

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. *Whether Jacob wrestled with an Angel, or with God himself?*

Ans. The words are, *Gen. 32.24.* There wrestled a *Man* with him, &c. But both our Saviour and his Angels appearing in the form of *Men*, are called by that name. See *Gen. 18. 3.* "*Abraham* lift up his Eyes, and *saw three men* stood by him, two of which *were Angels*—for 'tis said, *v. 12.* The *men* turned their Faces, and went towards *Sodom*. But in the 1st of the 19th.—There *came two Angels* to *Sodom*—yet not only *Lot* calls 'em *men* again, *v. 8.* but the Holy Ghost it self, *v. 10. and 12.* "*The men* put forth their Hands—The *men* said unto *Lot*—yet *Angels* again *15. and Men, 16.* That God, or our Saviour was one of the three, may be proved from the 1st of the 18th—"The Lord appeared to *Abraham*—but more plainly afterwards—for *one* only discourses with him, from the 10th *v.* to the end. *He* said—and who that was appears from the 13th. And the Lord (or Jehovah) said—that incommunicable Name, applied to none but God; tho' it's true that *Elohim*, another of his *Names*, includes the *Angels* also. 'Tis evident also from what follows, *v. 17.* "*And the Lord* said, Shall I hide from *Abraham* the thing that I do?—20.—"*And the Lord* said, Because the Cry of *Sodom* is great, &c. 22. And the men turned their faces to go to *Sodom*, but *Abraham* stood yet before the Lord.—But two men went, as before, 1st of the 19th. He then which remained with *Abraham* was the third, and that third was God—who also afterwards, as it seems by the Text, joyned the other two, and appeared to *Lot* when the Angels had brought him out of *Sodom*, who in the 18th *verse* entreating for *Zoar*, says, "*Not so, my Lord.* And *v. 24.* Then the Lord rained upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* Brimstone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven—Whence the *Arrian-Council* at *Sirmium* attempt in their Creed to prove a distinction between the Father and Son, taking the first *Lord* here for the Father, the second for the *Son*, tho' the Orthodox more cautiously pronounce 'em to be but one God, one Lord.—This premis'd because of the affinity of the Argument, we are to remark that he who wrestled with *Jacob* is implied to be God, because of the name given him—*Israel*—and the interpretation—as a Prince hast thou power with God—relating to his wrestling with him, that is, earnestly striving in Prayer to him, which had been Idolatry (by the *Socinians* leave) had he not been God. His being struck *Lame*, we esteem as a punishment for his more than *Holy-boldness*, or indeed want of Fear and Reverence enough towards God, *According to* positively.—"*I will not let thee go.*—It ap-

pears also to have been God from the name of the Place, as 'twas afterward called by *Jacob*; viz. *Peniel*, or the Face of God; for, says he, I have seen *God Face* to Face; namely, God the Son, who is also call'd an Angel, both in the Old Testament & New, and the Angel or Messenger of the Covenant. And this sufficiently solves that expression of *Jacob*, which the Papists would wrest to the defence of their own Angel-worship, that in *Gen. 48. 16.* "*The Angel* that redeemed me from all evil, blest the *Lads!* Who was this Angel, but he who wrestled with him, which was God. But the Angel who appeared to him in *Padan-Aram*, *cap. 31.* who tho' he's first call'd an Angel, *v. 11.* yet when discoursing with him, tells him, "*I am the God of Bethel*, *v. 13.* and bad him go out of the Land;—He whom he prayed to, *cap. 31. v. 9.* when in danger of *Esau*,—and said, "*O God of my Father Abraham, and God of my Father Isaac, the Lord* which saidst unto me, "*Return unto thy Country, and to thy Kindred—Deliver me, I pray thee, out of the hand of my Brother, which accordingly he did; and thereupon Jacob built him an Altar, and called it—God, the God of Israel.* The same God who also appeared to *Moses* in the Bush, *Exod. 3.* who is called the Angel of the Lord, in *v. 2.* But in the 4th, *Lord* and *God*, and in the 6th, The God of *Abraham, Isaac* and *Jacob*.

Quest. 2. *Whether Jephthah had sinned had he broken his Vow?*

Ans. Let us first examine what his Vow was, and how he fulfilled it; concerning which the Learned are of such different Opinions. The Vow, as we find it in the 11th of *Judges v. 31.* "*Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my House to meet me when I return in peace from the Children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lords, and I will offer it up for a Burnt-offering.* And *v. 39.* He did with her according to his Vow which he had vowed. Now the Law of a Burnt-offering we know was, that it shou'd be totally consumed on the Altar—Thus *Exod. 29. 18.* To instance in no more; "*Thou shalt burn the whole Ram upon the Altar, it is a Burnt-Sacrifice unto the Lord.* He vowed to offer whatsoever met him for a Burnt-Sacrifice; his Daughter met him; he did unto her as he had vowed, therefore he sacrificed her—which tho' several Learned men are of a contrary Opinion, we cannot but believe he actually did it, there being so punctual a Law coming fully up to this very case, *Levit. 27. 28, & 29.* "*No devoted thing that a man shall devote unto the Lord, of all that he hath, both of MAN and Beast, shall be sold or redeemed.—Every devoted thing is most holy to the*

"Lord—None devoted which shall be devoted of men shall be redeemed, BUT SHALL SURELY BE PUT TO DEATH. He therefore having opened his mouth to the Lord, tho' he might sin in so rashly doing it, cou'd not go back without Perjury, and besides, breaking this Solemn Law here twice repeated to make it more remarkable, and reaching not only to Beasts, but Men, if devoted to the Lord.

Q^u. 3. *What's the meaning of the Woman clothed with the Sun, having the Moon under her feet, whom we read of in the Revelations?*

Ans^w. All Commentators we ever met with, interpret it of the Primitive Christian Church, who is said to be clothed with the Sun, because illuminated with the true Faith of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. By the Moon under her feet, is generally understood her despising and trampling these sublunary things— But a Learned man has another curious Conjecture, either that it relates to the Feasts and Ceremonies of the Jews, which were all markt out by the course of the Moon, as the *New-Moons* themselves were their principal Holy-days, or else the Gentile-Idolatry, worshipping of Dæmons, and the Powers of Darknes, which might be represented by the Moon, which rules over the Night, as the contrary thereunto, namely, Gospel light, by the chearful Light of the Sun. For the twelve Stars, they are, we think, by all, interpreted as a Symbol of the *Twelve Apostles of the Lamb*.

Quest. 4. *What Community in your opinion comes nighest to the Doctrine of our Blessed Saviour, the Apostles and Primitive Fathers?*

Ans^w. Undoubtedly it's our opinion that the Communion we our selves are of, and hope to live and dye in, namely that of the Church of *England* is the best in the World, and nearest to the Doctrine of our Saviour, his Apostles and the Primitive Fathers, and unless we thought so, we should be very ill men to continue in it. —But this all the World besides think of their own Communion as well as we of ours, and pretend too to shew their Reasons for't. However there can be but one right, one nearest, where-ever it is, tho' there may be many near enough for Salvation: And that we are the nearest, we think we can make good, at least are pretty sure has been often already made good by better hands with invincible Reason. That our Doctrine is agreeable to Gods Word, both Papists and Protestants agree, — The Papists blaming us not for holding too much, but for not holding enough, the Protestants both abroad and at home, not finding fault with our Doctrine, but with our Discipline only, which Discipline, namely, Liturgy and Episcopacy, which we look upon to be the Essentials or Characteristicks of our Church, we are certain is agreeable to the practice of the Primitive Fathers, —and for one of 'em, viz. Episcopacy, and that a pre-eminence of one Presbyter above others, we

are sure we can prove it, from the Ages next the Apostles, and from those who had conversed with 'em, if not from the authority and practice of the Apostles themselves, —and defie any who think otherwise to shew any Error which was then Universally held by the Church of God.

Quest. 5. *Whether he that Begs Pardon for a sin before he commits it, and he that resolves to Sin and Repent afterward, are not alike Penitent?*

Ans^w. We answer in the Negative. For we may all ask Pardon, even in the Lords Prayer, for those sins we shall commit, through the unavoidable Infirmities of our Nature, as well as for those we have already committed. — Whereas he that resolves to sin and repent afterwards, is much more guilty than he who through infirmity falls into a sin, without thinking at the same time of Repentance, — because one is through inadvertency, the other premeditated. But if the Question be understood of one who immediately before he commits a sin, and resolving then to do it, yet begs pardon for't, 'tis much the same with the other, and is only a mocking the Divine Justice in both cases.

Quest. 6. *What sins are most destructive to Soul and Body, and which is the best way to avoid 'em?*

Ans^w. This is different in different men, according to their particular constitutions or Inclinations. But in general, 'tis the several sorts of *Intemperance* which destroy most men both Soul and Body, we mean the inordinate satisfaction of two of the grossest senses, the Touch and Taste, which as they fill the weekly Bills with Fevers, Consumptions, and something worse, which is so often shrowded under the name of the latter, so 'tis to be fear'd, more inevitably ruine the Souls of those who are tormented by 'em. —Now the means to avoid these sins are as many as there are helps to a Christian Life. —One however we'd propose, (tho' here's no room to Preach, nor is't our design to Print Sermons but Mercuries) which by God's Grace may have very good effect on those who use it. — 'Tis — once every day to get apart from all company, whatever happens, tho' but for a quarter of an hour together, and to think upon Death in good earnest, and what will certainly follow it if men either persist or fall into the habit of those, or indeed any other sins without repentance?

Quest. 7. *Whether monstrous Births have rational Souls, and whether they shall appear so at the last day?*

Ans^w. That's a Monster which has any thing defective or redundant, either in parts or magnitude. A Giant and a Dwarf are Monsters, and so he that is born with six fingers, or one less than he ought to have upon his hand. Now none will be so mad to say — therefore they have not rational Souls. Nay, though they should appear much more deform'd or monstrous. — For their rising at the last day, we think it shall be, as we have formerly express'd it, at the greatest perfection of their Natures, for the greater intenseness of their rewards or punishments.