

# The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether a Salamander is able to live in the Fire?

*Ans.* Pierius in his Hieroglyphicks, says, *Whereas 'tis commonly said, that a Salamander extinguisheth Fire, we have found by experience, that it is so far from quenching Hot Coals, that it dieth immediately therein.* Naturalists have observed, that Newts or Water-Lizards (especially if their Skins be pricked,) as also Frogs, Snails and such Creatures, &c. will endure the flame for a longer time than others will, by reason of an extraordinary Coldness which dissipates and scatters the flame for a little time; so there are several Unguents made by art to preserve from the power of fire for some time, and whereby a Man may handle or tread upon hot Iron, but not to continue so long without renewing their Unguent. The Royal Society mention an Experiment of a Salamander put into the fire, and there came from it a sort of a gelid moist humour, which resisted the power of the fire for a little time; but to say that it will always resist, or that it is its proper Element to live in, is against all Credible Authority and Experience.

Quest. 2. If there were any men before Adam?

*Ans.* Vide Numb. 9. Quest. 1.

Quest. 3. Whether Jephtha really Sacrificed his Daughter or not?

*Ans.* The Painter usually describes this Picture in the posture of Abraham Sacrificing his Son Isaac, but very improperly, both from the Text and other very good reasons; for 'tis observable that she went to deplore her virginity with her fellows, not her death: And also that when Jephtha did unto her according to his Vow, it is immediately added, and she knew on Man: Also according to Tremelius, *Ibant filie Israelitarum ad confabulandum cum filia Jephthæ quatuor diebus quotannis.* The Daughters of Israel went to talk with the Daughter of Jephtha yearly four days in a year: From all which places 'tis more than highly probable, that this Offering was only a dedicating her unto the Lord, as is the Custom now of the Romish Church in the separation of Nuns, &c. Besides, at that time the Oblation of unclean Beasts, much more humane Sacrifices were forbidden by the Law of God. Further, whereas the Common Translation has *Erit Jehova & offerum illud holocaustum*; Tremelius renders it, *Erit, inquam, Jehova aut offerum illud holocaustum*, which takes away the difficulty, and fairly bids, that whatever comes out of my house will be either proper for a Sacrifice, or not; if proper, it shall be a Sacrifice; if not, as in the Case of my Daughter, *Jehova erit*, &c. she shall be dedicated to the Lord.

Quest. 4. Whether if Lawyers shou'd erect an Office for an Ensurance of Estates, it wou'd not do well?

*Ans.* The greater Corruption of Law, the greater the Interest and profit of the Lawyers. We may expect the Lawyers (I mean the Common sort) will push on a reformation of Law, when Usurers grow Charitable. There is no Convenience without its Inconvenience: But if the Parliament shou'd erect such an Office of Ensurance, perhaps it might not be so much to the Detriment of ill Men, as such Ensurance wou'd be to the benefit of both good and bad: It wou'd prevent the ruine of thousands who must abide the Exposition of Ambiguous Sentences, where Interest or Prejudice may add or diminish the Truth: The length of Expensive Law-suits, such circumventing Tricks in dealing, that we want Presidents for, and which the Law can neither reach nor remedy, with innumerable other Inconveniencies: But these are our *private Thoughts*. If the Querist expects from our society Rules or Politicks of State, magisterial and decisive; We beg his pardon, and equally desire Correspondence with him and the Lawyers.

Quest. 5. Whether the antient Philosophers, upon supposition of living good lives, can be reasonably thought to be damned?

*Ans.* No, there is no respect of persons with God; but in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him: There is a natural Religion written in every Mans heart, and those that are denied a greater Light shall be judged according to that, Rom. 2. and 12, 14, 15. 'Tis true indeed, the Apostle has said, *there is no other name given under heaven whereby we may be saved, but by the name of Jesus*: But it wou'd be a very narrow, uncharitable interpretation to limit Salvation to the Letter: What (if so) must become of the Sons of believing parents, who are born deaf, and yet by Signs and Tokens are brought to a knowledge of their Duty, and of some one that died for 'em? 'Tis impossible to make 'em know it was Jesus, and yet not impossible they may be saved: Salvation by Christ is *Vertual, and not Nominal*; we may be saved by believing the second Person in the Trinity died for us; and the Heathens by believing there was a God, believed in him essentially, tho' not personally, and so cou'd not miss the benefit of his redemption any more than the Patriarchs and the Prophets before his Incarnation.

Quest. 6. An Hare is an Hundred Yards before a Dog, and the Dog runs  $2\frac{1}{2}$  faster than the Hare, Query how many Yards shall the Dog run before he overtakes her?

*Ans.* See towards the latter end of Wingates Arithmetick for the manner of working this Question.

Quest. 7. How comes it to pass, that a Bottle being stoppt with a strong big Cork, and let down

into the Sea such a Number of Fathoms that the Cork shall then be drawn and forc'd into the Bottle?

*Ans.* We know this to be matter of fact, and the reason of it may be sought long enough by those that have not consider'd the *internal Power* of each Element. First of all, this shews how deep the Element of Air may mingle with and penetrate into that of Water, to hinder Vacuities, and consequently we may make a proportionable estimate, how far the Element of Air may have some power in its operation in the Element of Fire above. 'Tis not only the nature of *animate* but *inanimate Bodies* (such as the Elements) to act as independently as they can; Nature abhors a *Vacuum*, and the Element of Water, so many Fathom from its superficies, is strong enough to act its part without being assisted with another Element. The Air in the Bottle descending so low, as that no more of its Element can come to its assistance, is assaulted by the innate power of the aqueous Element; wherefore contracting its self in the Bottle to resist that force, a Vacuity wou'd necessarily follow, which the Water striving to supply, bursts in the Cork, and banishes the little *Rebel Air* into its own Boundaries again.

Quest. 8. *What was the mark God set upon Cain?*

*Ans.* The *Rabbins* say that his Flesh was crusted and made invulnerable; and that *Lamech*, when he kill'd him, wounded him in the Eye. I know a Gentleman, whose misfortune it was to kill his Friend in a *Duel* (and honourably) according to that Notion the World now has of Honour; and though upon his Tryal he came off with his life, yet the action made such an Impression upon his *Spirits*, that he carries a *visible mark of horror and disturbance* in his Countenance to this day; and such an one, that causes many thinking persons, that are strangers to him, to take a particular notice of him, when they meet him. One amongst the rest meeting him in my company, pull'd me by the Arm to take notice of him, and when he was past by, told me, that Gentleman has the Characters of *Cain* legibly written in his Face; I told my Friend he had unfortunately kill'd a *Man*; my Friend repli'd, he did not know it before I told him: I am perswaded that this was *Cain's Mark*.

Quest. 9. *Whether it's lawful for Parents to force their Children to the same way of Worship they themselves profess? And whether Children ought always to obey them?*

*Ans.* Theres undoubtedly a difference in *Worships*; there can be but one best, and truest; and therefore others must be comparatively false and impious, and consequently it must be a greater sin for a Parent to force a Child to a false worship, than a true: Howsoever, it must be acknowledged this does not in the least remove the difficulty, because false and true are equally confident they are in the right, and even an *Erroneous conscience* obliges, though not to use such methods as wou'd take

away all its own excuse; and besides, there's still as great difference between a false Religion and the various Modes of the true, as between *Children* in their nonage, and when grown up to years of *Discretion*. But supposing 'em in those circumstances, supposing the Parents of the *True Religion*, (as one such there must be) and supposing a Child inclined to a false, The Parent can't, we think, be granted to have more power than the *Magistrate*; now the *Magistrate's* power, who is *Custos utriusque Tabulae*, the *Guardian*, or *Keeper of both Tables*, may reach to the prohibition of a false Religion; but in the Judgment of the most and best Christians, not to the violent enforcement of the True, a method our *Saviour* never used nor approv'd (he whipt ill men indeed out of the Temple, but never into't) nor is it suitable to humane nature, or likely to produce any effect, but making men *Hypocrites*. On the other side, supposing the Parent of a false Religion, and the Child of the True, 'tis yet clearer that neither has he any power to compel him to accompany him to his own false worship, nor, when the Child is of Age and Discretion enough to chuse for himself, to hinder him from embracing the true; nor is the Child at all obliged by his Commands, either on one side or the other, since, if God Commands one thing, and the Parent, nay the King another, 'tis an easy case whether of the two we ought to obey. Though in the mean time such dissent ought to be accompanied with the greatest modesty respect and duty imaginable to the Parent, that it might plainly appear 'twas Conscience, not *Stubbornness* or *Humour*, was the true reason thereof.

Quest. 11. *Whether the Soul of Man knoweth all things to come, but is hindered by the dulness of Bodily Organs?*

*Ans.* No: But rather than the Proponent should think we are singular, and have our own Abridgments and Limitations for the Soul, we'll allow it as great a Prerogative as the *Angels* and *Fallen Spirits*, neither of which can properly be said to have any Dull, Organous or Bodily Obstruction, either in respect of their knowing or acting. Therefore we shall first consult the Nature of *Angels*, which we shall find in an equal Classis with the *Spirits* of the Just, Luke 20. 36. And yet *Angels* Knowledge is short, both in respect of the *Mystery of Redemption*, and the prescience of things to come; 1 Pet. 1. 12. Mat. 24. 36. From which last place, we may argue a *Majori* that if those *Angels* who continue obedient, are defective in their Knowledge, then certainly the *Fallen Spirits* are Ignorant of things to come, unless some will prove that they found a greater Knowledge by their Fall, than *Adam* did by his, viz. his Guilt and Nakedness. But to be full, once for all, the Prophet *Isaiab*, C. 41. v. 23. arguing against pretended *Prophetic* Spirits, says, *shew us things to come, and hereby we shall know that ye are Gods*; by which place 'tis easily gathered, that all the Knowledge of *Angels* and *Spirits*, is either such as they have in *Commissions* from God Almighty, or else such as they gather from *Scripture Prophecies* and natural Observations of *Second Causes*, of which last sort is the *Devils* Knowledge; and his *Angels*; to which may be added the Correspondence that *fraternity* keep amongst themselves by *speedy Errands*, whereby they have quicker advices than others, and all without any *Spirit of Prophecy*, or any supernatural Knowledge fix'd in these *Incorporeal Entities*; for from the last cited Text, *Prescience* is an *Incommunicable Attribute* of God Almighty, and that whereby he particularly distinguishes himself from such as would pretend a foreknowledge of what is not revealable, either immediately by himself, or the natural Order of Causes and Effects, which also are very often hindered.