

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **VV** *Hether Peter or Paul, or any of the Apostles did use Notes in their Preaching?*

Answ. No, nor *Bibles* neither to put their *Notes* in, that ever we heard of. They had not so much as *Texts*, as we see by most, if not all their *Sermons* recorded in the *Scriptures*. They had no *Pulpits*, nor several other things in use among us; but what consequence can be drawn from all this?—these being only such *Circumstances* as enter not at all into the nature of the *Thing*; Such *Notes* as we have, they cou'd not probably have, our *way of writing* being not then, at least not so commonly in fashion. For *Zechary*, when he wou'd express his *mind*, askt not for *Pen, Ink and Paper*, but for a *Writing-Table*, tho' it's true the other way too was sometimes used. But as the *Apostles* used no *Notes*, so neither did they *study* their *Sermons* before-hand, nor needed they do it, the *Gift of Preaching* being one of those *χρηματα*, or *miraculous Gifts* at that time bestowed upon the *Church of God*. As we may learn from *2 Cor. 12. 28.* "And God hath set some in the *Church*, first *Apostles*, secondarily *Prophets*, thirdly *Teachers*, after that *Miracles*, then gifts of healing, &c." "Are all *Apostles*? are all *Prophets*? are all *Teachers*?—As for *Notes* or no *Notes*, at present it may not be unentertaining to discourse a little further, tho' beyond the *Question*, in reference to the present *Custom* of the *Nation*. 'Tis known that our *Ministers* began to write their *Sermons* first about the time of the *Reformation*, when their *Enemies* accused 'em for *Preaching* seditiously, for which reason they penn'd down all that they spoke, to produce their *Notes* if there shou'd be occasion, to witness for 'em against the *Calumnies* of their *Enemies*. And finding this to be an advantage unto 'em, as to the closeness of their discourses, and more correct expression, they have ever since continu'd it, and that to so good purpose, that unless we extremely flatter our selves, the *English-Sermons* are now the best in the *World*. But there are different ways of using *Notes* in *Preaching*. To have 'em in the *Pulpit* for an assistance to the memory, which he that comes without must be a *bold man*; or to use 'em altogether without at all trusting to the memory: And here we acknowledge a *Sermon* generally appears with much more *Life* when the *Preachers Eye* is not chain'd to his *Book*; and the custom of thus *Preaching* making the thing in time much more easie than at first it appears.—But then on the contrary, to get all by heart word for word is a great slavery, and besides, takes up so much time from other *Studies*, that we question whether it be always worth the while to do it. Upon

the whole, tho' the common people wou'd never think *St. Paul* himself preacht a good *Sermon*, unless, as some of 'em call it, he read it every word without *Book*; yet all those who are worth pleasing, had rather hear a piece of good sense and close discourse read to 'em out of the *Pulpit*, than a long rambling Mess of non-sense without *Book*, never so volubly tumbled over.

Quest. 2. *How shall we know our own wicked Thoughts from the Suggestions of the Devil?*

Answ. We believe this a very difficult matter, if not next to impossible, at least always to do. Sometimes 'tis possible the *Devil* himself may be slandered in this, as in other matters. At others he may inject such *Thoughts* as we may yet think to be our own; so subtle an *Adversary* is he, and by being all *Spirit*, having the advantage and power, when permitted, to put together such *Images* of things as he thinks best, and represent 'em to our *Fancies* either sleeping or waking, which evil *Thoughts* of his sending, are by some judg'd to be more especially aim'd at in those *fiery Darts* of this wicked one, mentioned in holy *Writ*. Some *Divines* have propos'd several *Criteria* or *Marks* whereby to distinguish these from our own. As by their suddenness, when there can no dependance be found betwixt them and any of our own that went before 'em. By their extravagance, blackness or horridness, their very *Lineaments* resembling and betraying their *Father*. But to be ingenuous, we hardly can think either of these, or indeed any other, to be any other than a probable mark, at least not an infallible one, since we oftentimes have independent thoughts from what went before, or from what immediately or nearly preceded, the first *Link* of the *Chain* (or the original of the *Thought*) being at a great distance from the other, and one *Thought*, as it were, diving for a while under a great heap of others, (like some *Rivers*, or the *Moon* behind a *Cloud*) and rising again a great way off from the place where 'twas at first obscur'd. Nor can we think the extravagant wickedness of 'em any surer sign; for *Truth* tells us, that the heart of man it self is *desperately wicked*, and the *Devil* can hardly be much worse. But tho' 'tis difficult to discern these from one another, 'tis easie to cure both, at least to know the way of doing it, which is of much more concern to those who are troubled with 'em, and that is—to take the *Shield of Faith*—immediately to make an *Act of Faith* on *Jesus*, to flie to him for *Refuge*, with utter detestation of any such abominable *Thoughts*, whencesoever they come—and then be it the *Devil*, or be it *Chance* that brings it into our minds (*Chance* the

Philo-

Philosopher excellently defines "the Effect of Causes far off) It shall be no more charg'd to our Account before God, than if we read any such thing in a Book, or heard it pronounc'd by any other.

Quest. 3. *Where is the Soul of Man when he is in a Swoon?*

Ans. The Ballad-Singers will tell us, 'tis— with Dives and Lazarus— and the whole Creation— in t'other World: But Philosophy assures us, that wherever 'tis, or whatever it's doing, the Body must know nothing of it, nor remember it, the Sensitive Faculties being unuseful by the unfitness of the Organs, and the Common-sence, Fancy, Memory and all stand still as the different Wheels and Motions of a Watch or Clock, when either the Weight's down, or any great Spring or Wheel's disorder'd. The Soul undoubtedly acts at present by the corporeal Organs, and those *Species*, which tho' we can scarce say they are truly material, yet we know they can't be properly Spiritual: And accordingly we are not like to remember what passes when we are in the condition before-mention'd. A remarkable and authentick Instance whereof we have in the Maid who in the last Age was Hang'd at Oxford for Murdering her Bastard-Child, and after many Hours reviv'd agen— who was so far from remembering what happen'd after she was seemingly Dead, that her Thoughts were unravell'd further back than the End of her first Life; and she remember'd little or nothing done or said after she came out of Prison, but began agen at her reviving with the same words she had spoken some time before her Death, what pass'd afterward till she was turn'd over, either not having lain long enough in her memory to make any lasting Impression there, or being immediately disturb'd and blotted out by Fear on approaching Death. We conclude then, that the Soul is still in the Body, as much as Spirit can be in Place, as much as it was before the Person first swoon'd, and remains there either as long as the Body is any way tenantable (which it may be for some time, tho' perhaps a little out of repair) or else, for ought we know, till God himself commands it away to return to him that gave it, and that as really and distinctly as he sends it first into the Body of the Child in the Womb of the Mother.

Quest. 4. *Why Hair does not grow on the Face of a Woman as well as a Man?*

Ans. For a resolution of this worthy Question, we must e'en refer the curious Author on't to Aristotle's Problems.

Quest. 5. *Can you resolve us, why England, the most devout of all the Reform'd Churches, is yet most remiss in Psalmody? Why those Angelical Songs, those Glorious shouts of Triumph, the highest part of all Devotion, and which are to endure for ever, shou'd be perform'd so ill— with much less Harmony than Prophane Songs.— And why a vile Complaisance to a few remiss Persons, shou'd still retain with us*

alone, that lifeless formal hated way of Reading Line by Line, when Thousands abhor it?

Ans. To give this honest Zealous Querist what Satisfaction we can upon these Heads— we Answer,— for our being more remiss in Psalmody than others— Something on't may be attributed to the Genius of our Nation in general— who are not so cheerful or musical as our Neighbours. And tho' we are the Ringing, (Pardon the Chyming!) we were never called the Singing Island. But there may be other Reasons, some of which have been already toucht on a Question not unlike this.— As the meanness and miserableness of the Translation, which our Church has been too busie since the Reformation to think of altering;— and yet there being no Canon for the use of Tom. Sternbold, we see no reason besides the Tyranny of Custom, why Mr. Patrick's, or any other good Version shou'd not without more ado be made use of in all our Churches— as they are already sometimes in One, not of the least in the Kingdom. But were the Version better, the Tunes which are now so well fitted to the Poetry, are most of 'em such vile ones, that Orpheus himself cou'd never make good Musick of em. This, and the reading 'em at such a lame rate, tearing 'em Limb from Limb, and leaving Sence, Cadency, and all at the mercy of the Clerks Nose, which an old inveterate Custom has rooted among us, first being it's probable introduc'd by a sort of Necessity, because few cou'd Read, may be part of the reason of our neglect and defect in this Exercise.— Not to add the decay of Piety in general, and that good old Custom of Singing Psalms every Night in Private Families, which may have had but too great a hand in this Matter.

Quest. 6. *Whether Negroes shall rise so at the last Day?*

Ans. The Pinch of the Question only lyes— Whether White or Black is the better Colour? For the Negroes won't be perswaded but their Jett is finer and more beautiful than our Alabaster. — If we Paint the Devil black, they are even with us, for they Paint him white, and no doubt on't are as much in the right on't as we, none amongst them who are legitimate being born white, but such as are a kind of Leprous Persons.— And they boast of an Emperor of Rome, one of the best of 'em, ('twas Severus,) and Saints, Fathers, and Martyrs without number, who have been of that colour.— But after all, unless we are very partial, there is something natural in't. Black is of the colour of Night, frightful, dark and horrid; but White of the Day and Light, refreshing and lovely. Taking then this blackness of the Negro to be an accidental Imperfection (the Cause whereof see before) we conclude thence, that he shall not arise with that Complexion, but leave it behind him in the darkness of the Grave, exchanging it for a brighter and a better at his return agen into the World.