

# The Athenian Mercury :

Tuesday, August 11. 1691.

Quest. 1. **A** Minister near Cyrencester in the County of Gloucester, having sworn not to marry any Persons clandestinely in an Alehouse, or any other unlawful place, but in the Church with Banes or License, did nevertheless marry several People in an Alehouse without Banes or License; and being ask'd whether he was not forsworn, answered No; for says he, I was to marry none clandestinely in an Alehouse, but a Couple coming to me to be Married is some—upon this Equivocation he thinks himself not forsworn: I wou'd desire your Opinion of it?

Ans. Several Letters are come to our Hands upon this Subject, which we have been willing to wave, as being very tender of the Reputation of that Cloth: But since by other Letters we are inform'd, that the Consequences of this Action terminate in a very great Fraud and Injustice about an Estate, we out of respect to Truth and Justice, have thought fit to return our Answer, which since a Scholar is concern'd in't, we shall first give him the Definition or Axiom of Perjury, which the Schoolmen have laid down, viz. *Perjurium est dictum humanum falsum, vel in se vel in iurantis Opinione, jure jurando asseveratum; cujus modi asseveratio divina adversatur reverentia, imo Dei contemptum implicatum habet, ob idque merito inter lethalia refertur peccata; licet nihilominus per se non publicum Manus administranti, alterius postulatu, ab eo quod perjuratum scieret, iurandum exigere, quod idem in privato homine Crimen esset Gravissimum, posset tamen privatus, ad rei dubie confirmationem, ab eo de cujus perjurio nihil certi haberet, sine culpa iurandum postulare.* Upon a Supposition that the Account we have received is true, which we are as willing as we can to disbelieve, we shall in Examination prove that the two essential parts of Perjury must be grounded upon this Action, viz. *Falsity in the Oath, and falsity in the Opinion of the Swearer, tho' a truth.* To the first, that it is essentially false, appears both from the Manner the Law requires in an Oath, as also to the Orthography of the words: as to the Manner the Law requires, The Swearer is to use the words in that sense that the tenderer of the Oath gives it in, and not in his own. A dreadful Instance of Equivocation we have in the Instance of Arrius the Heretick, who swore to the Tenets in his own Book he had under his Coat, and not to those that were offer'd to him, and as he return'd home voided out his Guts in a House of Office: But as to this Equivocation, that a Marrying none, was not a Marrying some. 'Tis the meanest Subterfuge that ever I knew, and proves just contrary to what he would have it, to wit, that he is Perjur'd, (supposing the relation to be Truth,) 'tis suppos'd he would have said, that the not marrying none had been a marrying some, for here not and none being two Negatives, make an Affirmative, to wit, some. We cannot by this place suppose him any thing but a Scholar, and if any Scholar at all, then he is Perjur'd in his Opinion, as well as in the essential falsity of his Oath, both which are fully prov'd by the second Oath he took of their being married.

Quest. 2. Whether a Person made Drunk, (so that he is incapable to return pertinent Answers to the Minister, either of his own, or as dictated to him) can at such a time be properly said to be married according to the Law of God?

Ans. Before I return a Negative Answer where a positive Oath has already been pass'd, as the Letters by me affirm, I shall premise, that other different Oaths were taken, as that the Man was made drunk; for proof of which, they alledg'd, that being ask'd, Wilt thou have this Woman to thy wedded Wife, he made no other answer but this, I must go to piss: But upon a supposition, that by several times asking, he made use of all his proper Responses, it won't follow that the Law of God will look upon this as a Marriage; for the Wisdom of our Church appointed the Matrimonial Office to be used upon a Supposition, that the words in't are to be offer'd to such persons as know what they say. The words of Matrimony are not the essential act of Marriage, but a

publick Sign or Solemnization of a Legal Contract made between the Parties beforehand. Now words being only the Index of our Minds, and when words are forced upon us by undue means, the sense of which we neither understand nor will, 'tis a Sacrilegious Rape committed upon the Soul, which by how much it is of a more excellent Nature than the Body, by so much greater is the Injustice, and deserves a severer Inquisition than what our Law requires for the Satisfaction of bodily Rapes, and all Person's concern'd in such Actions are a sort of Spiritual Pimps.

Quest. 3. What Distinction the Scripture makes between a Natural man and a Spiritual man, or whether Learning in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin makes a Divine?

Ans. This is another of the unanswerable Questions which we had some time since sent us. The Author adds his own Thoughts thereon. "That a Natural man is not taught the understanding the Scriptures by the Spirit of God which indited 'em, as the Spiritual Man is, That not many wise or noble are call'd, but God has chosen the foolish things of this World to confound the wise. That hence it follows, that Humane Learning, that is, says he, Learning in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, does not make a Divine or Spiritual man: That this Humane Learning may interpret the Scripture from the Original, but 'tis Revelation only must unfold their meaning: That one who understands not those Languages, may by Revelation be an abler Divine than such as are very well vers'd in 'em, which he proves by the Instance of St. Paul, who whilst he was a Learned but Natural man, and before he receiv'd the assistance of Revelation, persecuted the Church by Commission from the High Priest and Pharisees, learned but natural men: Where he adds his fear lest we are now as ignorant as the Jews then, because we think none a Divine without Humane Learning: and is concern'd lest there shou'd be now a Famine of the Word for want of it's being rightly interpreted.

And thus have we patiently and fairly represented the substance and strength of his Argument, by which we may see there are some Persons still foolish enough to set up for the old new lights, which went out in a snuff some thirty years past, and have ever since been so justly exploded. Supposing the Boasts of those concern'd in this and the past'd Questions to be true, that they have been shown to several great Divines about Town, we don't wonder that they have thought it worth the while to bestow an Answer to so much Confidence and Ignorance. We had also resolv'd to slight this, but finding it still sent in agen, will now dispatch it to get rid of the Impertinency of those concern'd therein.

To the Question, What Distinction the Scripture makes between a Natural man and a Spiritual man, or whether Learning in the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin, makes a Divine? To the first part we answer,——That by Natural man the Scripture means, such a one as arises no higher than the attainments of Nature, or unassisted Reason, as did the Grecian Philosophers, and others; by the Spiritual man, one who is assisted and guided by God's Holy Spirit into the Truths of the Christian Religion——For the second part of the Question, that and it's dependance on the former is very pleasant, or whether Learning in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin makes a Divine: So that his interpretation of Natural man, is, one that has Learning in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, or as he afterwards has it, Humane Learning, most profoundly intimating, as men of his Capacity generally believe, that there's no Humane Learning besides Learning in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. His Interpretation of Spiritual man, is a Divine, or Teacher of others, whereas the Apostle speaks not here of an Evangelist, Prophet, Presbyter, but of the Christian Church in general, and the whole Body thereof.

But he explains his meaning in what he adds, that a Natural man is not taught the understanding of the Scriptures



tures by the Spirit of God which indited 'em, as the Spiritual man is, and therefore can be no Divine. But we hope his Learned man, that is, one who understands the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and a Natural man, are not Terms convertible, but 'tis possible to be one, without being the other, as St. Paul was. Further, if we take a Natural man here for a Learned Jew or Heathen, we grant he cou'd not make a Christian Divine, or Teacher of others, having not that miraculous Spirit then necessary for the Preaching the Gospel, nor any assistances thereof. If for one who embraces the Christian Faith, but is not inwardly regenerated, or truly pious, such a man may be a Divine, or Teacher of others. This we prove from the Instance of Judas, who no doubt preach'd the Gospel, as well as the other Disciples. From the Defence of those false Professors at the last day whom our Saviour mentions, who shall not only have taught in the Streets, but wrought Miracles in his Name. From St. Pauls own words, while he preach'd to others a possibility of being himself a Cast-away. From his complaint of those who preach'd Christ out of Envy, notwithstanding which he rejoyc'd in their preaching, which he ne're wou'd have done, had it been either ineffectual or unlawful. For his Objections, That not many wise men are call'd, it's true, (in what sence we'll presently inquire) but 'tis not said not any, but not many. And who were those wise men, but the Scribes, the Philosophers of the Greeks, and Scribes and Pharisees among the Jews? God thereby magnifying his Son, and confounding the pride of the World, proving plainly by the meanness of the Preachers, and those miraculous gifts he had given 'em, the Divine Original of their Doctrine. But those miraculous gifts, among which the Gift of Languages, then frequent in the Church, the Gospel being long since spread thro' the World, soon ceased, as being not needful, and God doing nothing in vain. Some knowledge in Languages is however still requisite among us who have the Scriptures only translated, to those who are to teach others, else how shall they resist gainayers, or be able to prove any thing from the Scriptures, if they know not whether they are rightly translated. After all, the Apostle here discourses not of his Spiritual Mans understanding the Scriptures, or interpreting them aright, but his coming to the knowledge of the Principles and Articles of the Christian Religion, as reveal'd by our Saviour, and then miraculously taught by the Spirit, before they were committed to Writing, it being long after, e're the Canon of the Scripture was compleated: And 'twas by this Revelation the Apostle himself was made a Christian, tho' afterwards further instructed by Ananias a good and devout man.

For the Scriptures, as now we have 'em, their meaning is plain and clear in the Essentials of Salvation to every good man who applies his mind to study 'em. Plain enough they are, and easie to be known, tho' by our own faults, not so easily practis'd. For as one tartly enough ask'd a Lady of a suspected Fame, when she complain'd of the obscurity of the Scriptures, Madam, what can be plainer, than Thou shalt not commit Adultery? So may we ask here, if some Persons are so wicked as to make God the Author of Sin, what can be a plainer Text against 'em, than God tempeth no man to Evil? and what needs any further Interpretation of what's indisputable? If another who perhaps lives so that he dares not believe a Hell, denies there is or will be any such place or state, or any Eternal Torments after this Life is ended: what can be a clearer Answer to him than our Saviours own words, — These shall go away into everlasting punishment? Nor can that Text need any further explaining, wherein we read of some men, who wrest the Scriptures to their own Damnation.

Quest. 4. What Difference is there between a Cloud and a Fog? The reason is, the Querist has seen Clouds at a distance which when near have proved only Fogs, and Clouds about the sides of Tenariff while the Fogs have been clear, and in High-lands, in the East-Indies, persons walking up as if into a Cloud?

Ans. There's no need of going as far as Tenariff, or the East-Indies, for what happens here commonly enough, and we our selves have seen in England; we mean a Cloud towards the middle or bottom of a Hill, and all clear at top; which with the other Instances the

Querist gives, answers his own Question; and prove that a Cloud and Fog, or Mist are the same thing, tho' generally differing in height and thickness from one another; a Fog, till 'tis drawn up to some height, being but the Embryo of a Cloud, as that a ripe and perfect Fog.

Quest. 5. Whether all Marriages are made in Heaven?

Ans. No certainly; for we are sure some are made in Hell, as Incestuous Marriages, and such like. But the bottom of the Question is, Whether every Man and Woman who marry together were predestinate to the same. If by this Predestination is meant such a necessary determination of our Actions as makes 'em cease to be humane, or which is the same, free and rational, we must absolutely deny any such thing, as being only an Excuse for Imprudence and Folly, and may as well be made use of by ill Persons as weak ones. In the mean time we don't doubt but the Providence of God does really interpose and preside over all humane actions, suo modo, or in such a way as is agreeable to it's own Justice and Wisdom, and the Nature of Man, and if in other actions, certainly in this, which is of the highest concern as to the happiness of Life, so as to permit the evil, and dispose to the good; but this, as has been said, infers no manner of necessity upon us, nor in the least takes away the freedom of our actions, which we feel we have in what ever we do: tho' Reason tells us there's one above us, and tho' it may perhaps fall short in its Enquiry how these things can be well reconciled with one another.

Quest. 6. Whether a Young Man be a fit hearer of Philosophy?

Ans. The general practice of the Learned part of the World abound with Instances of Youth above Age, ten to one and more, but at the same time 'tis confess'd some Persons are never fit hearers, especially when they come to be old: Senem erudere & mortuum curare idem est. Youth is flexible, tender, and capable of Impressions, when Age is peevish, morose, and conceited; or if none of these, yet so asham'd generally to learn, that they will not be counsell'd. We read (Hakewel's Apol. 1. 3. c. 6.) That Tostatus Bishop of Abulum at the Age of two and twenty years, attained to the knowledge of all Arts and Sciences; for besides Philosophy and Divinity, Canon and Civil Laws, History, and the Mathematicks, he was well skill'd both in the Greek and Latin Tongues: So that it was written on him by Bellarmine, Hic stupor est mundi quod scibile discutit omne. He was so true a Student, and so constant in sitting to it, that with Dydimus of Alexandria he was thought to have a Body of Brass, and so much he wrote and published, that if three leaves were allowed to every day of his Life from his very Birth, there wou'd be some to spare.

Quest. 7. Which is the greatest Sin to be a Night-walker, or to rebel against ones Parents?

Ans. Either of them big enough for Damnation; neither doth the greater at all excuse the lesser, as 'tis often design'd in such Comparisons; but to return a direct answer, we refer you to the order of their setting down in the Commandments, where Duty to Parents is press'd, before Adultery is forbid.

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