

# The Athenian Mercury :

Tuesday, September 22. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether Witchcrafts or Possessions are credible? and whether Natural Distempers han't often preternatural Effects which may be judg'd by some to be the Work of the Devil?

Ans. That Witchcrafts are credible, we have formerly prov'd, as far as either Humane or Divine Authority can do it. Possessions indeed some Divines deny, but they have another word call'd Obsessions, which they use instead on't, to signifie something very like it, if not the same thing. Possessions they say were only proper to the time of our Saviour, tho' they have no ground that we know of, for such an Assertion, either from Scripture or sound Reason—On the contrary, tho' we are sensible there have been very many Cheats of this kind, yet we believe there's Reason not to think all Instances we have thereof are to be reckon'd in that Number. Possessions we are sure there were after our Saviour's time, since we read of the Man in whom an Evil Spirit was, whom the seven Sons of Seava Exorcised so long, 'till he fell upon 'em and beat 'em out of the House naked and wounded. Possessions we are almost as sure there were after the Times of the Apostles, namely, in Tertullian's Days, who speaks of 'em as a thing frequent and notorious, and appeals to the Heathens themselves concerning them, and that Power which the Christians had over the Devils who seiz'd on the Bodies of Men. That there have been Possessions since, even in our own Age, we see no Reason to deny, since not only strange Voices have been heard from the Bodies of the poor tormented Creatures, which we grant might be Natural, not only Hair, and other strange Substances have been Vomited after a strange manner, which yet might be Natural too—not only their Limbs and Bodies have been strangely writhed, and very odd Pains all over 'em, which might, we own, be still Natural; but they have spoken divers Languages, tho' utterly unlearn'd; they have reveal'd Secrets, disclosed what pass'd at a distance, reveal'd futurities, Vomited Pins and Stones and Nails to a prodigious quantity, being carried in the Air, and hung up against a Wall with no visible Support, all which we defie all the world to prove possible by the power of Nature only.

Quest. 2. **W**ant and ill Company induce a young Man to take ill Cour'es for some time—afterwards he gets into Business, and marries a vertuous Woman, by whom he has Children, and by assistance of Friends, and his honest Endeavours for several Years, is bless'd with a Competence, just sufficient to support his Family: Query, Whether he is in justice obliged forthwith to part with all, to make satisfaction as far as he can, while he lives, or leave it to the Poor when he dyes, and thereby expose his Family to want and beggery, who had no hand in the Wrong, nor any advantage by it? —or what is fittest for him to do in this Case, since he knows not all the Parties whom he has wronged.

Ans. We have printed this Question at large, as 'twas sent us, because we esteem it a very singular Case, and our Judgment concerning it is as follows—

That he ought in the first place very seriously to repent the Injury which he has done—but this we hope he has already done, by his being so concerned for restitution.

That if any of his ill-gotten Goods remain, he ought forthwith to restore 'em, whatever the Inconvenience might be to his own private Fortunes—But this if he proposes the question fairly, there does not, since he says his Family receiv'd no advantage by those Injuries he had formerly done to others.

That he ought seriously to put the Question, Whether no retrenchments might be made in his own or his Families Expences; which if possible, he ought to do it, tho' they liv'd never so meanly, without wanting Necessaries, in order to restore as much as he can of what he had formerly unjustly taken away.

That if ever he is in better Circumstances, he ought to make full reparation, even to the Interest of what he has taken, either to the Persons injur'd; or if that can't possibly be, to the Poor, who are God's Trustees in such a Case.

That, to come to the Pinch, we think it hard for any one to ruine and starve his innocent Family, because he himself has formerly been an ill Man, which he says he must do if he shou'd forthwith make satisfaction. Nay, 'tis our Judgment, that God does not require he shou'd do so, especially when, as he says, they had no Hand in the Injustice, nor Benefit by it; and that by the assistance of Friends, possibly his Wives as well as his own; he was put into a Capacity to live honestly, and maintain his Family; and if he ought not to beggar 'em while he is alive, we see little or less Reason why he shou'd do it at his Death, when he himself is like to feel none of the hardships his Family will suffer thereby; tho' if he can make Reparation, and leave 'em a competent; tho' not a plentiful Estate, he ought to do it.

This is all we have to say on so Nice a Subject—which being of such great moment, we advise the Querist not wholly to rely upon our Judgment herein, but consult some Grave and Reverend Divine, who on knowing the whole Concern and Circumstances thereof, may give him a more certain and entire satisfaction.

And if there be any good Man who shall be offended with what we have advanc'd on this Subject, we desire his further thoughts thereon, as always professing ourselves as willing to retract or learn, as to teach or inform others.

Quest. 3. **W**hat sort of Matter our Bodies shall be made of in the other World?

Ans. It does not yet appear what we shall be, that is, we can give no full or exact Account of the future Condition either of our Bodies or Souls; yet this in general we know, that as our Souls shall be impeccable, so our Bodies shall be incorruptible—that they shall be glorified, and therefore must be glorious and luminous, like the glorious Body of our Saviour at the Transfiguration. It's also probable that the Matter whereof they are composed shall be so refined in quality, and perhaps so diminish'd in quantity, that we shall be in that sense *καρσενος*—that our Bodies shall be no longer Clogs to our Souls, but obey their Commands, and indue the Nature of Spirits in their quick and imperceptible Motion from one Term to another.

Quest. **W**hether the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge were two different Trees?

Ans. So Antiquity generally held, so Josephus thought, and delivers it as the received Opinion of his Countrymen. In his Antiquities, cap. 2. p. 4. of his English Translation—Among the Trees of Eden, says he, were the Tree of Life, and another, the Tree of Knowledge. So the Scripture seems also not obscurely to assert. Thus Gen. 2. 9. Out of the ground God made every Tree to grow—the Tree of Life also, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—and yet more plainly after the Fall, Cap. 3. v. 22. Behold, says God, the Man is become as one of us, to know Good and Evil; that is, upon his eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—And now least he put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and Eat and Live for ever.—What's the meaning of that Also, if the Trees were all one, and what wou'd it be but a distinction without a difference; nay, a fruitless Caution, and besides an impossible one—if he was to be turn'd out of Paradise least he shou'd eat of that Tree which he had eaten of already. Besides, the Effects of the Tree of Life were Life, as appears both by its Name, and by the supposition here made, that on the tasting thereof Man might live for ever; (nor can we see any need of an Irony, which is commonly supposed in this place) whereas the Effects of the Tree of Knowledge were quite contra-

ry. In the Day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely dye, and what can differ more than Life and Death? In the mean time we must acknowledge there wants not some Conjectures from the History which seems to make for the other side, and wou'd perswade us it might be one Tree only; for Cap. 2. v. c. before mentioned, we read The Tree of Life a so in the midst of the Garden; and Chap. 3. v. 3. the Woman tells the Serpent, who very probably had but a confused Knowledge of those things before he got it out of the Woman, as it shou'd seem by his first Question to her, she tells him the Forbidden Tree was that which was in the midst of the Garden. It's plain the Tree they eat of was the Tree of Knowledge, the Tree they eat of was that in the midst of the Garden, the Tree of Life was in the midst of the Garden, therefore one would think the Tree of Knowledge shou'd be the Tree of Life. But notwithstanding this, we are rather inclined to our former Opinion, and believe it's not very difficult to get clear of this Objection—because there might be two Trees planted about the middle of the Garden, encompass'd perhaps by all the rest—which if once granted, the difficulty wou'd vanish; and because the words in the 5th Verse of the 2d Chapter may be transposed, or false pointed, an alteration in either of which wou'd make the sense very plain: For the Tree of Life in the midst of the Garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—if we shou'd read, the Tree of Life, and, in the midst of the Garden the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that Phrase, in the midst of the Garden, belonging to the following words, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, not the Tree of Life; which goes before, This is our Judgment, from which we are not Angry if any differ, and shall alter our own when they give us better Reasons.

Quest. 5. What Physical Alteration was made in the Body of Adam by the Fall?

Ans. We believe, and none doubts that his Body was created without any actual Disease, as well as his Mind without any actual Sin, tho' both with a possibility of either. Now had he for some time obey'd God's Command in abstaining from the forbidden fruit, it's very probable his Mind had been confirm'd by God's Grace, as Angels and good Men now are, and his Body had also been preserv'd incorruptible, and in a fit Tenor for the Operations of his Soul by eating of the Tree of Life, whose noble qualities wou'd have corrected or fix'd the mutability of Matter, and restrain'd or united those contending Principles and Humours, which by a Necessity of Nature were in the Body of Man. Now upon his Fall he was forbidden to taste of this Tree of Life, as God himself says, *lest he should eat and live for ever*; and for that very end he was thrust out of Paradise, and a Flaming Sword placed before the Gate. The Physical Alteration then which was made in his Body we esteem to be chiefly a letting loose of all those Principles and Seeds of Diseases wherewith he was made, all which, had he stood, wou'd have been restrain'd, or employ'd to a better Use, as it also wou'd have been in the Affections of the Mind, which are now turn'd into Vices and Tormenting Passions. Besides this, the Change of Climate, Change of Diet, nay, Change of the whole Creation with the Fall of Man; (and such a Change it has undoubtedly undergone, since we read it now *groans* for a Renovation;) These ill Accidents, with continual Labour for himself and his Family, and other Domestick Vexations, and the irregular Motions of his Mind, his now unruly Passions and Affections, and perhaps as much as all, the quick and violent Sense of what he had lost, Eden it self being not improbably always in his Sight as well as Memory. We say all this together was sufficient to make those fatal Alterations in his Body, which his Children have receiv'd from him, and still labour under; and such they were, as are the common and necessary Effects of those Causes already mentioned.

Quest. 6. Why Adam and Eve after the Fall sew'd Fig-leaves together, and made themselves Aprons?

Ans. Why do Men now sew Cloth together to make themselves Breeches?

Quest. 7. Is there any such thing as Natural Modesty (in the Case above-mentioned) and has not Bergerac Reason for that contrary Custom which he introduces in his World in the Sun?

Ans. That Custom may do well enough in an Imaginary World, but will hardly ever take in a World inhabited by any thing that's humane—and shou'd that mad Author who recommends it himself have practis'd it, he wou'd have been Chain'd for his Pains, and treated like a Mad-man as he was, almost in any part of our World. But 'tis no wonder to find one ridicule Modesty, who does as much by Piety it self, any more than that our Atheistical Sparks shou'd follow his steps, and when they had first parted with Religion, send their small Humanity after it. But let 'em say what they please, there is still such a thing as Natural Modesty, if we can ever know what is Natural, and there certainly must be so, which all Nations and all Men practise, and own to be so. They can't have Modesty in Climates where there's no necessity, and if there shou'd be any found so brutish as to be willing to neglect it, Nature her self has done it for 'em in such a manner as she has not to any of the rest of the World.

Quest. 8. Why does our Saviour use that odd Similitude of a Camels going through the Eye of a Needle, and what's the genuine meaning of that Text?

Ans. It betrays a weak Judgment rather than shows an acute one, to quarrel with any thing that eternal Truth has deliver'd; we ought rather modestly and justly to question our own Knowledge, which is finite and determin'd, whereas the other is unbounded and infinite. The Customs of Nations among other things we are commonly ignorant of, though so easily knowable, even of those near us, much more of those so far distant, and that in Age and Time as well as Place. The Proverbs of all Nations are said to contain the greatest part of their Experience and Wisdom; and this Similitude most Commentators agree is founded on a Proverb of the Jews: Some say it alludes to a very strait and low Gate in Jerusalem, call'd The Needle Gate, through which the Camels cou'd never pass, without first unloading their Burdens or Impediments, which if true, were a very beautiful and apposite Similitude. But we doubt this is rather a witty than a true Interpretation. The Learned and Indefatigable Bochart has another he tells us in his Dissertation concerning the Camel, in his Hierozoicon, that the word Gamal, which signifies a Camel, is also interpreted a CABLE, and withal tells us, 'tis a common Proverb among the Eastern Nations, when they speak of an impossibility—“That 'tis easier for a Cable to be threaded through the Eye of a Needle,—which is a very proper and apt Similitude—and this of the two we esteem the more Natural Interpretation, leaving the Reader to embrace which he pleases.

### Advertisements.

WHEREAS the Corporation for the Linnen Manufacture in Ireland, have in the London Gazette (on the 14th of this Instant September 1691.) declared that their present joint-stock, consisting of 400 Shares, shall be made up to 1000 Shares by Subscriptions at 50. per Share. NOW the GOVERNOUR and ASSISTANTS of the KING and QUEEN'S CORPORATION for the LINNEN MANUFACTURE in England, do hereby give notice that they are not only interested in 175 Shares, part of the said 400 Shares, but also have a Right to Subscribe for a Moiety, or half part of the remaining 600 Shares, as appears by ARTICLES of AGREEMENT, under the Hands of the Governour, Deputy-Governour, and divers Assistants of the said Irish Company. AND the said English Corporation (having advised thereupon with the ablest Lawyers of this Kingdom, who have given their Opinions under their Hands that the said Agreement is valid both in Law and Equity; and that they can compel a specifick Execution of the same, and being resolv'd to vindicate their just and legal Rights) HAVE thought fit HEREBY to signify so much, that all that have already subscribed, or who may hereafter subscribe for any of the said Shares, may be cautious how they subscribe or pay for the same.

THE Williamite's Catechism (is now published) written by Benjamin Bird, Rector of Wotton in the County of Dorset. Licensed according to Order. Printed for T. Waller.