation, or thinke it a sufficient warrant, because they erred in one circumstance, for me to erre in all, that is in silence and dumbe contempt;²⁸ whilst therefore they directed their devotions to her, I offered mine to God, and rectified the errors of their prayers by rightly ordering mine owne; at a solemne procession I have wept abundantly, while my consorts, blinde with opposition and prejudice, have fallen into an accesse of scorne and laughter.²⁹ There are questionlesse both in Greek, Roman, and African churches, solemnities, and ceremonies, whereof the wiser zeales doe make a Christian use, and stand condemned by us; not as evill in themselves, but as allurements and baits of superstition to those vulgar heads that looke asquint on the face of truth, and those unstable judgements that cannot consist in the narrow point and centre of vertue without a reele or stagger to the circumference.

* A Church Bell that tolls every day at 6. and 12. of the Clocke, at the hearing whereof every one in what place soever either of house or street betakes him to his prayer, which is commonly directed to the Virgin.

SECTION 4

As there were many reformers, so likewise many reformations; every countrey proceeding in a particular way and method, according as their nationall interest together with their constitution and clime inclined them, some angrily and with extremitie, others calmely, and with mediocrity, not rending, but easily dividing the community, and leaving an honest possibility of a reconciliation, which though peaceable spirits doe desire, and may conceive that revolution of time, and the mercies of God may effect; yet that judgement that shall consider the present antipathies between the two extreames, their contrarieties in condition, affection and opinion, may with the same hopes expect an union in the poles of Heaven.

SECTION 5

But to difference my self neerer,³⁰ and draw into a lesser circle: there is no church whose every part so squares unto my conscience, whose articles, constitutions, and customes seeme so consonant unto reason, and as it were framed to my

particular devotion, as this whereof I hold my believe, the Church of England, to whose faith I am a sworne subject, and therefore in a double obligation, subscribe unto her articles, and endeavour to observe her Constitutions:³¹ whatsoever is beyond, as points indifferent,³² I observe according to the rules of my private reason, or the humour and fashion of my devotion, neither believing this, because Luther affirmed it, or disproving that, because Calvin hath disavouched it.³³ I condemne not all things in the Councell of Trent, nor approve all in the Synod of Dort.³⁴ In briefe, where the Scripture is silent, the church is my text; where that speakes, 'tis but my comment; where there is a joynt silence of both, I borrow not the rules of my religion from Rome or Geneva, but the dictates of my own reason. It is an unjust scandall of our adversaries, and a gross error in our selves, to compute the nativity of our religion from Henry the eight,³⁵ who though he rejected the Pope, refus'd not the faith of Rome, and effected no more then what his owne predecessors desired and assayed in ages past, and was conceived the state of Venice would have attempted in our dayes.³⁶ It is as uncharitable a point in us to fall upon those popular scurrilities and opprobrious scoffes of the Bishop of Rome, whom as a temporall prince, we owe the duty of good language;³⁷ I confesse there is cause of passion between us; by his sentence I stand excommunicated, Heretick is the best language he affords me; yet can no eare witnesse I ever returned to him the name of Antichrist, man of sin, or whore of Babylon;³⁸ It is the method of charity to suffer without reaction: those usuall satyrs,³⁹ and invectives of the pulpit may perchance produce a good effect on the vulgar, whose eares are opener to rhetorick then logick, yet doe they in no wise confirme the faith of wiser beleevers, who know that a good cause needs not to be patron'd by a passion, but can sustaine it selfe upon a temperate dispute.

SECTION 6

I could never divide my selfe from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgement for not agreeing with mee in that, from which perhaps within a few dayes I should dissent my selfe:⁴⁰ I have no genius to disputes in religion, and have often thought it wisdom to decline them, especially upon a disadvantage, or when the cause of

truth might suffer in the weakenesse of my patronage:⁴¹ where we desire to be informed, 'tis good to contest with men above our selves; but to confirme and establish our opinions, 'tis best to argue with judgements below our own, that the frequent spoyles and victories over their reasons may settle in our selves an esteeme, and confirmed opinion of our owne. Every man is not a proper champion for truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cause of veritie:⁴² many from the ignorance of these maximes, and an inconsiderate zeale unto truth, have too rashly charged the troopes of error, and remaine as trophées unto the enemies of truth: a man may be in as just possession of truth as of a city, and yet bee forced to surrender: 'tis therefore farre better to enjoy her with peace, then to hazzard her on a battell: If therefore there rise any doubts in my way, I doe forget them, or at least defer them, till my better settled judgement, and more manly reason be able to resolve them; for I perceive every mans owne reason is his best Oedipus, and will upon a reasonable truce, find a way to loose those bonds wherewith the subtilties of error have enchained our more flexible and tender judgements.⁴³ In philosophy where truth seemes double-faced, there is no man more paradoxically then my self; but in divinity I love to keepe the road, and though not in an implicate, yet an humble faith, follow the great wheele of the church, by which I move, not reserving any proper poles or motion from the epicycle of my own braine;⁴⁴ by this meanes I leave no gap for heresies, schismes, or errors, of which at present, I hope I shall not injure truth, to say, I have no taint or tincture; I must confesse my greener studies have beene polluted with two or three, not any begotten in the latter centuries, but old and obsolete, such as could never have been revived, but by such extravagant and irregular heads as mine; for indeed heresies perish not with their authors, but like the river Arethusa, though they lose their currents in one place, they rise up againe in another:⁴⁵ one generall councill is not able to extirpate one single heresie, it may be cancelled for the present, but revolution of time and the like aspects from Heaven, will restore it, when it will flourish till it be condemned againe;⁴⁶ for as though there were a metempsychosis, and the soule of one man passed into another, opinions doe finde after certaine revolutions, men and mindes like those that first begat them.⁴⁷ To see our selves againe we neede not looke for Plato's yeare;⁴⁸ every man is not onely himselfe; there have beene many Diogenes, and as many Timons, though but few of

* A revolution of certaine thousand yeares when all things should returne unto their former estate and he be teaching againe in his schoole as when he delivered this opinion.

that name;⁴⁹ men are lived over againe, the world is now as it was in ages past, there was none then, but there hath been some one since that parallels him, and is as it were his revived selfe.

SECTION 7

Now the first of mine was that of the Arabians, that the soules of men perished with their bodies, but should yet bee raised againe at the last day; not that I did absolutely conceive a mortality of the soule; but if that were, which faith, not philosophy hath yet thoroughly disproved, and that both entred the grave together, yet I held the same conceit thereof that we all doe of the body, that it should rise againe.⁵⁰ Surely it is but the merits of our unworthy natures, if we sleepe in darkenesse, untill the last alarum:⁵¹ a serious reflex upon my owne unworthinesse did make me backward from challenging this prerogative of my soule;⁵² so I might enjoy my Saviour at the last, I could with patience be nothing almost unto eternity. The second was that of Origen, that God would not persist in his vengeance for ever, but after a definite time of his wrath hee would release the damned soules from torture;⁵³ which error I fell into upon a serious contemplation of the great attribute of God his mercy, and did a little cherish it in my selfe, because I found therein no malice, and a ready weight to sway me from the other extreme of despaire, whereunto melancholy and contemplative natures are too easily disposed. A third there is which I did never positively maintaine or practice, but have often wished it had been consonant unto truth, and not offensive to my religion, and that is the prayer for the dead;⁵⁴ whereunto I was inclined from some charitable inducements, whereby I could scarce containe my prayers for a friend at the ringing of a bell, or behold his corpse without an oraison for his soule: 'twas a good way me thought to be remembered by posterity, and farre more noble then an history. These opinions I never maintained with pertinacity, or endeavoured to enveagle any mans beliefe unto mine, nor so much as ever revealed or disputed them with my dearest friends;⁵⁵ by which meanes I neither propagated them in others, nor confirmed them in my selfe, but suffering them to flame upon their own substance, without addition of new fuell, they went out insensibly of themselves; therefore these opinions, though condemned by lawfull Councels, were not

heresies in me, but bare errors, and single lapses of my understanding, without a joynt depravity of my will.⁵⁶ those have not only depraved understandings but diseased affections, which cannot enjoy a singularity without a heresie, or be the author of an opinion, without they be of a sect also; this was the villany of the first schisme of Lucifer, who was not content to erre alone, but drew into his faction many legions of spirits;⁵⁷ and upon this experience hee tempted only Eve, as well understanding the communicable nature of sin, and that to deceive but one, was tacitely and upon consequence to delude them both.

SECTION 8⁵⁸

That heresies should arise we have the prophecy of Christ, but that old ones should be abolished we hold no prediction.⁵⁹ That there must be heresies, is true, not onely in our church, but also in any other: even in doctrines hereticall there will be super-heresies, and Ariens not onely divided from their church, but also among themselves:⁶⁰ for heads that are disposed unto schisme and complexionally propense to innovation, are naturally disposed for a community, nor will ever be confined unto the order or æconomy of one body;⁶¹ and therefore when they separate from others they knit but loosely among themselves; nor contented with a generall breach or dichotomie with their church, do subdivide and mince themselves almost into atomes.⁶² 'Tis true, that men of singular parts and humors have not beene free from singular opinions and conceits in all ages; retaining something not onely beside the opinion of his own church or any other, but also any particular author: which notwithstanding a sober judgement may doe without offence or heresie; for there is yet after all the decrees of counsells and the niceties of the schooles, many things untouch'd, unimagin'd, wherein the libertie of an honest reason may play and expatiate with security and farre without the circle of an heresie.⁶³

SECTION 9

As for those wingy mysteries in divinity, and ayery subtilties in religion, which have unhindg'd the braines of better heads,

they never stretched the *Pia Mater* of mine;⁶⁴ methinks there be not impossibilities enough in religion for an active faith; the deepest mysteries ours contains, have not only been illustrated, but maintained by syllogisme, and the rule of reason: I love to lose my selfe in a mystery to pursue my reason to an *oh altitudo*.⁶⁵ 'Tis my solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved ænigmas and riddles of the Trinity, with incarnation and resurrection.⁶⁶ I can answer all the objections of Satan, and my rebellious reason, with that odde resolution I learned of Tertullian, *certum est quia impossibile est*.⁶⁷ I desire to exercise my faith in the difficultest point, for to credit ordinary and visible objects is not faith, but perswasion. Some beleve the better for seeing Christ his sepulchre, and when they have seene the Red Sea, doubt not of the miracle.⁶⁸ Now contrarily I blesse my selfe, and am thankefull that I lived not in the dayes of miracles, that I never saw Christ nor his Disciples; I would not have beene one of those Israelites that passed the Red Sea, nor one of Christ's patients, on whom he wrought his wonders;⁶⁹ then had my faith beene thrust upon me, nor should I enjoy that greater blessing pronounced to all that believe and saw not.⁷⁰ 'Tis an easie and necessary beliefe to credit what our eye and sense hath examined: I believe he was dead, and buried, and rose againe; and desire to see him in his glory, rather then to contemplate him in his cenotaphe, or sepulchre. Nor is this much to beleve, as we have reason, we owe this faith unto history: they only had the advantage of a bold and noble faith, who lived before his coming, who upon obscure propheties and mysticall types could raise a beliefe, and expect apparent impossibilities.⁷¹

SECTION IO

'Tis true, there is an edge in all firme beliefe, and with an easie metaphor we may say the sword of faith; but in these obscurities I rather use it, in the adjunct the Apostle gives it, a Buckler;⁷² under which I perceive a wary combatant may lie invulnerable. Since I was of understanding to know we knew nothing, my reason hath beene more pliable to the will of faith; I am now content to understand a mystery without a rigid definition in an easie and Platonick description.⁷³ That allegoricall description of Hermes^{*},⁷⁴ pleaseth mee beyond all the

* *Sphæra, cujus
centrum ubique,
circumferentia
nullibi.*

metaphysicall definitions of divines; where I cannot satisfie my reason, I love to humour my fancy; I had as leive you tell me that *anima est angelus hominis, est Corpus Dei*, as *Entelechia*; *Lux est umbra Dei*, as *actus perspicui*.⁷⁵ where there is an obscurity too deepe for our reason, 'tis good to set downe with a description, periphrasis, or adumbration;⁷⁶ for by acquainting our reason how unable it is to display the visible and obvious effect of nature, it becomes more humble and submissive unto the subtilties of faith: and thus I teach my haggard and unreclaimed reason to stoope unto the lure of faith. I believe there was already a tree whose fruit our unhappy parents tasted, though in the same chapter, when God forbids it, 'tis positively said, the plants of the field were not yet growne; for God had not caused it to raine upon the earth.⁷⁷ I beleeeve that the serpent (if we shall literally understand it) from his proper forme and figure, made his motion on his belly before the curse.⁷⁸ I find the triall of the pucelage and virginity of women, which God ordained the Jewes, is very fallible.⁷⁹ Experience, and history informes me, that not onely many particular women, but likewise whole nations have escaped the curse of childbirth, which God seemes to pronounce upon the whole sex; yet doe I beleeeve that all this is true, which indeed my reason would perswade me to be false;⁸⁰ and this I think is no vulgar part of faith to believe a thing not only above, but contrary to reason, and against the arguments of our proper senses.

SECTION II

In my solitary and retired imagination, (*neque enim cum porticus aut me lectulus accepit, desum mihi*) I remember I am not alone, and therefore forget not to contemplate him and his attributes who is ever with mee, especially those two mighty ones, his wisdom and eternitie;⁸¹ with the one I recreate, with the other I confound my understanding: for who can speake of eternitie without a solecisme, or thinke thereof without an extasie?⁸² Time we may comprehend, 'tis but five days elder then our selves, and hath the same horoscope with the world;⁸³ but to retire so farre backe as to apprehend a beginning, to give such an infinite start forward, as to conceive an end in an essence that we affirme hath neither the one nor the other; it puts my reason to Saint Pauls sanctuary;⁸⁴ my philosophy

dares not say the angells can doe it; God hath not made a creature that can comprehend him, 'tis the priviledge of his owne nature; *I am that I am*, was his owne definition unto Moses;⁸⁵ and 'twas a short one, to confound mortalitie, that durst question God, or aske him what hee was; indeed he only is, all others have and shall be, but in eternitie there is no distinction of tenses; and therefore that terrible terme *predes-tination*, which hath troubled so many weake heads to conceive, and the wisest to explaine, is in respect to God no prescious determination of our estates to come, but a definitive blast of his will already fulfilled, and at the instant that he first decreed it; for to his eternitie which is indivisible, and altogether, the last trumpe is already sounded, the reprobates in the flame, and the blessed in Abrahams bosome. Saint Peter speakes modestly, when hee saith, a thousand yeares to God are but as one day;⁸⁶ for to speake like a philosopher, those continued instances of time which flow into thousand yeares, make not to him one moment; what to us is to come, to his eternitie is present, his whole duration being but one permanent point without succession, parts, flux, or division.

SECTION 12

There is no attribute that adds more difficulty to the mystery of the Trinity, where though in a relative way of Father and Son, we must deny a priority.⁸⁷ I wonder how Aristotle could conceive the world eternall, or how hee could make good two eternities:⁸⁸ his similitude of a triangle, comprehended in a square, doth somewhat illustrate the Trinity of our soules, and that the triple unity of God;⁸⁹ for there is in us not three, but a Trinity of soules, because there is in us, if not three distinct soules, yet differing faculties, that can, and doe subsist apart in different subjects, and yet in us are so united as to make but one soule and substance;⁹⁰ if one soule were so perfect as to informe three distinct bodies, that were a petty Trinity: conceive the distinct number of three, not divided nor separated by the intellect, but actually comprehended in its unity, and that is a perfect Trinity. I have often admired the mysticall way of Pythagoras, and the secret magicke of numbers;⁹¹ beware of philosophy, is a precept not to be received in too large a sense;⁹² for in this masse of nature there is a set of things that carry in their front, though not in capitall letters, yet in

stenography,⁹³ and short characters, something of divinitie, which to wiser reasons serve as luminaries in the abysses of knowledge,⁹⁴ and to judicious beliefes, as scales and roundles to mount the pinnacles and highest pieces of divinity. The severe schooles shall never laugh me out of the philosophy of Hermes, that this visible world is but a picture of the invisible, wherein as in a pourtract, things are not truely, but in equivocal shapes; and as they counterfeit some more reall substance in that invisible fabrick.⁹⁵

SECTION 13

That other attribute wherewith I recreate my devotion, is his wisdom, in which I am happy; and for the contemplation of this onely, do not repent me that I was bred in the way of study: The advantage I have of the vulgar, with the content and happinesse I conceive therein, is an ample recompence for all my endeavours, in what part of knowledg soever. Wisdom is his most beauteous attribute, no man can attaine unto it, yet Solomon pleased God when hee desired it.⁹⁶ Hee is wise because hee knowes all things, and hee knoweth all things because he made them all, but his greatest knowledg is in comprehending that he made not, that is himselfe. And this is also the greatest knowledge in man. For this do I honour my own profession and embrace the counsell even of the Devill himselfe: had he read such a lecture in paradise as hee did at Delphos, we had better knowne our selves, nor had we stood in feare to know him.*⁹⁷ I know he is wise in all, wonderfull in what we conceive, but far more in what we comprehend not, for we behold him but asquint upon reflex or shadow; our understanding is dimmer than Moses' eye, we are ignorant of the backparts, or lower side of his divinity;⁹⁸ therefore to pry into the maze of his counsels, is not onely folly in man, but presumption even in angels;⁹⁹ like us, they are his servants, not his senators; he holds no Councell, but that mysticall one of the Trinity, wherein though there be three persons, there is but one minde that decrees, without contradiction; nor needs he any, his actions are not begot with deliberation, his wisdom naturally knowes what's best; his intellect stands ready fraught with the superlative and purest Ideas of goodnesse; consultation and election, which are two motions in us, make but one in him; his actions springing from his power, at the first touch

* γνώθι σεαυτόν,
nosce teipsum.

of his will. These are contemplations metaphysicall, my humble speculations have another method, and are content to trace and discover those expressions hee hath left in his creatures, and the obvious effects of nature;¹⁰⁰ there is no danger to profound these mysteries, no *sanctum sanctorum* in philosophy:¹⁰¹ the world was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man: 'tis the debt of our reason we owe unto God, and the homage we pay for not being beasts; without this the world is still as though it had not been, or as it was before the sixth day when as yet there was not a creature that could conceive, or say there was a world. The wisdom of God receives small honour from those vulgar heads, that rudely stare about, and with a grosse rusticity admire his workes; those highly magnifie him whose judicious enquiry into his acts, and deliberate research into his creatures, returne the duty of a devout and learned admiration.

Therefore,¹⁰²

*Search while thou wilt, and let thy reason goe
To ransome truth even to the abyse below.
Rally the scattered causes, and that line
Which nature twists, be able to untwine.¹⁰³
It is thy makers will, for unto none
But unto reason can he ere be knowne.
The devills doe know thee, but those damned meteours
Build not thy glory, but confound thy creatures.
Teach my endeavours so thy workes to read,
That learning them, in thee I may proceed.
Give thou my reason that instructive flight,
Whose weary wings may on thy hands still light.
Teach me to soare aloft, yet ever so,
When neare the sunne, to stoope againe below.¹⁰⁴
Thus shall my humble feathers safely hover,
And though neere earth, more then the Heavens discover.
And then at last, when homeward I shall drive
Rich with the spoyles of nature to my hive,
There will I sit, like that industrious flye,
Buzzing thy praises, which shall never die
Till death abrupts them, and succeeding glory
Bid me goe on in a more lasting story.*

And this is almost all wherein an humble creature may endeavour to requite, and someway to retribute unto his creator; for if not he that sayeth *Lord, Lord; but he that doth the will of the*

Father shall be saved;¹⁰⁵ certainly our wills must be our performances, and our intents make out our actions; otherwise our pious labours shall finde anxiety in their graves, and our best endeavours not hope, but feare a resurrection.

SECTION 14

There is but one first cause, and foure second causes of all things; some are without efficient, as God, others without matter, as angels, some without forme, as the first matter, but every essence, created or uncreated, hath its finall cause, and some positive end both of its essence and operation;¹⁰⁶ this is the cause I grope after in the workes of nature, on this hangs the providence of God; to raise so beauteous a structure, as the world and the creatures thereof, was but his art, but their sundry and divided operations with their predestinated ends, are from the treasury of his wisdom. In the causes, nature, and affections of the eclipse of sunne and moone, there is most excellent speculation; but to profound farther,¹⁰⁷ and to contemplate a reason why his providence hath so disposed and ordered their motions in that vast circle, as to conjoyne and obscure each other, is a sweeter piece of reason, and a diviner point of philosophy; therefore sometimes, and in some things there appears to mee as much divinity in Galen his books *De usu partium*, as in Suarez' *Metaphysicks*:¹⁰⁸ had Aristotle beene as curious in the enquiry of this cause as he was of the other, hee had not left behinde him an imperfect piece of philosophy, but an absolute tract of divinity.

SECTION 15

Natura nihil agit frustra, is the onely indisputable axiome in philosophy;¹⁰⁹ there are no grotesques in nature; nor any thing framed to fill up empty cantons, and unnecessary spaces; in the most imperfect creatures, and such as were not preserved in the Arke, but having their seeds and principles in the wombe of nature, are every-where where the power of the sun is;¹¹⁰ in these is the wisdom of his hand discovered: out of this ranke Solomon chose the object of his admiration, indeed what reason may not goe to schoole to the wisdom of bees, ants, and spiders?¹¹¹ What wise hand teacheth them to doe what

reason cannot teach us? Ruder heads stand amazed at those prodigious pieces of nature, whales, elephants, dromidaries, and camels; these I confesse, are the Colossus and majestick pieces of her hand; but in these narrow engines there is more curious mathematicks, and the civilitie of these little citizens more neatly set forth the wisdom of their Maker;¹¹² who admires not *Regio-Montanus* his fly beyond his eagle, or wonders not more at the operation of two soules in those little bodies, than but one in the trunk of a cedar?¹¹³ I could never content my contemplation with those generall pieces of wonders, the flux and reflux of the sea, the encrease of Nile, the conversion of the needle to the north,¹¹⁴ and have studied to match and parallel those in the more obvious and neglected pieces of nature, which without further travell I can doe in the cosmography of my selfe;¹¹⁵ we carry with us the wonders, we seeke without us: there is all Africa, and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies, wisely learns in a compendium, what others labour at in a divided piece and endless volume.¹¹⁶

SECTION 16

Thus there are two bookes from whence I collect my divinity; besides that written one of God, another of his servant nature, that universall and publik manuscript, that lies expans'd unto the eyes of all;¹¹⁷ those that never saw him in the one, have discovered him in the other: this was the Scripture and theology of the heathens; the naturall motion of the sun made them more admire him, than its supernaturall station did the children of Israel;¹¹⁸ the ordinary effect of nature wrought more admiration in them, than in the other all his miracles; surely the heathens knew better how to joyne and reade these mysticall letters, than we Christians, who cast a more carelesse eye on these common hieroglyphicks, and disdain to suck divinity from the flowers of nature.¹¹⁹ Nor do I so forget God, as to adore the name of nature; which I define not with the schooles, the principle of motion and rest, but, that streight and regular line, that settled and constant course the wisdom of God hath ordained the actions of his creatures, according to their severall kinds.¹²⁰ To make a revolution every day is the nature of the sun, because that necessary course which God hath ordained it, from which it cannot swerve, but by a faculty

from that voyce which first did give it motion. Now this course of nature God seldom, alters or perverts, but like an excellent artist hath so contrived his worke, that with the selfe same instrument, without a new creation hee may effect his obscurest designs. Thus he sweetneth the water with a wood, preserveth the creatures in the Arke, which the blast of his mouth might have as easily created:¹²¹ for God is like a skillful geometrician, who when more easily, and with one stroke of his compasse, he might describe, or divide a right line, had yet rather doe this in a circle or longer way, according to the constituted and forelaid principles of his art:¹²² yet this rule of his hee doth sometimes pervert, to acquaint the world with his prerogative, lest the arrogancy of our reason should question his power, and conclude he could not; and thus I call the effects of nature the works of God, whose hand and instrument she only is; and therefore to ascribe his actions unto her, is to devolve the honor of the principall agent, upon the instrument;¹²³ which if with reason we may doe, then let our hammers rise up and boast they have built our houses, and our pens receive the honour of our writings. I hold there is a generall beauty in the works of God, and therefore no deformity in any kind or species of creature whatsoever: I cannot tell by what logick we call a toad, a beare, or an elephant, ugly, they being created in those outward shapes and figures which best expresse the actions of their inward formes.¹²⁴ And having past that generall visitation of God,¹²⁵ who saw that all that he had made was good, that is, conformable to his will, which abhors deformity, and is the rule of order and beauty; there is no deformity but in monstrosity, wherein notwithstanding there is a kind of beauty, nature so ingeniously contriving the irregular parts, as they become sometimes more remarkable than the principall fabrick.¹²⁶ To speake yet more narrowly, there was never any thing ugly, or misshapen, but the chaos;¹²⁷ wherein notwithstanding to speake strictly, there was no deformity, because no forme, nor was it yet impregnate by the voyce of God: now nature is not at variance with art, nor art with nature; they being both the servants of his providence: art is the perfection of nature: were the world now as it was the sixt day, there were yet a chaos: nature hath made one world, and art another.¹²⁸ In briefe, all things are artificiall, for nature is the art of God.

SECTION 17

This is the ordinary and open way of his providence, which art and industry have in a good part discovered, whose effects we may foretell without an oracle; to foreshew these is not prophesie, but prognostication. There is another way full of meanders and labyrinths, whereof the Devill and spirits have no exact Ephemerides, and that is a more particular and obscure method of his providence, directing the operations of individualls and single essences;¹²⁹ this we call Fortune, that serpentine and crooked line, whereby he drawes those actions his wisdom intends in a more unknowne and secret way; this cryptick and involved method of his providence have I ever admired, nor can I relate the history of my life, the occurrences of my dayes, the escapes of dangers, and hits of chance with a *Bezo las Manos*, to fortune, or a bare Gramercy to my good starres:¹³⁰ Abraham might have thought the ram in the thicket came thither by accident; humane reason would have said that meere chance conveyed Moses in the Arke to the sight of Pharaohs daughter; what a labyrinth is there in the story of Joseph, able to convert a Stoick?¹³¹ Surely there are in every mans life certaine rubs, doublings, and wrenches which passe a while under the effects of chance, but at the last, well examined, prove the meere hand of God.¹³² 'twas not dumbe chance, that to discover the Fougade or Powder Plot, contrived a miscarriage in the letter.¹³³ I like the victory of 88. the better for that one occurrence which our enemies imputed to our dishonour, and the partiality of Fortune, to wit, the tempests, and contrarietie of winds.¹³⁴ King Philip did not detract from the nation, when he said, he sent his Armado to fight with men, and not to combate with the winds. Where there is a manifest disproportion between the powers and forces of two severall agents, upon a maxime of reason we may promise the victory to the superiour; but when unexpected accidents slip in, and unthought of occurrences intervene, these must proceed from a power that owes no obedience to those axioms: where, as in the writing upon the wall, we behold the hand, but see not the spring that moves it.¹³⁵ The successe of that pety Province of Holland (of which the Grand Seignieur proudly said, that if they should trouble him as they did the Spaniard, hee would send his men with shovels and pick-axes and throw it into the sea) I cannot altogether ascribe to the ingenuity and industry of the people, but to the mercy of God, that hath disposed them to

such a thriving genius; and to the will of his providence, that disposeth her favour to each countrey in their preordinate season.¹³⁶ All cannot be happy at once, for because the glory of one state depends upon the ruine of another, there is a revolution and vicissitude of their greatnesse, and must obey the swing of that wheele, not moved by intelligences, but by the hand of God, whereby all estates arise to their zenith and verticall points, according to their predestinated periods. For the lives not onely of men, but of commonweales, and the whole world, run not upon an helix that still enlargeth, but on a circle, where arriving to their meridian, they decline in obscurity, and fall under the horizon againe.¹³⁷

SECTION 18

These must not therefore bee named the effects of fortune, but in a relative way, and as we terme the workes of nature. It was the ignorance of mans reason that begat this very name, and by a carelesse terme miscalled the providence of God: for there is no liberty for causes to operate in a loose and stragling way, nor any effect whatsoever, but hath its warrant from some universall or superiour cause. 'Tis not a ridiculous devotion, to say a prayer before a game at tables; for even in sortilegies and matters of greatest uncertainty, there is a setled and preordered course of effects;¹³⁸ 'tis we that are blind, not fortune: because our eye is too dim to discover the mystery of her effects, we foolishly paint her blind, and hoodwink the providence of the Almighty.¹³⁹ I cannot justifie that contemptible proverb, *that fooles onely are fortunate*; or that insolent paradox, *that a wise man is out of the reach of fortune*; much lesse those opprobrious epithets of poets, *whore*, *baud*, and *strumpet*.¹⁴⁰ 'tis I confesse the common fate of men of singular gifts of mind, to be destitute of those of fortune; which doth not any way deject the spirit of wiser judgements, who thoroughly understand the justice of this proceeding; and being enriched with higher donatives, cast a more carelesse eye on these vulgar parts of felicity. 'Tis a most unjust ambition, to desire to engrosse the mercies of the Almighty, nor to be content with the goods of mind, without a possession of those of body or fortune: and 'tis an errour worse than heresie, to adore these complementall and circumstantiall pieces of felicity, and undervalue those perfections and essentiall points of happinesse, wherein we resemble

our Maker. To wiser desires 'tis satisfaction enough to deserve, though not to enjoy the favours of fortune; let providence provide for fooles: 'tis not partiality, but equity in God, who deales with us but as our naturall parents; those that are able of body and mind, he leaves to their deserts; to those of weaker merits hee imparts a larger portion, and pieces out the defect of one by the excesse of the other. Thus have wee no just quarrell with nature, for leaving us naked, or to envie the hornes, hoofs, skins, and furs of other creatures, being provided with reason, that can supply them all. Wee need not labour with so many arguments to confute judicall astrology;¹⁴¹ for if there be a truth therein, it doth not injure divinity; if to be born under Mercury disposeth us to be witty, under Jupiter to be wealthy, I doe not owe a knee unto these, but unto that mercifull hand that hath ordered my indifferent and uncertaine nativity unto such benevolous aspects. Those that hold that all things were governed by fortune had not erred, had they not persisted there: the Romans that erected a temple to Fortune, acknowledged therein, though in a blinder way, somewhat of divinity; for in a wise supputation all things begin and end in the Almighty.¹⁴² There is a neerer way to heaven than Homers chaine;¹⁴³ an easie logick may conjoyne heaven and earth in one argument, and with lesse than a sorites resolve all things into God.¹⁴⁴ For though we christen effects by their most sensible and nearest causes, yet is God the true and infallible cause of all, whose concurrence though it be generall, yet doth it subdivide it selfe into the particular actions of every thing, and is that spirit, by which each singular essence not onely subsists, but performs its operation.

SECTION 19

The bad construction and perverse comment on these paire of second causes, or visible hands of God, have perverted the devotion of many unto Atheisme;¹⁴⁵ who forgetting the honest advisees of faith, have listened unto the conspiracie of passion and reason.¹⁴⁶ I have therefore alwayes endeavoured to compose those fewds and angry dissensions between affection, faith, and reason: for there is in our soule a kind of Triumvirate, or triple government of three competitors, which distract the peace of this our common-wealth, not lesse than did that other the State of Rome.¹⁴⁷

As reason is a rebell unto faith, so passion unto reason: as the propositions of faith seeme absurd unto reason, so the theorems of reason unto passion, and both unto reason;¹⁴⁸ yet a moderate and peaceable discretion may so state and order the matter, that they may bee all Kings, and yet make but one monarchy, every one exercising his sovereignty and prerogative in a due time and place, according to the restraint and limit of circumstance. There is, as in philosophy, so in divinity, sturdy doubts, and boisterous objections, wherewith the unhappinesse of our knowledge too neerely acquainteth us. More of these no man hath knowne than my selfe, which I confesse I conquered, not in a martiall posture, but on my knees.¹⁴⁹ For our endeavours are not onely to combate with doubts, but alwayes to dispute with the Devill; the villany of that spirit takes a hint of infidelity from our studies, and by demonstrating a naturality in one way, makes us mistrust a miracle in another. Thus having perus'd the Archidoxis and read the secret sympathies of things, he would dissuade my beliefe from the miracle of the brazen serpent, make me conceit that image work'd by sympathie, and was but an Ægyptian tricke to cure their diseases without a miracle.¹⁵⁰ Againe, having seene some experiments of Bitumen, and having read farre more of Naptha, he whispered to my curiositie the fire of the altar might be naturall, and bid me mistrust a miracle in Elias when he entrench'd the altar round with water;¹⁵¹ for that inflammable substance yeelds not easily unto water, but flames in the armes of its antagonist: and thus would hee inveigle my beliefe to thinke the combustion of Sodom might be naturall, and that there was an asphaltick and bituminous nature in that lake before the fire of Gomorrha:¹⁵² I know that manna is now plentifully gathered in Calabria, and Josephus tels me in his dayes 'twas as plentifull in Arabia;¹⁵³ the Devill therefore made the quere, where was then the miracle in the dayes of Moses? the Israelites saw but that in his time, the natives of those countries behold in ours. Thus the Devill played at chesse with mee, and yeelding a pawne, thought to gaine a queen of me, taking advantage of my honest endeavours; and whilst I labour'd to raise the structure of my reason, hee striv'd to undermine the edifice of my faith.

SECTION 20

Neither had these or any other ever such advantage of me, as to encline me to any point of infidelity or desperate positions of

Atheisme; for I have beene these many yeares of opinion there was never any. Those that held religion was the difference of man from beasts, have spoken probably, and proceed upon a principle as inductive as the other:¹⁵⁴ that doctrine of Epicurus, that denied the providence of God, was no Atheism, but a magnificent and high-strained conceit of his Majesty, which hee deemed too sublime to minde the triviall actions of those inferiour creatures:¹⁵⁵ that fatall necessitie of the Stoickes, is nothing but the immutable Law of his will. Those that heretofore denied the divinitie of the holy Ghost, have been condemned but as heretickes;¹⁵⁶ and those that now deny our saviour (though more than hereticks) are not so much as Atheists: for though they deny two persons in the Trinity, they hold as we do, there is but one God.

That villain and secretary of Hell, that composed that miscreant piece of the three impostors, though divided from all religions, and was neither, Jew, Turk, nor Christian, was not a positive Atheist.¹⁵⁷ I confesse every countrey hath its Machiavell, every age its Lucian, whereof common heads must not heare, nor more advanced judgements too rashly venture on:¹⁵⁸ 'tis the rhetorick of Satan and may pervert a loose or prejudicate beleefe.

SECTION 21

I confesse I have perused them all, and can discover nothing that may startle a discreet beleefe: yet are there heads carried off with the wind and breath of such motives. I remember a doctor in physick of Italy, who could not perfectly believe the immortality of the soule, because Galen seemed to make a doubt thereof.¹⁵⁹ With another I was familiarly acquainted in France, a divine and man of singular parts, that on the same point was so plunged and gravelled with three lines of Seneca,¹⁶⁰ that all our antidotes, drawne from both Scripture and philosophy, could not expell the poyson of his error. There are a set of heads, that can credit the relations of mariners, yet question the testimonies of Saint Paul; and peremptorily maintaine the traditions of Ælian or Pliny, yet in histories of Scripture, raise queres and objections, beleev- ing no more than they can parallel in humane Authors.¹⁶¹

* Post mortem
nihil est, ipsa;
mors nihil. Mors
individua est
noxia corpori,
Nec patiens
animæ—Toti
morimur, nullaq;
pars manet
Nostri.

I confesse there are in Scripture stories that doe exceed the fable of poets, and to a captious reader sound like Gargantua or Bevis:¹⁶² search all the legends of times past, and the fabulous conceits of these present, and 'twill bee hard to find one that deserves to carry the buckler unto Sampson, yet is all this of an easie possibility, if we conceive a divine concourse or an influence but from the little finger of the Almighty.¹⁶³ It is impossible that either in the discourse of man, or in the infallible voyce of God, to the weakenesse of our apprehensions, there should not appeare irregularities, contradictions, and antinomies: my selfe could shew a catalogue of doubts, never yet imagined nor questioned, as I know, which are not resolved at the first hearing, not fantastick queres, or objections of ayre: for I cannot heare of atoms in divinity.¹⁶⁴ I can read the history of the pigeon that was sent out of the Ark, and returned no more, yet not question how shee found out her mate that was left behind: that Lazarus was raised from the dead, yet not demand where in the interim his soule awaited; or raise a law-case, whether his heire might lawfully detaine his inheritance, bequeathed unto him by his death; and he, though restored to life, have no plea or title unto his former possessions.¹⁶⁵ Whether Eve was framed out of the left side of Adam, I dispute not; because I stand not yet assured which is the right side of a man, or whether there be any such distinction in nature; that she was edified out of the ribbe of Adam I believe, yet raise no question who shall arise with that ribbe at the Resurrection.¹⁶⁶ Whether Adam was an hermaphrodite, as the Rab-bines contend upon the letter of the text;¹⁶⁷ because it is contrary to reason, there should bee an hermaphrodite before there was a woman, or a composition of two natures, before there was a second composed. Likewise, whether the world was created in Autumne, Summer, or the Spring; because it was created in them all; for whatsoever signe the sun possesseth, those foure seasons are actually existent: it is the nature of this luminary to distinguish the severall seasons of the yeare, all which it makes at one time in the whole earth, and successive in any part thereof.¹⁶⁸ There are a bundle of curiosities, not onely in philosophy but in divinity, proposed and discussed by men of most supposed abilities, which indeed are not worthy our vacant houres, much lesse our serious studies; pieces onely fit to be placed in Pantagruels library*, or bound up with *Tartaretus de modo Cacandi*.¹⁶⁹

* In Rabelais.

SECTION 22

These are niceties that become not those that peruse so serious a mystery. There are others more generally questioned and called to the barre, yet me thinkes of an easie, and possible truth. 'Tis ridiculous to put off, or drowne the generall flood of Noah in that particular inundation of Deucalion: that there was a deluge once, seemes not to mee so great a miracle, as that there is not one alwayes.¹⁷⁰ How all the kinds of creatures, not only in their owne bulks, but with a competency of food and sustenance, might be preserved in one Arke, and within the extent of three hundred cubits, to a reason that rightly examines it, will appeare very foesible.¹⁷¹ There is another secret, not contained in the Scripture, which is more hard to comprehend, and put the honest Father to the refuge of a miracle;¹⁷² and that is, not onely how the distinct pieces of the world, and divided ilands should bee first planted by men, but inhabited by tygers, panthers and beares. How America abounded with beasts of prey, and noxious animals, yet contained not in it that necessary creature, a horse, is very strange. By what passage those, not onely birds, but dangerous and unwelcome beasts came over: How there bee creatures there, which are not found in this triple continent;¹⁷³ all which must needs bee strange unto us, that hold but one Arke, and that the creatures began their progresse from the mountaines of Ararat.¹⁷⁴ They who to salve this would make the deluge particular, proceed upon a principle that I can no way grant;¹⁷⁵ not onely upon the negative of holy Scriptures, but of mine owne reason, whereby I can make it probable, that the world was as well peopled in the time of Noah as in ours, and fifteene hundred yeares to people the world, as full a time for them as foure thousand yeares since have beene to us. There are other assertions and common tenents drawn from Scripture, and generally beleaved as Scripture; whereunto, notwithstanding, I would never betray the libertie of my reason. 'Tis a paradoxe¹⁷⁶ to me, that Methusalem was the longest liv'd of all the children of Adam, and no man will bee able to prove it; when from the processe of the text I can manifest it may be otherwise.¹⁷⁷ That Judas perished by hanging himself, there is no certainty in Scripture, though in one place it seemes to affirme it, and by a doubtfull word hath given occasion to translate it; yet in another place, in a more punctuall description, it makes it improbable, and seemes to overthrow it.¹⁷⁸ That our fathers,

after the flood, erected the tower of Babell, to preserve themselves against a second deluge, is generally opinioned and beleevd; yet is there another intention of theirs expressed in Scripture: besides, it is improbable from the circumstance of the place, that is, a plaine in the land of Shinar.¹⁷⁹ These are no points of faith, and therefore may admit a free dispute. There are yet others, and those familiarly concluded from the text, wherein (under favour) I see no consequence.¹⁸⁰ The Church of Rome confidently proves the opinion of tutelary angels, from that answer when Peter knockt at the doore, *'tis not he but his angel*;¹⁸¹ that is, might some say, his messenger, or some body from him; for so the originall signifies, and is as likely to be the doubtfull families meaning. This exposition I once suggested to a young divine, that answered upon this point, to which I remember the Franciscan opponent replied no more, but, that it was a new and no authentick interpretation.

SECTION 23

These are but the conclusions, and fallible discourses of man upon the word of God, for such I doe beleve the holy Scriptures; yet were it of man, I could not choose but say, it was the singularest, and superlative piece that hath been extant since the creation; were I a Pagan, I should not refraine the lecture of it; and cannot but commend the judgement of Ptolomy, that thought not his library compleate without it:¹⁸² the Alcoran of the Turks¹⁸³ (I speake without prejudice) is an ill composed piece, containing in it vaine and ridiculous errours in philosophy,¹⁸⁴ impossibilities, fictions, and vanities beyond laughter, maintained by evident and open sophismes, the policy of ignorance, deposition of Universities, and banishment of learning, that hath gotten foot by armes and violence; this without a blow hath disseminated it selfe through the whole earth. It is not unremarkable what Philo first observed, That the law of Moses continued two thousand yeares without the least alteration;¹⁸⁵ whereas, we see, the lawes of other commonweales doe alter with occasions; and even those that pretended their originall from some Divinity, to have vanished without trace or memory. I beleve, besides Zoroaster, there were divers that writ before Moses, who notwithstanding have suffered the common fate of time.¹⁸⁶ Mens workes

have an age like themselves; and though they out-live their authors, yet have they a stint and period to their duration: this onely is a worke too hard for the teeth of time, and cannot perish but in the generall flames, when all things shall confesse their ashes.¹⁸⁷

SECTION 24

I have heard some with deepe sighs lament the lost lines of Cicero; others with as many groanes deplore the combustion of the library of Alexandria;¹⁸⁸ for my owne part, I thinke there be too many in the world, and could with patience behold the urne and ashes of the Vatican, could I with a few others recover the perished leaves of Solomon.¹⁸⁹ I would not omit a copy of Enochs pillars, had they many neerer authors than Josephus, or did not relish somewhat of the fable.¹⁹⁰ Some men have written more than others have spoken; Pineda * quotes more authors in one work, than are necessary in a whole world. Of those three great inventions in Germany, there are two which are not without their incommodities, and 'tis disputable whether they exceed not their use and commodities.¹⁹¹ 'Tis not a melancholy *ulinam* of mine owne, but the desires of better heads, that there were a generall Synod;¹⁹² not to unite the incompatible difference of religion, but for the benefit of learning, to reduce it as it lay at first in a few and solid authours; and to condemne to the fire those swarms and millions of rhapsodies, begotten onely to distract and abuse the weaker judgements of scholars, and to maintaine the trade and mystery of typographers.

* Pineda in his *Monarchia Ecclesiastica* quotes one thousand and forty Authors.

SECTION 25

I cannot but wonder with what exceptions the Samaritanes could confine their beliefe to the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses.¹⁹³ I am ashamed at the rabbinicall Interpretation of the Jews, upon the Old Testament, as much as their defection from the New:¹⁹⁴ and truly it is beyond wonder, how that contemptible and degenerate issue of Jacob, once so devoted to ethnick superstition,¹⁹⁵ and so easily seduced to the idolatry of their neighbours, should now in such an obstinate and peremptory beliefe, adhere unto their owne doctrine, expect

impossibilities, and in the face and eye of the Church persist without the least hope of conversion: this is a vice in them, that were a vertue in us; for obstinacy in a bad cause, is but constancy in a good. And herein I must accuse those of my own religion; for there is not any of such a fugitive faith, such an unstable belief, as a Christian; none that do so oft transforme themselves, not unto severall shapes of Christianity and of the same species, but unto more unnaturall and contrary formes, of Jew and Mahometan, that from the name of Saviour can condescend to the bare terme of Prophet; and from an old belief that he is come, fall to a new expectation of his coming: it is the promise of Christ to make us all one flock;¹⁹⁶ but how and when this union shall be, is as obscure to me as the last day. Of those foure members of religion we hold a slender proportion;¹⁹⁷ there are I confesse some new additions, yet small to those which accrew to our adversaries, and those onely drawne from the revolt of Pagans, men but of negative impieties, and such as deny Christ, but because they never heard of him: but the religion of the Jew is expressly against the Christian, and the Mahometan against both; for the Turke, in the bulke hee now stands, he is beyond all hope of conversion; if hee fall asunder there may be conceived hopes, but not without strong improbabilities. The Jew is obstinate in all fortunes; the persecution of fiftene hundred yeares hath but confirmed them in their errour: they have already endured whatsoever may be inflicted, and have suffered, in a bad cause, even to the condemnation of their enemies.¹⁹⁸ Persecution is a bad and indirect way to plant religion; it hath beene the unhappy method of angry devotions, not onely to confirme honest religion, but wicked heresies, and extravagant opinions. It was the first stone and basis of our faith, none can more justly boast of persecutions, and glory in the number and valour of martyrs; for, to speake properly, those are true and almost onely examples of fortitude: those that are fetch'd from the field, or drawne from the actions of the campe, are not oft-times so truly precedents of valour as audacity, and at the best attaine but to some bastard piece of fortitude: if we shall strictly examine the circumstances and requisites which Aristotle requires to true and perfect valour, we shall finde the name onely in his master Alexander, and as little in that Romane worthy, Julius Cæsar;¹⁹⁹ and if any, in that easie and active way, have done so nobly as to deserve that name,²⁰⁰ yet in the passive and more terrible piece these have surpassed, and in a

more heroicall way may claime the honour of that title. 'Tis not in the power of every honest faith to proceed thus farre, or passe to Heaven through the flames; every one hath it not in that full measure, nor in so audacious and resolute a temper, as to endure those terrible tests and trialls, who notwithstanding in a peaceable way doe truly adore their saviour, and have (no doubt) a faith acceptable in the eyes of God.

SECTION 26

Now as all that die in warre are not termed souldiers, so neither can I properly terme all those that suffer in matters of religion martyrs. The Councell of Constance condemnes John Husse for an heretick, the stories of his owne party stile him a martyr;²⁰¹ he must needs offend the divinity of both, that sayes hee was neither the one nor the other: there are many (questionlesse) canonized on earth, that shall never be saints in Heaven; and have their names in Histories and Martyrologies, who in the eyes of God, are not so perfect martyrs as was that wise heathen Socrates, that suffered on a fundamentall point of religion, the unity of God.²⁰² I have often pitied the miserable bishop that suffered in the cause of Antipodes, yet cannot choose but accuse him of as much madnesse, for exposing his living on such a trifle, as those of ignorance and folly that condemned him.²⁰³ I think my conscience will not give me the lie, if I say, there are not many extant that in a noble way feare the face of death lesse than my selfe, yet from the morall duty I owe to the Commandement of God, and the naturall respects that I tender unto the conservation of my essence and being, I would not perish upon a ceremony, politick points, or indifferency;²⁰⁴ nor is my beleefe of that untractable temper, as not to bow at their obstacles, or connive at matters wherein there are not manifest impieties: the leaven therefore and ferment of all, not onely civill, but religious actions, is wisdom; without which, to commit our selves to the flames is homicide, and (I feare) but to passe through one fire into another.

SECTION 27

That miracles are ceased, I can neither prove, nor absolutely deny, much lesse define the time and period of their

cessation;²⁰⁵ that they survived Christ, is manifest upon record of Scripture; that they out-lived the Apostles also, and were revived at the conversion of nations, many yeares after, we cannot deny, if we shall not question those writers whose testimonies we doe not controvert, in points that make for our owne opinions; therefore that may have some truth in it that is reported by the Jesuites of their miracles in the Indies,²⁰⁶ I could wish it were true, or had any other testimony then their owne pennes: they may easily beleieve those miracles abroad, who daily conceive a greater at home; the transmutation of those visible elements into the body and blood of our Saviour:²⁰⁷ for the conversion of water into wine, which he wrought in Cana, or what the Devill would have had him done in the wilderness, of stones into bread, compared to this, will scarce deserve the name of a miracle:²⁰⁸ though indeed, to speake properly, there is not one miracle greater than another, they being the extraordinary effect of the hand of God, to which all things are of an equall facility; and to create the world as easie as one single creature. For this is also a miracle, not onely to produce effects against, or above nature, but before nature; and to create nature as great a miracle, as to contradict or transcend her. Wee doe too narrowly define the power of God, restraining it to our capacities. I hold that God can doe all things, how he should work contradictions I do not understand, yet dare not therefore deny.²⁰⁹ I cannot see why the angel of God should question Esdras to recall the time past, if it were beyond his owne power;²¹⁰ or that God should pose mortalitie in that, which hee was not able to performe himselfe. I will not say God cannot, but hee will not performe many things, which we plainly affirme he cannot: this I am sure is the mannerliest proposition, wherein notwithstanding I hold no paradox. For strictly his power is the same with his will, and they both with all the rest doe make but one God.

SECTION 28²¹¹

Therefore that miracles have beene I doe beleieve, that they may yet bee wrought by the living I doe not deny: but have no confidence in those which are fathered on the dead; and this hath ever made me suspect the efficacy of reliques, to examine the bones, question the habits and appertinencies of saints, and even of Christ himselfe:²¹² I cannot conceive why the crosse that

Helena found and whereon Christ himself died should have power to restore others unto life; I excuse not Constantine from a fall off his horse, or a mischiefe from his enemies, upon the wearing those nayles on his bridle which our Saviour bore upon the crosse in his hands:²¹³ I compute among your *pice fraudes*, nor many degrees before consecrated swords and roses, that which Baldwin King of Jerusalem return'd the Genovese for their cost and paines in his warre, to wit the ashes of John the Baptist.²¹⁴ Those that hold the sanctitie of their soules doth leave behind a tincture and sacred facultie on their bodies, speake naturally of miracles, and doe not salve the doubt. Now one reason I tender so little devotion unto reliques is, I think, the slender and doubtfull respect I have alwayes held unto antiquities: for that indeed which I admire is farre before antiquity, that is eternity, and that is God himselfe; who though hee be stiled the Antient of dayes, cannot receive the adjunct of antiquity, who was before the world, and shall be after it, yet is not older then it:²¹⁵ for in his yeares there is no climacter,²¹⁶ his duration is eternity, and farre more venerable then antiquitie.

SECTION 29

But above all things, I wonder how the curiositie of wiser heads could passe that great and indisputable miracle, the cessation of oracles:²¹⁷ and in what swoun their reasons lay, to content themselves and sit downe with such far-fetch't and ridiculous reasons as Plutarch alleadgeth for it.²¹⁸ The Jewes that can beleieve the supernaturall solstice of the sunne in the dayes of Joshua, have yet the impudence to deny the eclipse, which every Pagan confessed at his death: but for this, it is evident beyond all contradiction, the Devill himselfe confessed it.*²¹⁹ Certainly it is not a warrantable curiosity, to examine the verity of Scripture by the concordance of humane history, or seek to confirme the chronicle of Hester or Daniel, by the authority of Magasthenes or Herodotus.²²⁰ I confesse I have had an unhappy curiosity this way, till I laughed my selfe out of it with a piece of Justine, where hee delivers that the children of Israel for being scabbed were banished out of Egypt.²²¹ And truely since I have understood the occurrences of the world, and know in what counterfeit shapes and deceitfull vizzards time represents on the stage things past;²²² I doe beleieve them little more than things to come. Some have beene of my opinion, and endeavoured to write

* In his oracle
to Augustus.

the history of their own lives; wherein Moses hath outgone them all, and left not onely the story of his life, but as some will have it of his death also.²²³

SECTION 30

It is a riddle to me, how this story of oracles hath not worm'd out of the world that doubtfull conceit of spirits and witches;²²⁴ how so many learned heads should so farre forget their metaphysicks, and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of spirits.²²⁵ for my part, I have ever beleeeved, and doe now know, that there are witches; they that doubt of these, doe not onely deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence a sort, not of infidels, but Atheists.²²⁶ Those that to confute their incredulity desire to see apparitions, shall questionlesse never behold any, nor have the power to be so much as witches; the Devill hath them already in a heresie as capitall as witchcraft, and to appeare to them, were but to convert them: of all the delusions wherewith he deceives mortalitie, there is not any that puzzleth mee more than the legerdemain of changelings;²²⁷ I doe not credit those transformations of reasonable creatures into beasts, or that the Devill hath a power to transpeciate a man into a horse, who tempted Christ (as a trial of his divinitie) to convert but stones into bread.²²⁸ I could beleeeve that spirits use with man the act of carnality, and that in both sexes; I conceive they may assume, steale, or contrive a body, wherein there may be action enough to content decrepit lust, or passion to satisfie more active veneries; yet in both, without a possibility of generation: and therefore that opinion, that Antichrist should be borne of the tribe of Dan by conjunction with the Devill, is ridiculous, and a conceit fitter for a Rabbin than a Christian.²²⁹ I hold that the Devill doth really possesse some men, the spirit of melancholy others, the spirit of delusion others; that, as the Devill is concealed and denied by some, so God and good angels are pretended by others, whereof the late defection of the Maid of Germany hath left a pregnant example.²³⁰

SECTION 31

Againe, I beleeeve that all that use sorceries, incantations, and spells, are not witches, or as we terme them, magicians;

I conceive there is a traditionall magicke, not learned immediately from the Devill, but at second hand from his schollers; who having once the secret betrayed, are able, and doe empirically practice without his advice, they both proceeding upon the principles of nature: where actives aptly conjoynd to disposed passives, will under any master produce their effects.²³¹ Thus I thinke at first a great part of philosophy was witchcraft, which being afterward derived to one another, proved but philosophy, and was indeed no more but the honest effects of nature: what invented by us is philosophy, learned from him is magicke. Wee doe surely owe the discovery of many secrets to the discovery of good and bad angels. I could never passe that sentence of Paracelsus without an asterisk or annotation; *ascendens constellatum multa revelat; quærentibus magnalia naturæ*, i.e. *opera dei*.^{* 232} I doe thinke that many mysteries ascribed to our owne inventions, have beene the courteous revelations of spirits; for those noble essences in Heaven beare a friendly regard unto their fellow-natures on earth;²³³ and therefore beleeeve that those many prodigies and ominous prognostickes which fore-run the ruines of states, princes, and private persons, are the charitable premonitions of good angels, which more careless enquiries terme but the effects of chance and nature.

* Thereby is meant our good Angel appointed us from our nativity.

SECTION 32

Now besides these particular and divided spirits, there may be (for ought I know) an universall and common spirit to the whole world. It was the opinion of Plato, and it is yet of the hermeticall philosophers; if there be a common nature that unites and tyes the scattered and divided individuals into one species, why may there not bee one that unites them all?²³⁴ However, I am sure there is a common spirit that playes within us, yet makes no part of us, and that is the spirit of God, the fire and scintillation of that noble and mighty essence, which is the life and radicall heat of spirits, and those essences that know not the vertue of the sunne, a fire quite contrary to the fire of Hell:²³⁵ this is that gentle heate that brooded on the waters, and in six dayes hatched the world;²³⁶ this is that irradiation that dispells the mists of Hell, the clouds of hor- rour, feare, sorrow, despaire; and preserves the region of the mind in serenity: whosoever feels not the warme gale and

gentle ventilation of this spirit (though I feele his pulse) I dare not say he lives; for truly without this, to mee there is no heat under the tropick; nor any light, though I dwelt in the body of the sunne.

*As when the labouring Sun hath wrought his track,
Up to the top of lofty Cancers back,
The ycie ocean cracks, the frozen pole
Thames with the heat of the celestiall coale;
So when thy absent beames begin t'impart
Again a solstice on my frozen heart,
My winters ov'r, my drooping spirits sing,
And every part revives into a Spring.
But if thy quickning beames a while decline,
And with their light blesse not this orbe of mine,
A chilly frost surpriseth every member,
And in the midst of June I feele December.
O how this earthly temper doth debase
The noble soule, in this her humble place!
Whose wingy nature ever doth aspire,
To reach that place whence first it took its fire.
These flames I feele, which in my heart doe dwell,
Are not thy beames, but take their fire from Hell:
O quench them all, and let thy light divine
Be as the sunne to this poore orbe of mine.
And to thy sacred spirit convert those fires,
Whose earthly fumes choake my devout aspires.*

SECTION 33

Therefore for Spirits I am so farre from denying their existence, that I could easily beleeeve, that not onely whole countries, but particular persons have their tutelary, and guardian angels: It is not a new opinion of the Church of Rome, but an old one of Pythagoras and Plato;²³⁷ there is no heresie in it, and if not manifestly defin'd in Scripture,²³⁸ yet is it an opinion of a good and wholesome use in the course and actions of a mans life, and would serve as an hypothesis to salve many doubts, whereof common philosophy affordeth no solution:²³⁹ now if you demand my opinion and metaphysicks of their natures, I confesse them very shallow, most of them in a negative way, like that of God; or in a comparative, between our selves and fellow creatures; for there is in this universe a staire, or manifest

scale of creatures, rising not disorderly, or in confusion, but with a comely method and proportion: between creatures of meere existence and things of life, there is a large disproportion of nature; between plants and animals or creatures of sense, a wider difference; between them and man, a farre greater: and if the proportion hold on, between man and angels there should bee yet a greater.²⁴⁰ We doe not comprehend their natures, who retaine the first definition of Porphyry, and distinguish them from our selves by immortality;²⁴¹ for before his fall, man also was immortall; yet must we needs affirme that he had a different essence from the angels: having therefore no certaine knowledge of their natures, 'tis no bad method of the schooles, whatsoever perfection we finde obscurely in our selves, in a more compleate and absolute way to ascribe unto them.²⁴² I beleeeve they have an extemporary knowledge, and upon the first motion of their reason doe what we cannot without study or deliberation; that they know things by their formes, and define by specificall difference, what we describe by accidents and properties; and therefore probabilities to us may bee demonstrations unto them; that they have knowledge not onely of the specificall, but numericall formes of individualls, and understand by what reserved difference each single hypostasis (besides the relation to its species) becomes its numericall selfe.²⁴³ That as the soule hath a power to move the body it informes, so there's a faculty to move any, though informe none; ours upon restraint of time, place, and distance; but that invisible hand that conveyed Habakkuk to the lions den, or Philip to Azotus, infringeth this rule, and hath a secret conveyance, wherewith mortality is not acquainted;²⁴⁴ if they have that intuitive knowledge, whereby as in reflexion they behold the thoughts of one another, I cannot peremptorily deny but they know a great part of ours. They that to refute the invocation of saints, have denied that they have any knowledge of our affaires below, have proceeded too farre, and must pardon my opinion, till I can thoroughly answer that piece of Scripture, *at the conversion of a sinner the angels of Heaven rejoyce*.²⁴⁵ I cannot with those in that great Father securely interpret the worke of the first day, *fiat lux*, to the creation of angels,²⁴⁶ though (I confesse) there is not any creature that hath so neare a glympse of their nature, as light in the sunne and elements; we stile it a bare accident, but where it subsists alone, 'tis a spirituall substance, and may bee an angel: in briefe, conceive light invisible, and that is a spirit.²⁴⁷

SECTION 34

These are certainly the magisteriall and master pieces of the creator, the flower (or as we may say) the best part of nothing,²⁴⁸ actually existing, what we are but in hopes, and probability, we are onely that amphibious piece between a corporall and spirituall essence,²⁴⁹ that middle forme that linkes those two together, and makes good the method of God and nature, that jumps not from extreames, but unites the incompatible distances by some middle and participating natures; that we are the breath and similitude of God, it is indisputable, and upon record of holy Scripture,²⁵⁰ but to call our selves a microcosme, or little world, I thought it onely a pleasant trope of rhetorick, till my neare judgement and second thoughts told me there was a reall truth therein:²⁵¹ for first we are a rude masse, and in the ranke of creatures, which only are, and have a dull kinde of being not yet privileged with life, or preferred to sense or reason;²⁵² next we live the life of plants, the life of animals, the life of men, and at last the life of spirits, running on in one mysterious nature those five kinds of existences,²⁵³ which comprehend the creatures not onely of the world, but of the universe; thus is man that great and true *Amphibium*, whose nature is disposed to live not onely like other creatures in divers elements, but in divided and distinguished worlds; for though there bee but one to sense, there are two to reason; the one visible, the other invisible, whereof Moses seemes to have left no description,²⁵⁴ and of the other so obscurely, that some parts thereof are yet in controversie; and truly for the first chapters of Genesis, I must confesse a great deale of obscurity, though divines have to the power of humane reason endeavoured to make all goe in a literall meaning, yet those allegoricall interpretations are also probable, and perhaps the mysticall method of Moses bred up in the hieroglyphicall schooles of the Egyptians.²⁵⁵

SECTION 35

Now for that immateriall world, me thinkes we need not wander so farre as the first moveable,²⁵⁶ for even in this materiall fabricke the spirits walke as freely exempt from the affection of time, place, and motion, as beyond the extreamest circumference,²⁵⁷ doe but extract from the corpulency of

bodies,²⁵⁸ or resolve things beyond their first matter, and you discover the habitation of angels, which if I call the ubiquitary, and omnipresent essence of God, I hope I shall not offend divinity;²⁵⁹ for before the creation of the world God was really all things. For the angels hee created no new world, or determinate mansion, and therefore they are every where where is his essence, and doe live at a distance even in himselfe: that God made all things for man, is in some sense true, yet not so farre as to subordinate the creation of those purer creatures unto ours, though as ministring spirits they doe, and are willing to fulfill the will of God in these lower and sublunary affaires of man;²⁶⁰ God made all things for himself, and it is impossible hee should make them for any other end than his owne glory;²⁶¹ it is all he can receive, and all that is without himselfe; for honour being an externall adjunct, and in the honourer rather than in the person honoured, it was necessary to make a creature, from whom hee might receive this homage, and that is in the other world angels, in this, man; which when we neglect, we forget the very end of our creation, and may justly provoke God, not onely to repent that hee hath made the world, but that hee hath sworne hee would not destroy it.²⁶² That there is but one world, is a conclusion of faith. Aristotle with all his philosophy hath not beene able to prove it, and as weakely that the world was eternall;²⁶³ that dispute much troubled the penne of the antient philosophers,²⁶⁴ but Moses decided that question,²⁶⁵ and all is salved with the new terme of a creation, that is, a production of something out of nothing; and what is that? Whatsoever is opposite to something or more exactly, that which is truely contrary unto God: for he onely is, all others have an existence, with dependency and are something but by a distinction; and herein is divinity conformant unto philosophy, and generation not onely founded on contrarieties, but also creation; God being all things is contrary unto nothing out of which were made all things, and so nothing became something, and omneity informed nullity into an essence.²⁶⁶

SECTION 36²⁶⁷

The whole creation is a mystery, and particularly that of man, at the blast of his mouth were the rest of the creatures made,

and at his bare word they started out of nothing: but in the frame of man (as the text describes it) he played the sensible operator, and seemed not so much to create, as make him;²⁶⁸ when hee had separated the materials of other creatures, there consequently resulted a forme and soule, but having raised the wals of man, he was driven to a second and harder creation of a substance like himselfe, an incorruptible and immortall soule. For these two affections we have the philosophy, and opinion of the heathens, the flat affirmative of Plato, and not a negative from Aristotle:²⁶⁹ there is another scruple cast in by divinity (concerning its production) much disputed in the Germane auditories, and with that indifferency and equality of arguments, as leave the controversie undetermined.²⁷⁰ I am not of Paracelsus minde that boldly delivers a receipt to make a man without conjunction, yet cannot but wonder at the multitude of heads that doe deny traduction, having no other argument to confirme their beliefe, then that rhetoricall sentence, and antimetathesis of Augustine, *creando infunditur, infundendo creatur*:²⁷¹ either opinion will consist well enough with religion, yet I should rather incline to this, did not one objection haunt mee, not wrung from speculations and subtilties, but from common sense, and observation, not pickt from the leaves of any author, but bred amongst the weeds and tares of mine owne braine. And this is a conclusion from the equivocall and monstrous productions in the copulation of man with beast;²⁷² for if the soule of man bee not transmitted and transfused in the seed of the parents, why are not those productions meerely beasts, but have also an impression and tincture of reason in as high a measure as it can evidence it selfe in those improper organs?²⁷³ Nor truely can I peremptorily deny, that the soule in this her sublunary estate, is wholly and in all acceptions inorganically,²⁷⁴ but that for the performance of her ordinary actions, is required not onely a symmetry and proper disposition of organs, but a crasis and temper correspondent to its operations;²⁷⁵ yet is not this masse of flesh and visible structure the instrument and proper corps of the soule, but rather of sense, and that the hand of reason. In our study of anatomy there is a masse of mysterious philosophy, and such as reduced the very heathens to divinitie; yet amongst all those rare discoveries, and curious pieces I finde in the fabrick of man, I doe not so much content my selfe, as in that I finde not, that is no organe or instrument for the rationall soule; for in the braine, which we tearme the seate of reason, there is not

any thing of moment more than I can discover in the cranie of a beast:²⁷⁶ and this is a sensible and no inconsiderable argument of the inorganity of the soule, at least in that sense we usually so receive it. Thus we are men, and we know not how, there is something in us, that can be without us, and will be after us, though it is strange that it hath no history, what it was before us, nor cannot tell how it entred in us.

SECTION 37

Now for these wals of flesh, wherein the soule doth seeme to be immured before the resurrection, it is nothing but an elementall composition, and a fabricke that must fall to ashes; *all flesh is grasse*, is not onely metaphorically, but literally true, for all those creatures we behold, are but the hearbs of the field, digested into flesh in them, or more remotely carnified in our selves.²⁷⁷ Nay further, we are what we all abhorre, antropophagi and cannibals, devourers not onely of men, but of our selves;²⁷⁸ and that not in an allegory, but a positive truth; for all this masse of flesh which we behold, came in at our mouths: this frame we looke upon, hath beene upon our trenchers; in briefe, we have devoured our selves. I cannot beleeeve the wisdom of Pythagoras did ever positively, and in a littall sense, affirme his metempsychosis, or impossible transmigration of the soules of men into beasts:²⁷⁹ of all metamorphoses or transmigrations, I beleeeve onely one, that is of Lots wife, for that of Nabuchodonosor proceeded not so farre;²⁸⁰ in all others I conceive there is no further verity then is contained in their implicate sense and morality: I beleeeve that the whole frame of a beast doth perish, and is left in the same state after death, as before it was materialled unto life;²⁸¹ that the soules of men know neither contrary nor corruption, that they subsist beyond the body, and outlive death by the priviledge of their proper natures, and without a miracle; that the soules of the faithfull, as they leave earth, take possession of Heaven: that those apparitions, and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandring soules of men, but the unquiet walkes of Devils, prompting and suggesting us unto mischief, bloud, and villany, instilling, and stealing into our hearts, that the blessed spirits are not at rest in their graves, but wander solicitous of the affaires of the world; but those phantasmes appeare often, and doe frequent cemeteries, charnall houses, and churches,²⁸² it is because those

are the dormitories of the dead, where the Devill like an insolent champion beholds with pride the spoyles and trophies of his victory in Adam.

SECTION 38

This is that dismall conquest we all deplore, that makes us so often cry (O) Adam, *quid fecisti*?²⁸³ I thanke God I have not those strait ligaments, or narrow obligations to the world, as to dote on life, or be convulst and tremble at the name of death: not that I am insensible of the dread and horreur thereof, or by raking into the bowells of the deceased, continuall sight of anatomies, skeletons, or cadaverous reliques, like vespilloes,²⁸⁴ or grave-makers, I am become stupid, or have forgot the apprehension of mortality, but that marshalling all the horrors, and contemplating the extremities thereof, I finde not any thing therein able to daunt the courage of a man, much lesse a well resolved Christian. And therefore am not angry at the error of our first parents, or unwilling to beare a part of this common fate, and like the best of them to dye, that is, to cease to breathe, to take a farewell of the elements, to be a kinde of nothing for a moment, to be within one instant of a spirit. When I take a full view and circle of my selfe, without this reasonable moderator, and equall piece of justice, death, I doe conceive my selfe the miserablest person extant; were there not another life that I hope for, all the vanities of this world should not intreat a moments breath from me; could the Devill worke my beliefe to imagine I could never dye, I would not out-live that very thought;²⁸⁵ I have so abject a conceit of this common way of existence, this retaining to the sunne and elements, I cannot thinke this is to be a man, or to live according to the dignitie of humanity; in expectation of a better, I can with patience embrace this life, yet in my best meditations doe often defie death;²⁸⁶ I honour any man that contemnes it, nor can I highly love any that is afraid of it; this makes me naturally love a souldier, and honour those tattered and contemptible regiments that will die at the command of a sergeant.²⁸⁷ For a Pagan there may bee some motives to bee in love with life, but for a Christian to be amazed at death, I see not how hee can escape this dilemma, that he is too sensible of this life, or hopelesse of the life to come.²⁸⁸

SECTION 39

Some divines count Adam 30 yeares old at his creation, because they suppose him created in the perfect age and stature of man;²⁸⁹ and surely wee are all out of the computation of our age, and every man is some moneths elder than hee bethinkes him; for we live, move, have a being, and are subject to the actions of the elements, and the malice of diseases in that other world, the truest microcosme, the wombe of our mother; for besides that generall and common existence we are conceived to hold in our chaos, and whilst wee sleepe within the bosome of our causes,²⁹⁰ wee enjoy a being and life in three distinct worlds, wherein we receive most manifest graduations: in that obscure world and wombe of our mother, our time is short, computed by the moone; yet longer than the dayes of many creatures that behold the sunne, our selves being not yet without life, sense, and reason, though for the manifestation of its actions, it awaits the opportunity of objects; and seemes to live there but in its roote and soule of vegetation: entring afterwards upon the scene of the world, we arise up and become another creature, performing the reasonable actions of man, and obscurely manifesting that part of divinity in us, but not in complement and perfection, till we have once more cast our secondine,²⁹¹ that is, this slough of flesh, and are delivered into the last world, that is, that ineffable place of Paul, that proper *ubi* of spirits.²⁹² The smattering I have of the philosophers stone, (which is something more then the perfect exaltation of gold)²⁹³ hath taught me a great deale of divinity, and instructed my beliefe, how that immortall spirit and incorruptible substance of my soule may lye obscure, and sleepe a while within this house of flesh.²⁹⁴ Those strange and mysticall transmigrations that I have observed in silkewormes, turn'd my philosophy into divinity. There is in these workes of nature, which seeme to puzzle reason, something divine, and hath more in it then the eye of a common spectator doth discover.²⁹⁵

SECTION 40

I am naturally bashfull, nor hath conversation, age, or travell, beene able to effront, or enharden me, yet I have one part of modesty, which I have seldome discovered in another, that is (to

speake truly) I am not so much afraid of death, as ashamed thereof; 'tis the very disgrace and ignominy of our natures, that in a moment can so disfigure us that our nearest friends, wife, and children stand afraid and start at us. The birds and beasts of the field that before in a naturall feare obeyed us, forgetting all allegiance begin to prey upon us. This very conceite hath in a tempest disposed and left me willing to be swallowed up in the abysses of waters; wherein I had perished unseene, unpityed, without wondring eyes, teares of pity, lectures of mortality, and none had said, *quantum mutatus ab illo!*²⁹⁶ Not that I am ashamed of the anatomy of my parts, or can accuse nature for playing the bungler in any part of me, or my owne vitious life for contracting any shamefull disease upon me, whereby I might not call my selfe as wholesome a morsell for the wormes as any.

SECTION 41

Some upon the courage of a fruitfull issue, wherein, as in the truest chronicle, they seem to outlive themselves, can with greater patience away with death. This conceit and counterfeit subsisting in our progenies seemes to mee a meere fallacy, unworthy the desires of a man, that can but conceive a thought of the next world;²⁹⁷ who, in a nobler ambition, should desire to live in his substance in Heaven rather than his name and shadow in the earth. And therefore at my death I meane to take a totall adieu of the world, not caring for a monument, history, or epitaph, not so much as the bare memory of my name to be found any where but in the universall register of God: I am not yet so cynicall, as to approve the testament of Diogenes*,²⁹⁸ nor doe I altogether allow that rodомontado of Lucan;

—*Cælo tegitur, qui non habet urnam.*

He that unburi'd lies wants not his herse,
For unto him a tombe's the universe.²⁹⁹

* Who willed his friend not to bury him, but to hang him up with a staffe in his hand to fright away the crows.

But commend in my calmer judgement, those ingenuous intentions that desire to sleepe by the urnes of their fathers, and strive to goe the nearest way unto corruption. I doe not envie the temper of crows and dawes, nor the numerous and weary dayes of our fathers before the flood.³⁰⁰ If there bee any truth in astrology, I may outlive a Jubilee, as yet I have not seene one revolution of Saturne,³⁰¹ nor hath my pulse beate thirty yeares, and yet excepting one, have seene the ashes, and

left under ground, all the kings of Europe, have beene contemporary to three emperours, foure grand signiours, and as many popes;³⁰² mee thinkes I have outlived my selfe, and begin to bee weary of the sunne, I have shaken hands with delight in my warme blood and canicular dayes,³⁰³ I perceive I doe anticipate the vices of age, the world to mee is but a dreame, or mockshow, and we all therein but pantalonos and antickes to my severer contemplations.

SECTION 42

It is not, I confesse, an unlawfull prayer to surpasse the dayes of our saviour, or wish to out-live that age wherein he thought fittest to dye, yet if (as divinity affirms) there shall be no gray hayres in Heaven, but all shall rise in the perfect state of men, we doe but out-live those perfections in this world, to be recalled unto them, by a greater miracle in the next, and run on here but to be retrograde hereafter. Were there any hopes to out-live vice, or a point to be super-annuated from sin, it were worthy our knees to implore the dayes of Methuselah.³⁰⁴ But age doth not rectifie, but incurvate our natures, turning bad dispositions into worser habits, and (like diseases) brings on incurable vices,³⁰⁵ for every day as we grow weaker in age, we grow stronger in sinne, and the number of our dayes doth but make our sinnes innumerable. The same vice committed at sixteene, is not the same, though it agree in all other circumstances, at forty, but swels and doubles from the circumstance of our ages, wherein besides the constant and inexcusable habit of transgressing, the maturity of our judgement cuts off pretence unto excuse or pardon: every sin, the oftner it is committed, the more it acquireth in the quality of evill; as it succeeds in time, so it precedes in degrees of badnesse, for as they proceed they ever multiply, and like figures in arithmetick, the last stands for more than all that went before it:³⁰⁶ and though I thinke no man can live well once but hee that could live twice, yet for my owne part, I would not live over my houres past, or beginne againe the thred of my dayes: not upon Cicero's ground, because I have lived them well, but for feare I should live them worse:³⁰⁷ I find my growing judgement daily instruct me how to be better, but my untamed affections and confirmed vitiosity makes mee daily doe worse,³⁰⁸ I finde in my confirmed age the same sinnes I discovered in my youth,

I committed many then because I was a child, and because I commit them still I am yet an infant. Therefore I perceive a man may bee twice a child before the dayes of dotage, and stand in need of Æsons bath before threescore.³⁰⁹

SECTION 43³¹⁰

And truely there goes a great deale of providence to produce a mans life unto threescore; there is more required than an able temper for those yeeres; though the radicall humour containe in it sufficient oyle for seventie, yet I perceive in some it gives no light past thirty; men assigne not all the causes of long life that write whole bookes thereof.³¹¹ They that found themselves on the radicall balsome or vitall sulphur of the parts, determine not why Abel liv'd not so long as Adam.³¹² There is therefore a secret glome or bottome of our dayes;³¹³ 'twas his wisdom to determine them, but his perpetuall and waking providence that fulfils and accomplisheth them, wherein the spirits, our selves, and all the creatures of God in a secret and disputed way doe execute his will. Let them not therefore complaine of immaturitie that die about thirty, they fall but like the whole world, whose solid and well composed substance must not expect the duration and period of its constitution, when all things are compleated in it, its age is accomplished, and the last and generall fever may as naturally destroy it before six thousand, as me before forty:³¹⁴ there is therefore some other hand that twines the thread of life than that of nature; wee are not onely ignorant in antipathies and occult qualities,³¹⁵ our ends are as obscure as our beginnings, the line of our dayes is drawne by night, and the various effects therein by a pencill that is invisible; wherein though we confesse our ignorance, I am sure we doe not erre, if wee say, it is the hand of God.

SECTION 44

I am much taken with two verses of Lucan, since I have beene able not onely, as we doe at schoole, to construe, but understand:³¹⁶

*Victurosque Dei celant ut vivere durent,
Felix esse mori.*

We're all deluded, vainely searching wayes,
To make us happy by the length of dayes;
For cunningly to make's protract this breath,
The Gods conceale the happiness of death.³¹⁷

There be many excellent straines in that poet, wherewith his stoicall genius hath liberally supplied him; and truely there are singular pieces in the philosophy of Zeno, and doctrine of the stoickes, which I perceive, delivered in a pulpit, passe for currant divinity:³¹⁸ yet herein are they in extreames, that can allow a man to be his own assassine, and so highly extoll the end and suicide of Cato;³¹⁹ this is indeed not to feare death, but yet to bee afraid of life. It is a brave act of valour to contemne death, but where life is more terrible than death, it is then the truest valour to dare to live, and herein religion hath taught us a noble example: for all the valiant acts of Curtius, Scevola or Codrus, do not parallel or match that one of Job;³²⁰ and sure there is no torture to the racke of a disease, nor any poynyards in death it selfe like those in the way or prologue unto it. *Emori nolo, sed me esse mortuum nihil curo*, I would not die, but care not to be dead.³²¹ Were I of Cæsars religion I should be of his desires, and wish rather to goe off at one blow, then to be sawed in peeces by the grating torture of a disease.³²² Men that looke no further than their outsides thinke health an appertinace unto life, and quarrell with their constitutions for being sick; but I that have examined the parts of man, and know upon what tender filaments that fabrick hangs, doe wonder that we are not alwayes so; and considering the thousand dores that lead to death doe thanke my God that we can die but once. 'Tis not onely the mischiefe of diseases, and the villanie of poysons that make an end of us, we vainly accuse the fury of Gunnes, and the new inventions of death; 'tis in the power of every hand to destroy us, and we are beholding unto every one we meete hee doth not kill us. There is therefore but one comfort left, that though it be in the power of the weakest arme to take away life, it is not in the strongest to deprive us of death: God would not exempt himselfe from that, the misery of immortality in the flesh, he undertooke not that was in it immortall. Certainly there is no happinesse within this circle of flesh, nor is it in the opticks of these eyes to behold felicity; the first day of our jubilee is death; the Devill hath therefore fail'd of his desires; wee are happier with death than we should have

beene without it: there is no misery but in himselfe where there is no end of misery; and so indeed in his own sense, the stoick is in the right. Hee forgets that hee can die who complaines of misery, wee are in the power of no calamitie while death is in our owne.

SECTION 45

Now besides this littall and positive kinde of death, there are others whereof divines make mention, and those I thinke, not meere metaphoricall, as mortification, dying unto sin and the world; therefore, I say, every man hath a double horoscope, one of his humanity, his birth; another of his Christianity, his baptisme, and from this doe I compute or calculate my nativitie, not reckoning those *horæ combustæ*, and odde dayes, or esteeming my selfe any thing, before I was my saviours, and inrolled in the Register of Christ:³²³ whosoever enjoyes not this life, I count him but an apparition, though he weare about him the sensible affections of flesh. In these morall acceptions, the way to be immortall is to die daily,³²⁴ nor can I thinke I have the true theory of death, when I contemplate a skull, or behold a skeleton with those vulgar imaginations it casts upon us; I have therefore enlarged that common *memento mori*, into a more Christian memorandum, *memento quatuor novissima*, those foure inevitable points of us all, death, judgement, Heaven, and Hell.³²⁵ Neither did the contemplations of the heathens rest in their graves, without a further thought of Radamanth or some judicall proceeding after death, though in another way, and upon suggestion of their naturall reasons.³²⁶ I cannot but marvaile from what Sibyll or Oracle they stole the prophesy of the worlds destruction by fire, or whence Lucan learned to say,

*Communis mundo superest rogos, ossibus astra
Misturus.*—

There yet remains to th'world one common fire,
Wherein our bones with stars shall make one pyre.³²⁷

I beleeve the world growes neare its end, yet is neither old nor decayed, nor will ever perish upon the ruines of its owne principles. As the worke of creation was above nature, so is its adversary, annihilation; without which the world hath not its end, but its mutation. Now what force should bee able to

consume it thus farre, without the breath of God, which is the truest consuming flame, my philosophy cannot informe me. Some beleeve³²⁸ there went not a minute to the worlds creation, nor shal there go to its destruction; those six dayes so punctually described, make not to them one moment, but rather seem to manifest the method and idea of the great worke of the intellect of God, than the manner how hee proceeded in its operation. I cannot dreame that there should be at the last day any such judicall proceeding, or calling to the barre, as indeed the Scripture seemes to imply, and the literall commentators doe conceive:³²⁹ for unspeakable mysteries in the Scriptures are often delivered in a vulgar and illustrative way, and being written unto man, are delivered, not as they truly are, but as they may bee understood;³³⁰ wherein notwithstanding the different interpretations according to different capacities may stand firme with our devotion, nor bee any way prejudiciall to each single edification.

SECTION 46

Now to determine the day and yeare of this inevitable time, is not onely convincible and statute madnesse, but also manifest impiety;³³¹ how shall we interpret Elias 6000 yeares, or imagine the secret communicated to a Rabbi, which God hath denyed unto his angels?³³² It had beene an excellent quære, to have posed the devill of Delphos, and must needs have forced him to some strange amphibology;³³³ it hath not onely mocked the predictions of sundry astrologers in ages past, but the prophecies of many melancholy heads in these present, who neither understanding reasonably things past or present, pretend a knowledge of things to come, heads ordained onely to manifest the incredible effects of melancholy, and to fulfill old propheties*,³³⁴ rather than be the authors of new.³³⁵ 'In those dayes there shall come warres and rumours of warres,' to me seemes no prophetie, but a constant truth, in all times verified since it was pronounced:³³⁶ 'There shall bee signes in the moone and stares,' how comes he then like a theefe in the night, when he gives an item of his comming?³³⁷ That common signe drawne from the revelation of Antichrist is as obscure as any;³³⁸ in our common compute he hath beene come these many yeares, but for my owne part to speake freely, I am halfe of opinion that Antichrist is the

* In those dayes
there shall come
lyers and false
prophets.

philosophers stone in divinity,³³⁹ for the discovery and invention whereof, though there be prescribed rules, and probable inductions, yet hath hardly any man attained the perfect discovery thereof. That generall opinion that the world growes neere its end, hath possessed all ages past as neerely as ours; I am afraid that the soules that now depart, cannot escape that lingering expostulation of the saints under the altar, *Quousque Domine? How long, O Lord?* and groane in the expectation of the great Jubilee.³⁴⁰

SECTION 47

This is the day³⁴¹ that must make good that great attribute of God, his justice, that must reconcile those unanswerable doubts that torment the wisest understandings, and reduce those seeming inequalities, and respective distributions in this world, to an equality and recompensive justice in the next. This is that one day, that shall include and comprehend all that went before it, wherein as in the last scene, all the actors must enter to compleate and make up the catastrophe of this great peece. This is the day whose memory hath onely power to make us honest in the darke, and to bee vertuous without a witnesse. *Ipsa sui pretium virtus sibi*, that vertue is her owne reward, is but a cold principle, and not able to maintaine our variable resolutions in a constant and settled way of goodness.³⁴² I have practised that honest artifice of Seneca, and in my retired and solitary imaginations, to detaine me from the foulennesse of vice, have fancied to my selfe the presence of my deare and worthiest friends, before whom I should lose my head, rather than be vitious, yet herein I found that there was nought but morall honesty, and this was not to be vertuous for his sake who must reward us at the last.³⁴³ I have tryed if I could reach that great resolution of his, to be honest without a thought of Heaven or Hell; and indeed I found upon a naturall inclination, an inbred loyalty unto vertue, that I could serve her without a livery,³⁴⁴ yet not in that resolved and venerable way, but that the frailty of my nature, upon an easie temptation, might be induced to forget her. The life therefore and spirit of all our actions, is the resurrection, and stable apprehension, that our ashes shall enjoy the fruit of our pious endeavours; without this, all religion is a fallacy, and those impieties of Lucian, Euripedes,

and Julian are no blasphemies, but subtile verities, and Atheists have beene the onely philosophers.³⁴⁵

SECTION 48

How shall the dead arise, is no question of my faith,³⁴⁶ to beleeeve onely possibilities, is not faith, but meere philosophy; many things are true in divinity, which are neither inducible by reason, nor confirmable by sense, and many things in philosophy confirmable by sense, yet not inducible by reason. Thus it is impossible by any solid or demonstrative reasons to perswade a man to beleeeve the conversion of the needle to the north,³⁴⁷ though this be possible, and true, and easily credible, upon a single experiment unto the sense. I beleeeve that our estranged and divided ashes shall unite againe, that our separated dust after so many pilgrimages and transformations into the parts of mineralls, plants, animals, elements, shall at the voyce of God returne into their primitive shapes; and joyne againe to make up their primary and predestinate formes.³⁴⁸ As at the creation, there was a separation of that confused masse into its species, so at the destruction thereof there shall bee a separation into its distinct individuals.³⁴⁹ As at the creation of the world, all the distinct species that we behold, lay involved in one masse, till the fruitfull voyce of God separated this united multitude into its severall species: so at the last day, when these corrupted reliques shall be scattered in the wilderness of formes, and seeme to have forgot their proper habits, God by a powerfull voyce shall command them backe into their proper shapes, and call them out by their single individuals: Then shall appeare the fertilitie of Adam, and the magicke of that sperme that hath dilated into so many millions.³⁵⁰ I have often beheld as a miracle, that artificiall resurrection and revivification of Mercury, how being mortified into thousand shapes, it assumes againe its owne, and returns into its numericall selfe.³⁵¹ Let us speake naturally, and like philosophers, the formes of alterable bodies in these sensible corruptions perish not; nor, as wee imagine, wholly quit their mansions, but retire and contract themselves into their secret and unaccessible parts, where they may best protect themselves from the action of their antagonist. A plant or vegetable consumed to ashes, to a contemplative and schoole philosopher seemes utterly destroyed, and the forme to have

taken his leave for ever: but to a sensible Artist the formes are not perished, but withdrawne into their incombustible part, where they lie secure from the action of that devouring element.³⁵² This is made good by experience, which can from the ashes of a plant revive the plant, and from its cinders recall it into its stalk and leaves againe.³⁵³ What the art of man can doe in these inferiour pieces, what blasphemy is it to affirme the finger of God cannot doe in these more perfect and sensible structures? This is that mysticall philosophy, from whence no true scholler becomes an Atheist, but from the visible effects of nature, growes up a reall divine, and beholds not in a dreame, as Ezekiel, but in an ocular and visible object the types of his resurrection.³⁵⁴

SECTION 49

Now, the necessary mansions of our restored selves are those two contrary and incompatible places we call Heaven and Hell; to define them, or strictly to determine what and where these are, surpasseth my divinity. That elegant Apostle which seemed to have a glimpse of Heaven, hath left but a negative description thereof; 'which neither eye hath seen, nor eare hath heard, nor can enter into the heart of man'.³⁵⁵ he was translated out of himself to behold it, but being returned into himselfe could not expresse it.³⁵⁶ Saint Johns description by emeralds, chrysolites, and pretious stones, is too weake to expresse the materiall Heaven we behold.³⁵⁷ Briefely therefore, where the soule hath the full measure, and complement of happinesse, where the boundlesse appetite of that spirit remains completely satisfied, that it can neither desire addition nor alteration, that I thinke is truely Heaven: and this can onely be in the enjoyment of that essence, whose infinite goodnesse is able to terminate the desires of it selfe, and the unsatiable wishes of ours; where-ever God will thus manifest himselfe, there is Heaven, though within the circle of this sensible world.³⁵⁸ Thus the soule of man may bee in Heaven any where, even within the limits of his own proper body, and when it ceaseth to live in the body, it may remaine in its owne soule, that is its creator. And thus we may say that saint Paul, whether in the body, or out of the body, was yet in Heaven.³⁵⁹ To place it in the empyreall, or beyond the tenth spehere, is to forget the worlds destruction;³⁶⁰ for when this sensible world shall bee

destroyed, all shall then be here as it is now there, an empyreall Heaven, a quasi vacuitie,³⁶¹ when to aske where Heaven is, is to demand where the presence of God is, or where we have the glory of that happy vision. Moses that was bred up in all the learning of the Egyptians, committed a grosse absurdity in philosophy, when with these eyes of flesh he desired to see God, and petitioned his maker, that is truth it selfe, to a contradiction.³⁶² Those that imagine Heaven and Hell neighbours, and conceive a vicinity between those two extreames, upon consequence of the parable, where Dives discoursed with Lazarus in Abrahams bosome, do too grossely conceive of those glorified creatures, whose eyes shall easily out-see the sunne, and behold without a perspective, the extremist distances:³⁶³ for if there shall be in our glorified eyes, the faculty of sight and reception of objects I could thinke the visible species there to be in as unlimitable a way as now the intellectuall. I grant that two bodies placed beyond the tenth spheare, or in a vacuity, according to Aristotles philosophy, could not behold each other, because there wants a body or medium to hand and transport the visible rayes of the object unto the sense;³⁶⁴ but when there shall be a generall defect of either medium to convey, or light to prepare and dispose that medium, and yet a perfect vision, we must suspend the rules of our philosophy, and make all good by a more absolute piece of opticks.

SECTION 50

I cannot tell how to say that fire is the essence of Hell, I know not what to make of purgatory, or conceive a flame that can either prey upon, or purifie the substance of a soule; those flames of sulphure mentioned in the Scriptures,³⁶⁵ I take not to be understood of this present Hell, but of that to come, where fire shall make up the complement of our tortures, and have a body or subject wherein to manifest its tyranny: some who have had the honour to be textuarie in divinity, are of opinion it shall be the same specificall fire with ours.³⁶⁶ This is hard to conceive, yet can I make good how even that may prey upon our bodies, and yet not consume us: for in this materiall world, there are bodies that persist invincible in the powerfulllest flames, and though by the action of fire they fall into ignition and liquation, yet will they never suffer a destruction: I would

gladly know how Moses with an actual fire calcin'd, or burnt the golden calfe into powder:³⁶⁷ for that mysticall mettle of gold, whose solary and celestiall nature I admire, exposed unto the violence of fire, grows onely hot and liquifies, but consumeth not:³⁶⁸ so when the consumable and volatile pieces of our bodies shall be refined into a more impregnable and fixed temper like gold, though they suffer from the action of flames, they shall never perish, but lie immortall in the armes of fire. And surely if this frame must suffer onely by the action of this element, there will many bodies escape, and not onely Heaven, but earth will not bee at an end, but rather a beginning; for at present it is not earth, but a composition of fire, water, earth, and aire; but at that time spoyled of these ingredients, it shall appeare in a substance more like it selfe, its ashes. Philosophers that opinioned the worlds destruction by fire, did never dreame of annihilation, which is beyond the power of sublunary causes; for the last and proper action of that element is but vitrification or a reduction of a body into glasse;³⁶⁹ and therefore some of our chymicks facetiously affirm,³⁷⁰ that at the last fire all shall be crystallized and reverberated into glasse, which is the utmost action of that element.³⁷¹ Nor need we fear this term 'annihilation' or wonder that God will destroy the workes of his creation: for man subsisting, who is, and will then truly appeare a microcosme, the world cannot bee said to be destroyed. For the eyes of God, and perhaps also of our glorified selves, shall as really behold and contemplate the world in its epitome or contracted essence, as now it doth at large and in its dilated substance.³⁷² In the seed of a plant to the eyes of God, and to the understanding of man, there exists, though in an invisible way, the perfect leaves, flowers, and fruit thereof: (for things that are *in posse* to the sense, are actually existent to the understanding.) Thus God beholds all things, who contemplates as fully his workes in their epitome, as in their full volume, and beheld as amply the whole world in that little compendium of the sixth day, as in the scattered and dilated pieces of those five before.³⁷³

SECTION 51

Men commonly set forth the torments of Hell by fire, and the extremity of corporall afflictions, and describe Hell in the same method that Mahomet doth Heaven.³⁷⁴ This indeed makes a

noyse, and drums in popular eares: but if this be the terrible piece thereof, it is not worthy to stand in diameter with Heaven, whose happinesse consists in that part that is best able to comprehend it, that immortall essence, that translated divinity and colony of God, the soule.³⁷⁵ Surely though we place Hell under earth, the Devils walke and purlue is about it; men speake too popularly who place it in those flaming mountaines, which to grosser apprehensions represent Hell.³⁷⁶ The heart of man is the place the Devill dwels in; I feele sometimes a Hell within my selfe, Lucifer keeps his court in my brest, Legion is revived in me.³⁷⁷ There are as many Hells as Anaxagoras conceited worlds; there was more than one Hell in Magdalen, when there were seven Devils;³⁷⁸ for every Devill is an Hell unto himselfe: hee holds enough of torture in his owne ubi, and needs not the misery of circumference to afflict him, and thus a distracted conscience here is a shadow or introduction unto Hell hereafter;³⁷⁹ who can but pity the mercifull intention of those hands that doe destroy themselves? the Devill were it in his power would doe the like, which being impossible his miseries are endlesse, and he suffers most in that attribute wherein he is impassible, his immortality.³⁸⁰

SECTION 52

I thanke God, and with joy I mention it, I was never afraid of Hell, nor never grew pale at the description of that place; I have so fixed my contemplations on Heaven, that I have almost forgot the idea of Hell, and am afraid rather to lose the joyes of the one than endure the misery of the other; to be deprived of them is a perfect Hell, and needs me thinkes no addition to compleate our afflictions; that terrible terme hath never detained me from sin, nor do I owe any good action to the name thereof: I feare God, yet am not afraid of him, his mercies make me ashamed of my sins, before his judgements afraid thereof: these are the forced and secondary method of his wisdom, which he useth but as the last remedy, and upon provocation, a course rather to deterre the wicked, than incite the vertuous to his worship. I can hardly thinke there was ever any scared into Heaven, they goe the fairest way to Heaven, that would serve God without a Hell, other mercenaries that crouch unto him in feare of Hell, though they terme themselves the servants, are indeed but the slaves of the Almighty.

SECTION 53

And to be true, and speake my soule, when I survey the occurrences of my life, and call into account the finger of God, I can perceive nothing but an abyse and masse of mercies, either in generall to mankind, or in particular to my selfe; and whether out of the prejudice of my affection, or an inverting and partiall conceit of his mercies, I know not, but those which others terme crosses, afflictions, judgements, misfortunes, to me who enquire farther into them than their visible effects, they both appeare, and in event have ever proved the secret and dissembled favours of his affection. It is a singular piece of wisdom to apprehend truly, and without passion the workes of God, and so well to distinguish his justice from his mercy, as not to miscall those noble attributes; yet it is likewise an honest piece of logick so to dispute and argue the proceedings of God, as to distinguish even his judgements into mercies. For God is mercifull unto all, because better to the worst, than the best deserve, and to say he punisheth none in this world, though it be a paradox, is no absurdity. To one that hath committed murther, if the Judge should onely ordaine a fine,³⁸¹ it were a madness to call this a punishment, and to repine at the sentence, rather than admire the clemency of the Judge. Thus our offences being mortall, and deserving not onely death, but damnation, if the goodnesse of God be content to traverse and passe them over with a losse, misfortune, or disease, what frensie were it to terme this a punishment, rather than an extremity of mercy, and to groane under the rod of his judgements, rather than admire the scepter of his mercies? Therefore to adore, honour, and admire him, is a debt of gratitude due from the obligation of our nature, states, and conditions; and with these thoughts, he that knowes them best, will not deny that I adore him; that I obtaine Heaven, and the blisse thereof, is accidentall, and not the intended worke of my devotion, it being a felicitie I can neither thinke to deserve, nor scarce in modesty to expect. For these two ends of us all, either as rewards or punishments, are mercifully ordained and disproportionally disposed unto our actions, the one being so far beyond our deserts, the other so infinitely below our demerits.

SECTION 54

There is no salvation to those that beleieve not in Christ, that is, say some, since his nativity, and as divinity affirmeth, before

also; which makes me much apprehend the end of those honest worthies and philosophers which died before his incarnation. It is hard to place those soules in Hell whose worthy lives doe teach us vertue on earth; methinks amongst those many subdivisions of Hell, there might have bin one limbo left for these:³⁸² what a strange vision will it be to see their poetically fictions converted into verities, and their imagined and fancied furies, into reall Devils? How strange to them will sound the history of Adam, when they shall suffer for him they never heard of? when they derive their genealogy from the gods, shall know they are the unhappy issue of sinfull man? It is an insolent part of reason to controvert the works of God, or question the justice of his proceedings; could humility teach others, as it hath instructed me, to contemplate the infinite and incomprehensible distance betwixt the creator and the creature, or did we seriously perpend that one simile of saint Paul, *Shall the vessell say to the Potter, Why hast thou made me thus?*³⁸³ it would prevent these arrogant disputes of reason, nor would we argue the definitive sentence of God, either to Heaven or Hell. Men that live according to the right rule and law of reason, live but in their owne kinde, as beasts doe in theirs; who justly obey the prescript of their natures, and therefore cannot reasonably demand a reward of their actions, as onely obeying the naturall dictates of their reason. It will therefore, and must at last appeare, that all salvation is through Christ; which verity I feare these great examples of vertue must confirme, and make it good, how the perfectest actions of earth have no title or claime unto Heaven.

SECTION 55

Nor truely doe I thinke the lives of these or of any other were ever correspondent, or in all points conformable unto their doctrines; it is evident that Aristotle transgressed the rule of his owne Ethicks;³⁸⁴ the Stoicks that condemne passion, and command a man to laugh in Phalaris his bull, could not endure without a groane a fit of the stone or collick.³⁸⁵ The Scepticks that affirmed they know nothing, even in that opinion confute themselves, and thought they knew more than all the world beside.³⁸⁶ Diogenes I hold to bee the most vaine glorious man of his time, and more ambitious in refusing all honours, than Alexander in rejecting none.³⁸⁷

Vice and the Devill put a fallacie upon our reasons and provoking us too hastily to run from it, entangle and profound us deeper in it. The duke of Venice, that weds himselfe unto the sea, by a ring of Gold, I will not argue of prodigality, because it is a solemnity of good use and consequence in the state.³⁸⁸ But the philosopher that threw his money into the sea to avoyd avarice, was a notorious prodigal.³⁸⁹ There is no road or ready way to vertue, it is not an easie point of art to disentangle our selves from this riddle, or web of sin: To perfect vertue, as to religion, there is required a panoplia or compleat armour, that whilst we lye at close ward against one vice we lye open to the vennie of another:³⁹⁰ and indeed wiser discretions that have the thred of reason to conduct them, offend without a pardon; whereas under heads may stumble without dishonour. There goe so many circumstances to piece up one good action, that it is a lesson to be good, and we are forced to be vertuous by the booke. Againe, the practice of men holds not an equall pace, yea, and often runnes counter to their theory; we naturally know what is good, but naturally pursue what is evill: the rhetoricke wherewith I perswade another cannot perswade my selfe: there is a depraved appetite in us, that will with patience heare the learned instructions of reason; but yet performe no farther than agrees to its owne irregular humour. In briefe, we all are monsters, that is, a composition of man and beast, wherein we must endeavour to be as the poets fancy that wise man Chiron, that is, to have the region of man above that of beast, and sense to sit but at the feete of reason.³⁹¹ Lastly, I doe desire with God, that all, but yet affirme with men, that few shall know salvation, that the bridge is narrow, the passage strait unto life;³⁹² yet those who doe confine the church of God, either to particular nations, churches, or families, have made it farre narrower than our Saviour ever meant it.

SECTION 56³⁹³

The vulgarity of those judgements that wrap the church of God in Strabo's cloake and restraints it unto Europe, seeme to mee as bad geographers as Alexander, who thought hee had conquer'd all the world when hee not subdued the halfe of any part thereof.³⁹⁴ for wee cannot deny the church of God both in

Asia and Africa, if we doe not forget the peregrinations of the Apostles, the death of their martyrs, the sessions of many, and even in our reformed judgement lawfull councells held in those parts in the minoritie and nonage of ours:³⁹⁵ nor must a few differences more remarkable in the eyes of man than perhaps in the judgement of God, excommunicate from Heaven one another, much lesse those Christians who are in a manner all martyrs, maintaining their faith in the noble way of persecution, and serving God in the fire, whereas we honour him but in the sunshine. 'Tis true we all hold there is a number of elect and many to be saved, yet take our opinions together, and from the confusion thereof there will be no such thing as salvation, nor shall any one be saved;³⁹⁶ for first the Church of Rome condemneth us, wee likewise them, the sub-reformists and sectaries sentence the doctrine of our Church as damnable, the Atomist, or Familist reprobates all these, and all these them againe.³⁹⁷ Thus whilst the mercies of God doth promise us Heaven, our conceits and opinions exclude us from that place. There must be therefore more than one Saint Peter, particular churches and sects usurpe the gates of Heaven, and turne the key against each other, and thus we goe to Heaven against each others wills, conceits and opinions, and with as much uncharity as ignorance, doe erre I feare in points, not onely of our own, but one anothers salvation.

SECTION 57

I beleeve many are saved who to man seeme reprobated, and many are reprobated, who in the opinion and sentence of man, stand elected;³⁹⁸ there will appeare at the last day, strange, and unexpected examples, both of his justice and his mercy, and therefore to define either is folly in man, and insolency, even in the Devils; those acute and subtile spirits, in all their sagacity, can hardly divine who shall be saved, which if they could prognostick, their labour were at an end; nor need they compasse the earth, seeking whom they may devour.³⁹⁹ Those who upon a rigid application of the law, sentence Solomon unto damnation, condemne not onely him, but themselves, and the whole world;⁴⁰⁰ for by the letter, and written Word of God,⁴⁰¹ we are without exception in the state of death, but there is a prerogative of God,

and an arbitrary pleasure above the letter of his owne law, by which alone we can pretend unto salvation, and through which Solomon might be as easily saved as those who condemne him.

SECTION 58

The number of those who pretend unto salvation, and those infinite swarmes who thinke to passe through the eye of this needle, have much amazed me.⁴⁰² That name and compellation of *little flocke*, doth not comfort but deject my devotion, especially when I reflect upon mine owne unworthinesse, wherein, according to my humble apprehensions, I am below them all.⁴⁰³ I beleieve there shall never be an anarchy in Heaven, but as there are hierarchies amongst the angels, so shall there be degrees of priority amongst the saints. Yet is it (I protest) beyond my ambition to aspire unto the first rankes, my desires onely are, and I shall be happy therein, to be but the last man, and bring up the rere in Heaven.

SECTION 59

Againe, I am confident, and fully perswaded, yet dare not take my oath of my salvation; I am as it were sure, and do beleieve, without all doubt, that there is such a city as Constantinople, yet for me to take my oath thereon, were a kinde of perjury, because I hold no infallible warrant from my owne sense to confirme me in the certainty thereof. And truely, though many pretend an absolute certainty of their salvation, yet when an humble soule shall contemplate her owne unworthinesse, she shall meete with many doubts and suddainely finde how little⁴⁰⁴ we stand in need of the precept of saint Paul, *Worke out your salvation with feare and trembling*.⁴⁰⁵ That which is the cause of my election, I hold to be the cause of my salvation, which was the mercy, and beneplacit of God, before I was, or the foundation of the world.⁴⁰⁶ *Before Abraham was, I am*, is the saying of Christ,⁴⁰⁷ yet is it true in some sense if I say it of my selfe, for I was not onely before my selfe, but Adam, that is, in the Idea of God, and the decree of that synod held from all eternity. And in this sense, I say, the