



Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia (Urn Burial), and A Letter to a Friend

Thomas Browne

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Sir Thomas Browne was a 17th century author who wrote on a wide variety of subjects including medicine, religion, science and the esoteric. He is best known for his work entitled "Religio Medici", or "The Religion of a Doctor", which is Browne's own spiritual testament and an early example of a psychological self-portrait. Published in 1643, shortly after the author had qualified himself to practice medicine, "Religio Medici" became a best-seller throughout the European continent and because of its unorthodox views was admonished by the Catholic Church by being placed on the "Index Librorum Prohibitorum", or list of prohibited books. While largely an exposition of Christian faith the work meanders into digressions upon alchemy, hermetic philosophy, astrology, and physiognomy. Also included in this edition is "Hydriotaphia, Urn Burial, or a Discourse of the Sepulchral Urns lately found in Norfolk" and "A Letter to a Friend." The first work revolves around the discovery of a Roman urn burial in Norfolk which Browne uses to discuss ancient and current burial and funerary customs and extends to a greater inquiry of man's struggles with mortality. The second, which was written in 1656 and published posthumously in 1690, is a medical treatise of case-histories and witty speculations upon the human condition.

Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia (Urn Burial), and A Letter to a Friend Details

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The Letters of Sir Thomas Browne by Sir Thomas Browne (1931)

Jonathan Widell says

Instructions for one's spiritual pilgrimage throughout life, with the accent on its end. As Browne writes, the reader should tailor these and any other spiritual instructions to his own situation and use discernment in doing so instead of slavishly following someone else's precepts, which is sure not to please God any more than it pleases oneself. Virtue is measured by one's ability to find one's own voice, which presupposes that one knows oneself. Browne offers no excuse for us not to use our own judgment in settling theological questions and applying them to our own lives.
