

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, September 29. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**HAT Testimonies find ye in History (the Sacred Writ excepted) that can give us Assurance of such a Person as our Saviour and his Miracles? It may be of great Use to the settling in some young Hobbists a Perswasion of the reality of the Christian Religion.

Ans. The Death of Pan in Plutarch, at our Saviours Nativity. Origen's seventh Book against that witty Heathen Celsus, shows that Celsus own'd such a Person as our Saviour and his Miracles, only affirm'd they were done by the Devil. Tacitus in the Life of Nero witnesses that Jesus (our Saviour) suffered under Tiberius. If there had not been such a Person as our Saviour, who had done such strange Miracles, Apolloneus Thyaneus wou'd never have been set by the Heathens to have ap'd him in his Miracles. Symon Magus had his Statue set up in Rome, with this Inscription, Dedicated to Symon the Holy Ghost, he himself assuming that Title, and giving his Magick the Apellation of the Power of the Holy Ghost, which confirms such a thing as an Holy Ghost, spoke on by our Saviour and his Apostles. Ptolemy had the Mosaic Books translated, so that the Heathens had 'em before the Christians; wherefore there cou'd be no perverting thoe Texts which Prophecy'd of our Saviour, but the Cheat wou'd have been found out. Aristobulus the Peripatetick, in a Treatise dedicated to Ptolemy, mentions the seventh day as a Rest. Plato had his Trinity from the Rabbins, as also Aristotle his Ens Entium: From the Rabbins also came the three Destinies, alluding to the Trinity; all which proves that the Heathens had the Pentateuch, if no more, and if no other Authorities cou'd be given for it. Josephus cou'd be no Bigot, see Chap. 14. lib. 18. his Testimony is good, for the Emperors were Heathens. —Tertullian, Apolog. ch. 21. says thus, Our Saviours Miracles cannot be suspected, for they are Registered in the Calendars and publick Annals at Rome. Pilate, who was stiled Prætor of the Empire, and who passed Sentence of Death upon our Saviour, sent his Register of our Saviour and his Miracles from Palestine to Tiberius. Justin Martyr in his second Apology to Antoninus, first shews that the Jewish Prophecies were only fulfill'd by Christ, and refers to the Emperor to read Pilate's Record that was in the Registry — Consult but the Apologies of the Fathers to the Roman Emperors and the Senate, and there's many more such Passages. Paul Horatius and Eutropius, Secretaries to Octavian, say, that at the time when Jesus Christ was born, it happened in Rome, that in a Publick Inn was discovered and broke forth a Fountain of pure Oyl, which for the space of a whole day incessantly issued out in great abundance. Eutropius adds, that at our Saviours Birth in Rome and adjacent Places at Noon-time, was seen a Circle about the Sun, as bright as the Sun it self. Commentator in his Scholastick History, affirms that the same day (viz. our Saviour's Birth-day) the Temple in Rome, dedicated by the Romans to the Goddess Paix, fell to the Earth and was ruined; and he saith, that at the Time that it was built by the Romans, they addressed to the Oracle of Apollo, to know how long it shou'd endure; which made Answer, Even 'till a Virgin shall bring forth a Child. Julian, Vincent, Celsus, African, Lucian, Porfirie, &c. by their obstructing Christ and his Miracles as much as they cou'd, and the Apologies Written to the Senate and Emperors for the Christians, show it cou'd not be a Dream. Pilate, whom we have mentioned, having sent to Tiberius an Account of our Saviour and his Miracles, it was moved in the Senate, Whether they shou'd receive Jesus Christ for a God? which tho' it pass'd in the Negative, yet Tiberius forbid any further Persecuting the Christians. —Flegon the Greek Historian, born in Asia, of whom Suidas makes special mention, says, that in the fourth Year of the 210th. Olympiad, (which was the 18th. of Tiberius, when our Savi-

our suffer'd) there was the greatest Eclipse of the Sun that is to be met with in History, which also caus'd another Eminent Heathen to cry out, Aut Natura dissolvitur, aut Deus Natura patitur. Macrobius an Etbnick Historiographer, who recites some pleasant and Witty Speeches of the Emperor Octavian, says, the Emperor having heard of the Cruelty of Herod towards his own Son, and the other Innocents which he flew, reply'd, 'Twas better in Herod's House to be his Hog than his Child; which verifies the History of the Wise-men, and the Cruelty against the Innocents. We might add a Cloud more of Witnesses, viz. Pliny, Suetonius, Dion, Tranquillus, Cornelius Tacitus, Aelius Lampridius, Saturninus, &c. For the Testimony of our Saviour's Birth, his Miracles, his Apostles, the Persecution of the following Christians, the Edicts of the Emperors against 'em made and annull'd; but 'tis hoped here is already more than is requir'd for the Credibility of an Alexander, Julius Cæsar, or any other Persons or their Acts, which our Doubters of Christ's Truth and Miracles can readily assent to.

Quest. 2. Whether the keeping so many hundreds as are kept in Prisons (begging of Bread) for Accidents and Contingencies in Trades, when those that keep them there know they are not in a Capacity to pay 'em, be not a crying Evil, and contrary to all Christian Presidents, Practice and Custom of Foreign Nations? and whether it ought not to be redress'd in Parliament?

Ans. We are no Dictators to the Parliament, but are well assur'd, that tho' 'tis a common Practice, yet 'tis so far from a Christian Temper, as certainly excludes the Practitioners out of Heaven, without Repentance; for there are none there that cannot forgive impossible Debts, none but what are merciful, pitiful, and in short Imitators of the blessed Jesus.

Quest. 3. If a Man has a Brother, by Nature or Affinity, that owes 200 l. or 300 l. and is not worth near so much, but goes off with all, with an Intention to pay as far it goes, within a small Matter, and deposits this with a Brother confiding in him, to pay as far as it goes, and the same is refused by the Creditors — Whether or no the Brother is Obliged in point of Justice to reveal this Money, to become a Sacrifice and Prey to any of those merciless Creditors that will not accept of what is in a Man's Capacity and Power to do; seeing the Trust was a free Trust, and the Defect came by Accidents and Losses in Trade?

Ans. We had the reverse of this Question answer'd in our last Paper save one; and to this we say also, that Clause of Paying as far as it will go within a small matter, is as much as to say, be a little unjust, if any of what he has justly belongs to the Creditors, then all does, since more than all is their due. Perhaps the Creditors believe there are Assets enough to discharge the whole; and 'till they are satisfy'd of that, 'tis their Charity if they demand less: Yet if after such satisfaction they proceed in their first Demands, they are merciless and Uncharitable, and must be asham'd to think of their own Debts to Heaven, and how they can hope for other measures than they mete to their Brethren. Our Opinion is this, that the Trust ought to be deliver'd up again into the Creditors Hands, and the Truth of the plain Case on both sides be made known by Affidavit or otherwise, and afterwards referred to the Arbitration of two prudent good Men, who are not at all concern'd in the Affair, nor prejudiced by Passion, Affection or Interest.

Quest. 4. Whether there be a Species in Nature of which one Creature does only exist.

Ans. No, The Phoenix is a Fable, or any Creature else that pretends to a Priviledge of Self-generation; read whether of all Living Creatures that went into Noah's Ark there were not Male and Female.

An *Abstract* of the most valuable BOOKS newly Printed, to be continued Weekly.

A Discourse concerning Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholly. In Three Parts. Written for the Use of such as are or have been Exercised by the same. By Timothy Rogers, M. A. who was long afflicted with both. To which are annexed some Letters from several Divines, relating to the same Subject. London, Printed for Tho. Parkhurst and Tho. Cockeril at the Bible and three Crowns in Cheapside, and at the three Leggs in the Poultry. 1691.

The Author throughout the whole Discourse evidently displays an *Experimental Judgment*, a Moderate Temper, and a Spirit repleat with all the *Charms of Mildness and Piety*, of which his own Sufferings have rendered him very sensible. The *Preface* contains certain Heads of Advices to the Relations of such as are Melancholly: As, 1. That they should look upon the Party as under the worst Distemper in this Life; both Body and Mind being infected, and therefore a Subject both for a *Physitian* and *Minister*, 2. To be Compassionate to 'em, considering that we our selves are in the Body. 3. Not to use harsh Speeches to 'em, but imitate him that would not break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax. 4. To believe what they say, or at least that their Apprehensions are such as they tell you they are: 'Tis a real Misery to them if but fancy'd. To Contradict 'em, is Cruelty. 5. Urge 'em not to do what they cannot, lest you add to their Burden. 6. Attribute not the Effects of meer Disease to the Devil, it may proceed from a violent pressure upon their Spirits. 7. Do not much wonder at what they say or do: All's to be born with where the Agent is so unhappy as to think himself lost for ever. 8. Mention no formidable things or Stories to 'em, 'twill effect greater Disorders upon their Spirits. 9. When you talk to 'em, do not speak as if their Troubles would be very long, that's the *Sword that stabs 'em*: An End of Misery is encouraging. 10. Give 'em Examples of others under the same Circumstances that have been deliver'd. 11. Pray for 'em. 12. Get others to Pray for 'em. 13. Put 'em in mind of the Sovereign Grace of God in Christ Jesus. *Manasseh found many.*

Next follow the *Letters of several Divines* to the Author and his Relations, very pertinent to the Subject treated of, being mostly Experiences in such Troubles, and Deliverances from 'em.

Chap. 1. Treats, of the Reasons why God is sometimes Angry with his own Servants. Where he first shows that God is not subject to unquiet Passions, like a Man, but is always Unchangable; so that 'tis an Expression to our Capacity. *Anger is his Resolution or Will to punish Sinners*, and effected when he withdraws himself from us, and permits our Unhappiness in Afflictions, Distresses, &c. by a privation of their contraries. The Reasons he lays down, are,

That 'tis a Paternal Chastisement to secure us from Destruction. Because our sins are of greater Aggravations than others. For a warning to others and to wipe off all Aspersions that might be cast upon his Holiness. And to teach us to value his Favour more.

Chap. 2. Treats, That God is Angry but for a short Season. The Reasons. 'Tis so, if compared to the Eternity of Happiness design'd 'em. Compar'd to the Continuance of his Love. He remembers our frame. 'Tis the Tenor of his Covenant to be Angry but a Moment. He delights in Mercy. He does it for his own Names sake. 'Tis a distinction betwixt the Righteous and Wicked.

Chap. 3. Treats of the Fallacy of our Judgments under the Severity of God's Dispensations, proves it to be the Condition of the Church of God, Judges 6. 13. Isa. 49. 14, 15. Isa. 40. 27. Lam. 3. 7, 8, 9, 10. Job 1. 19. & 19. 10. Shows we ought to bear it quietly, because we have sin'd against him; that the being impatient, is a means to provoke him further. That he is just, Job 34. 23. That the Mercies we have receiv'd should be thought on. That we should compare these Sufferings with the Happiness to be revealed.

Chap. 4. Treateth of the great Love of Christ in Suffering for us, when all the benefit comes to us, upon so easie a Price as our Faith. That he suffer'd not for the fallen Angels. That he himself was Tempted,

ed, and that by these Sufferings he now sympathizes with ours, and is also able to succour us that are Tempted.

Chap. 5. Sheweth from the aforementioned grounds how unreasonable our Passions and Quarrels one with another are, Eccl. 7. 9. How disagreeable to the Temper of Christ. That, since Men are so unreasonable, 'tis better to fall into the Hands of God, (as to Temporal Calamities) than into theirs. He shows his Mercies. Magnifies his Goodness: And proves the Enemies of the Church of God to be mistaken in their insulting over good People: Compares the good Man's momentaneous Afflictions with the Eternal Punishments of the Wicked.

Chap. 6. Shows that such as never had a Sense of God's Wrath upon 'em, ought to admire and bless him for that distinguishing Grace, and yet not to presume with David, saying, *I shall never be moved*; lest they also Complain -- *Thou didst hide thy Face, and I was troubled*. Compares both Conditions together; and concludes that all Enjoyments are nothing under God's Displeasure: And that even the Ordinances of God will bring a Terror along with 'em. Advises to beware of the Beginnings of Divine Wrath, and to secure our selves from the Eternity of it.

Chap. 7. Shews what is to be done when we apprehend God to be Angry with us, viz. We should Pray, and beg to be Reconcil'd. Answers some Objections: And shows that tho' we can't Pray with a Warm Zeal: Yet 'tis a more excellent State to Pray without sensible Comfort than with it. That if our Thoughts wander, Prayer is the best Remedy to fix 'em. That if we have no gracious Return to our Prayers for a long time, we are assur'd by Promise it will at length come. If God refuses Comfort, 'tis in vain to seek it elsewhere. That we have a Mediator interceding for us.

Chap. 8. Treats of the Excellency of Faith in Christ: That it overcomes all Oppositions: Quiets the Soul: Helps us to a right Understanding of the Nature of Afflictions: Fortifies us against the Wiles of the Devil: Conveys Life and Strength from Christ; and shows us a Period of our Miseries.

Chap. 9. Treats of direct acts of Faith: Advising us to look forward to the Author and Finisher of our Faith, and his Example: To Wait patiently 'till the Lord appear. (1.) Because God has long Waited upon us. (2.) We are his Creatures, and at his disposal; and that which we Wait for will make amends, and therefore should under all entertain a hope that 'twill be over at last.

Chap. 10. Shows that we ought not to expect Joy and Assurance on a sudden; but rather enquire into the Causes of God's Anger. What the Accursed thing is that we hide in our Hearts, and calings upon the Subject of the 3d. Chapter.

Chap. 11. Shows that our Eternal State is not to be judg'd by present Terrors. That 'tis an ill thing to be over troubled, even for sin it self; as when our Sin hinders our regular Proceeding in the true Judgment of things, when our Sorrow for Sin drives us away from God, when it indisposes us for our Duty to him; or when it puts us upon indirect Means for Relief. That we should call to mind former Experiences of God's goodness.

Chap. 12. Shows that the Sufferings of God's Servants are certainly good for the Universe; and that he does it, that others may be Convinc'd of the Evil of Sin; be kept from Criminal Security, be sensible of God's All-sufficiency and their Nothingness: To their is the Defilement of our Nature; the Preciousness of Christ and his Word, and to be Admirers of Free Grace. To make us learn to be merciful to others in a like Case; and to make us diligent in duty.

Chap. 13. Shows that such Persons as have been deliver'd from Troubles of Mind, should all the rest of their Lives let but little Value upon the World. Nor distrust God. Be quicken'd to Duty. Walk humbly with him. And take heed of Relapses. And be publicly thankful. And not fear the Evils of the World. Admire the World is so Wicked, and yet in such Peace. To Pray that we may not fall into such Diseases as Satan may take advantage of us thereby. That as to such Persons that dye in the Apprehension of God's displeasure, we ought not to despair, but that they may be happily mistaken. Our Saviour when he was dying, complain'd he was forsaken. It may be such a distraction may Teach others to admire the Mercy of God, that they are not in the like Case; tho' such distraction may be a Mercy in delivering 'em from the Trouble of beholding their Friends Sorrow, or by preventing such Temptations as might have been more prejudicial to 'em.

The Book is large, containing three Parts, besides the Preface, &c. the 2d. and 3d. Part will be Abstracted in our Next Paper; where in particularly is an Account of the Authors own Troubles and Deliverances.

The World shall speedily have an Abstract of Mr. Norris's Practical Discourses on several Divine Subjects. The Relation of the Lady Travels into Spain, &c.

Advertisement.

WE having begun to Print Extracts of the most considerable Books (Publish'd in England and Foreign Parts) a long time before anything of that Nature appear'd in publick; and our Bookseller also having been at great Charges in carrying on the said Work, (as evidently appears by our first Supplement to the Athenian Mercury) these things being duly considered by Our Whole Society, we shall now for the general Benefit of the Learned World constantly allow two Columns in our Saturdays Mercury, (or more room if we see Occasion for it) COMMON JUSTICE to the first Undertaker Obliging us to it) to insert Abstracts of those New Books that are publish'd Weekly; that so what is at any time wanting in our several Supplements, may be supplied by our Weekly Mercories.

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