

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **VV**hat Animal is the most happy of all the Creation?

Ans. Before this Question can be resolv'd, we must agree what happiness is, and then examine the Creation, which comes nearest to that happiness; there might be brought very plausible Arguments for the happiness of Many Creatures before Man, if the absence of Evil determin'd happiness, or presence of some small Good. Our Answer is this, That happiness must consist in Action, and therefore a Creature which acts most perfectly is most happy, which is a good Man; but if we take Mankind in General, that they all are either more happy, or more miserable than all other Creatures whatever.

Quest. 2. What is the difference between Substance and Body?

Ans. So much as is betwixt Substance and Substance, or Body and Body.

Quest. 3. What is the Cause of the Variation of the Variation of the Compass?

Ans. As to the Variation of the Compass, I hope 'tis fully and plainly resolved in V. 3.—N. 4.—Q. 4.—viz. The different Situation or Position of the Earth amongst the Seas. We cannot well tell what the Querist means by the Variation of the Variation of the Compass, unless who it was that order'd this Situation at first; if so, our answer is, He that gave him the faculty and power of asking this Question; the other Question sent with these three, must have no other answer but silence.

Quest. 3. Whether the condemning a Thief to some certain Drudgery or Slavery for their lives, or for a limited time according to their Crime, as in Holland and other places to the Gallies and Mines, wou'd not be an effectual Affrightment to others, it being a lasting one, when the speedy loss of their lives, being speedy and transitory, is not so terrible? and whether this Kingdom might not receive advantage by their labours, and their own Soul an opportunity and space of Repentance?

Ans. Considering the frame of these unthinking Wretches, the benefit of Affliction to little Souls, who are strangers to Reformation by Gratitude, and the advantage to the Publick by their Labours; 'tis our Opinion (tho' we pretend not to instruct the Magistrate) that 'tis the most proper Method that can be taken.

Quest. 4. I desire your Opinion what Book you wou'd advise me to for my private Devotions, as being a single person.

Ans. What so many great and good men have been concern'd in the Composing, viz. the Liturgy of the Church of England—if the Labours of one man, then Dr. Taylors Compositions, The whole Duty of Man.

Quest. 5. What Image ought we to form of

God in our Minds, or whether any when we pray to him, or at any other time?

Ans. The Church of Rome (in St. Peters Church at Rome) has presumptuously contradicted the express Command of the Supreme Deity, in making the Image of an Old Grave Man as a representative of God. If such an imitation had not been the breach of an express Command, there cannot be found an act of a greater folly and ignorance throughout the whole Universe. How can Finite Creatures have an Idea of an Infinite Being? how can matter include immateriality, or a circumscribable Image imitate a Being that is every where at once? If we cou'd not discern such a weakness by natural Reason, the Sacred Writ would inform us God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth. Again—He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, &c. viz. an unsucceffive Being inexpressible by past or to come, but always the same, agreeable to another Text, Before Abraham was I am. Which word the Arrians with all their evasions know not what to make of when 'tis brought to prove the Eternity of our Saviours Godhead.

Quest. 6. One married to a Man by the Laws of the Land, but not by the Laws of God and Nature, as she thinks, and one who is of a temper so rigid as to abuse and beat her, and is also guilty of all manner of debauchery, query, whether it be sin for her to leave him or not?

Ans. He that retains not one Ear for the accused is unjust; but upon a supposition of Abuses, Debauchery, &c. the last if prov'd to be matter of fact, is sufficient cause to be divorced from Bed and Board; but the Law allows no second Marriages whilst either party lives.

Quest. 7. A young Man not long since married one who had all the Qualifications and Charms a man cou'd wish or desire to enjoy, but Tyrant Death, a respecter of neither Age nor Sex, depriv'd him of her in a few months; query, having such a Gust of the Greatest, and nothing but the Sweets of Love, whether it is as great a vertue to live single ever after, as if before he had devoted himself to a Cœlibacy, provided he had the gift of Continency? or whether one is not as difficult as the other?

Ans. The Querist speaks extreamly sensible of that melting, languishing Passion, but withal a little unintelligible, which is as pardonable to any under these Circumstances, as little Apish tricks are to Children. 'Tis not a vertue to live either single or married, but 'tis a vertue to live well in either state; if either way of living has more advantages for vertuous actions, 'tis the single (generally) where the Thorn in the flesh is absent; and 'tis the same thing after Marriage as before,

if it be possible to come into the same Circumstances again as to the concerns of the World. As to the latter part of the Question, we believe 'tis harder to refrain Incontinency after enjoyment than before, because habits (good or bad) are hard to be broke, tho' possible.

Quest. 7. *Whether good mens Souls after their departure hence enter immediately into Heaven, & enjoy the Beatifick Vision, or rest in some other place, yet happy enough till the reuniting of Soul and Body at the last and glorious day?*

Ans. That Text—*God having reserved some better thing for us, that they without us shou'd not be made perfect*, plainly shews, that the fulness of Joy is reserved till the last day. But to give the description of some determinate for its residence till then, is but labour in vain, whilst we are alive and know certainly by the manner of action, that such a Soul has a relation to, and dependance upon such a particular Body, yet to say the manner how, is only fit for the Language of Spirits, or *Glorified Bodies*: The nearest answer that we can give, is, let the Question alone till you come into another World, and then you shall not need to ask, but will know your self. For what may be gather'd from Scripture and Philosophy about the Nature of the Soul, read our former Papers, particularly Vol.—Q.— and Vol.—Q.—

Quest. 8. *Whether the Souls of Studious and Learned Men are not more perfect in the World to come, than the Souls of the Ignorant and Illiterate, if we suppose 'em equally pious here.*

Ans. Piety takes its estimate both from knowledge and practice, so that there cannot be an equality of Piety hereof between Souls equally careful and industrious here for the motives and manner of this care are different in themselves, and act by Sentiments not in the Nature, but in the Manner. As for instance, two persons go along the street, one sees very well, and the other is almost blind; they go both the same Journey, take the same care of Duties, Stones, &c. but he that sees best has a better prospect of the Journeys end, and can go on (ordinarily) with greater pleasure, being better able to avoid the inconveniences of the way than the other. I shou'd enter into the dispute whether doing or suffering shall have the greater reward hereafter; for I am sure they proceed both from one Principle, but sure I am that the liker we are to God by both knowledge and practice of Holiness, the higher our preferment will be hereafter with him; and I doubt not but in some measure this difference depends upon the Improvements our selves make of our time in this World.

Quest. 9. *In Dan. 5. 25. in the History of Belshazzar we have these words written on the wall MENE MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN. 'Tis desired you'd resolve us what Language are they? what their signification? why Daniel in the repetition of 'em leaves out one of the MENE's, repeating that word but once? and why he changes the last word from Upharsin into Peres?*

Ans. To the first Query we reply; The words are Chaldee—But why then cou'd not

the King read 'em, and why did he send for the Astrologers, Southsayers and Wise men, promising 'em rewards to read the writing, as well as to make known the Interpretation? neither of which, tho' the Story tells us some of these Wise men were Chaldeans, cou'd any of 'em do as the 8th v. informs us? 'Tis lawful here to insert a probable conjecture of our own, and we think this might be because it was written in Hebrew Characters, which was the Sacred Language.

To the second Query, The Interpretation of those words, the History sufficiently unfolds 'em, and there's no need of repeating it.

To the third—Why Daniel omitted one of the MENE's—we answer, he repeated both, v. 25. tho' he interprets but one, v. 26. The reason of which was, because they both being the same words, had the same signification, being only repeated the more vehemently and solemnly to affirm the things, as is common in all Languages. Thus the *Αληθ' Αληθ'*, and our *Verily Verily*.

To the last—Why Peres instead of Upharsin? We are apt to believe the word Peres may be falsly pointed in the Copy, and so ill render'd in our Translation, the same Letters with different Points making Pharas, as the Latines have it, or Phares, as the Seventy, which indeed these last use in both places. Now there's no more difference between Phares and Upharsin, than between the singular and the plural of the same word—which has a double signification. It's taken both for a thing abrupt, broken or divided, as Belshazzars Kingdom soon after was; and also for the Persians who divided it, whom the Chaldeans call in their Language Phars, or Pharas, to whom there is more than an Allusion in the word. Nay, Pliny tells us that the Persians were of old call'd Pharusi, which by the easie transposition of one Letter is the same with Upharsi, and both these senses the Divine Interpreter clearly and succinctly comprizes in his resolution thereof. Thy Kingdom, says he, is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Quest. 10. *What are we to think of such as are born with Cawls about their Heads?*

Ans. Some wou'd persuade us that they are not so subject to the Miseries & Calamities of Humanity as other persons, and that some special Priviledges are denyed the rest of Mankind which they enjoy; to this end they insinuate the History of Antoninus, surnamed Diadumenus related by *Ælius Lampridius*, who being born with such a Coif, did afterwards come to the Sovereign Dignity of the Empire, in the management whereof all things succeeded according to his wishes. Advocates in ancient times usually made use thereof to gain reputation in their Publick Pleadings, and to that end were in fee with Midwives, who knowing the excellency of such a Coif, sold it at a very dear rate. Some have had the vanity to believe, that such as have come with this Coif into the World, were to expect all good fortune, even so far as to become invulnerable, provided they be always careful to carry it about 'em. Nay, if it shou'd by chance be lost, or surreptitiously taken away, the benefit of it would be transferr'd to the party that found it. But we believe no such Correspondences betwixt the actions of Human Life, and that Shirt; because, if so, the ordinary dispensations of Providence wou'd be frustrate, and many actions, which according to their tendencies wou'd be inverted, and consequently a confusion in the settled Chain of Natural Causes. This Opinion was so strongly rooted in the Primitive Ages Persuasion that St. Chrysostom in several of his Homilies speaks against such as made use thereof to gain Esteem, particularly one Prætus a Clergy-man, being desirous to be fortunate, bought such a Coif of a Midwife, which was very highly censur'd, as *Balsamon* affirms in his Commentaries upon the Canons of the Apostles. In short, we believe neither fortunate nor unfortunate.