

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**Hat was the Sin of Onan ; whether 'tis possible to be guilty of it now, &c ?

Ans. We shall rather chuse for obvious Reasons, to propose the Question in the following Terms, wherein any observing Man may find all his Doubts on this Subject, Modestly and fairly answered.

Wherein consists the moral Turpitude or natural Evil of the Pleasures of what some have called the Sixth Sense ?

The Reason of the Question is this, as has been excellently and closely discoursed between two Learned Men on this Subject ; Because *Abstracted* Acts of this Nature, as Lascivious Embraces, and others whereto the present Difficulty more immediatly relates, seem to have no malice against God or our Neighbour ; the case of *Onan*, being, as 'tis acknowledged by all, different from that of single Men : I say, those Acts may be thought neither to injure our Neighbour, nor destroy Society, as Adultery and Fornication do. Wherein then consists their Natural Evil ? We answer, it consists in the same point that all other Evils do, namely, in Deviation from a Rule or Law, and that the Law of Nature, as well as the positive Laws of God.

Now that such *abstracted Acts* as these before mentioned, are contrary to the *Law of Nature*, is evident from this Reason : The End for which Nature has given this perception whereof we discourse, is for the propagation of Mankind ; which if employ'd for any other end, 'tis plainly *abused*, and therefore *unnatural*, if any thing is so. 'Tis besides forbidden in the 7th Commandment, which inhibits all manner of Unchastity ; and even the *Romans* abhorred it, as we may find in their Epigrammatists, who were far from being their Modestest Writers.

As to whatever of this nature, may be accidental or involuntary, both as to the Act and Causes of it, as Diet, &c. so far as 'tis involuntary, it cannot be reckoned Sinful : But if otherwise, no pretended Necessity can excuse in that any more than any other Sin.

Quest. 2. *How a Man may know when he is in the Covenant ?*

Ans. Are those Honest Persons who put this Question, Baptized or no ? Were their Parents Christians ? The promise of the Covenant is both to Good Men and to their Children. *Baptism* is the application of this promise, and Sign and Seal of this Covenant. 'Tis true they may break the Vow made therein, but how shall they know when 'tis renewed ? Truth it self informs us. A Tree is known by its Fruits. 'Tis a good Tree, not which bringeth forth all Good Fruit, which has not one corrupt production, but (*Denominatio sumitur a Majori*.)

the greater part of whose Fruit is meet for him by whom it was planted. In a word, we know no other sign of being in the Covenant, but Loving God ; and none for doing that, but keeping his Commandments.

Quest. 3. *In what Estate shall we appear at the Resurrection ? That wherein we died, or at perfect Manhood ?*

Ans. That which refers to the Kingdom of God in this World, may in this case be very properly applied to that in the other : There shall henceforth be no more an *Old Man*, neither an *Infant of Days*. It seems not proper to say we shall be raised at any Age, we mean such a State as we were in at such an Age, since undoubtedly we shall be endued with much more perfection, though 'tis probable, not cloathed with so much matter as we now carry about with us.

Quest. 4. *Whether went the Bodies of the Saints which arose with our Saviour ?*

Ans. 'Tis very probable they attended their Deliverer into *Paradise* ; for it seems not likely that those first Fruits from the Grave, when so miraculously rescued from it, as a particular Trophy of his Resurrection, should ever be suffered to fall into its Power again.

Quest. 5. *What we are to think of the Salvation of Cain, Eli, Sampson, Uzzah, Solomon ?*

Ans. Of *Cain* we find no ground to hope, because he went out from the Presence of the Lord, the same with being *Excommunicate*, and for ought we know, lived and died so ; but because we are not certain of that, neither are we so of his Final State. For *Eli* there appears no reason to doubt of his Happiness ; for though he was guilty of weakness towards his Sons, yet in all other Instances of his Life, he express'd a remarkable Sincerity, Piety, and even in his Death, Love to Gods Church, even more than his own Family, the loss of the *Ark* striking him into a Fainting Fit, and the Good Old Man by the Fall, which this accidentally occasioned, losing his Life. For *Uzzah*, he died indeed in an act of Sin, though that but of Infirmity, yet lessened with a good Intention, which though it can't excuse, it much alters an action ; and perhaps too, he died more as an Example to others, than properly for his own demerits. For *Solomon*, a sacred Pen-man of so great a part of Gods Word ; a Prophet, a Type of our Saviour, an illustrious Penitent ; We can't nor ever could imagine why the *Papists* deny him Salvation ; nor need we wonder they treat us no better. For *Sampson*, we think he died gloriously, in the discharge of his Duty, in the defence of his Country, in executing an Act of Justice on his own and Gods Enemies, he being

ing a Judge and a publick Person, and we doubt not is now happy in Glory.

Quest. 6. *Of what Degree or Nature is the Sin of felo de se?*

Ans. 'Tis the highest degree of Murther, the most desperate of all Sins, since the very action involves the Party into such unhappy Circumstances as *incapacitate him from Repentance*. After the Commission of other Sins, I may live to repent, but after this, 'tis impossible to wish it undone, or to reverse the fatal Resolution. I cannot but admire in what great Contemplations *Cato* could take his Book and his Sword together, and in cold Blood dispatch himself. *Let the whole world, (said he) fall into one Hand; let Cæsar encompass me with his Legions by Land, his Shipping at Sea, and his Guards at the Gates; Cato will yet cut out his way, and with that Weapon that was untainted even in the Civil Wars, give himself that Liberty which Fate denied his Country. Set upon the great Work then, and deliver thy self from the Clog of thy Humanity; Juba and Petreius have already done the Good Office one for the other by a generous Concurrence of Resolution and Fate. But Cato is above Example, and does as much scorn to ask his Death of any Man, as his Life.* This was a great action indeed, and so it was look'd upon by *Cæsar*, who hearing *Cato* had killed himself, made this Reply, *I envy the Honour of his Death, since he denied me the Honour of giving him his Life.* Parallel to this, was that of *Calanus* the Indian Ambassador to the Roman Senate, who designing according to the Use and Custom of his own Country to sacrifice himself, disputed with the Senate about it, who used all the Arguments they could to dissuade him, but in vain; for having caused his Funeral Pile to be raised and kindled, he made his Oration, alledging, *how inconsistent it was with a Good Mans Principles to reserve a rotten decrepit Body for the Gods, and spend a vigorous one in the pursuit of Sense and little Actions; with other such Arguments, which when finished, he made ready, and threw himself into the Flames with this Expression, Thus I make my self Immortal.* Though I admire these great Instances of *felo de se*, I mention them not for Imitation, since upon serious Inquisition in the *Laws of Nature*, we may find them very culpable, and inconsistent with *Morality*; much more if we compare them with the *Obligations of Christianity*, a Happiness they were deprived of: For they knew nothing more Sacred, than the Custom of Nations, or a Love of their Country.

Quest. 7. *Whether or no, we shall know our Friends in Heaven?*

Ans. The Affirmative is deducible from 1 Thes. 2. 19. *For what is our Hope, our Joy, our Crown of Rejoycing, are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming?* which Text plainly infers, that the *Apostle* shall know and be known by those *Thessalonians* at the Coming of our Saviour, distinguishable from the rest of the Just, seeing

they particularly are to be the subject and matter of his rejoycing at that Day. *Adam* knew *Eve* in the state of Innocence, without any telling him who or what she was. Those Disciples that were with our Saviour at his *Transfiguration* upon the Mount, knew *Enoch*, *Moses* and *Elias*, without asking. There are several Texts very plain for it; not one of the *Primitive Fathers* that ever doubted it; and 'tis impossible it should be otherwise, seeing Heaven is to be a place of Perfection; but to be limited in our Knowledge, would argue Imperfection.

Quest. 8. *If the Ostrich digests Iron?*

Ans. We usually find this Bird pictur'd with a *Horseshoe* in her Mouth, which practice no doubt has taken life from the Writings of *Johannes Longinus*, *Rhodiginus*, *Pliny*, *Aelian* and other Writers. But *Leo Africanus*, who lived where these Ostriches abound, says, *Surdum ac Simplex Animal*, &c. That 'tis a silly sort of a Bird, that Devours any thing that it finds; which agrees with those Experiments I have seen made on the Ostrich in *St. James's Park*, which would eat a Stick, a Glove, a Handkercher, Stones, Nails, or almost any thing else; but every little Naturalist will condemn that Opinion of an Ostrich's choosing Iron, &c. as its proper Food, as some believe, being not at all subject to Chulification and Digestion by the power of Natural Heat; Iron may be corroded and the Scorious parts separated by an Acid and Vitriolous Humour proper to all Stomachs, much after the nature of *Aqua Fortis*. So we read of Persons who have swallowed Rings, Counters, Money, &c. with some Diminution when it has been excern'd: And with this agrees the Experiment of *Ulysses Aldrovandus*, whose Words are these, *Ego ferri frusti devorare*, &c. I observed an Ostrich to swallow Pieces of Iron whilst I was at *Trent*, but yet they were excluded again undigested.

Quest. 9. *From what Cause proceeds the Shell which covers the Snail?*

Ans. From the same Cause that the Nails of a Mans finger proceeds, viz. from *Moisture*, which is also the Cause of Hair; and as a Mans Finger shapes the Nail growing out of it, so the Body of the Snail shapes the shell or horn which receives its Nourishment from that part or knot whereby tis fastned to the Snail.

Quest 10. *How came Monkeys first into the World?*

Ans. As Man did, by the power of God, being form'd by him out of the Dust of the Ground at the same time, with the rest of the Quadrupedes, on the Sixth Day of the Creation. That they are not produced, as some would perswade us, from any *Heterogeneous* or unnatural Mixtures, is plain from this unanswerable Reason; Nothing so produced ever generates any further, as we see in *Mules* and other *Monsters*, which are meer *Individuals*, the Providence of God preserving all things in that natural order in which he made them, and making it impossible to introduce any new Species into his Creation, though those Species numerously and beautifully varied; fixing besides a general Inclination in all Creatures to their own kind, though of never so seeming different a make, as in *Mastives*, *Lap Dogs*, *Gray-Honnas*, &c.