CONTRARY DEVOTION:

AN ANALYSIS OF BINARY STRUCTURE IN THE WORKS OF SIR THOMAS BROWNE

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 1979

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

English

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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September 1980

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ABSTRACT

Sir Thomas Browne was a seventeenth-century medical doctor who wrote on spiritual subjects. His works reflect a concern for the new methodology of Baconian empiricism and its attendant secularising impulses, as well as a deep commitment to traditional religious values. Although Browne is admired today for his amusingly complex and quaint language, and for his gracious toleration, it has not sufficiently been pointed out by critics how the achievement of such literary distinction resulted from Browne's direct and serious encounter with some of the most controversial and heated intellectual debates of his day. Browne's works, this thesis claims, are structured according to a series of binary oppositions which suggest that only by appreciating and presenting such paradoxes as faith and works, soul and body, sacred and profane knowledge, was Browne able to arrive at a mature resolution: one, that is, which works through the issues, rather than around them.

The first chapter deals with the key Reformation question of belief and knowledge, taking the controversy surrounding the death of Michael Servetus to exemplify the actual seriousness of the question, and to establish the basic terms of a debate which remained alive for Browne, although his historical position allowed him to

stand also partially outside it, and so to interpret it in his particular manner. Mainly, in this chapter, two distinct attitudes to the relationship of belief and knowledge are established. On the one hand, the paradoxes of religious faith, dogmatically stated, were held to demand intellectual submission and assent; on the other, the paradoxes were held to give rise to ambiguity which called for equivocation and exploration. Whether the mind is left with a violent separation between faith and knowledge, or whether it must explore their interpenetration, formed the basis of a debate between puritans and latitudinarians in the England of Browne's time. It was Browne's distinction, however, to recognize the claims of a radical Calvinism for which in some ways he had little sympathy, as well as the claims of the latutudinarian position. Browne's works express this peculiar joint allegiance by presenting us deliberately with the antithesis of belief and knowledge through binary structure, and then, stylistically, destructuring (though without finally destroying) that initial opposition.

Subsequent chapters deal with Browne's main works form this general perspective. Religio Medici is composed of two parts, and deals with the controversy of faith and works; Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus, two separate essays published by Browne under one cover, reflect the debate between mortalists and Platonists

over the nature of death and resurrection; Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals can be seen together as two sides of an examination of the increasingly incompatible concerns of sacred and profane knowledge.

Browne's writing, I conclude, endures today partly because it was decisively of its own times. The sense of toleration, open-mindedness, and disinterested curiosity for which Browne is famous, is the achievement of a man who knew the mind's dangerous oversimplifications as well as its need of dogma. The purpose of this thesis has been to provide some means for understanding Sir Thomas Browne in such a manner.

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Chapter I

The Execution of Michael Servetus: The Confrontation of Faith with Paradox

Thomas Browne, a medical doctor and "divine" author, died in 1682. Sixty-four years after his death, Dr. Johnson declared that Browne would be remembered for his curiously antiquarian style which, according to Johnson, sacrificed "rigorous examination" and "serious opinion" for an "abstruse," "obscure," and "exotic" "subtlety of disquisition":[1]

> His exuberance of knowledge, and plenitude of ideas, sometimes obstruct the tendency of his reasoning and the clearness of his decisions: on whatever subject he employed his mind, there started up immediately so many images before him, that he lost one by grasping another. His memory supplied him with so many illustrations, parallel or dependent notions, that he was always starting into collateral considerations: but the spirit and vigour of his pursuit always gives delight; and the reader follows him, without reluctance, through his mazes, in themselves flowery and pleasing, and ending at the point originally in view.[2]

Johnson is, of course, correct, and the "spirit and vigour" of Browne's style, conducting the reader through the delightful mazes of an argument, remain attractive to modern readers. But "the point originally in view," as Johnson ends by reminding us, is not neglected. Browne's literary achievement, in short, is not only a stylistically intricate and wanton pursuit of "collateral considerations": it is also a carefully considered reaction to the theological "points" which underlay sectarian controversies of his time.

Accordingly, Browne's writings are not merely the exuberant flights of an antiquarian eccentric; rather, they reflect a fascination with dividedness, with paradox, and with the antinomies and disputes which cause men to be antagonistic to one another on matters of religious belief. Browne's style, by its very complexity and refusal to take short cuts, may be said to advocate toleration. But the "plenitude," the "mazes," and the "many images" which Johnson describes, are an attempt to resolve theological and doctrinal issues by encountering them, and not just by avoiding them through pleasant obfuscation. Browne, after all, lived at a time when it was not easy to be tolerant, and when wrong interpretations of the paradoxes and binary oppositions of religious faith could have drastic results.

Some reasons why religious toleration was a problem for Renaissance writers can be outlined in an especially dramatic way if we recall, briefly, the execution of Michael Servetus, which occurred not in England but in Geneva, and not in Browne's time, but in the sixteenth century. I wish to begin by describing some circumstances of Servetus' execution, first because they can set before us (as, indeed, they set before all Reformation Europe), the problems of toleration in a radical form, and, second, because the confrontation between doctrinal paradox and individual faith is expressed there in a manner which

remained as much a concern for Sir Thomas Browne as it did for writers on divinity throughout the Renaissance and Reformation in England.

Convicted of anti-Trinitarianism and anti-paedobaptism, Michael Servetus was burned at the stake for heresy on 27 October, 1553. The burning took place at Champal, just outside of Geneva; Servetus had been condemned by Calvin and the Genevan council, who sentenced him in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.[3]

The circumstances surrounding Servetus' execution were complex, and to accuse Calvin of blind and dogmatic persecution would be a rash oversimplification. Servetus had already aroused enough animosity to be burnt in effigy by the Catholics at Vienne; he arrived in Geneva during a period when anti-Calvinist activity was particularly strong, and may have been associated with Libertine plots for a coup d'état; he behaved with provoking arrogance throughout the trial, actually attempting to file a counter-charge of heresy against his accusor.[4] Nevertheless, two important facts stand out. First, Servetus was charged and condemned to death for a heterodox religious belief, and no civil crime; second, the counts upon which he was convicted -- two out of an original thirty-nine -- were not only issues of current theological unease, but also highly sensitive aspects of Calvin's own doctrine.[5]

The controversy generated by the execution attests to the significance of these two considerations. On the one hand, Calvin, surpassing Luther in his logical articulation of dogma, was able to rationalize to his own satisfaction that Servetus was a heretic, a danger to the welfare of the community, and should be burned. On the other, Sebastian Castellio, a professor of Greek at Basle, promulgated a position of Erasmian tolerance and severely questioned both Calvin's claim to religious absolutism and his right to commit judicial murder on the grounds of a difference in belief. The debate between Calvin and Castellio may accordingly be viewed as a restatement of the contrasting positions of dogmatic certainty and skeptical restraint taken by Luther and Erasmus in their debate on free will, but crystallizes on a tension that had remained largely implicit in the earlier controversy: how certain are points of doctrine, and what actions based upon them can be justified?

The tension lies between an absolute and a relative claim to truth, a divergence most fully realized in the difference between Calvin's and Castellio's attitudes to religious paradox. In the most general sense, paradox presents a logical contradiction.[6] Within the context of Reformation theology, such a contradiction could be approached in two ways. First, as Rosalie Colie and Joel Altman point out, the divisions of paradox can provide

man with the opportunity to view questions in utramque partem, affording him the "chance to postpone a philosophical or religious choice he might live to regret."[7] The contradictory statements of a paradox are then held in an "equivocal balance" that exists as "an oblique criticism of absolute judgment."[8] In these terms, paradox becomes a denial of dogmatic certainty in religion, an instrument of equivocation and "continuous inquiry."[9] "Devoted to discovery, not explanation," it acts as a stimulating puzzle for the mind, "exercising the understanding."[10]

However, it is also possible to view paradox not as interrogative, but as declarative. In this sense, paradox is most frequently used to demonstrate man's utter inability to comprehend divine mysteries. Standing at the terminus of discursive reasoning, the paradoxical division is then not an instrument of equivocation or an intriquing puzzle, but an absolute statement affirming the certainty of a truth beyond human understanding. Such a position on paradox annihilates the possibility of investigation, since the paradox confronts reason with its own limitations and awes man into an humble acceptance of what appears rationally impossible.

Paradox is prevalent in Reformation theology precisely because Reformist theologians are so profoundly sensitive to the abyss separating fallen humanity from its creator.[11]

The via negativa thus predominates in their discussions of God: since he so completely transcends human awareness, he can be percieved only negatively, concealed sub contrariis. Luther describes how God appears to man paradoxically:

> faith has to do with things not seen [Heb. [11:1]. Hence in order that there may be room for faith, it is necessary that everything which is believed should be hidden. It cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under an object, perception, or experience which is contrary to it. Thus when God makes alive he does it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he exalts to heaven he does it by bringing down to hell . . . . Thus God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, his righteousness under iniquity. This is the highest degree of faith, to believe him merciful when he saves so few and damns so many, and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable, so that he seems, according to Erasmus, to delight in the torments of the wretched and to be worthy of hatred rather than of love. If, then, I could by any means comprehend how this God can be merciful and just who displays so much wrath and iniquity, there would be no need of faith. As it is, since that cannot be comprehended, there is room for the exercise of faith.[12]

According to Luther, "the highest degree of faith" is grounded upon paradox. Those who believe that God is good and merciful cannot escape perceiving that he damns men by his own will and seems "to delight in the torments of the wretched." If this paradox could be comprehended, explains Luther, the divine purpose would be understood and there "would be no need of faith." As it is, God's paradoxical mode of operation cannot be so comprehended; as a result, "there is room for the exercise of faith."

Consequently, faith speaks in confrontation with

paradox, and how the believer comes to terms with a paradoxical statement defines the nature of his religious devotion. In the Reformation controversy over the absolute or relative nature of theological knowledge, the two aforementioned approaches to paradoxical division can be discerned: the former, based upon equivocation, is held by the liberals Erasmus, Castellio, and (contemporaneous with Browne) the English theologians John Hales and William Chillingworth, advocates of religious latitudinarianism; the latter, based upon affirmation, is held by Luther and Calvin as well as such polemical English Puritans as William Prynne. An exploration of these two positions can elucidate not only some of the reasons behind the death of Servetus, but can also show how the ramifications of that death are relevant for a study of Thomas Browne, whose literary distinction may be said to lie in a unique appreciation and treatment of the conventional paradoxes of religious faith, as they are apprehended by a medical doctor dedicated to the new intellectual fashions of empiricism and toleration, as well as to the doctrinal assertions of tradition.

Faith, for Calvin, is based upon a conviction of absolute certainty, "an undoubted expectation of salvation";[13] his attitude towards paradox is founded upon that belief. So in order to understand Calvin's position on paradox it is necessary to have some understanding of

the grounds on which his claim to certainty rests. Calvin refutes the Papist claim to infallibility because Catholic doctrine, he believes, has been determined by the fallible councils of men; its truth, therefore, cannot be absolutely assured.[14] Accordingly, Calvin resorts to the original source of doctrine, the Bible. For Calvin, Scripture alone reveals "pure and infallible truth," because it is not the work of men but the Word of God.[15] Thus the "credibility of doctrine" can in Calvinist terms only be established if men "are persuaded beyond doubt that God is its Author."[16] This "persuasion" is the office of the Holy Spirit:

> The same Spirit, therefore, who has spoken through the mouths of the prophets must penetrate into our hearts to persuade us that they faithfully proclaimed what had been divinely commanded.[17]

The Spirit not only enables the recognition of the Bible as the very Word of God and sole rule of faith, however; it also grants the believer a completely unambiguous understanding of all that is contained in that Word. "No man perceives one iota of what is in the Scriptures unless he has the Spirit of God," explains Luther; once "persuaded" by the Spirit he finds that "nothing at all is left obscure or ambiguous," and that scriptural truth becomes "all quite accessible."[18] Hence for Calvin and Luther, faith can be based "not on ignorance, but on knowledge."[19] Although this "knowledge," it should be emphasized, is not

a "comprehension" of the sort attainable by discursive reason, it is nevertheless a "certainty" "of persuasion" that precludes all doubt.[20] Accordingly, Calvin is able to define faith as a "firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us," a knowledge perceived, confirmed, and maintained "from his Word."[21] For the thorough-going Calvinist, therefore, faith never need go beyond a firm "knowledge" of the revelation of the Bible as illuminated by the Spirit:

> for by a kind of mutual bond the Lord has joined together the certainty of his Word and of his Spirit so that the perfect religion of the Word may abide in our minds when the Spirit, who causes us to contemplate God's face, shines; and that we in turn may embrace the Spirit with no fear of being deceived when we recognize him in his own image, namely, in the Word. So indeed it is. God did not bring forth his Word among men for the sake of a momentary display, intending at the coming of his Spirit to abolish it. Rather, he sent down the same Spirit by whose power he had dispensed the Word, to complete his work by the efficacious confirmation of the Word.[22]

Calvin's claim to doctrinal certainty, therefore, is based upon the conviction that the words of the Bible, as dictated to the prophets and confirmed and clarified for the believer by the Spirit, absolutely manifest God's truth. "By his Word," Calvin declares, "God rendered faith unambiguous forever."[23]

Although Calvin believes that the Spirit completely and truly illuminates the Word, however, he also maintains that the knowledge of God conveyed by Scripture, while infallibly accurate, is not complete. God "has set forth

by his Word the secrets of his will that he had decided to reveal," Calvin explains, but these "secrets" are only those it will "concern us and benefit us" to know for our salvation.[24] In other words, Scripture reveals God to man only as Redeemer: Luther claims man can know no other God than "God incarnate," Calvin that He is "comprehended in Christ alone."[25] Of the God hidden outside revelation man can know nothing. His essence and edicts remain completely enigmatic.

Both Calvin and Luther carefully stress their distinction between the revealed and the hidden God. Quoting Psalm 36:6, Calvin explains that aside from the "understanding of those mysteries" "set forth familiarly" in Scripture, God has "another hidden will which may be compared to a deep abyss."[26] As this will is "incomprehensible," the "secret purposes" of the hidden God remain closed to man.[27] Luther is even more explicit. "We have to argue in one way about God or the will of God as preached, revealed, offered, and worshipped," he writes, "and in another way about God as he is not preached, not revealed, not offered, not worshipped."[28]

Paradox is this "other way" of speaking about the hidden God. The incomprehensibilities of the "abyss" thus find expression in the great paradoxes of Calvinist and Lutheran theologies: the Trinity, the servitude of the will, the nature of Christ, and predestination. These

paradoxes express truths that overwhelm human understanding, as Calvin demonstrates in tackling the problem of predestination to reprobation:

> With Augustine I say: the Lord created those whom he unquestionably foreknew would go to destruction. This has happened because he has so willed it. But why he so willed it, it is not for our reason to inquire, for we cannot comprehend it. And it is not fitting that God's will be dragged down into controversy among us, for whenever mention is made of it, under its name is designated the supreme rule of righteousness. Why raise any question of unrighteousness where righteousness clearly appears? . . . . Thou seekest reason? I tremble at the depth. Reason, thou; I will marvel. Dispute, thou; I will believe. I see the depth; I do not reach the bottom.[29]

Such paradoxes are not to be subjected to "controversy," "reason," or "Dispute." "We must not ask the reason for the divine will," says Luther, "but simply adore it."[30] Because Calvin and Luther find these paradoxes present in the Bible they are necessarily true, even though man cannot grasp them; he must therefore be content "reverently to adore" them.[31] So for Calvin and Luther, faith presupposes a total resignation to the ineffable truth of divinely prescribed paradox. "Scripture simply confesses the trinity of God and the humanity of Christ, and the unforgiveable sin," Luther maintains, "and there is nothing here of obscurity or ambiguity. But <u>how</u> these things can be, Scripture does not say . . . . nor is it necessary to know."[32] Consequently, inquiry must not pass beyond paradox as set forth in the Word:

> let us remember here, as in all religious doctrine, that we ought to hold to one rule of modesty and sobriety; not to speak, or guess, or even to seek to know, concerning divine matters anything except what has been imparted to us by God's Word.[33]

According to Luther and Calvin, therefore, paradoxes have been set forth in the infallible Word of Scripture; they must receive unquestioning assent. The hiddenness of God is not an encouragement to indulge in speculation, but rather demands total submission. For these theologians, God is so transcendent, irreducibly other, that resignation to paradox is imperative: all are admonished "to pay attention to the word and leave that inscrutable will alone."[34]

Such a flat acceptance of paradox prevents equivocation. Though Colie suggests that "the paradoxical form denies commitment" as it "defies 'sitting' in any specific philosophical position,"[35] no such restraint characterizes Calvin's or Luther's attitude towards paradox. Their view compels commitment and demands the assumption of a very specific stance. For both, since doctrinal truth has been definitively revealed in Scripture, the function of the Christian is not to equivocate about that doctrine, but to "consistently adhere to and affirm" it; indeed, a Christian must "delight" in such "assertions."[36] Take away assertion, states Luther, "and you take away Christianity."[37]

Paradox thus becomes a test of faith, its resolution

located in correct choice. If paradoxical truth is absolutely certain, then it compels assent; to question the truth of the paradox becomes, in effect, a denial of Christianity. Just such an implicit denial on the part of Servetus provided the official justification for his death.

Servetus had not only rejected infant baptism, but also questioned the Trinity, one of the central paradoxes of the Christian faith. Neither of these two points of dogma, he argued, could be proved from the Word. Technically his claim was correct. Paedobaptism was an exceedingly hot issue at the time and, as François Wendel observes, Calvin must undertake fairly strenuous exegesis to defend it.[38] The doctrine of the Trinity, also a subject of current unease, had actually been formulated by the Nicene Council in 325 A.D.[39] Nevertheless, Calvin was convinced that both were scripturally true and, having once been forced to defend himself against a charge of Arianism, became a particularly adamant Trinitarian.[40] "Say that in the one essence of God there is a trinity of persons," he asserts, and "you will say in one word what Scripture states and cut short empty talkativeness."[41] Servetus, however, explicitly denied the distinction of persons and the eternal co-existence of the Son and Spirit with the Father. The Trinity, he stated, is but three "phases or modes of God's activity."[42] From Calvin's point of

view, this refusal to yield assent to a paradox Calvin saw so definitively stated in Scripture was a "horrible, execrable" blasphemy, Servetus himself a promulgator of "stinking heretical poison."[43] To Calvin it appeared that by refusing to submit to the paradox, by pushing at and investigating it, Servetus had quite effectively damned himself:

> I protested simply, and it is the truth, that I never entertained any personal rancor against him . . . . I told him that I would pass over everything which concerned me personally. He should rather ask the pardon of God whom he had so basely blasphemed in his attempt to efface the three persons in one essence, saying that those who recognize God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with a real distinction, created a three-headed hound of hell . . . . But when I saw that all this did no good I did not wish to be wiser than my Master allows. So following the rule of St. Paul, I withdrew from the heretic who was self-condemned.[44]

Four months after the execution of Servetus, Calvin published a defense of his actions, the Defensio orthodoxae fidei de Sacra Trinitate contra prodigiosos errores Michaelis Serveti Hispani. In response, Sebastian Castellio issued his Contra libellum calvini, a restatement of an earlier work, Traité des Hérétiques, in which quotations from Calvin are cited only in order to be refuted by the pseudonymous Vaticanus. Castellio endeavours to point out the dangerous absurdity of claims to absolute doctrinal certainty:

> All sects hold their religion as established by the Word of God and call it certain. Therefore all sects are armed by Calvin's rule for mutual

> persecution. Calvin says he is certain and they say the same. He says they are mistaken and they say the same of him. Calvin wishes to be judge, and so do they. Who will be judge? Who made Calvin judge of all the sects, that he alone should kill? How can he prove that he alone knows?[45]

Calvin is charged by Castellio on two particular counts. First, he argues that Calvin's assertion of certainty has reduced the incomprehensible mysteries of faith into points of intellectual dispute, rather than demonstrations of man's restricted perspective and the consequent need for a latitude of belief. Second, he claims that Calvin's emphasis on the infallibility of the Word resulted in the execution of Servetus on the basis of an over-literalized application of the "letter" of the law. The two charges are obviously related: an increasing literalization of what is to be believed inevitably leads to an increasing certainty of comprehension about it. The death of Servetus shows that both charges are in some measure true. Paradox, for Calvin, is a statement of literal truth that must be unconditionally accepted; the acceptance or rejection of the "letter" of that paradox can define one's position as a believer or a heretic. Unfortunately, it is then all too easy to quote Matthew 12:30, as Luther does: "'He who is not with me . . . is against me.'" [46] Castellio's own position advocates a quite different method of approaching religious paradox, a method advanced by Erasmus and carried forward

into the seventeenth century by the English latitudinarians.

Castellio's two-pronged attack strives to undermine Calvin's conviction of absolutism. He therefore shrewdly focusses his attention upon the basis of that conviction, the infallible clarity of the Word of Scripture. Castellio never questions the authority of Scripture, which "all the Christian sects" agree to be true; rather, he questions the validity of assertions on "how it is to be understood."[47] For Castellio, as for Erasmus, even the illumination of the Spirit leaves many parts of the Bible ambiguous and "obscure," since "the Spirit does not furnish the whole truth to anyone."[48] These obscurities are the "secret places" of the Word, which cannot be definitively understood; indeed, "God has not wished us to penetrate them."[49]

The Word in conjunction with the Spirit is thus not "wholly clear" as Calvin and Luther maintain;[50] it remains full of quite intentional ambiguities that defy the attempt to establish any certain doctrinal position. "God desired to leave obscurity," Castellio writes, "as an exercise to human industry that the mind, like the body, might gain its bread by the sweat of its brow."[51] Consequently, man need not submit himself unquestioningly to all that is stated in the Word. Rather, Castellio defines three different degrees of assent:

> They are to be believed if clearly set forth in

> Scripture. They are to be doubted if ambiguously explained, and to be left in ignorance if there is nothing recorded about them.[52]

Many doctrinal issues are "to be doubted"; "ambiguously explained," their truth can only be relative, and assent to their propositions only conditional. Accordingly, says Castellio, man simply needs to be certain of his Christian duty and perform it according to Christ's precepts.[53] All other points are open to equivocation.

Although Castellio believes that this approach does not violate the "authority of Scripture," the presence of ambiguity in the Word causes him to transfer its infallibility from a "meticulous verbal consistency" to the "tenor and body of the thought." The "reliability" of the Word is then contingent not at all upon its literal accuracy; instead, Castellio claims it is "manifested" precisely in the fact that those who wrote it were "so intent upon the salvation of men as to be unconcerned for words."[54] Accordingly, a flat acceptance of the "letter" of the Bible must be practised "warily," as Hales explains, since a concern for the literal sense of the Word may ultimately "hinder Scripture from that latitude of sense, of which it is naturally capable."[55] In short, the Bible must not be read carnally, for the letter, but spiritually, for "that latitude of sense."

Castellio expressly charges Calvin with denying Scripture just this "latitude." Because Calvin's theology

repudiates the possibility of ambiguity in revealed truth, Castellio claims he must drive the passages of the Bible into a "rigid conformity" that does violence to their intentional ambiguity.[56] This practise, according to Castellio, results from exactly such an over-close adherence to the "letter" of the text, which only too easily leads to a kind of idolatry of language, a dangerous confusion of "the symbol with the thing symbolized."[57] In turn, this confusion causes the "killing" application of the "letter" of the Old Law rather than the spiritual flexibility and "latitude of sense" required by the New.

As far as Castellio is concerned, Calvin's execution of Servetus was the inevitable outcome of precisely this chain of errors, culminating in a culpable attempt "to wage spiritual war with earthly arms."[58] Calvin's insistence that the Word is perfectly clarified by the Spirit caused him to arrogantly usurp God's power to judge and punish; his focus on the literal infallibility of the text caused him to ignore the extra dimension given to the Word by the Crucifixion:

> They cite the law in Exodus, 'He that sacrificeth unto any God save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.' I ask you whether this destruction is corporal or spiritual. If it is corporal, then must they first revive the whole law of Moses and inflict corporal punishment upon those who sacrifice. But to do this is to seek to be justified by works of the law, and to be cut off

> from Christ, in whom the former things are passed away and all things are made new.[59]

For Castellio, only God can know the truth amidst ambiguity, and only God has the right to act upon it. Therefore, he concludes, quoting I. Cor. 4:5, men must "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts."[60]

The frequent ambiguity and spiritual "latitude" of Scripture thus strongly challenge Calvin's conviction of certainty. Consequently, whereas Calvin had equated faith with a "certainty" "of persuasion" that precludes all doubt, Castellio and Chillingworth contend that doubt plays a significant part in the act of faith. To require of men an absolute certainty of belief, explains Chillingworth, would be a "great error," potentially of such "dangerous and pernitious consequence" as the death of Servetus;[61] since "scripture is ambiguous," they must remain content with "some shew of probability."[62] All that men can do is live in accordance with the "main points of religion which are clear and evident from Holy Scriptures" and which are necessary "to the performance of duty";[63] all other issues must be doubted if the justification for religious absolutism and assertion is to be eliminated. By so equating faith with the "exercise" of a skeptical private devotion and not with a conformity

to doctrine, these liberal writers allow for the co-existence of contrary beliefs:

> though it were damnable to oppose any point contained in Scripture; yet Persons of a contrary beliefe . . . might both be saved, because their contrary beliefe was not touching any point contained in Scripture. Secondly, because the contrary beliefe may be about the sense of some place of Scripture which is ambiguous, and with probabilitie capable of diverse senses . . . . Thirdly because the contrary beliefe may bee concerning points wherein Scripture may with so great probabilitie be alleaged on both sides . . . that men of honest and upright hearts, true lovers of God and of truth, such as desire, above all things, to know Gods will and to doe it, may, without any fault at all, some go one way, and some another, & some (& these as good men as either of the former) suspend their judgements, and expect some Elias to solve doubts, and reconcile repugnancies.*64*

This suspension of belief in the face of ambiguous points of doctrine also informs the attitude these writers hold towards religious paradox. For Calvin, a paradox, though beyond human comprehension, demands submission. As the test of faith it exists not to be questioned, only affirmed or (heretically) denied. But for Castellio, Erasmus, Hales and Chillingworth, paradox demands no such passive resignation; rather, it provokes a search for resolution. It is not so much a statement of absolute truth as an instrument of "continuous inquiry" into the nature of truth. Accordingly, paradoxical contradictions are no longer viewed as the area that defines faith, but the area wherein faith is discovered and explored, providing, as Castellio says, an "exercise to human industry"

for the "mind." Whereas for Calvin and Luther faith is dependent upon the assertion of paradox, for these writers faith is dependent upon the exploration of paradox, and is sustained by the play of the mind within it.

As a result, both Castellio and Erasmus conclude that the great paradoxes of faith (the Trinity, predestination, the nature of Christ) are not "wholly clear" statements of truth. Rather, they are matters of ambiguity "not cleared up in Scripture."[65] Therefore, conjectures about them can be but "guesses," and they must be accorded the same "latitude of sense" as all Scriptural ambiguities, their interpretation left to the discretion of the individual.[66] So while Castellio describes the Trinity as an "inexplicable enigma" just as Calvin does, Castellio feels free to proceed into speculation. "The assumption that there is but one God," he writes, is to be believed because it is clearly set forth in Scripture; but "from this point of departure reason may consider whether there is a Trinity and of what sort."[67] If religious paradox is so viewed as a matter of reasonable consideration, open to equivocation and ripe for the "exercise" of devotion, then the hiddenness of God does not annihilate speculation. On the contrary, it provides a stimulation to it.

As handled by these four writers, therefore, paradox

becomes not the end and test of a doctrinal faith, but the beginning of the establishment of an individualized belief. The paradox is held in suspended judgment, in a creative tension that encourages equivocation and patiently awaits the resolution of uncertainty in God. This faith in an ultimate resolution of doubt permits a full and relaxed exploration of paradoxical oppositions, the believer learning, like Erasmus, to play "the debater, not the judge; the enquirer, not the dogmatist."[68] From this perspective, equivocation is both a therapeutic and religious activity, rather than the heretical denial of Christianity Luther claimed.

Accordingly, the doctrinal controversy surrounding the death of Servetus delineates the contours of two distinct, though somewhat overlapping attitudes to paradox that inform Reformation theology and remain a source of genuine concern well into the seventeenth century. Thomas Browne is one of the writers who feels this concern strongly; yet, a century removed from the origins of the controversy, he is able to view the debate in its entirity, appreciate the claims of both positions, and recognize that neither is wholly satisfactory. To take a Calvinist position and reduce paradox to the level of an unquestionable fact is to deny the validity of personal response and subject faith to a rigid dogmatism; such a reduction ultimately results in the death of

individuals like Servetus. Conversely, to take the position of Castellio and the latitudinarians and completely abandon paradox to equivocation and private determination is to deny religion any objective standards; such a practise would inevitably lead to the proliferation of sects and the justification of any sort of behaviour upon religious grounds. For Browne, a truly creative response to religious paradox must be discovered in the mean between the extremes, where the potentialities of individual belief can be "exercised" within the bounds of orthodoxy. In the Religio Medici he writes:

> '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 their own Church or any other, but also any particular Author: which notwithstanding a sober judgement may doe without offence or heresie; for there are 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.[69]

Browne knows that the paradoxes of faith must be accepted; but he also recognizes that paradox invites the mind's free "play" and becomes a vehicle for the creation of a personal devotion to God. Hence both conceptions of paradox are fundamental to a study of Browne, especially since all of Browne's works are structured upon paradoxical divisions. The two halves of the Religio Medici play upon the current debate over

the relationship of faith and works; the co-publication of Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus examines the paradoxical inherence of death and resurrection; Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals juxtapose the increasingly divided concerns of profane and sacred knowledge. The structural juxtaposition of such issues creates paradoxes which demand acceptance. However, Browne's unique rhetorical approach manifests a skepticism and latitudinarianism that work within the paradox to modify dogmatic assumptions. Structurally, all of his works present paradoxical oppositions in a "Calvinist" manner; stylistically, the graciousness of his prose consistently softens the sense of dogmatic division and contradiction, confident that true faith emerges as a quality of life established in and through an acceptance of doctrinal paradox. The first demonstration of this hypothesis, to which I will turn in the next chapter, is the paradoxical division most fundamental to Browne's concerns, the faith-works controversy of the Reformation, which sets up the terms of a debate in which Browne participates (notably in the Religio Medici) and, in his own manner, resolves.

Chapter II

Religio Medici: The Paradox of Faith and Works

"God made all things double," states Browne in Pseudodoxia Epidemica, "two and two, one against another; that one contrary hath another" (PE. VII. 17. 536). Such doubleness informs the very structure of Browne's earliest work, the Religio Medici: the first part deals with Faith, the second with Charity. F.L. Huntley has suggested that this method of organisation reflects the traditional two-fold division of the Commandments into duty towards God and duty towards man.[1] Others have claimed that the two sections simply examine Faith and Charity separately, and, attempting to account for an apparent omission on Browne's part, have further claimed that Part I includes Hope, the third theological virtue.[2] But even these suggestions do not attend carefully enough to Browne's arrangement of the Religio: Joan Bennett's assertion "that the whole of Part II was an afterthought, a garnering of the many thoughts about his own Christianity which had not found their way into Part I" has been too widely accepted.[3] However, the relationship of Religio Medici to the faith-works controversy deserves more careful scrutiny, because in light of Browne's treatment of that religious paradox the coherence and significance of the Religio's design become clear.

The "vital spot" of Luther's Reformation, "the question on which everything hinges," is the problem of free will, which Erasmus defines as the "power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them."[4] For Luther, as for Calvin, man has no such "power." Human nature has been totally corrupted by the Fall; man has become a deformity "worthless in the sight of God."[5] Accordingly, the individual will is nothing more than a "beast of burden" possessing no free choice, "a captive, subject and slave either of the will of God or the will of Satan."[6] Man's works are without merit, and it is through faith and grace alone that he is saved.[7]

Erasmus, opposing Luther on this question in much the same manner as Castellio opposed Calvin, sees the danger inherent in Luther's sola fide doctrine as an eradication of human merit that could potentially result in the diminishment of charity, ultimately in a complete disregard for moral law (cf. Servetus).[8] Unconvinced by Luther's assertion that good works will always follow justification, Erasmus prefers to allocate works a part in the process of justification itself.[9] But whereas Erasmus accuses Luther of a lack of charity, Luther accuses Erasmus of attempting to revive the grace-destroying heresy of Pelagianism by attributing any degree of merit to works.[10] Although the difference between the two doc-

trines is one of degree and not of kind, it does not prevent charges of both types of extremism from being rife throughout the Reformation, notably in the Puritan-Anglican controversy of the seventeenth century..

Though originally founded upon a severe Calvinism that agreed with Luther in denying human merit, Anglican theology quickly softened under the doctrines of the Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius, which became increasingly influential despite their official condemnation at the Synod of Dort.[11] Arminianism encourages a confidence in the efficacy of works as a subsidiary adjunct to faith. Human reason can then be viewed as a support of faith rather than an enemy, as Calvin had maintained; human endeavour as a "fellow-worker" rather than a slave of grace.[12]

Puritans, however, found such latitude appalling, and sought to revitalize the harsher doctrines of Calvin. William Prynne, away the most energetic of the Puritan pamphleteers, condemns the "Grace-destroying Arminian novelties" of this "new Pelagianisme" "raised from Hell"; Daniel Featley, another pamphleteer, insists that man's works are valueless and demands that the "Supremacie" of "speciall and saving grace" be reasserted against the Anglican elevation of "corrupt Nature."[13] Admission of even a partial freedom of the will and the concept of co-operating grace are thus seen by the fundamentalists as a virtual revival of Pelagianism that would eventually

lead to the supposedly worse horrors and uncertainties of the quantitative Catholic emphasis on justification by works. "Popery and Arminianisme are growne now so potent, so head-strong, so impudent, sawcy, and audacious," Prynne warns, "as to over-top, controll, affront and beard the very truth and Doctrines of our Church." [14]

In turn, Anglican pamphleteers tend to regard the Puritan re-emphasis on sola fide as encouraging an indifference to works that "gives way exceedingly to loosenesse," and ultimately to the moral dangers of antinomianism that were producing such a stir in the Puritan colonies of Massachusetts.[15] John Sedgwick condemns this "newly revived" antinomianism that is both "Law-destroying, and Dutie-casting down"; John Harris charges that a Puritan will neglect his "pious dutie" and "make a zealous shew of serving God, but expresse the contrary in his life and conversation."[16] The dismissal of works as an adjunct to faith, the Anglicans fear, will lead to civil and religious anarchy. Thus while the Puritans fling fearful accusations of Arminianism, Pelagianism, Popery, and the abolition of grace at Anglicans, Anglicans fling back accusations of antinomianism, hypocrisy, and neglect of charitable works. While neither position, of course, is as extreme as its opponents contend, these charges couch the controversy in such terms as to make the relationship of faith and

works a matter of real importance.

The structural division of the Religio, sensitive to the heat of such debate, symbolizes the antithesis between faith and charity and presents, on the surface, a clear opposition of a "Calvinist" sort. However, Browne's attitude to paradox, as we have said, is not wholly one of dogmatic assertion: the paradoxical oppositions he accepts are also subjected to the equivocations of his style. Structurally, therefore, the Religio offers a doctrinal paradox that Browne believes must receive assent. Stylistically, it manifests Browne's unique response to that paradox, demonstrating the use of a literary and imaginative method that probes between the paradoxical extremes, transforming the initial tension of opposites into a creative symbiosis. Thus, while maintaining a position sympathetic to Calvin's view of paradox, Browne stimulates the mind towards discovering a personalized devotion that will harmonize the acceptance of dogmatic distinctions with the tolerance that appreciates different individual experiences of lived faith finding expression in works.

First of all, Browne acknowledges that faith and charity are dogmatically separated; that the Religio is binary bears witness to this disjunction. At the end of Part I, however, Browne stresses the limitations of such an abstract division:

> I doe not deny, but that true faith, and such as God requires, is not onely a marke or token, but also a meanes of our Salvation; but where to finde this, is as obscure to me, as my last end. And if our Saviour could object unto his owne Disciples, & favourites, a faith, that to the quantity of a graine of Mustard seed, is able to remove mountaines; surely that which wee boast of, is not any thing, or at the most, but a remove from nothing. (I. 60. 69)

For Browne, what men now define as "faith" is "not any thing," at best a "remove from nothing," because it has no inherent "competence [or] abilitie to performe . . . good workes" (II. 13. 91). Not being that "true faith" which can "remove mountaines" and subsume charity within it, it is "a meer notion, and of no existence" (II. 1. 70). For the purposes of theological discussions the two virtues must be distinguished; practically, they should be fused in the life of the believer. According to Browne, therefore, "that other Vertue of Charity" must augment man's notional, or theoretical Faith to give it active being, and the opposing halves of the Religio must be held together in harmony (II. 1. 70).

The division of the Religio is thus the product and image of the divisions endemic to fallen human nature. That these divisions are necessary is, according to Browne, partly the consequence of the way in which the human mind works: reason tends to see things "divided or separated" (I. 12. 21). In a sense, these intellectual oppositions are valuable, just as Calvinist paradox is

valuable, since both reflect fundamental truths about the damaged human condition. Therefore, when functioning correctly as the tool of "double-faced" Philosophy (I. 6. 15), reason can provide a key to understanding the "distinct pieces" of the world and the "sundry and divided operations" of God's hand in Nature (I. 22. 33; I. 14. 23).[17]

However, as Browne continues to discuss reason, it becomes clear that its processes are also potentially destructive. Although the initial, obvious binary structure does reflect the mind's activity, Browne seems to say, the mind cannot be continually binary without getting into trouble and creating schisms that result in the death of individuals like Servetus. A "rebellious" reason only too easily violates the integrity of religion, subjecting it to "fewds and angry dissentions" (I. 9. 18; I. 19. 29). Thus disputations over points of dogma have caused the Church to fall from its "primitive integrity" into an unintegrated multitude of sects at war "dividing the community," as did the "first Schisme" of Lucifer (I. 21. 12; I. 4. 13; I. 7. 17); attempts to analyse divine mysteries have plunged men into "infidelity or desperate positions of Athiesme" "divided from all Religions" (I. 20. 30-1); exegetical quarrels over the Bible have led to the promulgation of "wicked Heresies and extravagant opinions" (I. 25. 36), and a loss of faith

in Scripture itself (I. Sections 21-3).

If such divisions are allowed to proliferate, moreover, religious schismatics fall further and further into multiplicity, approaching complete fragmentation. "Heads that are disposed unto Schisme and complexionally propense to innovation," Browne writes,

> are naturally indisposed for a community, nor will ever be confined unto the order or oeconomy of one body; 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. (I. 8. 17)

Indeed, schismatics condemn themselves to a Hell Browne defines as an absolute multiplicity: it is full of "subdivisions" (I. 59. 64), for "there are as many hells as Anaxagoras conceited worlds," each devil and sinner being not only a "hell unto himself" but further subdividing himself into "Atomes" (I. 51. 62).

Martial imagery is used throughout the Religio to heighten the reader's sense of the perils of disjunction and irresolution. Contraries appear always at war. The Catholics stand at "swords point" with the Anglicans (I. 3. 12); "inconsiderate zeale" rashly charges the "troopes of error" (I. 6. 15); the Jews and Mahometans are Christian "Adversaries" (I. 25. 36); the militants of learning give "wounds" for the "victory" or "conquest" of a point (II. 3. 75). However, the divided and embattled nature of man is not completely the result of his own willfulness; it

is also the result of his "disposition" as originally "composed" by God.[18] God, in two creations, formed "two affections" in man, a corruptible mortal frame and an incorruptible spiritual essence (I. 36. 46): thus for Browne man's very nature is raised upon a "masse of Antipathies," "a swarm of distinct essences," and a "world of contrarieties" (II. 7. 80). Human existence is thus intrinsically paradoxical, perpetually subject to both external and internal schism and strife. "We carry private and domesticke enemies within," Browne concludes, "publicke and more hostile adversaries without" (II. 7. 80).

However, Browne suggests that the ongoing battle within and without man is not irreconcilable. Paradoxical oppositions need not be simply destructive, as we have seen: the mind's ability to work in a "binary" manner is the basis of its analytical functions, and the dogmatic "Calvinist" division of faith and works that is manifested in the structure of the Religio may be harmoniously resolved. For Browne, existence is a struggle to achieve such resolution amidst "division," "antipathies," "contrarieties," "disputes," "irregularities, contradictions, and antimonies"[19] and, throughout the Religio, the hope of achieveing this is expressed in terms of the metaphor of the circle. Whereas the tension and strife of contraries is used to convey a sense of increasing disorder

and eventual dissolution, the circle is used to emphasize the presence of an encompassing order that can allow the individual to reconcile paradoxical oppositions within himself. The primacy of this metaphor is stressed by Browne in I. 7. 27:

> 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, which must obey the swing of that wheele, not moved by intelligences, but by the hand of God, whereby all States 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 a Helix that still enlargeth; but on a Circle, where, arriving to their Meridian, they decline in obscurity, and fall under the Horizon againe.

The warring of civil and religious "contrarieties" -- even of the whole world -- is ordered within the "predestinated" "swing of that wheele," moved by the "hand of God." The polarities of night and day, sun and moon, are ordered by God in a "vast circle" (I. 14. 23); the seemingly "loose and stragling" motions of Nature and Fortune are actually regulated "in a circle" (I. 18. 28; I. 16. 25); the antipathies of religious opinions are reconciled within the "great wheele of the Church" (I. 6. 15); the linear opposition of past and present is circularized by the "revolution of time" (I. 6. 16). The individual's ability to focus on the circular order that encompasses temporal dichotomies, Browne feels, thus provides the means of overcoming schism and coming to

terms with the binary division of the Religio itself.

The power of the circle to reconcile controversial oppositions is exemplified in its fullest sense in God. In contrast to Hell, which Browne views as completely multitudinous and divided, Heaven is a circular unity. Thus whereas in the human domain Faith and Charity remain opposed and divided, in God they are made one. Browne quotes "That allegorical description of Hermes" to define God: sphaera cuius centrum ubique, circumferentia nullibi" (I. 9. 19). In the sphere of God "there is no distinction of Tenses," God's "whole duration" being "but one permanent point without succession, parts, flux, or division" (I. 11. 20); Heaven itself is nothing but the "ubiquitary and omnipresent essence of God" (I. 35. 45), a sphere whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere. For God, therefore, the inner commitment to act (faith, in human terms), and the fulfillment of that commitment in action (charity) are indivisible. The "placet of [God's] will" is "fulfilled" "at the instant he first decreed it" (I. 11. 20), "for strictly his power is [but] the same with his will" (I. 27. 39):

> 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 wisedome naturally knowes what's best; his intellect stands ready fraught with the superlative and purest Idea's of goodnesse; consultation and election, which are two

> motions in us, are not one in him; his actions springing from his power, at the first touch of his will. (I. 13. 22)

God and his Angels "upon the first motion of their reason doe what we cannot without study or deliberation" (I. 33. 43). In His circle the two states cannot be distinguished, and the ideal synthesis of faith and charity that Browne conceives of is achieved. God is an absolute and indivisible Unity, eternal, immutable, and omnipresent; he is the "true and infallible cause of all" and, "being all things" can be "contrary unto nothing" (I. 18. 29; I. 35. 46). A self-enclosed and self-sustaining circle, He resolves paradox within Himself (II. 12. 86-7). So "In briefe, there can be nothing truly alone, and by its self, which is not truely one, and such is God: All others doe transcend an unity, and so by consequence are many" (II. 12. 87).

For man, however, such a simultaneity of faith and charity has been lost, and he stands poised between the contrary claims of his divided nature. Forced to exist amidst schism and division, he can unquestioningly accept his existence in this battleground and so submit himself to the "Calvinist" paradox of faith and works, as the Religio points out. Conversely, since man's spiritual essence partakes of the sphere of God, he is capable of acknowledging the existence of division while attempting to effect a reconciliation between the ex-

tremes. Far from mincing himself into "Atomes," he then finds himself able to balance paradoxical oppositions within the "one fabricke" of his own nature (II. 7. 80). Man is thus a "compendium," Browne explains, who can circumscribe within himself the "divided piece and endlesse volume" of all Creation (I. 15. 24). Paralleling the structure of the greater world, his "divided Antipathies and contrary faces" find resolution in the circle of his Microcosm, and "doe yet carry a charitable regard unto the whole, by their particular discords preserving the common harmony" (II. 7. 81):

> we are onely that amphibious piece betweene a corporall and spirituall essence, that middle frame 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 . . . . 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. (I. 34. 44-5)

Man is the "middle and participating" element that "linkes" the spiritual and material worlds, resolving the tension of "extreames" and "incompatible distances" within the circle of his own Microcosm. His chance of salvation, according to Browne, thus resides in his ability to reconcile the analogous "extreames" of faith and works in order to achieve the ideal synthesis of that "true faith." Man must endeavour to repair the division of the Religio within his own life. At best faith and charity should

form one simultaneity; in Browne's view, man's hope of redemption is contingent upon the resolution of this paradox within the "circle of [the] selfe" (I. 38. 49).

"The great advantage of his mean life," Browne writes in Christian Morals, "is thereby to stand in capacity of a better" (CM. III. 25. 287). The circumscription of opposites within the human microcosm puts man in such a "capacity"; his "endeavours" towards the reparation of division place him in "hope" of a resurrection (I. 13. 23). Accordingly, Browne equates the metaphor of the circle and its power to reconcile paradoxical oppositions with the third theological virtue of Hope. Hope does have a place in the Religio, therefore, but cannot be confined to either of its two Parts: rather, Hope is the midterm between Faith and Charity, the "middle frame that linkes those two together." Man, also a "middle frame," is the creature who exists "but in hopes, and probabilitie" (I. 33. 44).[20] Hope, the sustaining circumscription of the binary oppositions of the Religio, is likewise the sustaining circumscription of man himself; consequently, to the extent that an individual can harmonize in himself the two virtues of Faith and Charity in Hope of their reconciliation, the two halves of the Religio do merge.

If Hope resides in the ability of the individual to resolve antipathies within the circle of his own microcosm, then the presence of Hope in the Religio can be located

within the persona of Browne himself, and style manifests the persona. Whereas the argument and structure are binary, therefore, the style itself imitates the circular resolution of division that Browne advocates, and manifests the unique approach of the individual to religious paradox. The deliberateness of its complexity, as critics have frequently noted, is an "invitation to come out and play," a "recreation" rather than a conflict.[21] Stanley Fish argues that the prose induces a state of "self-confidence, which is the result of never having been really pained or challenged"; Joan Webber observes that Browne "does not make the reader worry," for the convolutions of the style always pull "the sting from pain."[22] Browne's rhetoric annihilates the tensions of his structural opposition in sheer anfractuosity. The style guides us to a calm centre in the whirl of extremes, to a state of patience, hope, and acceptance where antipathies are made concordant; the stylistic achievement of this concordance is Browne's hopeful imitation of what must be achieved within the self.

Webber has remarked on the "changeableness" of the persona in the Religio, who seems able to adopt instantly contrary positions.[23] Yet what she calls "changeableness" is actually the self's transcendence of change and the reconciliation of contraries in the achievement of an ordered circularity. Thus the style of the Religio, from

the individual sentences even to the basic twofold division of the work itself reveals a common pattern: the reader is moved from the tension of opposites to the circular harmonization of paradoxical extremes. Browne's sentences, like the Religio itself, tend to be binary structures which become oddly circular, resolving paradox in the discovery of a comprehensive circumscription.

Accordingly, Browne's sentences generally alternate statements and counterstatements, throwing the reader from one side of the argument to another. For example, he stands in religion "neither violently defending one, nor with the common ardour of contention opposing another" (I. 1. 11); he believes "many are saved who to man seem reprobated, and many reprobated, who in the opinion and sentence of man, stand elected" (I. 57. 67); he is "confident and fully perswaded, yet dare not take my oath of my salvation" (I. 59. 68); men are "railed into vice, but might as easily be admonished into vertue" (II. 4. 76). The prose is riddled with such dichotomies, for human reason begets division. However, these contradictions and disputations are always resolved within the circumscribing sensibility of Browne himself, whose moderation offers a "middle and participating" reconcilation of opposed positions. A clear idea of this circumscribing process can be found in the examination of the structure of an

entire sentence:

> 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; 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, [the sayings of the Seers, and the Chronicles of the Kings of Judas]. (I. 24. 35)

The short, unbroken opening clauses of the sentence, divided off by semi-colons, are set against each other: "some" have mourned for the works of Cicero; "others" for the library of Alexandria. However, the initial presence of Browne himself ("I HAVE heard") is felt before and behind the tension of these two opinions, and emerges fully to contain them in the tempering third clause, beginning his statement with the conciliatory and modest "for my owne part." The contrast of the first two clauses is moderated in the leisurely sweep of the third, with its elaborate parallelism ("and could with patience behold the urne and ashes of the Vatican, could I with a few others recover . . . .") and triplet (". . . the perished leaves of Solomon, [the sayings of the Seers, and the Chronicles of the Kings of Judas]."): the "deepe sighs" and "many groanes" of those who vainly "lament" and "deplore" the loss of pagan learning are reconciled within the "patience" of the conditionals "I think" and "could." The radical opinions of the advocates of human reason are blurred and softened within the circuitous

ramble of the sentence itself.

This same pattern is carried out on a larger scale within the individual sections of the work. Browne deliberately provokes the reader with sets of opposites and contrasting opinions which get blurred and then reconciled in an act of faith stated in such a way as to communicate its charitable intention. This is clearly evident in the design of Part I, Section 27. The first sentence of the section, carrying the weight of the shift from position to position, is long, broken, and labyrinthine -- the reader is quickly enmeshed in its intentional confusion and made to feel the blinding futility of such logic-chopping:

> THAT Miracles are ceased, I can neither prove, nor absolutely deny, much lesse define the time and period of their cessation; 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 wee shall not question those Writers whose testimonies wee doe not controvert, in points that make for our owne opinions; therefore that may have some truth in it that is reported of the Jesuites and their Miracles in the Indies, I could wish it were true, or had any other testimony then their owne Pennes: they may easily beleeve those Miracles abroad, who daily conceive a [far] greater at home; the transmutation of those visible elements into the body and blood of our Saviour: for the conversion of water into wine, which he wrought in Cana, or what the Devill would have had him do in the wildernesse, of stones into Bread, compared to this, will scarce deserve the name of a Miracle: Though indeed, to speake strictly, there is not one Miracle greater than another, they being the extraordinary effects 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.

Antithesis begins in the second, third, and fourth clauses and continues throughout the successive qualifications and parenthetical statements: a refusal to take a firm stand manifests itself in Browne's refusal to close the train of his thought and so relieve the reader by stating what he actually does believe. The seemingly emphatic statement of the first clause, "THAT Miracles are ceased," quickly vanishes in a series of "reasonable" qualifications and objections: Browne can neither "prove" nor "absolutely deny" their existence, "much lesse define" the date of their cessation; "we cannot deny" they existed after the Apostles only "if we shall not question" the authority of writers we agree with "in points that make for our owne opinions." Therefore, Browne continues, there "may" be some truth of the Jesuit reports of miracles in the Indies, but it must be remembered that the Catholics, who go so far as to "conceive" of the daily "miracle" of transsubstantiation, will believe anything. The rambling, "reasonable" investigation of miracles is equivocating itself out of existence, and the reader becomes unsure of where the sentence is moving, or of what position he is being asked to take.

At the end of the sentence, however, the tone changes. The evasions and frustrating distinctions of reason are taken up into a straight fideism, as Browne declares that the existence of miracles must not be proved by the tes-

timony of men or the assent of reason, but depends upon faith in God himself. Miracles are not the work of men, but "the extraordinary effects of the hand of God" to whom "there is not one Miracle greater than another . . . and to create the world as easie as one single creature." Browne's faith in and acceptance of the true inscrutability of miracles thus emerges as a result of his tolerant willingness to analyse and speculate, and his equally tolerant acknowledgement of the limitations of such investigation. Accordingly, the section continues towards a gentle acceptance of the ineffability of God and a final reconciliation of rational disputations:

> 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. I cannot see why the Angel of God should question Esdras to recall the time past, if it were beyond his owne power; or that God should pose mortalitie in that, which hee could not performe himselfe. I will not say God cannot, but hee will not performe many things, which wee plainely affirme he cannot: this I am sure is the mannerliest proposition, wherein notwithstanding I hold no Paradox. For strictly his power is [but] the same with his will, and they both with all the rest doe make but one God.

Reason refutes its own binary power: logic may "not understand" how God can "work contradictions," but men "dare not therefore deny" it. The sinuous ramble of the first sentence becomes a series of flat paradoxical

statements that challenge ratiocination. The limitations of human understanding are stressed throughout: men "too narrowly define" God, "restraining" Him to their own "capacities"; what they "do not understand" or "cannot see" they "affirme" does not exist. Man's failure to comprehend rationally thus finds expression in the incomprehensibility of paradox; yet paradox creates no controversial tension, and is resolved by the individual act of faith. Affirming his utter trust in God, Browne concludes that His miracles are "no Paradox," for they are harmoniously contained within the power and will of the "one God." Hence the oppositions and paradoxes of reason create no anxiety for Browne; rather, they are happily chased and pursued within the context of Browne's own circumscribing sensibility and his ultimate faith in God.

Accordingly, in both sentences and sections of the Religio the balanced "circle" of Browne's persona is used to reconcile oppositions and antitheses. A solution must not be forced by means of reason, Browne advises; the paradoxes of revealed faith must be accepted, but can be creatively reconciled within the harmony of individual religious experience. The circuitous style of the Religio expresses Browne's own hopes for such a resolution, and is thus the means by which contraries are brought together in accord. The sweeping circular action of the prose, enacting the reconcilation which Browne represents by

allusions to circles, dissolves the tensions that beset the human mind, moving it towards a personally unified devotion. And even as the style manifests a preservation of order in the midst of discord, so it holds together in harmony the two halves of the Religio, maintaining a creative symbiosis between the paradoxical extremes of Faith and Charity.

As we read Browne, we come to feel increasingly how the relationship of Faith and Charity is reciprocal, because the rhetoric encourages an increasing interpenetration of the two virtues. Our understanding, as it were, expands, and this brings us to a final aspect of Browne's deployment of circles, wherein he explores the relationship of faith to works as one of dilation. Part I, on Faith, Browne views as the centering of the self upon God. To be centric is to realize the adoption of God for one's centre in the "exercise" of faith;[24] to be eccentric is to be one of those "unstable judgments that cannot consist in the narrow point and centre of vertue without a reele or stagger to the circumference" (I. 3. 13). The discovery of faith Browne explains as an effort to "draw into a lesser circle" (I. 5. 14), "to take a full view and circle of my selfe" (I. 38. 49). Faith in God "composes" man as God originally "disposed" him, restoring his "disposition" to its original harmony; establishing peace in the human "Common-wealth" it provides a reconciliation

of the "fewds and angry dissentions between affection, faith, and reason" battling within man (I. 19. 29). Consequently, Browne views faith as the restoration of order in the discovery of the spirit's true centre, and a nurturing of "that part of Divinity in us" in preparation for salvation (I. 39. 50).

A refusal to order the self upon God, however, causes one to be trapped within the circumscription of self-centeredness. Schismatic religious sects are "circumscribed by their doctrines and rules of Faith" (I. 2. 11), are often confined within the "circle of an heresie" (I. 8. 18), and, if their adherents cannot centre themselves upon God, they are absolutely circumscribed within this "circle of flesh" (I. 44. 55). Hence whereas a lack of true faith leads downwards to ever-tighter constriction, a discovery of faith leads to the reconciliation of division, conquered "not in a martiall posture, but on [one's] knees" in the "exercise" of a private devotion "contrary to reason" and its divisiveness (I. 19. 30; I. 10. 19).

Once the "exercise" of Faith has centred and ordered the individual, according to Browne, then it dilates into Charity. Charity, "our love both to God and man," is to "accomplish the Will and Command" of God by fulfilling the "duty towards God & our Neighbour" required of the Commandments.[25] In Browne's own words, it is "a competence,

and abilitie to performe those good workes to which the Almighty hath inclined my nature" (II. 13. 91); so for Browne, the self centered on God through the "exercise" of faith, enacts God's will.

Consequently, thereas Part I of the Religio delineates the restoration of order within the individual in the discovery of his true centre, Part II delineates the diffusion of that order throughout the external world. Caritas enables the self to move "within the circle of another" (II. 5. 78); hence Pride, the egotistical refusal to love nothing more than the self -- self-centeredness -- is the greatest sin against Charity (II. 8. 81). Charity leads to such a loving identification of the internal with the external that the charitable man can resolve divisions without as well as within himself: he can feel no "antipathies" (II. 1. 70), no "nationall repugnances" (II. 1. 70), no "reproach" for "whole professions, mysteries, [or] conditions" (II. 4. 76). The "scenicall and accidentall differences" between men can no longer prevent him from seeing and identifying with that "common and untoucht" part of all men (II. 13. 92).

Accordingly, for Browne, Charity is the diffusion and dilation of Faith throughout the external world. But he also conceives of it as an expansion towards God. To love that "common and untoucht" part of men is to love God himself, "or as it were a divided piece of him, that

retaines a reflex or shadow of himselfe" (II. 14. 92). Thus, with the radiating energy of Charity, Faith moves from the true centre of God towards a circumference which is also God:

> The earth is a point not onely in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestiall part within us: that masse of flesh that circumscribes me, limits not my mind: that surface that tells the heavens it hath an end, cannot perswade me I have any; I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty; though the number of the Arke do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my minde: whilst I study to finde how I am a Microcosme or little world, I finde my selfe something more than the great. (II. 11. 87)

Browne reverses the traditional division of the Commandments in Part II precisely to supplement this image and create a sense of expansion from self to world to God; as Kenelm Digby (though sarcastically) remarks, "he creepeth gently upon us at the first, yet he groweth a Gyant, an Attlas (to use his own expression) at the last." [26] The Religio Medici turns out to be structured not so much upon a straightforward binary opposition, but upon an ever-expanding circle. The "exercise" of Faith in Part I orients the individual towards a centre which is the immanent God; the exercise of Charity in Part II dilates that Faith towards a circumference which is the transcendent God. The relationship between Faith and Charity Browne views as a relationship between centre and circumference, and since the exercise of both virtues has the same goal, their integrity is reinforced.

Browne's use of the circle metaphor to transform the faith-works dichotomy into a dilation of centre towards circumference surmounts division and difference, reconciling opposites both within and without the self. We are asked to consider the "indifferency" (I. 1. 11) of a man who can say "I COULD never divide my selfe from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that, from which perhaps within a few days I should dissent my selfe" (I. 6. 15). In Part II, as Faith dilates into Charity, this "indifferency" becomes still greater; we learn he is of a "constitution so generall, that it consorts and sympathizeth with all things; I have no antipathies . . . . In briefe, I am averse from nothing" (II. 1. 70). Paradoxes, dichotomies, oppositions and contraries are all reconciled within a sweeping circular movement towards God, where polarities are ultimately unified and made one.

Throughout the Religio, therefore, Browne demonstrates his own method of interpreting religious paradoxes. Structurally, the work reveals an opposition between faith and works that is a necessary consequence of divided human nature, and must be dogmatically accepted. However, in the very act of posing this paradox, Browne's rhetoric strives to harmonize paradoxical oppositions within the enactment of an individual lived faith. This

is achieved through the use of the circle metaphor and the manifestation of that metaphor in the circuitous windings of his style. In exploring a doctrinal paradox, Browne finds that its extremes interpenetrate and become oddly circular, annihilating dogmatic conflicts and tensions in the achievement of a life infused by grace.

Chapter III

Hydriotaphia and *The Garden of Cyrus*: The Paradox of Death and Resurrection

In the Religio Medici, while maintaining an orthodox distinction between man's corruptible mortal body and incorruptible immortal soul, Browne admits that his "greener studies" had been "poluted" with the heresy of mortalism, the belief "that the soules of men perished with their bodies, but should be raised againe at the last day" (RM. I. 7. 16). Browne clearly repudiates this heresy throughout the Religio, deploring the error of both "a Doctor in Physick of Italy, who could not perfectly believe in the immortality of the soule, because Galen seemed to make a doubt thereof" and a French "Divine and [a] man of singular parts, that on the same point was so plunged and gravelled with three lines of Seneca" that he "could not expell the poyson of his error" (RM. I. 21. 31). Yet two contemporary critics thought Browne's lapse serious enough to warrant even more unequivocal condemnation. Alexander Ross, in Medicus Medicatus, sedulously documents seven proofs of the soul's immortality;[1] Sir Kenelm Digby rebukes the impudence of a "Physitian whose fancy is always fraught with the materiall drugs that hee prescribeth" "and whose hands are so inured to the cutting up, & eies to the inspection of anatomised bodyes" in

attempting "so towring a Game" as a discussion of the soul.[2] "If he had traced the nature of the Soule from its first principles," Digby firmly concludes, "hee could not have suspected it should sleepe in the grave till the Resurrection of the body."[3]

Browne's concern to repudiate his early belief in the soul's immortality -- not to mention the earnest fulminations of Digby and Ross -- attest to the highly sensitive nature of the doctrine of immortality in the seventeenth century. Implicitly accepted by early and medieval Christianity, belief in immortality was threatened during the Italian Renaissance by a new skepticism engendered by the re-investigation of ancient philosophers, such as Epicurus, who seemed not so convinced that man possessed an immortal soul. By 1513 these unorthodox speculations had become popular enough to necessitate condemnation, and at the Fifth Lateran Council Leo X issued a papal decree affirming the immortality of the soul. The conservatism of the Reformation also reinforced the suppression of liberal and skeptical philosophy; Calvin's rigorous insistence on the soul's immortality resulted in even more rigorous attacks on the Protestant sects which denied it, notably the Swiss Anabaptists, whom Calvin attacked in his Psychopannychia.

However, the rise of English latitudinarianism helped pave the way for a revival of the heresy in England, where

increasingly materialistic tendencies of thought placed the doctrine of immortality under strain.[4] The influence of Cartesian dualism, coupled with a growing scientific interest in the purely corporeal side of Descartes' theory, threatened completely to discredit the doctrine; indeed, it seemed a denial of man's immortal soul must lead to a denial of God himself.[5] To avoid this danger, it was felt necessary to reconcile faith in human immortality with the empirical evidence of the new materialism. Such a reconciliation was attempted by two schools of thought contemporaneous with Browne: the English mortalists, who tended to resolve the Cartesian dualism by concentrating on the materialist side of Descartes' philosophy, and the Cambridge Platonists, who tended to focus on Descartes' idealism.[6] Both groups appealed to Browne's sympathies: yet their influence upon those of his works which deal most plainly with death and resurrection, Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus, has not been investigated.

The revival of mortalism in the seventeenth century was not simply an expedient way of giving in to the claims of materialism: in Milton's case, at least, it arose out of a desire for the purification of doctrine and the establishment of a belief based firmly upon correct Scriptural exegesis.[7] But in the contemporary intellectual milieu the mortalist position proved particularly appealing, since it solved the problems of dualism by making man a

wholly material entity. For various reasons, therefore, writers as diverse as Richard Overton, Thomas Hobbes, and Milton promulgated the belief that the soul of man is propagated with the body, exists inseparably from the body, and dies with the body. Man is not a duality, insists Milton, but a unity, "intrinsically and properly one . . . . He is not double or separable"; Hobbes concurs in condemning the "Error of Separated Essences."[8] Moreover, this single essence is completely mortal. The "whole man is corruptible," says Overton, "and the whole man dies."[9] The Hell-hatch'd Doctrine of th'immortal Soule" has been replaced by a doctrine which insists that "soul" signifies only "Body and Soul jointly, the Body alive," a material unity that will utterly perish and corrupt.[10] Thus man, by his very nature, is bound to the world of matter.

Notwithstanding their advocacy of such materialism, the mortalists uniformly seek to conform also to the demands of religion by adhering to the doctrine of an immortality conditional upon the Resurrection. So, despite lack of an immortal soul that will ascend to heaven upon the death of the body, man will be completely restored to life on the Last Day, attaining immortality by the grace of God. "Immortall Life," explains Hobbes, "beginneth not in man, till the Resurrection, and day of Judgment; and hath for cause, not his specificall nature, and generation;

but the Promise."[11] Immortality is, then, totally contingent upon a divine grace which transcends and transfigures the absolute mortality of human nature. The doctrine is briefly encapsulated by the full title of Overton's work:

> MANS MORTALITIE: OR A TREATISE Wherein 'tis proved, both Theologically and Philosophically, that whole Man (as a rationall Creature) is a Compound wholly mortall, contrary to that common distinction of Soule and Body: And that the present going of the Soule into Heaven or Hell is a meer Fiction: And that at the Resurrection is the beginning of our immortality, and then Actuall Condemnation and Salvation, and not before.

Mortalism, although officially condemned, can hence be viewed in one respect as an extension of orthodox Calvinism, since total mortality underlines absolute human dependence upon God's grace to assure resurrection. Yet in further distancing God from the physical world, the doctrine becomes somewhat paradoxical, combining as it does the extreme bleakness of material dissolution with an equally extreme faith in something as resistant to empirical proof as the Resurrection. The apparent incompatibility of these two extremes troubles the mortalists' major opponents, the Cambridge Platonists. The Platonists fear, first of all, that such a severance of God from the world of matter will result in the abandonment of God altogether, and bring on the ethical dangers of materialism they saw exemplified in Hobbist social philosophy. Accordingly, Ralph Cudworth's Intellectual System of the

Universe, primarily an attack on Hobbes, explicitly equates materialism with atheism:

> all Atheists are mere Corporealists, that is, acknowledging no other Substance besides Body or Matter . . . .[they] Madly dote upon Matter, and Devoutly worship it, the only Numen.[12]

Consequently, whereas the mortalists seek to reconcile materialism with the demands of religion by positing a resurrection in which the corporeal substance of man will be restored and immortalized, these Platonists seek to assimilate the discoveries of the new science into an older hierarchical model of the universe, in which the realm of transcendent Ideas takes precedence over the realm of material objects. Though initially enthusiastic about Cartesian philosophy because it seemed to combine the main tenets of contemporary empiricism with a reassuring belief in the existence of God and the soul, the Cambridge Platonists quickly became disillusioned with Descartes' tendency to view the realm of corporeal bodies as independent from spirit.[13] Matter, for these writers, was rather a passive and inert mass at the nadir of the scale of being, completely dependent upon the spirit's superior reality. "Spirit," Henry More explains, "is to be acknowledged the true principle of all life and motion."[14] Thus More's "Spenserian" venture, A Platonicall Poem of the Immortality of Souls, unequivocally condemns the mortalists' "foul blasphemous belch":[15]

> And whereabout that inward life is seated,
> That moves the living creature, they espie
> Passing in their dim world. So they'r defeated,
> Calling thin shadows true reality
> And deeply doubt if true corporalitie,
> (For so they term those visibles) were stroy'd
> Whether that inward first vitalitie
> Could then subsist. But they are ill accloy'd
> With cloddie earth, and with blind duskishnesse annoy'd.[16]

For More, the "corporalitie" of the body is but a "thin shadow" in a world of "dim" "duskishnesse"; mortalists are "defeated" by mistaking this "visible" for the "true reality" of the living creature. Such "true reality" can lie only in the soul, a "Substance really distinct" from the phantasmagoria of decaying matter, and immune to physical death.[17]

In order to establish firmly his Platonic idealism, More attributes to the spirit the quality of spatial extension Descartes viewed as the fundamental attribute of corporeal bodies. Spirit thus becomes as "real" for More as matter for Descartes.[18] Accordingly, More and the Platonists resolve the Cartesian dualism by revitalizing the concept of a physical world permeated with and sustained by spirit, spirit more "real" than its material shadows. As a result, human immortality becomes independent of corporeal resurrection, which is reduced to "a minor, if not irrelevant position in the Christian eschatological drama."[19] For the Cambridge Platonists, immortality is indeed the natural state of man, who is a spirit sojourning only briefly in this "dim world."

Mortalists and Platonists therefore take polar attitudes to the nature of life after death. In I. Cor. 15: 35-54, St. Paul explains that the dead shall arise in "celestial" flesh, the "natural body" "changed" "in the twinkling of an eye" into an "immortal" and "incorruptible" "spiritual body."[20] The composition of this "spiritual body," however, is eminently debatable. Due to their emphasis on the corporeal, the mortalists tended to materialize such a transfiguration. Asserting that the dead would arise in their own physical bodies, they found themselves frequently forced to squabble over such futile questions as to whose "spiritual body" a particle from a cannibal's victim would belong.[21] Conversely, the Platonists tended to push spiritualization very far indeed. While asserting that the soul assumes first an "Aereal" and then an "AEthereal" body each quite different from the gross "Terrestrial" corpse, More even claimed that his own body exuded a "flower-like fragrance" and had become etherealized.[22]

By the time of the joint publication of Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus in 1658 this debate was already well underway. Richard Overton had produced Mans Mortalitie in 1644; Leviathan appeared in 1651, and Milton's Christian Doctrine was soon to follow. On the Platonist side, Henry More had published his Philosophical Poems in 1647 and An Antidote against Atheisme in 1653; The Immortality of

the Soul was to appear in 1659. Browne's early involvement with the mortalists and his concern to assert the immortality of the soul implies that he took this debate quite seriously, and he clearly feels the attraction of both positions. As Digby points out, a "Physitian" "inured" "to the inspection of anatomised bodyes" is halfway down the road to materialism; however, Browne's Platonizing tendencies are just as strongly marked. In discussing death and resurrection Browne is therefore under particular strain, and the tension between the mortalist and the Platonist perspectives is reflected in the paradoxical treatment of these issues in Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus.

The fact that these two works were jointly published by Browne invites their comparison, and indicates that their opposition is structurally significant. In conjunction, they tempt us, as do the two sections of the Religio, to accept the flat contradiction of a "Calvinist" paradox: in this case, Browne sets the "materialist" against the "spiritualist" perspective on life and death. As in the Religio, however, Browne's style works to complicate the initial division, invites consideration of the consequences of any simple either/or decision, and stimulates the mind towards the discovery of a truth about immortal life that becomes more comprehensive in incorporating both possibilities.

In the Religio, Browne declares that man is no purely material or spiritual being, but rather an "amphibious piece betweene a corporall and spirituall essence" (RM. I. 34. 44), compounded of a "fabricke" of flesh "that must fall to ashes" and a soul that subsists "beyond the body" by the "priviledge" of its "proper nature," knowing "neither contrary nor corruption" (RM. I. 37. 48). Such duality leads Browne to conclude that the "spiritual body" cannot be simply "corporall" or "spirituall," but must consist of a mysterious refinement of the whole nature of man. Thus Browne provides his own "hermeticall" definition of death:

> est mutatio qua perficitur nobile illud extractum Microcosmi; for to mee that consider things in a naturall and experimentall way, man seemes to be but a digestion, or a preparative way unto that last and glorious Elixar which lies imprisoned in the chaines of flesh, etc. (RM. I. 39. 50-1)

So death, according to Browne, is the full flowering of human potential in the "Elixar" of the "spiritual body." The nature of such a realization, however, cannot be imagined; confined within the categories of its logic, the mind must conceive the "spiritual body" either as resurrected "corporall" flesh or as an aetherealized "divine" spirit (GC. IV. 220). The binary opposition of the material and the spiritual perspectives in Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus is the result of just such a logical dissection, and Browne, as a man of science, well

knows the advantages consequent upon this type of analysis. Thus the frequently enumerated polarities of the two works reinforce the reader's sense of division: death and life, body and soul, substance and form, passion and reason, ignorance and knowledge, accident and design, time and space, darkness and light, earth and heaven.[23] Yet Browne presents such polarities only to confound them. By stylistically pursuing each pole to its extreme he forces the reader to confront its opposite, so that the manifest insufficiency of either the "material" or the "spiritual" view of death and resurrection finally reveals the necessity of both. This continuous breakdown of each polarity is instrumental in complicating the straightforward paradox that the two works present, preparing us for Browne's own conception of the "spiritual body" as the "Systasis or harmony of those two, in the mystical decussation" (GC. IV. 220).

Hydriotaphia focusses on the material body; its purpose is to explore the future of corporeal substance, and discover "how long in this corruptible frame some parts may be uncorrupted" (H. Letter. 131). The answer is not reassuring. Man declines into the earth, and his substance cannot be preserved. He is reduced to a "few pounds of bones and ashes" "distinguishable in skulls, ribs, thigh-bones, and teeth" (H. III. 153; II. 140); his body is a "combustible lump" (H. III. 154); his tombs

preserve "not beyond powder" (H. III. 154); his decaying corpse congeals "large lumps of fat, into the consistence of the hardest castle-soap" (H. III. 156). The only signs of life detectable in the midst of this material degeneration are "snakes out of the spinall marrow" (H. III. 155). Thus in Hydriotaphia death is indeed a "deformity" (H. IV. 157); the body's integrity is violated by "devouring" fire or the "putrefaction" of earth (H. III. 154; I. 137), and all that remains, man's "last and lasting part," are his "collected bones and Ashes" (H. III. 140).

While the intensity of this concentration on the objective facts of material decomposition could be depressing, however, Browne's style contrives to make them appear bizarrely amusing. In his lengthly historical discussion of the relative merits of cremation and burial, for example, Browne lightly produces as evidence "God himself, who buried but one" and "was pleased to make choice of this way" (H. I. 136); Christians, he satirically points out, "though they stickt not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, detested that mode after death" (H. I. 135); the "Musselman beleevers," expecting future trial by angels, make their graves "so hollow, that they may rise upon their knees" to plead their case (H. I. 139); the "ancient Patriarchs" interred themselves as close to Calvary as they could, hoping to "make a part

of that Resurrection . . . which should produce the first-fruits of the dead" (H. III. 157). The incongruous literalism of this approach to death and resurrection does ridicule materialism: since all that remains of the body are bones and ashes, debate over "contrivances of . . . corporall dissolution" seems "phantasticall," and pathetically absurd (H. I. 136).

For Browne, however, it seems the very fact that such debate is not to be taken seriously implies human nature somehow transcends it, and this tends to validate the enduring hope of a resurrection that underlies the obvious vanity of human attempts at corporeal preservation. By so reducing the human to the crassly material, Browne demonstrates the fundamental insufficiency of the materialist view of life after death. For instance, the manner of Christ's resurrection from the tomb is described in curiously tactile terms, as Browne delineates the effect of:

> that rising power, able to break the fascinations and bands of death, to get clear out of the Cere-cloth, and an hundred pounds of oyntment, and out of the Sepulchre before the stone was rolled from it. (H. I. 139-40)

If Richard Crashaw compels a reaction against materialism by exploiting its horrors, Browne does so by pointing out its absurdities. The mysterious force of "that rising power" in breaking the "fascinations and bands of death" is revealed in images so pathetically incongruous

with the miracle of resurrection that we are provoked to laugh: Christ's ascent into heaven is reduced to the ability to extricate himself from a shroud saturated with a hundred pounds of oils, and break out of a sepulchre. Confrontation with this disturbing contradiction forces the reader onto the sense of a truth about death and resurrection beyond what the corporeal perspective of Hydriotaphia can encompass. According to Browne, materialism cannot provide a comprehensive account of human experience; the "superior ingredient and obscured part of our selves" does not submit to its absurdities, and persists in affirming that "we are more than our present selves," more than a crass material "lump" (H. IV. 164).

Throughout Hydriotaphia, Browne provokes in various ways our exploration of this innate human tendency to look beyond the mere depressing decay of material substance, and so consider the possibility that death may not be just a "deformity," but rather the creation of new form. In Hydriotaphia time is the agent of destruction; its relentless linear progression "antiquates Antiquities, and hath an art to make dust of all things" (H. V. 169). So all-encompassing is this temporal movement "which scarce stands still one moment" that time "grows old it self" (H. V. 167, 168); condemned to live in its "latter Scene" (H. V. 166) man can but watch "all things"

move towards final annihilation, condemned to crumble into "dust" and decline into the final oblivion of the urn. Since life is thus nothing but a continual process of decay, according to Browne, life itself is a death, and human existence is confined within the urn. Thus death is the midwife or "Lucina" of birth, for "we begin to die when we live" and life is but "a prolongation of death" (H. V. 167, 164-5). But the very intensity of the statement that physical life is a death and man lives in the urn evokes its antithesis, an analogy that entertains the possibility of an alternative to temporal decline.

Accordingly, though time does annihilate the body and reduce it to dust in the urn, Browne, staring at the urn, cannot avoid suggesting that it resembles a womb:

> most imitate a circular figure, in a spherical and round composure; whether from any mystery, best duration or capacity, were but a conjecture. But the common form with necks was a proper figure, making our last bed like our first; nor much unlike the Urnes of our Nativity, while we lay in the nether part of the Earth, and inward vault of our Microcosme. (H. III. 148)

This analogy appears with increasing frequency throughout Hydriotaphia. The bones of the dead are wrapped and dried at the mother's breast, "the first fostering part, and place of their nourishment" (H. IV. 158-9); corpses are buried on their backs, contrary to "our pendulous posture, in the doubtfull state of the womb" (H. IV. 160); falling into death "by long and aged decay" men "make but one

blot with Infants" (H. V. 164-5). In moving from birth to death, therefore, Browne implies that no man is destroyed by the relentless decline of time; rather, he comes full circle to a womb-like urn that points towards the possibility of restoration and recreation.

Moreover, Browne is prepared to carry the analogy still further. If life in the body is life in an urn, then that urn is also a womb: men live but in an "Embryon" state (H. IV. 162), in the "Chaos of pre-ordination, and night of their forebeings" (H. V. 170). So the apparently inexorable destructiveness of time is consistently undermined by the resemblance of womb to urn, a resemblance which Browne uses to hint at the hope of rebirth suggested by cyclic renewal.

The prospect of rebirth from the "Chaos" and "night" of the corporeal body also indicates the presence of a formal design underlying the material dissolutions portrayed in Hydriotaphia. If man really does subsist only in his physical substance, then the "Opium" of time obliterates him "without distinction to merit of perpetuity" (H. V. 166, 167); his attempts at self-preservation are frustrated by blind contingency. "Earth hath engrossed the name," Browne writes (H. I. 135); accordingly, the process of temporal decline and decay in Hydriotaphia results in a complete destruction of the individual being. All that can be achieved is a morbid reconstruction of the

physiognomy (H. III. 156). Indeed, Browne concludes, "who were the proprietaries of these bones, or what bodies these ashes made up" is "a question above Antiquarianism" (H. V. 165). They are but "Vain ashes,"

> which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves a fruitlesse continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as Emblemes of mortall vanities; Antidotes against pride, vainglory, and madding vices. (H. V. 165)

Although Browne asserts that "To live indeed is to be again our selves" (H. V. 171), the chaotic material decay in Hydriotaphia thus appears to deny the possibility of such a reconstruction. Yet once again, Browne provokes a rejection of this reductiveness by referring in various ways to a formal principle in man -- the soul -- which can endure beyond contingency and corruption. Associated with light in Hydriotaphia, this principle is the "invisible Sun within us," sustaining the "pure flame" of life even in the darkness of the grave (H. V. 169). Browne states that only this "soul subsisting" can give matter the formal coherence needed to "salve the individuality" (H. III. 157), and indeed, underlying the dissolution related in Hydriotaphia is a pervasive design that suggests the presence of such form within them, points forward to the quincuncial order of The Garden of Cyrus, and possibly, for Browne, even sustains Hydriotaphia itself.

The quotation from Propertius which appears beneath the urns in the frontispiece hints at the nature of this design: "Behold, I an now the burden which is lifted with five fingers."[24] The funeral ashes of a man can be held in one unaided hand. Yet since five is the number of order and design in The Garden of Cyrus, this quotation suggests that some form, symbolized in the quincuncial design of the fingers, can enable whatever remains of human identity -- even ashes -- to defeat mere dispersal and dissolution. Furthermore, it draws our attention to the structure of Hydriotaphia itself, which is, pointedly enough, composed of five chapters. Though F. L. Huntley contends that "Urn Buriall has five chapters more by sympathy" with the five chapters of the Garden "than by organic necessity,"[25] the "Quincunciall Ordination" (GC. I. 183) of the first work is really of primary importance. The presence of this design underlies and organizes the disorders illustrated in Hydriotaphia, urging acknowledgment of a formal principle that will finally redeem the deformity of chaotic matter, as Browne had observed in the Religio:

> Those bodies that we behold to perish, were in their created nature immortall, and liable unto death but accidentally and upon forfeit; and therefore they owe not that naturall homage unto death as other bodies doe, but may be restored to immortality . . . 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 inaccessible parts, where they may best protect themselves from the action of their Antagonist. (RM. I. 48. 59)

The extreme to which Browne pushes materialism urges an opposing truth upon us. Browne clearly shows how any heavy emphasis on the decomposition of the material substance, the destructiveness of time, and the obliteration of personal identity quickly induces consideration of the incorruptibility of form, the potentialities of cyclic renewal, and the power of soul to transcend body. So we are asked to recognize that human experience cannot be constrained within the wholly corporeal, as we see how the mind revolts against such a confinement, and slips off into "collateral considerations." Such dissatisfaction with the "materialist" perspective naturally invites entertainment of the "spiritualist" view, and so Browne re-addresses the age-old, fascinating, and perplexing questions raised in Hydriotaphia in the subsequent Garden of Cyrus, where the "spiritualist" viewpoint is presented and pursued to its own extreme.

Whereas Hydriotaphia deals with the properties of material substance, The Garden of Cyrus deals with form. Browne, in the Garden, considers the figure of the quincunx, a geometrical form composed of a rectangle bisected crosswise from corner to corner, forming a central intersection of "decussation." His observations lead him to

declare that the quincunx is the basic form underlying all reality, and The Garden of Cyrus is an exhaustive investigation into the "elegancy of this order" with its "severall commodities, mysteries, parallelismes, and resemblances, both in Art and Nature" (GC. I. 183). Accordingly, in the Garden, man is not a gross material lump subject to continual erosion and the threat of ultimate deformity. Rather, he is a creature whose whole existence is a "delightfull" (GC. Letter. 176) manifestation of quincuncial form. He hears and sees quincuncially (GC. IV. 219); he thinks quincuncially (GC. IV. 219-20); he moves quincuncially (GC. III. 206); his outspread body forms a quincunx (GC. III. 204-5). Man is indeed "more" than this corporeal body -- he is a "shadow of the Harmony," an "Epitome" of the quincuncial design (GC. III. 209; Letter. 176).

This "delightfull" emphasis on form is reassuring after the gloom and decay of Hydriotaphia; yet the extreme to which Browne pushes this formalism has its own peculiar kind of melancholy. If Hydriotaphia is oddly literalistic in its approach, the Garden is bizarrely symbolic, and the sheer over-elaboration of the quincuncial form detracts from the initial reassurance it offers. For example, Browne finds that the very inner organs of man's body exemplify this "elegant ordination" with a baroque opulence that is slightly

oppressive (GC. III. 190):

> This Reticulate or Net-work was also considerable in the inward parts of man, not only from the first subtegmen or warp of his formation, but in the netty fibres of the veins and vessels of life; wherein according to common Anatomy the right and transverse fibres are decussated by the oblique fibres; and so must frame a Reticulate and Quincuncial Figure by their Obliquations, Emphatically extending that Elegant expression of Scripture; Thou hast curiously embroydered me, thou hast wrought me up after the finest way of texture, and as it were with a Needle. (GC. III. 204)

The extent to which Browne elaborates the symbolical "Figure" renders the image somewhat absurd. Man is a cloth spread out on a loom, "the warp of his formation"; his "veins and vessels" are woven by the warp and woof of "netty fibres"; thus the body of man is "wrought up" and "embroydered" after the form of the quincunx. The mind boggles at the extravagance of the design: as Dr. Johnson observed, "a reader, not watchful against the power of [Browne's] 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."[26] The extreme to which Browne carries this symbolism thus proves just as unsatisfying as the literalism of Hydriotaphia. The material reality of the body cannot be "embroydered" out of existence, and the Platonic elegance of the quincuncial form does little to alleviate the horrors of corporeal decay. The fact of physical existence resists such abstraction: the

fantastic ingenuity of this eternal pattern is inevitably confronted by our awareness of man's subjection to the "deformity of death" (H. IV. 157).

The fanciful exuberance of this over-Platonic conception of human nature is therefore insufficient as a perspective on life. In Hydriotaphia, Browne attacks the Platonists, calling them "Severe contemplators" who "conceive it superfluous to expect a resurrection out of Reliques," tending to devolve all "upon the sufficiency of soul existence" (H. III. 157; IV. 157). In the Garden, the material component is indeed forgotten. Christ's cross becomes no more than a "mystical1" symbol devoid of emotive capabilities (GC. IV. 220). Christ as a crucified reality is lost in a haze of symbolic ramifications: He is not so much the Saviour of humanity as the "sacred Letter X" who decussates the universe and gives it formal significance (GC. IV. 220-1). His "signality" appears in the "mysterious crosses of AEgypt" (GC. I. 182); "the labarum and famous standard of Constantine"; "the Hebrew Tenupha" (GC. I. 183); "the cruciated character of Trismegistus" (GC. III. 204), and the "figure of the brazen Serpent" (GC. IV. 220). But such a wholly symbolic cross proves emotionally unsatisfying, and our consciousness of the corruption of human nature that necessitated the Crucifixion urges us back upon the bleak materialism of Hydriotaphia. The human

cannot sustain either too much reduction or amplification; by an intensity of focus on substance and then on form Browne demonstrates the insufficiency of each single perspective and the necessity of both.

The deliberately heightened unreality of the quincuncial form in application to human nature undermines the pattern of cyclic renewal Browne outlines in the Garden. As opposed to Hydriotaphia, time is not linear but circular, and perpetual renewal enables the maintenance of the "delightfull" "elegancy" of the quincuncial design.[27] In this work, all creations strives towards the restoration and perfect exemplification of an Edenic order that stands "too early for Horoscopie" (GC. I. 179), beyond and before time. Paradise, according to Browne, is the "Prototype and originall of Plantations" (GC. I. 185), the first manifestation of the quincuncial form; the artificial, natural, and mystical forms of his Garden all work to "imitate," "answer," "resemble," or "correspond" to the harmony of man's "originall" home.[28] Thus, far from grinding all things to dust, time brings all things to the perfection of their Edenic "Prototype," and the Garden, instead of looking ominously towards the end of time, circles back optimistically to the Creation. The circularity of time perpetually "arriveth unto the same point again" (GC. III. 201), and perpetually renews "the excellency of this order" (GC. Letter. 176).

However, the cyclic perfection of the Garden cannot address the fact that man has been exiled from the eternal harmony of Paradise nor that the degeneration of human nature denies him the ability to recapture it. So our intuitions of Paradise are now but glimpses of a place, as Browne says in Christian Morals, "lost not only to our Fruition but our Knowledge" (CM. III. 11. 278). Accordingly, the Garden is shadowed by reminders of man's progression through time to death and dissolution. Browne makes reference to "Urnes" (GC. Letter. 177), the "Sepulchral Monuments of Martyrs" (GC. I. 182), the "Sepulchral bed" of the ancients (GC. II. 192), "And the craticula, or grate through which the ashes fell in the altar of burnt offerings" (GC. II. 187). Even admiration for Cyrus, "that splendid and regular planter" (GC. I. 181) is overlaid by the recollection of his "Tomb" and "remaining bones" discovered in Hydriotaphia (H. III. 156). The growth of forms from "crude pubescency unto perfection" in the Garden is haunted by the knowledge that, in our state of corruption, the moment of perfect consummation is also the moment of imminent decline and decay (GC. III. 198). After delineating the continual cyclic renewal of the Paradisal form artificially, naturally, and mystically, therefore, Browne closes the Garden upon a return to the dark night of material decomposition in which "there is little encouragement to dream of Paradise

itself" (GC. V. 226). The description of Eden only reminds man that he has fallen from it, and provides no solution to the fact of corporeal decay.

In its decline into night, The Garden of Cyrus declines also into "Chaos"; hence all order and stability are lost. Throughout the Garden, the controlled design of the quincunx exemplified the existence of a general formal principle impervious to death or decay, and provided an alternative to the uncontrollable disintegration of the body which predominates throughout Hydriotaphia. Yet material objects present in the Garden achieve fulfillment only in their realization of the geometric design, a design that endures the loss of its particular manifestations. So, whereas Hydriotaphia laments the fate of unique individuals, The Garden of Cyrus celebrates the perpetuation of "generalities" (GC. Letter. 175; V. 255). Personal destruction is ignored in this garden of forms: all things within it elegantly epitomize the "generality and antiquity" of the quincuncial figure, a figure whose perpetual endurance is assured by God, the "ordainer of order" himself (GC. V. 226).

A perspective which coldly views nature in terms of such generalities and geometric designs, however, finally misses all particular beauties. While the quincunx endures, the material bodies which so delightfully display it must crumble and perish. The formal principle is im-

mortal; but it is also undifferentiated. So in order completely to fulfill Browne's requirement of life after death -- "to be again our selves" (H. V. 171) -- matter "clothed with due accidents" is needed to "salve the individuality." The soul needs body and is incomplete without it. Thus Browne once again directs the reader back to the materialism of Hydriotaphia and, in doing so, contrives to pull his two works full circle. At the end of The Garden of Cyrus, we lose sight of the quincuncial principle as the reassuring optimism of the Garden declines into night, "the daughter of Chaos," who "affords no advantage to the description of order" (GC. V. 226). If Platonic form subsists within matter, then it must be subject to contingency and obscurity; accordingly, "Wildernesses" are made of the Garden's "handsome Groves" in order to demonstrate that design, from the human perspective, will always be partially obliterated by the dark "night" of material decay (GC. V. 226).

In short, the "spiritual" perfection of The Garden of Cyrus is as incomplete as the "material" corruption of Hydriotaphia; Browne's circularization of the two works manifests their interdependency. Neither a wholly corporeal nor a wholly Platonic perspective does justice to man's "amphibious" nature, and so neither a "mortalist" nor a "Platonist" conception of life after death is ade-

quate. Browne's own feeling is that the nature of the "spiritual body" must somehow encompass both perspectives, and he therefore directs the reader towards the apprehension of such a composition. This is implicit in the strategic passage that links the two works, which appears in the introductory letter to The Garden of Cyrus:

> That we conjoyn these parts of different Subjects, or that this should succeed the other; Your judgement will admit without impute of incongruity; Since the delightfull World comes after death, and Paradise succeeds the Grave. Since the verdant state of things is the Symbole of the Resurrection, and to flourish in the state of Glory, we must first be sown in corruption. Beside the ancient practise of Noble Persons, to conclude in Garden-Graves, and Urnes themselves of old, to be wrapt up in flowers and garlands. (GC. Letter. 176-7)

Browne is obviously being somewhat ironic: The Garden of Cyrus is not a Paradise, nor is Hydriotaphia completely concerned with the grave. However, the Garden follows Hydriotaphia as resurrection follows death because its main focus is the energy of an eternal, life-giving form which makes resurrection possible, whereas the main focus of Hydriotaphia is physical mortality. Here, Browne uses a plant metaphor to connect them. The relationship of death to resurrection, according to Browne, is the same relationship as that of seed to plant; "sown in corruption" and earth, man rises to "flourish in the state of Glory." Significantly, the metaphor originates from the same passages in St. Paul as those dealing with the nature of the "spiritual body," I. Cor. 15: 34-44. According to

Paul, the "natural body" is "sown" as a "seed" in "corruption," "dishonour," and "weakness"; "it is raised a spiritual body" in "incorruption," "glory," and "power." Browne's use of the metaphor is particularly interesting in light of the mortalist controversy. The central biblical quotation used by Overton, Milton, and Hobbes, Job 14:72, asserts that man is not like a plant and not capable of regeneration:

> For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
> Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;
> Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.
> But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?
> As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up:
> So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

Overton's exegesis typifies the mortalist interpretation of this passage: "Man (not his flesh only, for that makes not man; but flesh and spirit sensu conjunctio make Man) is not as a Tree, when he is cut downe, whose spirit liveth, and sprouteth forth, and continueth; but as the flowre of the field, (not the stalke, but the bare flowre) which totally fadeth and perisheth: Therefore man is wholly mortal; He shall die, and the Son of Man shall be made as grasse, ISA. 51. 12."[29] For the mortalists, man is not naturally immortal; therefore he is not capable

of natural growth and resurrection, but must rely completely upon God's grace. Similarly, the static perfection of the spirit conceived of by the Platonists negates the possibility of such a growth to fruition. For Browne, however, man is like a plant, and his readers familiar with the mortalist writings would immediately appreciate his adaptation of the Biblical metaphor.

As used by Browne, the plant metaphor conveys his own sense of the "spiritual body" as the mysterious fusion of the duality of matter and spirit, both of which must be recognized in the light of logic and imagination, into the perfection of "that last and glorious Elixar," where "the consumable and volatile pieces of our bodies shall be refined into a more impregnable and fixed temper like gold" (RM. I. 50. 61). Man is, then, neither a wholly mortal unity restored by grace, nor a wholly immortal unity unaffected by decay. Rather, he is a "seed" that grows "from crude pubescency unto perfection" (GC. III. 198), from death to resurrection. The movement through Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus adumbrates this process of maturation, and points towards the fruition of the Last Day that Browne describes in Pseudodoxia Epidemica:

> For then indeed men shall rise out of the earth: the graves shall shoot up their concealed seeds, and in that great Autumn, men shall spring up, and awake from their Chaos again. (PE. VI. 1. 399)

The descent into the urn in Hydriotaphia is thus the planting of a seed. Man "declines" into the earth, "whereof all things are but a colonie" (H. III. 154); he lays "down in darknesse" (H. V. 168). Yet the burial of the body, as we have noted, is inseparable from hopes of its restoration, hopes which Browne expresses in terms of a rising movement. Men "hope to rise again" and so inter their bones "no lower than they might receive them . . . content with less than their own depth" (H. I.135-6); because the saints "arose from graves and monuments about the holy City," the "ancient Patriarchs" hope to "rise" there (H. III. 157); the "bodies of men" shall "rise where their greatest Reliques remain" (H. III. 157). According to Browne, Adam's fall compels man to sink into the earth (H. IV. 164), but Christ's resurrection enables him to rise from it, and grow to his "fruition" (H. IV. 164).

The peculiar literalism of Hydriotaphia, however, gives these hopes of rising an ironic twist. In order to counter the decomposition of material substance, men erect monuments which attempt a perpetuation of the individual. Therefore, they parody the nature of resurrection. "Great Persons affected great Monuments," Browne explains (H. III. 147); "Ulysses in Hecuba cared not how meanly he lived, so he might find a noble Tomb after death." Yet, for Browne, monuments are only

"Mechanicall preservations" "whose duration we cannot hope"(H. V. 166). The "irregularities" and "wilde enormities" (H. V. 170) of these erections are expressed in the discovery of the urns. "Digged up," the urns "arise" from earth as "Emblemes of mortall vanities" (H. Letter. 132; V. 165); such "rising" is pathetically inadequate and ultimately "fruitlesse" (H. V. 165). "To subsist in bones and be but Pyramidally" -- or monumentally -- "extant," Browne concludes, "is a fallacy in duration" (H. V. 165):

> Pyramids, Arches, Obelisks, were but the irregularities of vainglory, and wilde enormities of ancient magnanimity. But the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian Religion, which trampleth upon pride, and sits on the neck of ambition, humbly pursuing that infallible perpetuity, unto which all others must diminish their diameters, and be poorly seen in Angles of contingency. (H. V. 170)

Christianity, Browne stresses, pursues genuine resurrection, "infallible perpetuity" whose "rising power" diminishes the vain erection of monuments and the "rising" of ashes. Accordingly, the dissatisfying, materialistic attitude to resurrection in Hydriotaphia is set against hints of the true nature of "rising" provided by Browne's references to plants. Indeed, the opening paragraph of Hydriotaphia contains the implications that are to be developed: "Urnes, Coynes, and Monuments," buried in the earth, lie "scarce below the roots of some vegetables" (H. I. 135), and Browne wonders at "some roots of Quich,

or Dogs-grasse wreathed about the bones" (H. III. 149). The fact that plants have their roots in the urn encourages man to hope that he too may arise from earth, or, as Browne says in Christian Morals, that vegetable "Regeneration may imitate Resurrection" (CM, II. 6. 262-3). In the hope that this "imitation" may prove accurate, man "plants" urns "laden with flowers and ribbons" (H. III. 150); his "cemiteriall cels" are decorated with "the flourishes of Cypresse, Palmes, and Olive" (H. III. 152), and his tombs with leaves or flowers:

> That in strewing their Tombs the Romans affected the Rose, the Greeks Amaranthus and myrtle; that the Funerall pyre consisted of sweet fuell, Cypresse, Firre, Larix, Yewe, and Trees perpetually verdant, lay silent expressions of their surviving hopes: Wherein Christians which deck their Coffins with Bays have found a more elegant Embleme. For that tree seeming dead, will restore it self from the root, and its dry and exuccous leaves resume their verdure againe; which if we mistake not, we have also observed in furze. Whether the planting of yewe in Chruchyards hold not its originall from ancient Funerall rites, or as an Embleme of Resurection from its perpetual verdure, may also admit conjecture. (H. IV. 159)

The tree is an "Embleme of Resurrection" because, "seeming dead" in the earth, it grows again to "verdure." Hence whereas to be "Pyramidally extant" in urns, bones, and monuments proves but a "fruitlesse continuation" (H. V. 165), true resurrection is a growth to "fruition" (H. IV. 164), when the "first-fruits of the dead" shall arise (H. III. 157). Planted in the earth in Hydriotaphia, man rests in these "hopes of another life" (H. IV. 158),

hopes of growth and flowering that are realized in The Garden of Cyrus.

The Garden, F. L. Huntley contends, is itself structured upon the figure of the quincunx, with Chapter III -- on the imitation of the quincunx in nature -- forming the "central decussation."[30] This suggestion can be further developed. At the centre of Chapter III lies the real "decussation" of the work, a long "digression" (GC. III. 200) on the growth of seeds which is isolated because, as Browne points out, it has no relation to the quincuncial order (GC. III. 196). The seed, according to Browne, is a "fructifying principle," a "seminall . . . . Punctilio or generative nebbe" (GC. III. 196). From such "nebbes" "arise" "sproutings"; these "sproutings" grow and "proceed to a perfect plant" (GC. III. 196). The predominant vocabulary in this section -- "sprout," "dilating," "arise," "grow up," "enlengthen," "shooting," "extending," "ascendeth" -- deals with rising. Seeds undergo a "maturative progresse" from "crude pubescency unto perfection," "extending" from "exgùity and smallnesse" to the "magnalities" of "large productions" (GC. III. 198-9).

This "digression" on seeds, moreover, is directly connected with the burials in Chapter IV of Hydriotaphia. In Hydriotaphia, "Darknesse and light divide the course of time," but the light has passed and the "night of time" declines man into the grave (H. V. 168, 167). In the

Garden, however, "Darknesse and light hold interchangeable dominions," and a descent into the darkness of the urn is seen but as a preparation for new growth and light:

> But Seeds themselves do lie in perpetual shades, either under the leaf, or shut up in coverings; And such as lye barest, have their husks, skins, and pulps about them, wherein the nebbe and generative particle lyeth moist and secured from the injury of Ayre and Sunne. Darknesse and light hold interchangeable dominions, and alternately rule the seminall state of things. Light unto Pluto is darknesse unto Jupiter. Legions of seminall Idaea's lye in their second Chaos and Orcus of Hipocrates; till putting on the habits of their forms, they shew themselves upon the stage of the world, and open dominion of Jove. (GC. IV. 218)

In short, seeds, lying in "perpetual shades," are "lockt up" in a "gomphosis or mortis-articulation," a death-like state (GC. III. 207); growing, they "diffuse themselves" into the "perfection" of plants (GC. III. 207). The obvious resemblance between seed and urn, both husks "wherein the generative particle lyeth moist and secured," allows Browne to classify the process of resurrection as just such a growth towards the attainment of perfection.

Accordingly, Chapter IV of the Garden proceeds to document the development towards maturity. Trees "runne up in height" to a "commodious radiation . . . and a due expansion" (GC. IV. 210); mint is observed "to send forth sprouts and leaves" (GC. IV. 211); plants are nurtured by "the rayes of Moon and Sunne, so considerable in the growth of Vegetables" (GC. IV. 211), and grow by "radiation or branchings" (GC. IV. 217). Moreover,

since this growth to verdancy is a "Symbole of the Resurrection," and since Browne regards resurrection as a refinement of essence, the chapter inevitably closes with the achievement of perfect harmony between the material and the spiritual in the "Systasis," the "mystical decussation" (GC. IV. 220). In this sense, the quincunx itself adumbrates the quintessence in which the "materiall and formall principles" are made one (GC. V. 222).

The growth of a seed from its "seminall Idaea" towards the fulfillment of its potential thus provides a metaphor for Browne's conception of death and resurrection and harmonizes the paradoxical opposition of matter and spirit in Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus. Man, a divided and amphibious creature, is planted in the earth; he is refined and perfected in growth. So the apparent polarization of Browne's two essays is transformed into a relationship of centre (seed) to circumference (perfect plant) very much like the relationship of faith to works in the Religio. Yet whereas the circles of the Religio liberate man from schism and division, here the circular cycle of vegetable generation turns out to be distressingly circumscribing. Browne stresses throughout that the metaphor of the plant is only an "Analogy" (GC. I. 183): it can provide but a "Symbole" of resurrection, a "shadow of the Harmony" (GC. III.

209). As Browne's contemporary Henry Vaughan remarks in the preface to his own work on resurrection, Man in Glory, all that can be known about life after death is but a shadow of what may be, "showne thee here through a glasse darkly, and but in part."[31] In ultimate terms, therefore, the cyclic renewal of plants is "darkly" unconsoling; to quote Vaughan again, from Man in Darknesse: "The Spring comes constantly once a yeere, and flowers, when the frosts are past, keep house no longer under ground, but feel the Sun, and come abroad. The leaves come again to whisper over our heads, and are as green and as gay as ever, but man dieth and wasteth away, yea man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"[32] In short, man is finally not a plant, and nature's cycles hold no promise for him. The seasons return, but he cannot.

The circumscribing aspect of vegetable renewal and decay is reflected in the cyclicism of Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus as a whole. As previously noted, the Garden comes full circle and declines into "night" and "Chaos"; man is trapped within this diurnal cycle that always return to corruption and darkness. "The account of time beganne with night," Browne explains, "and darknesse still attendeth it" (H. Add. from M.S: 172). So while both men and plants sink into "night," plants return, but men do not come again. Confined to the cycle, we cannot know what happens to them, for we

perceive but "through a glasse darkly" and see only shadows:

> 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. (GC. IV. 218)

Although human life is but a "shadow," however, so that the metaphor of the plant proves circumscribing, this "shadow" itself can provide intuitions about its source. "The greatest mystery of Religion is expressed by adumgration" (GC. IV. 218), Browne declares, and it is only through such "adumbration" as the plant metaphor that man can glimpse an order that transcends and sustains vegetable cyclicism. The hope of breaking free is implied by the circumscription itself.[33] Accordingly, even as the works as a whole must finally return to night and the "account of time," the cycle it portrays adumbrates another circle, stable and mystically mathematical, that stands outside of time. The end of The Garden of Cyrus composes these two circles. As the Garden itself descends into night and chaos, Browne makes us aware of the higher design: "All things began in order, so shall they end, and so shall they begin again; according to the ordainer of order and the mysticall Mathematicks of the City of Heaven" (GC. V. 226).

Death and resurrection, therefore, must ultimately remain mysterious: according to Browne, we can seek to

know of them only by analogy, hoping that such analogy will in some way prove valid. Man cannot achieve the ideal synthesis of the "Elixar" as he could achieve the synthesis of faith and works; consequently, whereas the Religio begins with the crossed oppositions of a paradox that Browne resolves into a circle, Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus create a circle that throws us onto the cross itself. While Browne stylistically explores the paradox of death and resurrection from the contemporary viewpoints of a "mortalist" and a "Platonist," and concludes that both perspectives must be incorporated within his own metaphor derived from the circular growth of plants, the inadequacy of this "circle" fully to express the mystery compels the exercise of faith, the paradoxes of which, as we have seen, Browne explores at length in the Religio Medici:

> There is but one who dyed salvifically for us, and able to say unto Death, Hitherto shalt thou go, and no farther; only one enlivening Death, which makes Gardens of Graves, and that which was sowed in Corruption to arise and flourish in Glory: when Death it self shall dye, and living shall have no Period.
>
> (CM, II, 12, 267)

Chapter IV

Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals: The Paradox of Science and Religion

Browne's involvement with the faith-works controversy as well as the mortalist-Platonist debate entails also the much larger problem of how religion can relate to the physical world in an age of science. Both Calvin's rigorous insistence on the depravity of human works and the mortalists' declaration that man is wholly material imply a discontinuity between God and the world; the Creator is totally transcendent of his Creation, which man must in turn transcend in order to worship Him. Claiming that God was completely transcendent and yet that he could be glorified through an investigation of his Creation, the scientists furthered this radical severance between worldly and other-worldly concerns: physical reality was the realm of "secondary causes" which man exploited for his material benefit; the meta-physical "first cause" was detached and remote, and spiritual concerns were dislocated from the material world. In this context, the latitudinarians' belief in the merits of individual endeavour and the Platonists' philosophy of a physical reality suffused and sustained by spirit imply a desire to maintain a more old-fashioned connection between God and the world.

Browne's concern with problems of belief in relation to science makes itself most clearly felt in two of his less important works, Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals. Formally, there is no connection between them. Pseudodoxia ran through eight reprints and three altered editions before the "compleat and perfect" work appeared in 1672.[1] Christian Morals, however, represents the fragments of what appears to have been Browne's last work (the title is not his own), and was collected and published posthumously by his daughter, Elizabeth Lyttleton, and John Jeffery, the Archdeacon of Norwich, in 1716.[2]

Superficially, the two works are distinct and, to complete the pattern I have examined in earlier chapters, it is interesting to point out that they manifest a paradoxical opposition between primary and secondary causes, between religion and science, much as Religio Medici examines the paradox of faith and works, Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus the paradoxes of belief in a spiritual body. The relatively minor literary interest of Pseudodoxia and Christian Morals does not merit extensive consideration. Nevertheless, a brief exploration of their relationship will succinctly elucidate Browne's method of interpreting dogmatic paradox, and will enable me to draw some final conclusions about the function of binary structures in his works as a whole.

As we have seen, Luther and Calvin emphasize faith

to a degree that causes them to devalue secular knowledge as a means to salvation; faith is the only certain means of redemption. A century later, Bacon approaches this division from the other side. Concerned for the advancement of secular knowledge, he declares that the realm of faith lies beyond human comprehension. Agreeing with Calvin and Luther, he affirms that God is the "final" or "primary" cause of things Who can be known to man only through faith and revelation; however, Bacon also claims that man can derive intellectual certainty in the limited realm of human experience by an examination of secondary causes, that is, through natural philosophy.[3] In The Advancement of Learning Bacon divides this philosophy into two branches: the inquisition of causes and the production of effects.[4] For Bacon, the attainment of absolutely certain knowledge about the structure of creation (the inquisition of causes) gives man the power to dominate, control, and manipulate the physical world (the production of effects). Thus philosophical speculations about the nature of reality are judged by their practical results. Accordingly, Bacon condemns the work of earlier philosophers -- notably Plato, Aristotle, and the Scholastics -- for producing philosophical systems "of futile disputations useless for works."[5] In Cogitationes de Namura Rerum he writes:

> in the fashionable philosophies we read of privation, form, the attraction of like to like, interaction between heaven and earth, the grouping of the elements by symbolising qualities, the influence of celestial bodies, sympathies and antipathies, specific hidden virtues and properties, fate, fortune, necessity. But such generalities as these are mere phantoms that float on the surface of things. I need hardly ask whether they enrich mankind or increase the number of his possessions. They merely inflate the imagination and are of no effect towards the accomplishment of works.[6]

For Bacon, human knowledge which is not demonstrably certain is not real. If knowledge is "barren" of "fruits," he writes, "let it be set at naught."[7] Religion is a matter of faith and revelation; philosophy is a matter of the technical manipulation of nature. Bacon did not intend to isolate God from the physical world, or to replace theological belief with mechanical production, any more than Calvin or Luther intended to abolish works or create the immoralities of antinomianism. However, Bacon's "philosophy of works" had precisely this effect.[8] While continually stressing the religious orthodoxy of his approach, Bacon denies the validity of theological approaches to the physical world which deploy "imagination" and its "phantoms" to reveal the glory of God suffusing Creation.[9] According to Bacon, God had created the world, but he could not be comprehended in it; it was His work, not His image. Therefore, men must "not presume by the contemplations of nature to attain to the mysteries of God."[10] Religion and natural philosophy cannot intermingle,

and in Bacon'natural philosophy and its works are stressed, albeit unintentionally, at the expense of faith.[11]

Bacon's approach to the establishment of certainty therefore reveals a profound distrust of the imagination. Man's mind is an "unequal mirror" that creates "deceiving and deformed images" of the world; these "idols" of the mind must be purged so that man can come to terms with nature clearly and objectively.[12] To imbue the world with theological or moral significances that cannot aid in the production of works, according to Bacon, is to impress such "deformed images" upon reality.

This empirical attitude leads to Bacon's attempted reformation of philosophical rhetoric. The scientist's mode of expression, Bacon feels, must correspond to the essential nature of reality; it must not present a false image of systematic completion. Therefore, Bacon's ideal discourse is to be in aphorisms, which, "representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to inquire further" and, since they "cannot be made but of the pith and heart of sciences" avoid the dangers of rhetorical elaboration.[13] Aphorisms are concrete, concise, and utilitarian; as such, they correspond to Bacon's philosophical ideal and re-inforce his separation of the mysteries of religion from the empirical procedures of scientific investigation.

Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals may each be seen as reflecting the concerns of one half of this

separation between profane and sacred knowledge. Yet just as the Religio complicates a straightforward distinction between faith and works and Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus complicate the opposition of matter and spirit, so Pseudodoxia and Christian Morals complicate the Baconian division to which Browne, with one part of himself, gave enthusiastic assent. Consequently, both works may be seen to manifest characteristics curiously at odds with their apparent functions, characteristics which Browne deliberately employs to suggest that while a separation between technical and theological knowledge is fruitful for the development of both, it must not be rigorously reinforced if it is not to be ultimately destructive.

Pseudodoxia is cast in a deliberately Baconian mold. Browne's preface "To the Reader" stresses the fact that he works for "the advancement of Learning" (PE. 6); the treatise is offered as a series of "sober Enquiries" (PE. 5) designed "to purchase a clear and warrantable body of Truth" (PE. 3):

> impartially singling out those encroachments, which junior compliance and popular credulity hath admitted. Whereof at present we have endeavoured a long and serious Adviso, proposing not only a large and copious List, but from experience and reason attempting their decisions. (PE. 3)

Browne evidently perceives the advantages of being Baconian: his "long and serious" endeavour enables him

to correct such preposterous errors as the belief that badgers have shorter legs on one side than on the other (PE. III. 5. 170-1), that a magnet placed under a pillow will reveal a wife's incontinency (PE. II. 3. 113), that Negroes are black because they were cursed by God (PE. VI. 11. 470-5), or that elephants have no joints (PE. III. 1. 157-61). Yet despite the fact that Pseudodoxia was obviously a "vastly learned contribution to scientific methodology" in its time,[14] it is articulated, as critics have noted, in incongruously "aesthetic terms."[15] Patrides remarks on a sense of "qualified despondency" suffusing the work, "because fabulous yet enchanting beliefs . . . must be sacrificed on the altar of demanding truth"; Joan Bennett observes that Browne is often intentionally "absurd" and "ridiculous"; F.L. Huntley is prepared to go even farther, and claim that Pseudodoxia is intended as "a vast ironic comedy."[16] Such a stylistic approach to the eradication of popular errors is certainly not characteristic of the impersonal, utilitarian, aphoristic mode advocated by Bacon; rather, we have a rhetorical method that is variously described as "aesthetic," "ridiculous," "ironic," "absurd," and full of "calculated ambiguities."[17]

Browne's juxtaposition of a Baconian search for objective certainty with this peculiarly non-Baconian style reveals Browne's willingness to indulge his imagin-

ation, and take off from straight observation into fantastical and playful speculation. For Browne, empiricism does not always provide satisfying truth, and the tangential offshoots of the rhetoric manifest an openness to consider things that may be metaphorically or emotionally true.

Accordingly, throughout Book I of Pseudodoxia, Browne is at pains to point out the dangers of an overzealously empirical approach to the world, a kind of idolatry of the literal fact. "THE First and Father-cause of common Error," the "depravity" of human nature caused by the Fall, resulted from literal-mindedness; tempted by "the Object it self" Adam and Eve neglected their "intellectuals" and "the Theory of truth" in favor of material reality (PE. I. 1. 17-19). "The second cause of Popular Errors, the erroneous disposition of the People" (PE. I. 3. 25), is partly caused by a submission to the "fallacies of sense," and a blind acquiescence to "sensible representations" and the "dulness of Idolatry" (PE. I. 3. 26-7). Similarly, "Verbal" errors can result from "converting Metaphors into proprieties, and receiving as literal expressions, obscure and involved truths" (PE. I. 4. 32), transferring "all deductions from Metaphors, Parables, Allegories, unto real and rigid interpretations" (PE. I. 4. 34); "Real" errors arise when men "conclude from the sign unto the thing signified . . .

converting the symbolical use of Idols into their proper Worship, and receiving the representation of things as the substance and thing it self" (PE. I. 4. 35). While advocating a Baconian search for objective truth, therefore, and obviously appreciating the advantages of such an approach, Browne remains acutely aware of tne dangers of simplistic literalism inherent in empiricism, and aware of the emotional complexities that cloud detached scientific investigation (PE. 6). For Browne, disinterested observation cannot be as easily severed from the imagination as Bacon seems to believe, and things may be true in metaphor that are errors in material reality.

An example of Browne's tentativeness and insight may be found in the section "Of the Picture of Adam and Eve with Navels" (PE. V. 5. 345-7). The section begins with examples of portraiture, which Browne concludes "cannot be allowed" on rational grounds: since the observed function of the navel is "to continue the Infant unto the Mother, and by the vessels thereof to convey its ailment and sustenation," Adam, who was never in the womb, could not logically possess one. Creation, Browne argues, must be distinguished from generation; not to do so is to subject the mind to feverish "imaginations that Adam was made without Teeth; or that he ran through those notable alterations in the vessels of the heart, which the Infant suffereth after birth."

However, after rationally investigating and dismissing the possibility that Adam and Eve could have literally possessed navels, Browne postulates the existence of a metaphoric navel, connecting not only Adam, but the whole world unto God:

> All the Navel therefore and conjunctive part we can suppose in Adam, was his dependency on his Maker . . . . and an umbilicality even with God himself. And so indeed although the propriety of this part be found but in some animals, and many species there are which have no Navel at all; yet is there one link and common connexion, one general ligament, and necessary obligation of all what ever unto God. Whereby although they act themselves at distance, and seem to be at loose; yet do they hold a continuity with their Maker. Which catenation or conserving union when ever his pleasure shall divide, let go, or separate; they shall fall from their existence, essence, and operations: in brief, they must retire unto their primitive nothing, and shrink into their Chaos again.

The pattern of approach in this passage is very similar to that used in Hydriotaphia: As Browne "rationally" investigates the problem his conclusions become more and more absurd. To admit that Adam possessed "that tortuosity or complicated nodosity we usually call the Navel," is to admit that he was created without teeth, that the egg came before the bird, and that dogs were created blind. The way out of such logic-chopping is offered through the introduction of a metaphor, and the reader becomes absorbed in the consideration of this imaginative truth.

A similar approach to a less exotic topic is found in the section "Of Hares" (PE. III. 17. 212-19). Here,

Browne investigates the supposed "double sex of single Hares, or that every Hare is both male and female." After a survey of the authorities supporting this opinion, Browne logically postulates that hares must be male and female either "by mutation and succession of sexes; or else by composition, mixture or union thereof." These two possibilities are accordingly probed both rationally and experimentally; yet the investigation is continually spiced up by playfully lewd explorations into the realms of human transsexuality and hermaphroditism. Both alternatives are admissible in hares, Browne affirms, both "being observable in Man": woman have changed their sex throughout history, "which occasioned disputes at Law, and contestations concerning a restore of the dowry"; hermaphroditism is equally rife, some going so far as to say that all humans are really man, "and raised a querie, whether any at the last day should arise in the sex of Women."

Browne also admits a third possibility, that of superfetation, "a conception upon a conception," whereby the extraordinary fertility of hares could have led to the belief that they were double-sexed. Again, this alternative is teasingly justified by an analogy to man. The female "Matrix" "which some have called another animal within us," may often receive "a strange and spurious inmate." There are many "merry" examples of such instances,

Browne explains, in those promiscuous "super-conceptions, where one child was like the father, the other like the adulterer, the one favoured the servant, the other resembled the master." These continual references to the anomalies of human sexuality culminate in a final fantastic analysis of all possible methods of copulation. Hares, coupling back to back, do not permit an observer "to judge of male or female" by means of the coital position; yet this is but the "constant Law of their Coition," which all animals, saving only depraved man, obey:

> For some couple laterally or sidewise, as Worms: some circularly or by complication, as Serpents: some pronely, that is, by contaction of the ventral parts in both, as Apes, Porcupines, Hedgehogs, and such as are termed Mollia, as the Cuttlefish and the Purple; some mixtly, that is, the male ascending the female, or by application of the ventral parts of the one, unto the postick parts of the other, as most Quadrupeds: Some aversely, as all Crustaceous Animals, Lobsters, Shrimps, and Crevises, and also Retromingents, as Panthers, Tygers, and Hares. This is the constant Law of their Coition, this they observe and transgress not: onely the vitiosity of man hath acted the varieties hereof; nor content with a digression from sex or species, hath in his own kind run thorow the Anomalies of Venery; and been so bold, not only to act, but represent to view, the irregular ways of Lust.

Interestingly enough, Browne gives no definitive solution to the problem of leporine sexuality; he seems to delight more in stylistic exploration than in actual scientific discovery. Thus the playful, ironic style of Pseudodoxia continually works to undermine its "Baconian" content, and direct the reader away from the "shell and

obvious exteriors of things" (PE. 6) towards the play of the individual imagination upon physical reality. For Browne, to demand absolute certainty from the physical world is dangerous, as man is "almost lost" in the "boundless" "waies" of "Error" (PE. I. 2. 25); the discovery of truth is therefore fraught with innumerable obstacles. Accordingly, Browne prefers to speculate rather than to assert, confident that God will finally and "truly determine these, and all things else" (PE. I. 1. 20).

So, in Pseudodoxia, Browne counsels man at last to resolve disputations by referring them to "GOD, who cannot possibly Erre" (PE. I. 1. 21). In Christian Morals, however, where such a spiritually-oriented counsel would appear appropriate, Browne, surprisingly, stresses that man himself is capable of discovering objective truth and downplays the validity of an imaginative response to reality:

> LET thy Studies be free as thy Thoughts and Contemplations, but fly not upon the wings of Imagination; Joyn Sense unto Reason, and Experiment unto Speculation, and so give life unto Embryon Truths, and Verities yet in their Chaos. There is nothing more acceptable unto the Ingenious World, than this noble Eluctation of Truth; wherein, against the tenacity of Prejudice and Prescription, this Century now prevaileth.
> (CM. II. 5. 261-2)

Christian Morals, a treatise on the spiritual life, is suffused with just such a sense of dogmatic, prescriptive certainty. Browne's style here, far from being tentative

or playful, is declarative, imperative, unquestioning. Ostensibly, the effect is somewhat chilling. Green complains that the style is "rigid," demonstrating "how age had formalized and stereotyped" Browne's talents; Patrides finds it "sententious, terse to the point of curtness," and, agreeing with Bennett, "unremittingly didactic."[18] Yet the style is quite intentionally Baconian and aphoristic, demonstrating an empirical pragmatism that stands in contrast to, and fills out, the spiritual message.

Browne presents Christian Morals not as a search for knowledge, but as a "Progress unto Virtue" (CM. I. 1. 243). Its focus is not so much upon this world as upon the world to come; man strives not for scientific certainty but for salvation. "True Beatitude groweth not on Earth, nor hath this World in it the Expectations we have of it," explains Browne, "'Tis therefore happy that we have two Worlds to hold on" (CM. III. 11. 278). Yet the progress from "this World" to the "next" (CM. III. 5. 274) is not private, as it was in the Religio. Rather, it is a public effort, regulated for all men according to the "Ethicks of Faith" and "classical Rules of Honesty" (CM. III. 21. 284; I. 12. 247). To be certain of achieving salvation, therefore, Browne counsels men to study the world around them so that, as Bacon says, they may "make a better and freerer choice of those

actions which may concern" them, and "conduct them with the less error and the more dexterity."[19]

A Baconian observation of the world and the men in it thus allows the individual to model his behaviour upon "imitable Examples of Virtue" (CM. I. 12. 247) and to be "Virtuous by Epitome" (CM. III. 4. 273). "Order thy imitation to thy Improvement," advises Browne, and strive "to ascend unto the highest conformity, and to the honour of the Exemplar. He honours God who imitates him. For what we virtuously imitate we approve and admire" (CM. III. 9. 276; III. 2. 272).

The attainment of salvation "by Examples" (CM. III. 9. 276), moreover, allows man to construct a "Theory" of the world (CM. III. 29. 290). Accurate observation affords the ability to reduce the complexities of human behaviour to a few "Principles of Goodness," condensing "the Law and the Prophets in a Rule, the Sacred Writ in Stenography, and the Scripture in a Nut-Shell" (CM. III. 4. 273). Such indeed is the declared purpose of Christian Morals, articulated clearly in Part III, Section 22 (284-5). "IN Seventy or eighty years," Browne explains, "a Man may have a deep Gust of the World, Know what it is, what it can afford, and what 'tis to have been a Man." This depth of experience accordingly enables him to "raise Axioms of this World," and, by a "long observation of Men," "Judge the interiors by

the outside, and raise conjectures at first sight." At this stage "Antiquated Theorems will revive, and Solomon's Maxims be Demonstrations unto him." Christian Morals presents just such a series of "Axioms," "Theorems," and "Maxims," Browne's certain rules for the advancement of virtue and the suppression of vice.

Christian Morals, therefore, deals in a kind of heavenly pragmatism. Man's goal is to attain the other world, "unto which this is but Exordial, or a passage leading unto it" (CM. III. 25. 287); this is contingent upon the performance of "the sober Acts and serious purposes of Man; which to omit were foully to miscarry in the advantage of humanity, to play away an uniterable Life, and to have lived in vain" (CM. III. 23. 286). To carry out this purpose, according to Browne, man must first "study his own oeconomy" (CM. I. 18. 249), "and early discover what nature bids thee to be, or tells thee thou may'st be" (CM. I. 9. 246). Such self-scrutiny enables the individual to "cultivate" his particular virtues and "Raise timely barriers" against his particular vices, adapting Browne's general "rules unto the figure of himself" (CM. I. 9. 246; I. 18. 249). The individual is thus encouraged to discover his own workable accommodation of the ideal, and cultivate a practical vision of the means to salvation, his "capital end" (CM. III. 23. 286).

Such pragmatism, along with the certitude Browne accords his rules for salvation, is surprisingly empirical, combining as it does an assured knowledge of the laws of human nature with a practical application of those laws. For Browne, religion need not be removed from the practical business of "getting on" in the world, and the deliberately Baconian style of Christian Morals works to bring this to the reader's attention. A clear example may be found in Browne's handling of the standard Biblical precept, "turn the other cheek." In Christian Morals, such advice is not naively spiritual or unworldly; rather, it becomes a chillingly Machiavellian method of revenge that still allows the Christian to fulfill his duty to God:

> If thou must needs have thy Revenge of thine Enemy, with a soft Tongue break his Bones, heap Coals of Fire on his Head, forgive him, and enjoy it. To forgive our Enemies is a charming way of Revenge, and a short Caesarian Conquest overcoming without a blow; laying our Enemies at our Feet, under sorrow, shame, and repentance; leaving our Foes our Friends, and solicitously inclined to grateful Retaliations. Thus to Return upon our Adversaries is a healing way of Revenge, and to do good for evil a soft and melting union, a method Taught from Heaven to keep all smooth on Earth. (CM. III. 12. 278-9)

The advice is almost fiendishly calculating; it reduces religion from a contemplation of "airy mystery" to a science of behaviour. Under this system, "Charity becomes pious Usury" and "Christian Liberality the most thriving industry" (CM. I. 6. 245); asceticism becomes

an "obsolete Affectation," "and such contempt of the World out of date" (CM. I. 26. 253). In Christian Morals, the aphoristic, pithy Baconian prose assures man that salvation itself can be worked at in a calculated manner, and that the "central and vital interiours of Truth" (CM. II. 3. 261) may be profitably attained by the pragmatic practise of virtue.

Accordingly, Browne's juxtaposition of style with content in both Christian Morals and Pseudodoxia Epidemica works to blur clearcut divisions between sacred and profane. Pseudodóxia is prevented, by the use of an imaginative, playful style, from being too empirical and this-worldly; Christian Morals is prevented, by the use of a Baconian, utilitarian style, from being too other-worldly. In short, Browne seems to say, a theoretical distinction between religious and pragmatic concerns is both useful and profitable: however, if it is not to become dangerously naive on the one hand or dangerously Machiavellian on the other, both concerns must be harmonized within our experience. While accepting the Baconian paradox in a "Calvinist" manner, therefore, Browne stylistically probes within it, annihilating the potential tensions and conflicts by the sophistication and subtlety of his style.

Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals therefore provide an interesting completion of the binary patterning

discovered throughout Browne's writings. Religio Medici, composed of two distinct parts, is binary within itself; Hydriotaphia and The Garden of Cyrus, two works published together, are binary within a volume; Pseudodoxia Epidemica and Christian Morals, while not formally connected by Browne, may be viewed as binary in a speculative sense. In each case, Browne deals in the juxtaposition of theological or philosophical positions that have become dangerously incompatible in his time, controversial issues that, as I noted, centre upon the problem of maintaining religious concerns in an era of growing scientific empiricism. The faith-works debate, which Browne explores in the Religio, revolves around the question of whether God should be worshipped as transcendent or immanent; the mortalist-Platonist controversy examined in Hydriotaphia and the Garden extends the problem, mortalism further distancing God from the physical world, and Platonism focussing on a Creation existent only by virtue of an omnipresent spiritual significance; finally, the conflict between religion and science, reflected in Christian Morals and Pseudoxia Epidemica, reflects a schism in which God has become virtually alien to the world, which is now viewed as independent, measurable, and open to manipulation.

However, while structuring his works upon the paradoxical oppositions created by such immensely topical

debates, Browne, as we have seen, stands elusively outside the heat of controversy to contemplate the issues with a tolerant detachment. Such detachment is continually demonstrated in the unique sophistication and complexity of his style, which does not use rhetoric to compel the assumption of a doctrinal or dogmatic position, but encourages consideration, toleration, and suspension of judgment. Browne's timeliness lies in his response to current conflicts and debates; his timelessness lies in his conviction that the questions are less important than the way in which we answer them. Paradoxical oppositions, according to Browne, while they must be accepted and productively used, can never be satisfactorily resolved. To accept this truth with tolerant dispassion is to discover true faith, which "thinketh no evil, which envieth not, which beareth, hopeth, believeth, endureth all things" (CM. I. 16. 248).

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

1 Samuel Johnson, The Life of Sir Thomas Browne, in vol. 9 of The Works of Samuel Johnson, L.L.D. (London: F. C. & J. Rivington, et. al., 1823), pp. 285-6, 313.

2 Johnson, Life, p. 312.

3 Roland Bainton, Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus 1511 - 1553 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953; rpt. 1960), pp. 168-207. Bainton provides the most exhaustive account of Servetus' trial and execution; supplementary information can be found in Francois Wendel, Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Collins, 1963), pp. 90-7; Henry Kamen, The Rise of Toleration (New York and Toronto: World University Library, 1967), pp. 75-81; and Joseph LeCler, Toleration and the Reformation, trans T. L. Westow (New York: Association Press; London: Longman's, 1960), I, pp. 323-330.

4 Wendel, Calvin, p. 95; Bainton, Heretic, pp. 168, 173, 204-5.

5 See page 14 for a discussion of these points.

6 "Paradox," The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Two basic definitions are provided, the first "A statement or tenet contrary to received opinion or belief"; the second "A statement seemingly self-contradictory or absurd, though possibly well-founded or essentially true."

7 Rosalie Colie, Paradoxia Epidemica: The Renaissance Tradition of Paradox (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 38.

8 Colie, Paradoxia, pp. 38, 10.

9 Joel B. Altman, The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press), p. 64.

10 Altman, Tudor Play, pp. 24, 6.

11 The Reformers, as evidenced in their iconoclasm and their extremely pessimistic view of fallen human nature, stressed God's transcendence of the physical world. See Paul Tillich, A History of Christian Thought, ed. Carl E. Braaten (London: SCM Press, 1968), pp. 229-30, and Wendel, Calvin, p. 151.

12 Martin Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, ed. and trans. Philip S. Watson, in Luther's Works, Vol. 33, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), pp. 62-3.

13 John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill, in The Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), Vol. XX, III. ii. 16. 562. The emphasis on certainty is fundamental to Reformation thought: "the Reformers had to insist on the complete certainty of their cause. In order to accomplish their ecclesiastical revolution, they had to insist that they, and they alone, had the only assured means of discovering religious knowledge." Richard H. Popkin, The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1979), p. 13.

14 See LeCler, Toleration, I, p. 322.

15 John Calvin, "First Sermon on Pentecost," in John Calvin: Selections from his Writings, ed. John Dillinger (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1971), p. 561. The doctrine of biblical authority is central for both Luther and Calvin. See LeCler, Toleration, I, pp. 148-9; Wendel, Calvin, pp. 306-7; Tillich, Christian Thought, p. 229; and William A. Scott, Historical Protestantism: A Historical Introduction to Protestant Theology (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1971), pp. 8, 14-15, 35.

16 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. vii. 4. 78.

17 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. vii. 4. 79. See also Wendel, Calvin, p. 157 and H. Jackson Faustman, Word and Spirit: Calvin's Doctrine of Biblical Authority (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 62, who writes: "It may be said, then, that the work of the Holy Spirit in the writers of the Bible was to produce a scripture free from all human admixtures in its parts. This was accomplished through some form of 'dictation'."

18 Luther, Arbitrio, pp. 28, 26. Luther continues: "the Spirit is required for the understanding of Scripture, both as a whole and in any part of it" (p. 28).

19 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, III. ii. 2. 545.

20 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, III. ii. 14. 559-60. The full quotation runs: "When we call faith 'knowledge' we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception. For faith is so far above sense that man's mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it. Even where the mind has attained, it does not comprehend what it feels. But while it is persuaded of what it does not grasp, by the very certainty of its persuasion it understands more than if it perceived anything human by its own grasp."

21 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, III. ii. 7. 551 and 549. Calvin's equation of faith with "knowledge" is also found in Calvin, "First Sermon on Pentecost," p. 567 and discussed in Faustman, Word

and Spirit, pp. 9 ff., et passim, and Popkin, Scepticism, pp. 7-10.

22 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. ix. 3. 95. According to Bengt Hägglund, History of Theology, trans. Gene J. Lund (St. Louis and London: Concordia, 1968), p. 223, the same is true of Luther, for whom "Faith is related to the Word itself, not simply to a metaphysical reality behind the Word, and there it finds salvation."

23 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. vi. 2. 71.

24 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XXI, III. xxi. 1. 923.

25 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 145; Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, II, vi. 4. 347. See also Wendel, Calvin, pp. 185 and 155: "In short, since Jesus Christ is at the centre of the whole of the Bible, of which he is the vivifying spirit, since God, hidden from sinful man, has been revealed only in Jesus Christ, and it is the Bible that bears witness to that revelation."

26 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. xvii. 2. 212-3.

27 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX. I. xvii. 2. 212 and Vol. XX. I. xiv. 1. 161. Calvin makes his distinction again in the Aphorismes of Christian Religion, trans H. Holland (London, 1596; rpt. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1973), p. 1, where he explains that God is both creator and redeemer. As redeemer, he can be understood; as creator he lies beyond human comprehension.

28 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 193. See also Paul Althous, The Theology of Martin Luther, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 20 ff., and Hägglund, Theology, p. 234, who writes: "One must distinguish between what holds true for the hidden God and that which God has revealed in His Word." For a general discussion of this point in both Luther and Calvin, see B. A. Gerrish, "'To the Unknown God': Luther and Calvin on the Hiddeness of God," Journal of Religion 53, iii (July, 1973), pp. 263-92.

29 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XXI, III. xxiii. 5. 952-3. See also III. xxiii. 2. 949, III. xxi. 1. 922-3. As Gerrish, "'Unknown God'," notes, the "horror of the Unknown God" is most profoundly revealed in the paradox of predestination, "in which the will of God appears divided against itself" (pp. 278-80).

30 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 61. This is a constant theme in Luther as well as in Calvin. See pp. 25, 28, 60, 139, 140, 145-6.

31 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. xvii. 2. 213.

32 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 28.

33 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. xiv. 4. 164.

34 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 140.

35 Colie, Paradoxia, p. 38.

36 Luther, Arbitrio, pp. 19-22.

37 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 21.

38 Wendel, Calvin, p. 322. The paedobaptism issue can be briefly summarized. Although Luther had reduced the sacraments to two, the eucharist and baptism, he remained unsure of whether the act of baptism, essentially a profession of faith, should be granted to a child who would naturally be unaware of its significance. Luther's doubt on this point gave rise to continual problems, notably among the heretical Anabaptist sect. Servetus himself asserted that baptism was a spiritual rebirth a child could not experience before he had need of regeneration; Calvin insisted that infants had a latent faith, and that paedobaptism perpetuates the covenant of God. See Institutes, Vol. XXI, IV. xv-xvi; Scott, Protestantism, p. 23, and Bainton, Heretic, p. 141, who states: "The denial of infant baptism destroyed the picture of the Church as ongoing community; Servetus' description of the Church as a fellowship of the fervent bode fair to render it small and impotent in a social context."

39 See Kamen, Toleration, p. 81, for a brief discussion of the anti-Trinitarian movement.

40 Peter Caroli accused Calvin of this heresy, of believing that Christ is cosubstantial with God, from 1535-7. Wendel, Calvin, pp. 54-5, remarks: "It is almost certain, however, that it was the painful memory of Caroli's insinuations that led the reformer afterwards to insist so strongly upon the trinitarian dogma: perhaps it also played a part in his attitude to Servetus."

41 Calvin, Institutes, Vol. XX, I. xiii. 5. 128.

42 Bainton, Heretic, p. 48.

43 Bainton, Heretic, pp. 208-9. The phrases are drawn from the official condemnation issued by the Genevan council.

44 Bainton, Heretic, pp. 209-10. The passage is taken from Calvin's journal.

45 Sebastian Castellio, Contra Libellum Calvini, in Concerning Heretics . . . Together with Excerpts from Other Works, trans. and ed. Roland H. Bainton (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), pp. 281-2.

46 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 54.

47 Castellio, De Arte Dubitandi et Confitendi, Ignorandi et Sciendi, in Concerning Heretics, p. 293.

48 Castellio, Arte Dubitandi, p. 293; Desideratus Erasmus, De Libero Arbitrio, in Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation, trans. and ed. E. Gordon Rupp (London: SCM Press, 1969), p. 46. John Hales, in his sermon "Abuses of Hard Places of Scripture," in The Works of John Hales (Glasgow, 1765; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1971), I, p. 28, restates the position: "As for those marvellous discourses of some, framed upon presumption of the Spirit's help in private, in judging or interpreting difficult places of scripture, I must needs confess, I have often wondered at the boldness of them. The Spirit is a thing of dark and secret operation, the manner of it none can descry."

49 Erasmus, Arbitrio, p. 48.

50 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 27.

51 Castellio, Arte Dubitandi, pp. 293-4.

52 Castellio, Arte Dubitandi, p. 296. Erasmus makes a similar distinction in Arbitrio, pp. 39-40.

53 This is a key point for all the liberals. In Arte Dubitandi, p. 292, Castellio writes: "I say that the duty of man is to know God and His precepts, that is, a man must know what is his duty. If he knows this and does his duty, blessed is he, even though he is ignorant of much else"; Erasmus, Arbitrio, p. 40, believes that only "the precepts for the good life" are "plainly evident" in Scripture. See also Popkin, Scepticism, p. 6, and LeCler, Toleration, I, pp. 126-7, 352.

54 Castellio, Arte Dubitandi, p. 288.

55 Hales, "Abuses," pp. 38-9.

56 Castellio, Arte Dubitandi, p. 299. In Contra, p. 267, Vaticanus declares that Calvin "is wroth that anyone should declare the Scriptures obscure. He thinks them clear."

57 Castellio, Concerning Heretics, p. 233.

58 Castellio, Concerning Heretics, p. 214.

59 Castellio, Concerning Heretics, pp. 226-7. He adds in Contra, p. 271: "To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine, but to kill a man. When the Genevans killed Servetus they did not defend a doctrine; they killed a man."

60 Castellio, Concerning Heretics, p. 253. Hales also counsels such a suspension of belief in "Abuse," pp. 41-2: "it will be our best way, to put them to some day of hearing afar off, even till that great day, till Christ, our true Elias, shall come, who at his coming shall answer all our doubts, and settle all our waverings." See also Erasmus, Arbitrio, p. 37.

61 William Chillingworth, The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation . . . (Oxford, 1638; rpt. Menston: The Scolar Press, 1972), Ch. 6, Pt. I, p. 325. Castellio, in Arte Dubitandi, p. 289, uses the same point to make a direct hit at Calvin: "There are some who are unwilling to doubt anything, to be in ignorance of anything. They assert everything unreservedly, and if you dissent from them they damn you without hesitation. Not only do they doubt nothing themselves, but they will not permit others to doubt."

62 Hales, "Of Dealing with Erring Christians," in Works, pp. 95-6: "since it is impossible, where scripture is ambiguous, that all conceits should run alike, it remains that we seek out a way, not so much to establish a unity of opinion in the minds of all, which I take to be a thing likewise impossible, as to provide, that the multiplicity of conceit trouble not the church's peace. A better way my conceit cannot reach unto, than that we would be willing to think, that these things, which with some shew of probability we deduce from scripture, are at best but ouropinions: for this preemptory manner of setting down our own conclusions, under this high commanding form of necessary truths, is generally one of the greatest causes, which keeps the churches this day so far asunder." See also Sebastian Castellio, Advice to a Desolate France . . . ed. and intro. Marius F. Valkhoff, trans. Wouter Valkhoff (Shepherdstown: Patmos Press, 1975), pp. 47-8.

63 Castellio, France, p. 9 and Arte Dubitandi, p. 293.

64 Chillingworth, Protestants, Ch. 1, Pt. I, pp. 40-1. See also 1, I, p. 38 and 2, I, p. 60.

65 Castellio, Arte Dubitandi, p. 293.

66 Erasmus, Arbitrio, p. 40. For a further discussion, see Margaret L. Wiley, The Subtle Knot: Creative Skepticism in Seventeenth-Century England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 16-17, 59.

67 This is drawn from a much longer section on the Trinity from Arte Dubitandi, p. 303, where the "anonymous" Castellio conducts a hypothetical argument with the Athanasian Creed. The discussion is important enough to be recorded in full:

ATHANASIUS: 'Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled: without

doubt he shall perish everlastingly.'

ANONYMOUS: 'Yes, but the Catholic faith must be such that everyone can hold it; the publicans and sinners and the thief upon the cross believed and were saved. Otherwise they would have perished.'

ATHANASIUS: 'And the Catholic Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."

ANONYMOUS: "I do not think the publicans and the sinners know this faith. If you think so, prove it. There is not a word about it in Scripture. If you are right they are undoubtedly damned . . . . If you hold that there is one substance in three persons and three persons in one substance you are certainly speaking in a most obscure and enigmatic fashion, which is not appropriate for a creed which is to be held by all. What everyone must know must be expressed in a way which everyone can understand . . . . For myself I believe in "God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord and in the Holy Ghost." In this faith I will live and die, God willing, and I think that this simple faith, given to us by the apostles, is sufficient for salvation, even if one neither knows nor believes inexplicable enigmas introduced by the curious after the days of apostolic simplicity. If some are acute enough to understand what I and those like me cannot grasp, well and good, but to demand the same acumen of everybody, as a condition of salvation, means that the majority will be excluded.'

68 Erasmus, Arbitrio, p. 38.

69 Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, in The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, 4 vol., ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), Vol. I, I. 8. 18. All references to Browne will appear as follows: within the individual chapters, the work or works under discussion will be referred to by initials, followed by the part, section, and page number within the text. Volume references will not appear, since all works under discussion save Pseudodoxia Epidemica appear in Vol. I; Pseudodoxia appears in Vol. II.

CHAPTER II

1 F. L. Huntley, Sir Thomas Browne: A Biographical and Critical Study (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 107. Huntley is followed in this contention by Jaon Bennett, Sir Thomas Browne: 'A Man of Achievement in Literature' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), p. 98, and R. H. A. Robbins, ed., Sir Thomas Browne: Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia, and The Garden of Cyrus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. xi. However, to make a corollary between Faith and Charity on the one hand and the twofold division of the Commandments on the other is inaccurate, and can in no way apply to the structure of the Religio. According to Alexander Nowell, A Catechisme, or Institution of Christian Religion . . . (London: Stationer's Co., 1614), $D3^a$, religion is divided into two parts: "obedience, which the law, the perfect rule of righteousness commandeth, and faith, which the gospel . . . requireth." Obedience to the law, moreover, is specifically equated with charity: "For sometime for obedience they set charity." Faith, the avowed concern of Part I of the Religio, thus has no direct connection with the Commandments of the Law: if the traditional division of the Commandments is to apply at all, it must apply solely to Part II, as indeed it does. Browne makes this quite specific in II. 14/ 92, where he summarizes his conclusions about Charity: "NOW there is another part of charity, which is the Basis and Pillar of this, and that is the love of God, for whom we love our neighbour: for this I thinke is charity, to love God for himselfe, and our neighbour for God." An interesting point is that Browne reverses the traditional order of the division here, for reasons that will be explored later in the chapter. Confirmation of Nowell's division of religion and on the equation of Charity with the Commandments may be found in the following sources: Lancelot Andrewes, A Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine (1642) (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), pp. 73 ff.; Edmund Coote, The English Schoole-Master (1596; rpt. Menston: The Scolar Press, 1968), p. 39; John R. Muldur, The Temple of the Mind: Education and Literary Taste in Seventeenth-Century England (New York: Pegasus, 1969), pp. 112-4; Certaine Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be Read in Churches. In the Time of the Late Queene Elizabeth of Famous Memory (London: Richard Whitaker, 1640), pp. 26, 40.

2 Joan Webber, The Eloquent 'I': Style and Self in Seventeenth-Century Prose (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), p. 161, was the first to make the suggestion; she was followed by Laurence Stapleton, The Elected Circle: Studies in the Art of Prose (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 47, and C. A. Patrides, ed., Sir Thomas Browne: The Major Works (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 49. However, none of the three can offer textual evidence for such an inclusion.

3 Bennett, Browne, p. 99. Peter Green, Sir Thomas Browne (London: Longman's, Green, & Co., 1959), p. 13, and Huntley, Browne, p. 108, agree that the structure of the Religio is not consistent enough to be more than a secondary critical consideration.

4 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 294; Erasmus, Arbitrio, p. 47.

5 Luther, Arbitrio, pp. 255-6: "nothing good or virtuous is left in man, since he is flatly stated to be unrighteous, ignorant of God, a despiser of God, turned aside from him."

6 Luther, Arbitrio, pp. 65, 70.

7 Luther, Arbitrio, p. 270, declares: "no works and no aspirations or endeavours of free choice count for anything in the sight of God, but are all adjudged to be ungodly, unrighteous, and evil." On p. 274 he adds: "apart from faith in Christ there is nothing but sin and damnation." For a more complete account of the sola fide position, see Scott, Protestantism, pp. 9-10, and LeCler, Toleration, I, pp. 147-9.

8 Erasmus accuses Luther of making Christianity too "cold and sleepy," "passive," and "inactive," in Arbitrio, pp. 92, 89. Interestingly enough, both Castellio and the latitudinarians make similar charges against Calvin and the dogmatists for their persecution of heretics. See Castellio, France, pp. 3-6; Chillingworth, Protestants, 1, I, p. 38; and Hales, "Erring Christians," pp. 63-4, 73.

9 Luther's position is summed up by his aphorism: "Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works," quoted in Scott, Protestantism, p. 11. Erasmus declares that God's grace rather liberates the will so that it may be made "synergos, ('fellow-worker') with grace, although grace is itself sufficient for all things and has no need of the assistance of any human will," in Arbitrio, p. 81, and concludes on p. 85: "to those who maintain that man can do nothing without the help of the grace of God, and conclude that therefore no works of man are good -- to those we shall oppose a thesis to me much more probable, that there is nothing that a man cannot do with the help of the grace of God, and that therefore all the works of man can be good."

10 Luther, Arbitrio, pp. 69, 123, 268. On p. 107 he actually claims that Erasmus "outdoes even the Pelagians."

11 For an account of Arminianism and its influence on English thought see Kamen, Toleration, pp. 166-7; Scott, Protestantism, p. 78; John Spencer Hill, John Milton: Poet, Priest and Prophet: A Study of Divine Vocation in Milton's Poetry and Prose (London: MacMillan, 1979), pp. 10-15; and Horton Davies, Worship and Theology in England, Vol. I: From Cranmer to Hooker 1534 - 1603 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 23 ff., et passim.

12 The rising liberal attitude can be found in the 11th Article, added by Archbishop Parker of Canterbury: "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment: yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring necessarily of a true and lively faith, in so much that by them, a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the works." Quoted in Davies, Worship, I, 23. Similar attitudes are found in John Donne, The Sermons of John Donne, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1953), Vol. I, Sermon 7, pp. 271-2 and Vol. X, Sermon 3, p. 84 et passim; lancelot Andrewes, The Morall Law Expounded . . . (London: Michael Sparke, et. al., 1642), p. 23; and James I, Basilikon Doron, in The Political Works of James I, ed. and intro. Charles H. McIlwan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918), pp. 13, 15.

13 William Prynne, Anti-Arminianisme . . ., 2nd ed. (London: n.p., 1630), sig. A2^{r}, B2^{v}; Daniel Featley, Pelagius Redivivus. Or Pelagius Raked Out of the Ashes . . . (London: Robert Mylbourne, 1626), sig. A2^{r}. The condemnation is echoed by Francis Cheynell, The Rise, Growth, and Danger of Socianisme (London: Samuel Gelibrand, 1643), sig. D4^{v}, who claims that the Arminians "advance the power of Nature, and destroy the efficacy of Grace." For a critical account of the Puritan position, see John F. H. New, Anglican and Puritan: The Basis of their Opposition, 1558 - 1640 (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1964), passim.

14 William Prynne, A Briefe Survay and Censure of Mr Cozens his Couzening Devotions . . . (London: n.p., 1628), sig. ¶¶ 3^{r}. The Puritans evidently felt that the emotional reaction against popery could be effectively employed to damage the Anglicans if the two could be associated. Prynne does it again in Anti-Arminianisme, sig. B1^{r}, as does Cheynell, Socianisme, A4^{v}, and the anonymous author of The Arminian Nunnery (London: Thomas Underhill, 1641), p. 10.

15 A Declaration against the Antinomians . . . (London: John Jones, 1644), p. 6. For a discussion of the problem in Massachusetts, see David D. Hall, ed., The Antinomian Controversy, 1636 - 1638: A Documentary History (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), passim. The author of the Declaration explains on p.1 that antinomianism is based upon the tenet: "That such as are elected, are at all times beloved of God; in what condition soever they be, be they never so great sinners, yea, in the very act of sinne it selfe."

16 John Sedgwick, Antinomianisme Anatomized . . . (London: Samuel Gellibrand, 1643), sigs. A2^{r}, A4^{r}; John Harris, The Puritanes Impuritie . . . (London: T. Fawcett, 1641), pp. 3, 5.

17 This, for Browne, is the proper function of reason. He stresses it in I. 13. 22: "The world was made to be inhabited by beasts, but studied and contemplated by man: 'tis the debt of our reason wee owe unto God, and the homage wee pay for not being beasts; without this the world is still as though it had not been, or as it was before the sixt day when as yet there was not a creature that could conceive, or say there was a world. The wisedome 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 of his creatures, returne the duty of a devout and learned admiration."

18 Puns on "dispose" and "disposition," "compose" and "composition" run throughout the Religio, the former pair occuring approximately twenty times, the latter nine times. For Browne, God the "Composer" (II. 9. 84) "composes" or "disposes" man's original "composition" or "disposition" in order and harmony; man's duty is to maintain that harmony.

19 The last quotation in the series comes from I. 21. 31. "division" (and variants) occurs approximately twenty-six times in the Religio, "antipathies," seven times, "contrarieties" or "contrary" sixteen times, and "disputes" or "disputations" eleven times.

20 Andrewes, Doctrine, p. 94, explains: "The use of hope is twofold; that we rest in hope in this life; that we rest not here, but look for a better." Browne equates Hope with this resting and expectancy throughout his writings: in Hydriotaphia he refers to man's "hopes of another life" (IV. 158), of heaven as "the place of their hopes" (IV. 159), of the "circumference of these hopes" for immortality (IV. 164), of man's "hopes of subsistency" (V. 168); in Christian Morals good men "hope it may not be too long" before the Last Day (III. 26. 288), the New Jerusalem is where "we may hope to behold invisibles" (III. 15. 281), and man is advised to "attend with patience" the fulfillment of "true Christian Expectations" (III. 22. 285).

21 Anna K. Nardo, "Sir Thomas Browne: Sub Specie Ludi," Centennial Review, 21 (1977), pp. 311-20, p. 317; Webber, Eloquent 'I', p. 151, et passim. See also Stanley E. Fish, Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 351 ff.; Anne Drury Hall, "Epistle, Meditation and Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici," PMLA, 94 (March 1979), pp. 234-46, passim; James Roy King, Studies in Six Seventeenth-Century Writers (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966), pp. 96-7; and Muldur, Temple, pp. 58-61.

22 Fish, Artifacts, p. 372; Webber, Eloquent 'I', p. 181.

23 Webber, Eloquent 'I', pp. 154-5.

24 "Exercise" is a key word in the Religio, appearing in "To the Reader," pp. 9 and 10, I. 9. 18, and II. 3. 74.

25 Joseph Hall, "Sermon XLII," in Vol. 5 of The Works of the Right Reverend Joseph Hall, D.D., a new ed., rev. and corrected by Philip Wynter (Oxford, 1863; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 680; Religio Medici II. 2. 72; Nowell, Catechisme, $A3^{b}$.

26 Sir Kenelm Digby, Observations upon Religio Medici 1644, intro. Raymond B. Waddington (Menston: The Scolar Press, 1974), p. 54.

CHAPTER III

1 Ross' conclusions are summarized by James N. Wise, Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici and Two Seventeenth-Century Critics (n.p.: University of Missouri Press, 1973), p. 131.

2 Digby, Observations, pp. 11-12.

3 Digby, Observations, p. 12

4 The foregoing account has been summarized from Norman T. Burns, Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 10-35; 90-1, and Ben Lazare Mijuskovic, The Achilles of Rationalist Arguments. The Simplicity, Unity and Identity of Thought and Soul from the Cambridge Platonists to Kant: A Study in the History of an Argument (The Hauge: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), pp. 13-8.

5 See Elmar Klinger, "Soul," Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology, ed. Karl Rahner, et. al. (New York: Herder & Herder; London: Burns & Oates, 1968). For a discussion of the effects of Cartesianism, see Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 1933; rpt. 1937), pp. 76 ff.

6 Willey, Background, p. 101, writes of Descartes' philosophy: "Probably any system which dichotomises reality in this kind of way is likely to invite attempts to resolve the divided worlds into one, and the uncomfortable antithesis of matter and mind in the Cartesian scheme seems to have made inevitable both the materialist and the idealist solutions. Either all is 'really' matter, or all is 'really' mind." See also Jorg Splett, "Body," Sacramentum Mundi, and Flora Isabel MacKinnon, ed., Philosophical Writings of Henry More (New York: AMS Press, 1925; rpt. 1969), pp. xviii-xx.

7 George Newton Conklin, Biblical Criticism and Heresy in Milton (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), p. 75.

8 John Milton, Christian Doctrine, trans. John Carey, Vol. VI of The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, ed. Maurice Kelley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973), I. vii. 317; Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, ed. C. B. MacPherson (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1968), IV. 46. 692.

9 Richard Overton, Mans Mortalitie . . . ed. Harold Fisch (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1968), p. 9; Milton, Doctrine, I. xiii. 400.

10 Overton, Mortalitie, p. 4; Hobbes, Leviathan, IV. 44. 637-8.

Milton, Doctrine, I. vii. 317, explains that the "soul" is merely the "breath of life," and not "any part of the divine essence."

11 Hobbes, Leviathan, III. 38. 484. See also Thomas Hobbes, An Answer to a Book Published by Dr. Bramhall . . ., in Vol. 4 of The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, ed. Sir William Molesworth (1840; rpt. n.p.: Scientia Aalen, 1962), p. 351, and Overton, Mortalitie, pp. 64-5 and p. 9, who writes: "Death reduceth this productio Entis ex Non-ente ad Non-entem, returnes Man to what he was before he was; that is not to Be . . . . But the Resurrection restoreth this non-ented Entitie to an everlasting Being."

12 Quoted in C. A. Patrides, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), p. 26. More also attacks Hobbes, in The Immortality of the Soul . . . (London: James Flesher, 1652), p. 39, calling him "that confident Exploder of immaterial substances." It must be admitted that their hatred of Hobbes is somewhat justified; in Leviathan IV. 46. 689 Hobbes had gone so far as to declare: "the World, (I mean not the Earth onely, that denominates the Lovers of it worldly men, but the Universe, that is, the whole masse of all things that are) is Corporeall, that is to say, Body." The Platonists' reaction to Hobbes is fully documented in Samuel T. Mintz, The Hunting of Leviathan: Seventeenth-Century Reactions to the Materialism and Moral Philosophy of Thomas Hobbes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 90 ff., et passim.

13 Patrides, Platonists, pp. 29-30, points out that although they initially thought that Descartes would "accomplish the marriage between the theistic demands of the Cambridge Platonists and the mechanical view of nature upheld by the 'new philosophy'," the Platonists quickly "discovered that Cartesianism was more 'Mechanical' than 'transcendent'." See also John Hoyles, The Waning of the Renaissance 1640 - 1740: Studies in the Thought and Poetry of Henry More, John Norris, and Isaac Watts (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), p. 19; Willey, Background, pp. 101, 163; and MacKinnon, More, p. xxv, for accounts of the Platonists' attitudes to Descartes.

14 Quoted in MacKinnon, p. 270. More further adds, p. 263, that "stupid matter" "has no life or sense at all." Mintz, Hunting, p. 152 usefully summarizes the Platonist position: "As a counter-theory to Hobbes' materialism, Cudworth and More worked out an elaborate doctrine of spirit, which they furnished with the elements of classical and Renaissance Platonism. Mind, they said, was an absolute and independent spirit, 'Senior to the world, and proleptical to it,' as superior in the scale of being to dull, inert matter as the angels are superior to men, or men to beasts. God, the highest and most perfect example of spirit, gave to the world a spirit of its own, a plastic nature which performs the menial tasks of God's creation." See also Ernst Cassirer, The Platonic Renaissance in England, trans. James P. Pettegrove (London: Thomas

Nelson, 1953), p. 51.

15 Henry More, A Platonicall Poem of the Immortality of Soules, Especially Mans Soul (Cambridge: Roger Daniel, 1642), p. 2.

16 More, Poem, p. 4.

17 More, Immortality, p. 126.

18 Mintz, Hunting, p. 90, explains: "More believed that if Descartes were correct in affirming that spirit is unextended he would succeed in refining spirit out of existence altogether, and would thus play directly into the hands of Hobbes." See also Willey, Background, p. 165.

19 Burns, Mortalism, p. 178.

20 This and all subsequent biblical quotations will be from the Authorized King James Version.

21 Burns, Mortalism, p. 150.

22 Quoted in MacKinnon, More, p. 163; Willey, Background, p. 160.

23 See Huntley, Browne, pp. 209-10, and Green, Browne, p. 22.

24 Browne quotes the Latin: "En sum quod digitus Quinque Levatur onus propert."

25 Huntley, Browne, p. 208.

26 Johnson, Life, p. 295.

27 Huntley, Browne, pp. 209-10, and Green, p. 22, claim that The Garden of Cyrus opposes "space" to the "time" of Hydriotaphia, but the Garden is actually "spatial" only in the sense that the cyclicism of time permits the continual recreation of a "spatial" figure -- i.e. the quincunx.

28 The vocabulary of analogy, epitome, and resemblance saturates the Garden, appearing on Letter, 176-7; I. 180-3, 185; II. 185-6, 188-91; III. 192, 194, 198, 200, 202-9; IV. 209, 215-6, 218, 220; V. 221, 225.

29 Overton, Mortalitie, pp. 12-3. The passage from Job also appears in Hobbes, Levaithan, III. 38. 483, and Milton, Doctrine, I. xiii. 401.

30 F. L. Huntley, Browne, p. 208.

31 Henry Vaughan, Man in Glory, in The Works of Henry Vaughan, 2nd ed., ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 192.

32 Vaughan, Man in Darknesse, in Works, p. 174. Interestingly, Vaughan uses the mortalist quote; it is possible that his companion pieces, like Browne's, were influenced by the debate.

33 Elizabeth MacKenzie, "The Growth of Plants: A Seventeenth-Century Metaphor," in English Renaissance Studies Presented to Dame Helen Gardner in Honour of her Seventieth Birthday (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 194-211, pp. 195-6, points out that this notion was virtually commonplace: "The ancient arguments for the beneficial, self-perpetuating changes of nature, its 'Eterne in Mutabilitie,' much older than Christianity but admirably adapted to explain God's providential government of the world, turn out to be insufficient to preserve the individual human being. To take charge of this, Tertullian constructed an argument which became a model for subsequent discussions. He tries out the cycle of night and day and of the seasons as evidence of the resurrection demonstrated in nature . . . then sees that it is in escaping from the cycle that the individual's future is assured."

CHAPTER IV

1 Geoffrey Keynes, "Editor's Preface," in The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, Vol. II, pp. vii-viii.

2 Keynes, "Editor's Preface," in Works, Vol. I, p. 241.

3 See Paolo Rossi, Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 83.

4 Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, in The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis, ed. Arthur Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), II. v. 1. pp. 83 ff. The inquisition of causes is further subdivided into physic (the study of variable causes) and metaphysic (the study of abstract and fixed causes). These are discussed by Henry G. van Leeuwen, The Problem of Certainty in English Thought 1630 - 1690, 2nd ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 4.

5 Quoted in Benjamin Farrington, The Philosophy of Francis Bacon: An Essay on its Development from 1603 - 1609 with new Translations of Fundamental Texts (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1964), p. 23.

6 Quoted in Farrington, Bacon, p. 41.

7 Quoted in Rossi, Bacon, p. 49. Bacon's emphasis on works is a key point in his philosophy. See also van Leeuwen, Certainty, pp. 2-3.

8 Farrington, Bacon, p. 35.

9 Bacon attacks the scholastics on precisely these grounds. In the Advancement, IV. 6. 29, he charges that they abandoned God's words and works "to vanish in the mixture of their own inventions." See also Rossi, Bacon, p. 125: "The sin of traditional philosophy was intellectual pride: it claimed to impress its own stamp upon reality rather than to discover the stamp of God; that is why men should discard philosophies which try to put experience behind bars and trample underfoot the works of the Creator, and should instead learn humbly to read the great book of the world."

10 Bacon, Advancement, I. 3. 9-10.

11 See Farrington, Bacon, pp. 25-6. Rossi stresses the fact that Bacon's "interest was not primarily theological," and that he used the Biblical emphasis on charity to justify his own emphasis on works.

12 Bacon, Advancement, IV. 6. 29. See van Leeuwen, Certainty, pp. 5 ff. Bacon's goal, according to van Leeuwen, was to purge the mind of "errors in reasoning" which would prevent man's "effort

to achieve absolutely certain knowledge of the real structure of nature" (pp. 9, 7).

13 Bacon, Advancement, II. xvii. 7. 135-6.

14 Keynes, "Editor's Preface," Works, Vol. II, p. viii.

15 Patrides, Browne, p. 38.

16 Patrides, Browne, p. 38; Bennett, Browne, p. 179; Huntley, Browne, pp. 170-1.

17 Patrides, Browne, p. 37.

18 Green, Browne, p. 26; Patrides, Brownep. 45; Bennett, Browne, p. 241. See also Huntley, Browne, p. 235.

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Contrary Devotion: An Analysis of Binary Structure in the Works of Sir Thomas Browne

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