
A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

pull down the wall and rebuild it because it is leaning over by the time you reach the top. Exactness is a saving, not a waste, of time, and the 'absolutely its' are always first in the end.

2. The second reason which the 'near enoughs' give is that *it really doesn't matter*. Doesn't it? Carelessness always matters. It is dangerous for yourself, and it is dangerous for other people.

A workman who was making a saddle put in a piece of inferior work, but he thought it would pass and did not trouble to make it right. That saddle was ridden in the Zulu War by the Prince Imperial. During a battle the prince was surrounded by the wild tribesmen and had to fight for dear life. He had a good horse under him, his friends were coming to his rescue, and it was merely a case of holding on till they arrived, but suddenly his saddle gave way and he was thrown to the ground. In a moment the Zulus were upon him, and he was wounded to death. The heir to the throne of France lost his life because a careless saddler thought 'near enough' would do in making a saddle.

Here is another story. Some years ago the United States of America were passing a Bill about the articles that should be admitted into the country free of duty. Amongst the goods named were foreign fruit-plants, with a hyphen between 'fruit' and 'plants.' That meant that any growing fruit-plants for transplanting might come in without paying duty. The clerk who was copying the Bill missed out the hyphen and stuck in a comma instead, making the words read 'fruit, plants,' etc. What do you think happened? For a whole year, until Congress could remedy the blunder, all oranges, lemons, bananas, grapes, and other foreign fruits came in duty free, and the American Government lost about half a million pounds sterling. That was a pretty costly comma—wasn't it?

Boys and girls, don't believe the 'near enoughs.' They are wrong every time. Make up your mind to-day that you will be an 'absolutely it'—for your own sake, because it is the only honest way; for other people's sake, because it is the only safe way; most of all for Christ's sake, because it is His way.

The Bookshelf by the Fire.

By the Rev. George Jackson, B.A., Professor of Pastoral Theology, Didsbury College, Manchester.

VIII.

Sir Thomas Browne's 'Religio Medici.'

I have remarked before in these chapters on the strange remoteness from the din and confusion which filled all the highways of seventeenth-century life of some of those on whose names to-day we love most to dwell. George Herbert, Nicholas Ferrar, Izaak Walton—what have they to do with the fierce heats of the council-hall, or the fiercer frays of the battlefield? And now to these is to be added the name of Sir Thomas Browne, the good physician of Norwich. He was born in the year of the Gunpowder Plot, and he lived to within a few years of the Revolution (1605–1682); he himself was loyalist in his sympathies, and Norfolk, which was his home for nearly half a century, was ardently Puritan; and yet, as Dr. Alexander Whyte says, you might read every word of Sir Thomas Browne's writings and never discover that a sword had been unsheathed or a shot fired in England, all the time he was living and writing there. Yet, after all, perhaps, the silence is not so strange. In the seventeenth century East Anglia lay in a siding of English life. The very supremacy of Puritanism would tend to an easy toleration of unpopular views in a famous citizen. And as for Browne himself, there were a hundred things—his patients, his books, his curios—which interested him vastly more than the noisy wrangling of Cavalier and Roundhead.

I.

The story of a life so secluded and uneventful is quickly told. Indeed, there is so little to tell

that a bare chronological record is perhaps the most convenient form that a biographical summary can take:

1605	born in London.
1616	entered Winchester School.
1623	matriculated at Oxford.
1630–33	studied on the Continent at Montpellier, Padua, and Leyden.
1635	wrote *Religio Medici.*
1637	settled at Norwich.
1641	married Dorothy Mileham.
1643	first authorized edition of *Religio Medici.*
1646	*Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (or *Vulgar Errors*).
1658	*Hydriotaphia* (or *Urn-Burial*) and *The Garden of Cyrus.*
1671	knighted by Charles II.
1682	died at Norwich.

Posthumous Works—
A Letter to a Friend.
Christian Morals.

To this bald summary may be added two notes of a personal character. The first is from the pen of the Rev. John Whitefoot, a Norfolk rector, Browne's close and lifelong friend: 'His complexion and his hair were answerable to his name, his stature was moderate, and his habit of body neither fat nor lean, but εὐσάρκος. In his habit of clothing he had an aversion to all finery, and affected plainness. He ever wore a cloke or boots when few others did. He kept himself always very warm, and thought it most safe so to do. . . . His memory was capacious and tenacious, insomuch that he remembered all that was remarkable in any book he ever read. . . . His aspect and conversation were grave and sober; there was never to be seen in him anything trite or vulgar. Parsimonious in nothing but his time, whereof he made as much improvement, with as little loss as any man in it, when he had anything to spare from his drudging practice, he was scarce patient of any diversion from his study: so impatient of sloth and idleness that he would say he could not do nothing.'[1] The second note is from Browne's own pen, and, though it is rather long for a quotation, it will serve not only to show what manner of man Sir Thomas was, but to give the reader who has yet to make his acquaintance a taste of his quality as a writer: 'I have no antipathy, or rather Idio-syncrasie in dyet, humour, air, any thing. I wonder not at the French for their dishes of Frogs, Snails and Toadstools, nor at the Jews for Locusts and Grasshoppers; but being amongst them make them my common Viands, and I find they agree with my Stomach as well as theirs. I could digest a salad gathered in a Church-yard, as well as in a Garden. I cannot start at the presence of a Serpent, Scorpion, Lizard, or Salamander: at the sight of a Toad or Viper, I find in me no desire to take up a stone to destroy them. I feel not in myself those common Antipathies that I can discover in others: those National repugnances do not touch me, nor do I behold with prejudice the French, Italian, Spaniard, or Dutch: but when I find their actions in balance with my Country-men's, I honour, love, and embrace them in the same degree. I was born in the eighth Climate but seem for to be framed and constellated into all. I am no Plant that will not prosper out of a Garden. All places, all airs, make unto me one Countrey; I am in England everywhere, and under any Meridian. I have been shipwrackt, yet am not enemy with the Sea or Winds; I can study play or sleep in a Tempest. In brief, I am averse from nothing: my Conscience would give me the lye if I should say I absolutely detest or hate any essence but the Devil; or so at least abhor anything, but that we might come to composition.'[2]

[1] See Dr. Alexander Whyte's *Appreciation*, p. 20.

II.

From this bit of vivid self-portraiture I pass to the book from which it is taken, and with which, in this chapter, we are chiefly concerned.

The *Religio Medici* was written at Shipden Hall, near Halifax, about 1635, and before its author had reached his thirtieth year. It was composed, Browne tells us, without 'the assistance of any good book whereby to promote my invention or relieve my memory,' and also without any intention to publish. The book is, as Mr. Gosse says, 'a sort of private diary of the soul,' 'a personal record of the adventures of a questioning spirit,'[3]

[2] I quote here, as throughout, from Dr. W. A. Greenhill's delightful edition of the *Religio Medici* in the 'Golden Treasury' series.

[3] *Sir Thomas Browne* in 'English Men of Letters' series, p. 20.

or, to quote again our author's own words, 'a private exercise directed to myself, rather a memorial unto *me* than an example or rule unto any other.' Its private character notwithstanding, the manuscript passed through several hands, and during the next few years several copies of it were made. Then, in 1642, a discerning, if not over-scrupulous London publisher, with no one's permission asked or given, launched the frail thing on the world's high seas. One of the copies of this pirated edition came into the hands of Sir Kenelm Digby, and from that day Browne's secret was a secret no more. How Sir Kenelm, hearing of the little book, sent out his servant post haste, just as the shops were shutting, to purchase a copy; how, when the messenger returned with it, he lay most of the night surveying the rich treasures it had brought him, and how, next morning, 'in a blaze of enthusiasm and excitement,' and almost at a single sitting, he told in a volume of a hundred and thirty-four pages, the story of his discovery and appreciation—all this may be read in Mr. Gosse's delightful book. This unlooked-for turn of events forced the Norwich doctor's hands, and the following year Browne himself issued, though still anonymously, the first authorized edition of his book. What he had written was now some seven years old, and in giving it to the world he is careful to point out that it sets forth 'the sense of my conceptions at that time, not an immutable law unto my advancing judgment at all times'; and therefore, he adds, 'there might be many things therein, plausible unto my past apprehension, which are not agreeable unto my present self.'

The little book achieved an immense and immediate popularity, both in England and on the Continent. Eight editions were published during the author's life. As early as 1644, there were two Latin versions, one published in Leyden, the other in Paris, and before Browne's death, his book had been translated into French, German, Dutch, and Italian.[1] What is the secret of a spell so early and so widely felt, and so long enduring?

III.

To begin with, Browne's place in English literature is another illustration of the old saying that in the world of books style is the great antiseptic.

[1] See the full list of editions given by Dr. Greenhill.

Lord Morley once declared that the success of a political speech depends on three things: who says it, how he says it, and what he says, and that of the three the last matters the least. Be this as it may, it is certainly the 'how' not less than the 'what' that attracts us to Sir Thomas Browne. Mr. Gosse goes still further, and puts him down as a pre-eminent example of the class of writer with whom it is form, not substance, that is of the first importance. We do not, for example, go to the *Urn-Burial* for correct antiquarian information, 'but as we should to the rhapsody of some great poet, to be borne along on the wind of his imaginative afflatus.' 'It is the art, the style, the human charm of Browne that matter, and not his boasted learning.' The glamour of twilight on his pen transfigures the commonest objects, and sometimes even the most patent absurdities. We may smile at his science, and yawn over his philosophy, yet still we read on. His rich imagination suffuses all it touches with its own glowing colours. In his hands the 'rough yarn' of fact is turned into 'heavy cloth of gold.' Indeed, sometimes we feel the ornament is in excess. We should be better pleased if the ingenuity were a little less wanton, the 'beautiful obliquities,' as Lamb calls them, a little less oblique, if the writer would lay aside his coronation robes, and be content to say plain things in a plain way. Yet, after all, what is this but another way of saying that we belong to the twentieth century, while Browne belonged to the seventeenth—the century of John Milton and Jeremy Taylor? Our changed standards may suit our changed temperament, but it is sheer provincialism that can find nothing admirable outside its own preferences. And if, as Johnson urged, Browne's style is the faithful reflexion of Browne's self, what more is there to be said? It is not conformity to the standards of your age that makes bad art, but insincerity in the artist.

It may not be out of place to add that the faults most frequently urged against Browne's style—its whimsicalities, its over-elaboration, its love of unfamiliar words, and so on—are least visible in the *Religio Medici*. Even so, the reader who is making his first acquaintance with Browne will probably do well not to attempt too much at a single sitting. The ear should have time to grow accustomed to the unfamiliar music without being wearied by it.

IV.

But Sir Thomas Browne has more than 'the glory of words' to commend him to us. The *Religio Medici* is a frank self-disclosure that can never lose its interest as long as men care to think about themselves, their fellows, or their God. As the title of the book indicates, it is concerned with religion. This is how a wise and good physician, deeply versed in the knowledge of his time, did, in the seventeenth century, construe his relation to God and the unseen world. And when all is said, religion still remains our chief human interest.

The reading of such a book to-day must inevitably awake very mingled feelings. Some things in it will leave us wholly cold; at others we shall smile and pass on; others again will sharply repel us. On one page we shall find ourselves wondering at the writer's catholicity of spirit and breadth of vision; on another we shall marvel still more how such breadth and narrowness could coexist in the same mind. That Browne should interpret the Scriptures after the manner of the prevailing literalism does not surprise us; but we are more than surprised, we are shocked, when we come on a passage like this: 'For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are Witches: they that doubt of these, do not onely deny *them*, but Spirits; and are obliquely and upon consequence a sort not of Infidels, but Atheists.' Unfortunately, as Dr. Greenhill says, Browne's belief on this subject was not so harmless in practice as some of his other credulous fancies, since it was his evidence in a court of justice that turned the scale against two poor women charged with witchcraft, and led to their execution.[1]

On the other hand, the *Religio Medici* is a useful reminder that seventeenth-century extremists, whether of the Puritan or Papist type, did not divide the land between them, as we sometimes thoughtlessly suppose. Browne himself was a convinced Church of England man: 'There is no Church,' he said, 'whose every part so squares unto my Conscience; whose Articles, Constitutions, and Customs seem so consonant unto reason, and as it were framed to my particular Devotion, as this whereof I hold my Belief, the Church of England.' Yet he would be no party to the 'popular scurrilities and opprobrious scoffs' with which it was then the fashion to assail 'the Bishop of Rome': 'I confess,' he said, 'there is cause of passion between us: by his sentence I stand excommunicated; *Heretick* is the best language he affords me; yet can no ear witness I ever returned him the name of *Antichrist*, *Man of Sin*, or *Whore of Babylon*. It is the method of Charity to suffer without reaction: those usual Satyrs and invectives of the Pulpit may perchance produce a good effect on the vulgar, whose ears are opener to Rhetorick than Logick; yet do they in no wise confirm the faith of wiser Believers, who know that a good cause needs not to be patron'd by passion, but can sustain it self upon a temperate dispute.' So again, though he was 'of that Reformed new-cast religion, wherein I dislike nothing but the name,' yet he adds, 'I cannot laugh at, but rather pity, the fruitless journeys of Pilgrims, or contemn the miserable condition of Fryars; for, though misplaced in Circumstances, there is something in it of Devotion. I could never hear the Ave-Mary Bell without an elevation; or think it a sufficient warrant because they erred in one circumstance, for me to err in all, that is, in silence and dumb contempt. Whilst, therefore, they directed their Devotions to *Her*, I offered mine to God, and rectified the errors of their Prayers by rightly ordering mine own. At a solemn Procession I have wept abundantly, while my Consorts, blind with opposition and prejudice, have fallen into an excess of scorn and laughter.'

There has been a good deal of discussion among Browne's admirers as to his own personal relation to the Christian faith, and the words 'sceptic' and 'scepticism' have been freely bandied to and fro. Such words in such a context seem to me wholly misleading. Even Mr. Gosse, notwithstanding the sympathy and insight with which he writes, hardly does justice to the depth and the strength of Browne's religious faith and life. The opening words of the *Religio* are as explicit as they could well be: 'For my Religion, though there be several Circumstances that might perswade the World I have none at all, yet, in despight hereof, I dare without usurpation assume the honourable Stile of a Christian. . . . Having in my riper years and confirmed judgment seen and examined all, I find my self obliged by the Principles of Grace, and the Law of mine own Reason, to embrace no

[1] The mournful story may be read in Mr. Gosse's volume, pp. 147–150.

other Name but this.' He had indeed found 'as in philosophy so in divinity sturdy doubts and boisterous objections,' but he had conquered them, he tells us, on his knees. His friend Whitefoot, from whom I have already quoted, says, 'He attended the public service very constantly, when he was not withheld by his practice. Never missed the sacrament in his parish, if he were in town. Read the best English sermons he could hear of with liberal applause: and delighted not in controversies. His patience was founded upon the Christian philosophy, and sound faith of God's providence, and a meek and humble submission thereto. I visited him near his end, when he had not strength to hear or speak much: and the last words I heard from him were, besides some expressions of dearness, that he did freely submit to the will of God: being without fear. He had oft triumphed over the king of terrors in others, and given him many repulses in the defence of patients; but when his own time came, he submitted with a meek, rational, religious courage.'[1] His correspondence with his sons is full of the same manly piety.[2] Most striking of all is his language about prayer: 'I cannot contentedly frame a prayer for myself in particular, without a catalogue for my friends; nor request a happiness, wherein my sociable disposition doth not desire the fellowship of my neighbour. I never hear the Toll of a passing Bell, though in my mirth, without my prayers and best wishes for the departing spirit; I cannot go to cure the body of my patient, but I forget my profession, and call unto God for his soul; I cannot see one say his prayers, but instead of imitating him, I fall into a supplication for him, who perhaps is no more to me than a common nature: and if God hath vouchsafed an ear to my supplications, there are surely many happy that never saw me, and enjoy the blessing of mine unknown devotions.' And then there are those golden extracts from Browne's Commonplace Books, which his editor prints by way of illustration of the passage just quoted. I have only space for two of them:

'To pray and magnify God in the night, and my dark bed, when I could not sleep: to have short ejaculations whenever I awaked; and when the four o'clock bell awoke me, or my first discovery of the light, to say the collect of our liturgy, *Eternal God, Who hast safely brought me to the beginning of this day, etc.*'

'To pray in all places where privacy inviteth; in any house, highway or street; and to know no street or passage in this city which may not witness that I have not forgot God and my Saviour in it: and that no parish or town, where I have been, may not say the like.'

Surely Dr. Whyte speaks with pardonable warmth when he says that to call a man who could write like this a sceptic, or an English Montaigne, is utterly misleading and essentially untrue.

V.

Some, I suppose, will read these words who will not be persuaded to go further and take up Browne for themselves. Let them at least have the profit of the fine evening hymn with which Browne adorns one of the closing pages of his *Religio*:

The night is come, like to the day,
Depart not Thou, great God, away.
Let not my sins, black as the night,
Eclipse the lustre of Thy light:
Keep still in my Horizon; for to me
The Sun makes not the day, but Thee.
Thou, Whose nature cannot sleep,
On my temples Centry keep;
Guard me 'gainst those watchful foes,
Whose eyes are open while mine close.
Let no dreams my head infest,
But such as Jacob's temples blest.
While I do rest, my Soul advance;
Make my sleep a holy trance;
That I may, my rest being wrought,
Awake into some holy thought;
And with as active vigour run
My course, as doth the nimble Sun.
Sleep is a death; O make me try,
By sleeping, what it is to die;
And as gently lay my head
On my grave, as now my bed.
Howere I rest, great God, let me
Awake again at last with Thee;
And thus assur'd, behold I lie
Securely, or to awake or die.
These are my drowsie days; in vain
I do now wake to sleep again;
O come that hour, when I shall never
Sleep again, but wake for ever.

Browne's hymn suggests at once Bishop Ken's more familiar lines, 'Glory to Thee, my God, this night,' published towards the close of the same

[1] Dr. Whyte's *Appreciation*, p. 21. Mr. Gosse laments the meagreness of Whitefoot's recollections, but makes no reference to this passage.

[2] See the delightful letter printed by Dr. Whyte, p. 31.

century. The parallelisms are very obvious, and point to a greater indebtedness on Ken's part than Dean Plumptre, his biographer, is willing to admit.[1] Other writers have suggested a common Latin origin.[2] I leave those who are interested to determine the matter for themselves, thankful only to have had the opportunity of calling attention to this devout soul's 'colloquy with God.'

[1] *Thomas Ken*, vol. ii. p. 224.

[2] See Julian's *Dictionary of Hymnology*, p. 621.

Contributions and Comments.

Recent Publications of Apocrypha Pseudepigrapha.[1]

When the great Corpus of Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha appeared a few years ago under the able editorship of Canon Charles, it was almost inaccessible to the scholar who could not afford the costly and bulky Oxford edition, and it was a happy thought which prompted Dr. Oesterley and Canon Box to issue a series of handy volumes, clearly and beautifully printed and moderate in price. No less important is the fact that whilst reproducing the older publication the new editors have reserved for themselves full freedom of action and independence of judgment. They have not been satisfied with merely repeating the results arrived at by former editors, notably those by Canon Charles, to whose industry and learning the study of the apocryphal literature owes so much. This independence of judgment cannot be overestimated. It would have been quite natural for younger scholars to bow before the authority of Canon Charles; this would have led to a school of teaching and a line of investigation from which to deviate would have become almost a heresy. It must therefore be recognized that we have in these publications an advance upon the last results and not a stereotyped reproduction of older views. This in spite of the fact that the texts here are reprinted from the great publication, with scarcely any alteration.

The notes accompanying the texts have been considerably reduced, and the student is constantly referred to the Oxford publication. It may be mentioned here that in the books previously published by Canon Charles and then reprinted in the Corpus the footnotes are not so ample as in the previous original publications. The result is that the student must also consult the first mentioned if he wishes to utilize the entire philological and critical apparatus.

Canon Charles has created a scheme which the new editors adopted, though they re-examined the arguments, notably so Canon Box in his introduction to the edition of *The Book of Jubilees*. Any one acquainted with the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature is aware of the wide divergence between scholars as to date and original language. New divergencies have arisen as to the religious sect to which the authors belonged, their theological views and eschatological conceptions.

It is not here the place to discuss these problems at length. The present writer holds views fundamentally differing from these scholars. The discovery of so many Jewish sects as is made by the modern students rests upon nothing else than hypothetical speculation. The small number of Jews in Jerusalem must, according to them, have split up into a large number of sects. As far as is known Jerusalem was the only likely centre for writings emanating from that place to claim authority.

A peculiar method of investigation, not free from preconceived ideas, has now led to that multiplication of unknown sects—among those also I mention the Sadducees—of whom little is known. Two diametrically opposed views hold the field (*vide* the article of Canon Box in *The Expositor*, January 1918).

Still more complicated is the problem of the date. This is often deduced from obscure allu-

[1] *Translations of Early Documents*, edited by the Rev. W. O. E. Oesterley and the Rev. Canon G. H. Box.

The Apocalypse of Baruch, by the Rev. Canon B. H. Charles. Introduction by the Rev. W. O. E. Oesterley. S.P.C.K., London, 1917.

The Assumption of Moses, translated by W. J. Ferrar.

The Book of Jubilees, by R. H. Charles, with an Introduction by G. H. Box. London and New York, 1917.

The Biblical Antiquities of Philo, now first translated from the old Latin version by M. R. James. London and New York, 1917.

The Apocalypse of Abraham, edited with a translation from the Slavonic by G. H. Box and J. T. Landsman. London and New York, 1918.