

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, May 21. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**hat is the reason of changing the Name of your Athenian Gazette into the Name of Athenian Mercury?

*Ans.* *Gaza* signifies a Treasury, and therefore we reserve it for the general Title of our Volumes, designing to entitle 'em the *Athenian Gazette*, or *Casuistical Mercury*: And *Mercurius* signifying a Messenger, 'tis the more proper Title for the single Papers, which run about to Coffee-houses and elsewhere, to seek out *Athenians*.

Quest. 2. **W**hat is the reason that some men are black, some tawny, and some white in the same Climate, as in India.

*Ans.* We shall endeavour a satisfaction by shewing the diversity of Opinions about this matter, and by advancing an Hypothesis of our own, chargeable with as little absurdity as we can. Some have believed that *Cains Mark* was black, and therefore his Successors Colour might be alter'd from what *Adams* was, and so by new Marriages and Intermixtures, the World might be diversly coloured. Some say *Lors* Daughters having upon their flight from *Sodom* an Idea of the Smoke and Flames they left behind them, might very probably in the act of Generation with their Father, fix a similitude of Colour upon Conception by the power of their imaginary faculty: Some, that the nearness or distance of the Sun may have an Effect upon the Skin, as the *Portuguese* are more tawny than the *English*, or Northern Climates. We shall give you one instance more, and then lay down what we conceive to be the reason. One *Mr. Briggins*, now a Captain of a Privateer, who is yet alive, and may be heard of at the *Tower*, mentions in his Journals, that they toucht upon an Island of Blacks near *Bantam*, where after they had dispatcht their Merchantile Affairs, they were conducted to the King's Palace, who when he had ask them several Questions about the Novelties they had met with, told them that he had one Rarity in his Court, a white Child born of two of his Subject Blacks, that had neither of 'em seen a white Man or Woman in all their Lives, and then caused the Child to be brought forth, which in its Skin (not its Physiognomy) resembled a fair English Child. From which last Example we affirm, that 'tis more than barely probable that the first change of Colours in Persons came from such an Instance as this, and when such an Instance happened, the news or sight of it would form an Idea in others, which in the Act of Generation would have the same Effect, the Imaginary power being stronger than the Generative, both in Women and other Creatures. We have frequent Examples of the first, and want not some in the last, particularly in *Jacobs* Policy of transferring *Labans* Flocks into his: see *Gen. 30. v. 37, 38, 39*. Now a Colour being once changed, it naturally follows that Intermarriages, Transplantations, and Commixtures of such persons must produce variety of Colours, though we must allow a great Cause in the nearness or distance of the Sun.

Quest. 3. **W**herber the Soul is born with the Body?

*Ans.* A Question much of this Nature was with great eagerness discuss'd by the Theologicall Professors of the *Conimbrick University*, viz. Whether a Man begets a Man, that is according to their meaning, begets the whole man, Body and Soul. Some argued that man did supply matter, out of which man was made; but this was confuted, as limited only to successive body, and backt with this Instance, that he that finds matter for a Statue is not the Maker of that Statue, but the Artificer: Others, and with them most Philosophers, asserted that man begets a man, not only by supplying matter for the body, but by preparing that matter to receive the form, and so by a kind of prolifick vertue to make the Physical Composition of Body and Soul; but this Opinion was at last thus confuted, Preparation of matter is a Change of Quality, but Generation is no Change; again, Generation is

a simple Act, not a mixt, Preparation goes through several Changes. Others asserted man begets man, not by giving him Form, but by his seminal power, begetting the sensitive and vegetative Soul, but the defects of this appeared at first sight, since the rational Soul was wanting, which the father must communicate to beget a man. At last all the Theological Disputants agreed, that man does truly beget a man, although the Soul is created by God; not because he supplies matter, or prepares the Body to receive the Soul, or because he gets the vegetative or sensitive Soul of his Child, but because when man generates there is that very Action in which the Rational Soul is substantially united to the Body or Matter which informs and animates the whole Mass. This Confirms our Opinion of the Soul and Body being Coexistent: see *Numb. 1. Vol. 1.*

Quest. 4. **I**f it be lawful for a man to marry his Cozen German?

*Ans.* I could never see any thing that lookt like solid Reason to the contrary; the *Civil Law* reaches not the case; the *Canon Law*, or *Pontifical Decretals* 'tis true are strict enough in the matter, for by this Craft 'tis notorious that they get their living, but for that I hope we have done with't, though I'm pretty confident the awe and fear we generally find upon the minds of men in relation to this matter, draws its original from the customs of Popery, which permitted not such Marriage without a Dispensation: As for the Laws of God, even supposing the Degrees prohibited by *Moses*, are Moral, not Ceremonial, as most Casuists believe, there can't yet be found so much as one syllable relating to the matter either of one side or t'other; that I could yet ever see. Nor is there any thing more of it in the Gospel. Indeed there's no Argument against it, but what is oftentimes much stronger, two inveterate prejudices there are, which render many people tender in this matter. The first, that it being a controvertive point, and the World wide enough, better let such matches alone than engage in 'em. But in answer, this is only a prudential motive, and not at all relating to the right of the Thing, and Essence of the Question. Further, this must be own'd, that if a person is dissatisfied in his Conscience, i. e. his practical Judgment submitted to God, and as he thinks directed by him, he ought in this case by no means to do it. Nay, if he has only a scrupulous Conscience, a degree below a doubtful, I should think he were better let it alone. But I shall by no means allow that its being a controverted point with others, generally perhaps of weaker Judgments, should at all conclude me, or abridge me of a Liberty I am no way convinced the Laws of God ever denyed me. For if anothers Conscience and not my own were to be the Rule of my Actions, 'twould be unavoidable that mine must be the Rule of his, which at very first sight involves the grossest Absurdities. The other grand prejudice, and that a very popular one, against the marriages of Cousin-Germans is, that common Observation shews us they are frequently unhappy.—The same Argument the men of the Town make use of against all Matrimony, and that with just as much reason. No man I am confident ever made a Collection of Cases in this matter large enough to found an Induction upon, which if he could, contrary Instances would soon destroy it.—All that's to be said is this, that those Matches which prove unhappy fall more under Observation than such as are otherwise, and for that reason are reckoned the greater number.

Quest. 5. **I**f it be lawful for a man having buried his Wife, to marry her own Sister, the first leaving Issue behind her?

*Ans.* The case is the same if we turn it to a Sister marrying two Brothers, and of that we have the highest instance in the Controversie of *Queen Katherine* and her two Husbands, *Prince Arthur* and *Henry the 8th*, that ever

the World yet saw. 'Tis not an easie matter to say any thing on that subject which has not been already said, since it employed at that time almost all the learned Pens in Europe. The chiefest of whose Arguments, and which makes us resolve the Question in the Negative, is to this purpose. What's against the moral Law, is undoubtedly unlawful. This is plainly such, *Levit. 12. 21. If a man shall take his Brothers Wife, it is an unclean thing.* 'Tis Moral, because 'tis added, *That for these things God abhorred the Canaanites, and cast them out, who cou'd be obliged, at least before the other was revealed, only by the Moral Law.*

As for Issue or no Issue, I see not how that can any way alter the case: For whether or no Sponson or Affiance without any thing succeeding on the Ceremony but what constitutes the Essence of Marriage, none ever said that Children were to be reckoned among things of that Nature.

Quest. 6. *Whether Incest be malum in se?*

Ans. The highest sort of Incest, that between immediate Superiors or Inferiors is undoubtedly so, because never dispensed with by God upon any occasion that we e're read of. That between Equals may seem otherwise, because in not a few Instances permitted by him, yet in general also forbidden from the highest Reason, namely, the security of Families, and preventing those Inconveniencies which would otherwise unavoidably follow, and which may easily be gueft. But after all, thus much is certain, though God may permit in some Cases such Infractions, no man on Earth must ever pretend to do the same.

Quest. 7. *Whether objective Goodness consists in the agreement between the object and rational Nature, and formal Goodness in the Conformity between the Act and the Rule of Manners?*

Quest. 8. *Whether Philosophical or Moral Sin be a humane Act disagreeing from rational Nature or right Reason, and Theological or Mortal Sin a willing Transgression of the Love of God?*

Ans. Were all the Gentlemen whom we are willing to oblige by answering any of their reasonable Questions, as importunate as he who sent these two just mentioned, both the Bookseller and Authors concerned in this Paper would have a very ill time on't. He seems very angry too, and talks of *taking a Course* if his desires were not speedily satisfied. 'Tis hoped he means not a *Course in Law*, unless he's resolved to fight with a *Johannes in Nubibus*. All we think fit to advertise him in this matter is, That for our words sake and the Publick, his private desires shall be now satisfied, and yet he's still left at Liberty to *take his Course* as he thinks convenient.

For the Questions themselves we meet with 'em both in the History of Europe for the Month of Decemb. 1690. p. 159. and 160. as condemned by the Pope, the first as Heretical, the last as scandalous and erroneous, though they seem so injur'd in the Translation, or by the Original Print, that it's a hard matter to make sense of 'em, or know what they drive at. But without minding the Holy Fathers Thunder, we'll enquire into the first.—In which, by *objective Goodness*, I suppose they mean the Goodness of the Object, or a sort of Metaphysical and Transcendental Goodness; the Essence whereof I see no absurdity in placing in appetibility, conformity, or agreement; but this not only with rational Nature, but with sensible too. By formal Goodness I suppose is meant here moral Goodness, implying a Conformity to a Law or Rule of Manners, which appears so much the very Notion of the thing, unless the Terms are mistaken, that I see not how it can be deny'd.

For the 8th. Question, —*Whether Philosophical or Moral sin be a humane Act*, which disagrees from rational Nature and right Reason; Theological or Mortal Sin a willing Transgression of the Love of God; Law I suppose it should be, for I know not what sense to make of *Transgressing Love*; I think the Term of Philosophical sin, for a humane act contrary to right Reason, meaning I suppose in relation to Manners, is proper enough. — And that a more wilfull Transgression of Gods Law, when actually premeditated, may without Nonsense be called Theological Sin, though it seems a very odd sort of Expression. In this appears no difficulty, but the main Question still follows, which the Querist never takes notice of, and therefore it concerns not us to examine it,

namely, *Whether this Philosophical sin as they call it, be any Offence against God?*

Quest. 9. *What Number is that whose Square being multiplied by 6, and the Square of that Product multiplied by 8, both Products added together will make 19502?*

Ans.  $2\frac{1487}{3880}$

$\frac{2}{4}$ 6	$\frac{3}{9}$ 6	<del><math>\frac{2}{3}</math></del>
24	54	14870 — 3880†
24	54	3            2
96	216	44610       7760
48	270	14870       44610
576	2916	3880       7760
8	8	18750) 52370 (2 $\frac{1487}{3880}$
4608 } 24 }	23328 } 54 }	Rem. 14870 (
4632	23382	
19502	23382	
4632	19502	
14870	3880	

I know not what the Proponents of this and some other Questions of like nature sent to us, can pretend to themselves; 'tis not to satisfy the World, or the generality of those to whose hands this will come, nor the Proponents themselves, who I question not but can as easily resolve them as we: Wherefore we think fit for the future to desire the World to forbear imposing School-boys Tasks upon us, or such other Mathematical Questions, as are not worth our time, being more laborious than difficult to answer. If we receive any more of this Nature, we shall refer 'em to some Author that has already laid down parallel Rules; but if any thing is offered, for which no Rule has yet been given, we will endeavour to find a Canon for the Solution.

### Advertisements.

**T**his is to acquaint all those Querists that have yet heard nothing from us, that we design to answer, at the end of the First Volume, all the Questions (fit for a Resolution) that have been sent us by them and others, from the beginning of our Project to this present Saturday, (being May 2d.) we having now received Questions enough to fill up the said Volume, which as soon as printed, Publick Notice shall be given, that so all Curious Inquirers may again send in their New Questions.

\* \* That nothing might be wanting to render our Athenian Project serviceable to the Publick, and thoroughly known, we shall again give an Account of what we design'd from our very first engaging in it — which was not only to confine our selves to Answer all manner of Theological and other Questions whatever that shall be sent us, fit for a Resolution, (which shall also be perform'd from Week to Week either in single Numbers, or at the end of every Volume, for the Reasons hinted in Numb. 2.) but also to give Accounts of most Books transmitted to us from Forreign Parts, in Order whereto we have settled a Correspondence beyond Sea being resolved to spare no Charges to gratifie the Ingenious.

We design also to insert the Transactions and Experiments of several English Virtuoso's, and what ever else is CURIOUS that shall be sent us from time to time, and to transcribe (that so we may the more fully make good our Title) from the Acta Eruditorum Lipsiæ, the Paris Journal des Scavans, the Giornali de Letterati, Printed at Rome and the Universal Historical Bibliothecque, &c. all that we conceive will be lookt upon here as valuable — ALL which we intend to add (together with our Answers to Objections) at the end of every Volume, they being Licensed and Enter'd, and now Translating in order to it.

Direct your Letters to Mr. Smith's Coffee-house in Stocks-market but pray pay the Postage, or they will not be taken in; and forbear sending till we give Publick Notice that we have answered all these Questions we have already received.

This Paper will be Publisht every Tuesday and Saturday, the Authors of it having Obliged themselves to be constant to those two dayes.