

CUS417/4.20

Fred Johnson to Sir William Osler, Bart.
2nd May 1913.

8 Theatre Street,
Norwich.

Sir Wm. Osler, Bart.

Dear Sir,

I hope I have not inconvenienced you by not writing before to report progress with the collation of 'Religio Medici', but several things have been against me. I have now collated both the MSS. and the (supposed) earlier of the two spurious editions of 1642, with the first authorized edition - so that I have still the smaller of the spurious editions of 1642 to collate, but this will not I think be a long job. I have taken a separate sheet for each page in the authorised version and worked down line by line, so that all variations on any page and line can be seen at a glance. Several things suggest themselves to me as I have been doing this and I must say I would like to know on what grounds the late Dr. Williams considered the larger of the 2 MSS. here to be in Sir. T. B's own writing. So far as I can make out both these MS. were in Wilkin's possession and in his Edn. he does not say anything to imply that he considered the larger as in Sir Thos'. writing. There is a certain general similarity in the writing - but only in the sense that both wrote a rather large hand. There's an original letter of Sir. Thos. in the Museum here, which bears very little resemblance to the MS. - in fact Sir Thos. seems to have written a quick, somewhat illegible hand, whereas the MS. is in a bold careful hand all through. One great point, at least to my mind, against the genuinness of the MS. (as Sir T. B's. writing) is that there blanks in it - where the writer, (who as I think copied another MS) could not read a word and so left it blank - there are other slips, in the nature of words misread, as they might be by a copyist not too careful - misread so as to make nonsense. At times I have been inclined to think the MS. may have been written from dictation, some blunders being such as might quite well be made under such conditions - but I cannot conceive of the authors own copy in his own writing containing blanks for words he could not read. Both the MS. rather seem to me to be copies of one of the spurious editions. However of this I can perhaps write more fully when I have completed the collation, which I hope to be in about 10 or 12 days after Whitsuntide. I merely send this to let you know I am getting on - I had hoped to have done it before the holidays - but I have been compelled to put it aside for other things occasionally, and once or twice I had to leave it for a few days as I was not at all well. I assure you I am anxious to complete it as soon as possible and to put you to no further delay.

Yours very truly,
Fred. Johnson.