

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether you believe the Romans in their greatest power had so many Soldiers in Pay as the present French King?

Ans. Yes, and many more; Xerxes Mustered above twice as many in a little part of the World; but the Lieutenancy of Rome was generally spread throughout Europe.

Quest. 2. When the Angels had their first existence?

Ans. Who but an Angel knows? The Scriptures alone must be our Rule, and we there can track them as far as the Foundations of the Earth, and no farther; when we are told, those Morning Stars sung together, and all the Sons of God (as they are often called,) shouted for Joy. For which Reason, we dare not lay any stress on a notion, which else might be not very improbable, namely, that they might be the Souls of Good Men, or some such Creatures which to us want a Name, remaining from some former Creation.

Quest. 3. Where go the Souls of Good Men immediately after Death?

Ans. 'Tis impossible but we must talk improperly of such things whereof we can have none but borrowed notions. Whereness or Ubiquity, and all physical Progressive local Motion, which must be in a Ubi, do not, that we know of, agree to pure Spirits; nor can we conceive how they should, being only the Attributes of Body. However, Exist they must, and we can't conceive any Existence but what is somewhere; and if we allow Vehicles, could much more easily think and discourse of these things. But for the present, considering of separate Spirits as in a Place, though we know not how, the Question is where those, if Good Men, reside immediately after Death? If by immediately, here the Querist should mean the very next instant after Separation, we conceive 'twould be the same thing as if that Term were to be taken in a lax Sense, for the time before the Resurrection; seeing Metaphysical motion is performed in an instant: And by the leave of very good Men, we can see no necessity, nor so much as a Congruity, in what is generally called a particular Judgment. We believe then and assert, that the Souls of Pious Men, as soon as departed out of this Life, are in Mann Domini, with God that gave them: If we are further ask'd to be more explicit, we answer, they are in Paradise, as was the good Thief's, Lazarus's, &c. But still, whether that Paradise be the Highest Heavens, the Seat of ineffable Glory, and the Throne of the most High; or only a Place of Ease and Refreshment prepared for the Spirits of Good Men between Death and the last Judgment, (which is far enough from Purgatory, and was the unanimous Doctrin of the first and purest Ages of the Church,) we think

so immediately to the present Question.

Quest. 4. Whether a separate Soul can assume a Body; and how that which has no Body, can operate on what is so?

Ans. For the latter part on which the former much depends, that what is not Body, operates on what is so, we are as sure as of that we our selves are made up of Body and Soul; but how it does so, better modestly acknowledge Ignorance, than pretend fully to account. This however we think may be said, that the nearer any thing is in nature to Spirit, the stronger it acts on Body, as Winds, though Invisibile: That every order in Nature of a higher kind, commands that of a lower, not vice versa; and that there is and must be an Hylarchick power in Spirit, which commands Matter at Pleasure, though the mode thereof we can't pretend to explain.

Quest. 5. How does Gods Prescience consist with Mans free Agency?

Ans. God made Man upright, and a free Agent (yet not without defectibility, as the Angels;) He inclines him not to Evil more than Good, but capacitates him by a Talent of Reason to answer the end of his Creation, and render himself acceptable. He exacts no Impossible Duty from Man, but knowing Mans Frame and the possibility of prevaricating, he has prescribed a Method to restore such as forfeit their Priviledges: This is equally common to all; but if after all, he will have more patience with this Man than that, and by giving Instances of his Prerogative, for a Warning to all Men, call some to a speedy Account, who have not been so notoriously wicked, as some others that are spared longer; this is no Impediment of his Justice, who gives to every Man sufficient Means for his Happiness. Thus Gods Prescience presides over Mans free Agency, but doth not over-rule it by saving Man (ordinarily) whether he will or no, or by damning him undeservedly.

Quest. 6. Whether was that of Dives and Lazarus a Parable or an History?

Ans. I can meet with no Writer, either antient or Modern, that takes it otherwise than Parabolical; though of all Parables it looks most like an History, because 'tis so particular; as to Dives, his Fathers House, his Number of Brethren, &c. but whether Parable or History, it is not without its use. It is either a real truth, or a real representation of truth, seeing it came from his Lips who is truth it self.

Quest. 7. What is the meaning of that Text, 1 Cor. 7. 36. If any Man think that he becometh himself uncomely toward his Virgin, if she pass the Flower of her Age, and need so require, let him do what he will, he sinneth not; let them Marry?

Ans. The Apostle in another place, says, *Marriage is Honourable*, to which the Word *uncomely* is here opposed; so that the Sense is, *if any Man who keeps his Virgin* (that is, his Virginity or Chastity) *and thinks it uncomely or not so honourable a State as Marriage, and also finds the Constitution of his Body necessitates him to his Physical end, after a long abstinence, even beyond the Flower of his Age, let him Marry if he will, he Sins not*; although from the preceding Discourse of the Apostle, a *Virgin State* is more adapted to the Service of God (generally) than a *Married one*.

Quest. 8. *Who was that Melchizedech, mentioned Heb. 7? Whether Christ, an Angel, or a Man?*

Ans. We promised (N. 10. Q. 11.) to add something more of this Subject at the latter end of our Volume, which is this, that *Melchizedech* was neither (according to those Learned Authors we mentioned in our last,) an *Angel*, nor the *very Son of God*; but a *Man*, notwithstanding those Objections that have been brought, especially that, *Without Father, without Mother, &c.* (1st.) Gen. 14. 18. 'Tis said, *He brought forth Wine, &c.* If the Text had been, *He brought Wine, &c.* it had been proper for an *Angel*, &c. but the word *forth* supposes a place of Residence, and a Human Entertainment. (2d.) Here's no need of a Personal Type, (I mean as to a similitude in Persons,) no more than there was betwixt old *Elias*, and young *St. John the Baptist*, 'twas the *likeness and power of their Spirits*; so here the Type or Similitude lies in the Order, as is plain by the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Verses of the Seventh of the *Hebrews*. (3d.) The Holy Ghost gives the express Characteristick Man, ver. 4. He had a *Personal descent*, (that is, a Natural Father and Mother, gathered from ver. 6, and was subject to Mortality: See ver. 8. the beginning of the Verse, for the latter part alludes not to his Person, but his Order. His natural Genealogy is plainly inferred in ver. 6. but not set down, it being only the custom of the Jews to Register their Genealogies in order, to preserve their Claims to outward Promises, Blessings, Priviledges, &c. Christ himself had a reputed Descent, but when he was about this Order of Righteousness, Peace, &c. he plainly represented his prototype *Melchizedech*, in saying, *he own'd no other Relation but such as did the Will of his Father in Heaven*. The difficulty and mistake, was a Confounding the Person of *Melchizedech*, with his Order; it was Righteousness, Peace, &c. which have no Register, which are without beginning of Days, or end of Time; and so representing the Son of Righteousness, who is now and ever will remain so, eternally fulfilling that Order which *Melchizedech* personally represented for a little time. We need not say any more against *Melchizedech's* being an *Angel* or *Christ*, or *Sem*, &c. Opinions, since they are already confuted by the abovesaid learned Authors.

Quest. 9. *Seeing the Dictates of Gods Spirit are generally Dogmatical, seldom Hypothetical, and never precarious, mayn't we imagin the word (I suppose) to be crept into the Text, John 21. ult?*

Ans. There's no necessity of granting any such thing, since we find the word in all the Copies; nor does such a Consequence follow from the Querist's Premises, as he draws from them: For the Argument produced by him to prove such a change probable, viz. that the Dictates of Gods Spirit are generally Dogmatical, seldom Hypothetical, and never precarious; we may acknowledg as much, but yet say, that in the expressing those Dictates, that same blessed Spirit may make use of a different way, according to the different importance of the Truth revealed. In the great Truths of the Gospel, 'tis necessary we should have the clearest and most explicit Words to make the Testimony more cogent and effectual on our Minds, in things collateral. Though the Inspired Writers were there too guided by the same infallible Spirit, and could affirm nothing but Truth, they might yet in the expressing that Truth, make use of such Figures as are common in the Speech of all Nations, and give something a less positive and magisterial turn to what they write. To instance in the former of these Cases; Where the Attestation of the Church is brought to what the Evangelist writes of our Saviour's Life and Death, and Miracles, they say, *We know that his Testimony is true*. The words in question, are an instance of the latter: The Evangelist expresses the Multitude of our Saviours Miracles, by an usual Hyperbole; saying, *that if they should all be written, he supposes the world could not contain them*: As the Pharisees say in another case, *All the World is gone after him*; and we in common Discourse, *Tell all the World*. Now this Hyperbole, (against which too, some have been so wise to make Objections,) is softened by the Word (*suppose, & quas*, of the same import with *Crederes, you'd think*, and is the same as if he had said, the World would hardly be able to contain such Books.

Quest. 10. *Whether there was ever such a Person as Pope Joan?*

Ans. Though I am no Papist, I must own that I want clearer Confirmations of this Story than any I have yet met with; It is generally delivered with a *they say*. *Martinus Polonus*, who is most urg'd to authorize this Relation in his antient Copies, mentions not any thing of it, as the Learned *Leo Allatius* hath upon a diligent Inquisition observed. *Metrophanes Smyrnaeus*, the Latin Historians, and the exasperated Greeks do not mention it; but grant that *Benedict* the Third was a Successor of *Leo* the Fourth, notwithstanding the Relation is, that *Pope Joan* intervened, and Succeeded *Leo* the Fourth.