

# The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**hy was Barrenness counted a greater Curse in the Levitical Law than in the present Age?

Ans. One Reason why our Women are not so very desirous of Children as theirs, may be, because the Jewish Women had much easier Labour than other Nations; as in the Story of the Egyptian Midwives—besides, their Country being warmer, made it yet gentler than 'tis with ours in colder Climats.—But the reason why they thought Barrenness so great a Curse, more especially, was, because the Women all expected to be the Mother of their promised Messiah, the very hopes whereof, and the Honour they expected to receive thereby, outweighed all the pains they could endure—which Honour, if without Children, they must despair of, and 'twas this principally, as good Authors tell us, which made 'em in that Age so impatient of Barrenness.

Quest. 2. How many years before the Creation was Lucifer cast from Heaven?

Ans. A wise Question—How many years? when there was no such thing as Days, or Months, or Years, or even Time it self, which is only the measure of the heavenly Bodies. For which reason we can have no clearer Notion of Duration before the World began, than we have of Infinite or Eternal—Nor is't so much as certain, the Angels were created before the World (tho' they might in the very beginning of it, the Heaven and all the Host of Heaven, as Moses tells us, being part of the six days Work) and consequently, we can have no certainty, that the Apostacy of the Angels was at all before the Creation.

Quest. 3. On what grounds doth Mr. Cowley say, that the Q. of Sheba had a Child by K. Solomon, when no Author besides mentions it?

Ans. If Mr. Cowley says so, he has Authority enough for a Poet to ground a Fancy on—For besides old Tradition, all the Ethiopian or Abyssinian Histories positively affirm the same; nay, shew us a long Succession of Kings from this Son of hers, tho' 'tis more than probable they were mistaken, both in the Queen and her Son.

Quest. 4. We read in the History of Cain—that he desired God should set a mark upon him, lest any finding him, should slay him;—How could any slay him, there being no people at that time in the World besides Adam, Eve, and himself?

Ans. Supposing there had been no others in the World, yet Guilt causes Fear, and Fear, we know, is unreasonable—But the Querist is very hasty in saying, there were then no other persons in the World besides Adam, Eve, and Cain, which he can never prove; and the contrary thereof is almost demonstrable from the Sacred History; for immediately after his Murder of Abel, when Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, mention is

made of his Wife,—and in the same verse, of a City which he built, probably within a year after, which none can think he could do without the assistance of others. Abel might have Children, whom he would have reason to fear;—Adam might have more Children than are named; nay, we are certain he had so, for Gen. 5. v. 4. we read, that besides Cain, Abel, and Seth, he begat Sons and Daughters.

Quest. 5. Our Saviour said to the good Thief on the Cross,—This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.—The Apostles Creed says—Our Saviour,—the third day arose again from the Dead: Is't possible to reconcile these together?

Ans. Very easily. None are so foolish to think our Saviour's Body and Soul died together.—His Body we are sure descended into the Grave, or Hell, and rose not again till the third day. His person, all that was man in him, was in the state of the Dead, or state of Separation,—but his Soul was in Paradise, where he promised the good Thief, he should, that very day, be with him, and undoubtedly he was as good as his word.

Quest. 6. What was the more immediate cause of Sodom's overthrow;—whether it was not their attempt against the Angels?

Ans. When a Vessel is just full, one drop more will make it run over.—That last abominable Wickedness and Impenitence, even after they were struck blind, did, no doubt, fill up the measure of their Sins, and make 'em ripe for Divine Vengeance.

Quest. 7. 'Tis said in the History of Abraham,—Three men stood before him, and he seeing 'em, fell down and said,—My Lord,—The meaning of it?

Ans. Some have hence endeavoured to prove the Trinity,—but we have clearer places, and don't need it. What we esteem more probable, is,—that one of these three men or Angels which appeared in the form of men, was Christ himself, the second person in the ever blessed Trinity, who is called the Angel of the Covenant, and the Angel which delivered Jacob from all evil. This Abraham knew, and accordingly adored him, not the others, which would have been Idolatry.

Quest. 8. Whether Pharoah were a proper Name, or only significant of the Royal Station among the Egyptians?

Ans. From the long continuance of that Name through so many Ages, and comparing it with others like it, we think it most probable that 'twas both:—First, a Cognomen from some accident or other affixed to one of their Emperors, who being in high esteem amongst 'em for his Prudence, Valour, or Virtue, it might afterwards be taken up by his Successors for his and their own Honour, and the more to ingratiate themselves with the



People, as we find in the *Cesar's*, and *Augustus's* of the *Romans*,—and perhaps in other Instances.

Quest. 9. Did our Saviour's Humane or Divine Nature most display it self while he was upon Earth;—since, tho' he was Sinless and wrought Miracles like a God, yet he was in all other things like a man, both in his Life and Death?

Ans. Undoubtedly there appeared much more of his Humanity than of his Divinity while he was here; for his Divinity was indeed shrouded or hid in his Humanity, he being then in his state of Exinanition and Humiliation. And 'twas necessary that he should be so, otherwise he could not have died to have made us happy.

Quest. 10. Why did not God create Man incapable of sinning?

Ans. The very Question is little less than Nonsense.—If he had been created incapable of sinning he had not been man,—which he could not have been without a Root of Liberty and Rational Powers, capable of chusing and refusing Good and Evil:—Now, why God did create such a creature as this, what can be a better reason than that thereby he might manifest himself, and both exercise and demonstrate his Wisdom, Goodness, Mercy, Justice, Power, and all other his Divine Attributes, which are the same with his Essence; for nothing but what's rational is a proper Subject for proper Punishments and Rewards.

Quest. 11. Why did Christ take upon him the nature of Man on purpose to suffer Death for our Redemption, and yet pray that that Cup might pass from him?

Ans. He did not absolutely pray that it might pass from him, but only, if it were possible;—and this to shew himself a real man, and as such sensible of pain, and desirous to avoid it;—but this still with the most entire Submission and Resignation to God's Will,—as appears from the following words, *Not my Will, but thine be done.*

Quest. 12. What Notion can we have of the nature of that Being which never had a beginning?

Ans. An imperfect one, for could we comprehend him fully, we must be not only as great, but also greater than he. Imperfect therefore in relation to us, as are even most or all of our Notions even about Sensible Objects, ever present with us, whereof we know but very little as to their Properties or Natures,—what strange thing then is't? If we can't comprehend the incomprehensible, if we are lost in what's Spiritual, Infinite, and Eternal? Our best notions of God are only negative in respect of our selves and our own weakness,—we remove all those Imperfections which are in our selves and attribute the contraries thereof to that most glorious Being in whose very Essence is included all possible perfection.

Quest. 13. Who was most in the right, Democritus for laughing, or Heraclitus for weeping?

Ans. Both equally in the wrong, one running as far in one extremum as the other in the contrary. The world is not so bad nor miserable, but Heraclitus might have found something in it to have made him smile with a little more reason than seeing an Ass mumble Thistles, nor so happy; but Democritus, if he had had much good nature, might have found Objects in't, more than enough to have spoiled his Laugh. In the mean time, as there are few persons will be laughed out of their faults, so a man may cry his Heart out before even they'll amend 'em; and upon the whole, 'twas not at all likely either of these Extravagants should produce any good effect by their behaviour, on the minds of men, only making themselves equally ridiculous.

Quest. 14. Whether the stratagem of Zopyrus were fit for Imitation?

Ans. By no means, and upon no account, The Story is,—that he cut off his own Nose, Ears, and Lips, and having thus frightfully mangled himself, fell to the Babylonians, whom his Master had long besieged in vain, pretending 'twas he had so used him; by whom being believed and made their Governor, he soon after found means to betray them and their City to Darius, wherein 'tis a question, whether he were more cruel to himself, or false to those who trusted him, neither of which seems to deserve either Imitation or Commendation. 'Tis true, Darius highly esteemed him for the action, and he had reason, since he had not many Subjects who would endure so much pain, and such a lasting disgrace for him, to purchase him so easie a Victory: But after all, trusted he was by those people, and breach of Trust looks very ill, whatever be the occasion; a Traytor is like a Spye in the Court or Camp of an Enemy, a sort of a necessary evil; but so is a Hangman as well as both the others, whose Office and Character there are very few would be proud of.

Quest. 15. What's the reason that a Wound in any part of the Body by a gnawn or chaw'd Bullet, proves incurable?

Ans. If it be really so, the reason may be because the roughness of the Bullet, and its many unequal edges tare and jag the Flesh in such a manner, that 'tis impossible it should ever close again, or admit of any Cure besides Amputation.

Quest. 16. Why a Snake cut into several parts; will, if the pieces be any thing near, joyn again, and become sound and whole,—the Querist having lately seen it?

Ans. We suppose, if the Querist had not seen it himself, he would ne're have believed it;—and he must not take it amiss if we desire the same liberty,—and 'twill be time enough to enquire into the reason of the thing when we are once sure of matter of Fact,—which we are the more inclin'd to doubt, because of the Company it comes in, as may be seen by the two following Queries sent by the same Hand.