

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **O**F the two Religions, a Quaker, or a Papist, which wou'd you chuse, with your Reasons?

Ans. Neither: because both of 'em are so bad, that they can hardly be call'd Christian. But to compare 'em; In many things it's true they are near a Kin; and the Quakers have been, e're since their rise, lookt upon as the Jesuits, By-blows of the Jesuit. And indeed, it must be confest, that in many things they strangely Symbolize with the Papists. The Quakers deny the Plenary Satisfaction of Christ, and rest on their own Merits; so do the Papists: they Rail at our Ministers, and deny their Legal Call, or Ordination; so do the Papists: They pretend to a greater strictness and singularity of Life than other People, so it's notorious do several Orders among the Papists, so exactly, that one wou'd think the Quakers only a sort of Lay-Brothers to some of their Societies. Then for Phanaticism, and Enthusiasm, they are most admirably match'd, that and Infidelity together making up the very Creed of the Quaker (forgive the Expression!) But to consider 'em afunder, it's true, the Papist holds more than he ought to do, and therefore all the Articles of the Christian Faith; but the Quaker much less: They all deny the Christian Sacraments, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper; and we wonder how they have the Face to pretend to what they never had, Christianity, when they were never Christen'd. They are indeed a Compendium of almost all sorts of Heresies; for they not only deny the Merits of Christ, as has been said, with the Papists, but even his Satisfaction, Divinity and all, being, at best, no better than meer *Arrians*; if we believe 'em what their late (and present) great Champion has refin'd 'em into: Nay, there have been some of 'em, who as far as we can understand 'em, deny our Saviour's Manhood too, as well as his Godhead; nay, deny Angels, Spirits, Heaven and Hell, turning all into mean and jejune Allegories; and no wonder after this, they shou'd, all of 'em, to a Man, that e're we met with, in positive Terms, deny the Scriptures to be the *Word of God*; and most of 'em deny any Resurrection of the Body, as others the Existence, or Activity and Consciousness (which is all one) of Souls after Death. For these Reasons, we think, as a bad Christian is better than none; so a Papist than a Quaker; though Charity gives us room to hope, that there may be some in both of those Parties who may be better Christians, than those Principles, if believ'd, wou'd permit 'em to be; but then they must be neither good Quakers, nor good Papists.

Quest. 2. I have often heard John Whitehead, a Grand Director of the Quakers, boast, as of a Miracle; that when he was under Persecution, as he call'd it, and fed in a Prison with Bread and Water; he Fatten'd on't, so as he afterwards was Three yards, or more, about the Waste—— Quare, Whether the Contribution of the Sister-hood laid aside, the Miracle may not cease, either through the Constitution of the Man, or the Nature of the Place, or several other ways— or lastly, Whether his Wife cou'd feed by Sympathy, she being near as spacious as her Consort?

Ans. Supposing it true, that the Story was thus related to the Querist, and that in Fact it so really fell out; we yet think our Friend John will have no great Reason to boast of a Miracle, unless such an one as was wrought upon *Nebuchadnezzar*, by turning a Man into a Beast, since such a load of Guts cou'd have hardly any shape of Humanity left: But we can easily enough get rid of this huge Wonder, without a Miracle; for, 'tis the Nature of some Beasts to grow Fat, when Styd up in a narrow Room (for which reason we know not but their Brother Whitehead might have made good Brawn too, if he had been but Collar'd.) It being notoriously known, that a recluse Life, in some Constitutions, nay, we believe in most, inclines extremely to grossness, and a Corpulent Habit of Body—— But after all, we must confess, we suspect 'twas no better nor worse than the Friendly Contributions did the business— for, to return to our first plain Comparison; let the Swine lye a fasting never so long, he'll ne'r prove good Bacon, unless the Good-women bring their Wash now and then, and empty their Pails into his Trough— and that there was really something of this in the present case, we have most violent Suspicions as well as Presumptions, from the shape of the Sister, who, sure, cou'd not be so uncharitable, as not to be in Tribulation together with him; for if her licking the Platter now and then, could make her *Burnish* at so wonderful a Rate, one wou'd be apt to conclude, that there was something or other in't that had some Savour, before the Brother had done with't, unless we are to suppose there was a Brace of Miracles to do the business.

Quest. 3. How shall that person behave himself, who, being concern'd in this Reformation, has thereupon lost the Love of his Neighbours, by whom he was formerly very much esteem'd, and having Publick Business, has lost some already, and is like to lose the rest, and is further excluded their Society and Company as a base Fellow?

Ans. If the Person is satisfy'd in his Intentions, that they were fair and honest in what

what he has done, and that he has acted out of obedience to God and the King; these considerations alone will afford him great satisfaction— He has our Saviour's own Blessing— *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you— and shall cast you out as evil-doers, &c.* He is to consider himself as a Confessor, and almost a Martyr, for the cause of Virtue, and the good Laws of the Land— This we say he may have already; but if he'll let us know his Name, and Circumstances, all well-attested, which we promise shall not be made use of to his prejudice, he may perhaps find those who may as much encourage and advantage him as his Ill-Neighbours have before injur'd and abused him.

Quæry 4.—From another Hand. *Whether think ye will the Laws against Vice be as duly now put in Execution, as those formerly were against the Dissenters?*

Ans^r. 'Twould be a shame if they shoudn't; and if they are not, we may e'ne thank the under-Officers for't; since all has been done from Above that was possible, both by Example and Command toward so great a Work.

Quest. 5. *I've heard it discours'd, that in the Canons of the Church, particularly Canon 55, 'tis appointed, that all Ministers shall in their Prayers before Sermon, Pray for the King by his Name and Title; and by Canon 59— Every Sunday and Holy-day, before Evening-Prayer, to examine and instruct the Youth in the Church-Catechism, as 'tis also directed in the Rubrick. How comes it then that the first is generally neglected, and the latter only perform'd in time of Lent, whereas it ought to be done all the year round?*

Ans^r. For the First, either the Gentleman who proposes the Quæry never goes to Church; or else he has very ill Fortune, always to light upon a *Jacobite*-Minister; since 'tis notoriously known, that there are few hundreds, if so many as One, throughout England, who deny Obedience to the present Government, or refuse to Pray for 'em, and that by Name, as directed. For the Latter— we wish we cou'd as easily prove him mistaken, as we can in the former— However, here's this to be said, That the People are grown too Proud, and think themselves too wise to be Satisfy'd, or put off, as they'd be ready to call it, with Catechizing (we mean both instructing the Children, and explaining the *Questions and Answers*) unless they have a Sermon too. There was indeed in the Primitive Times, belonging to every Church, one, whose particular Office 'twas, to Catechize and Instruct them that were Ignorant in the Mysteries of Christian Religion; who, for that Reason, were call'd *Catechumeni*. St. Mark, as 'tis affirm'd in good Ch. History, was the first who set this Office up at Alexandria in Egypt, when he left it, fixing another there in his Room; and 'tis certain they had Catechizing and formal Catechists in that Church from the first Ages— *Origen* himself was one of these, whom, if we mistake not, *Heraclius* Succeeded in that Office, as *Damasus* him—

And this very Method it's very probable, made Christianity then so successful, and in so little a space planted it so firm all the World over, that all the Arts and Torments the Devil or Man cou'd invent, cou'd never root it out. And 'twas by the same method, the Papists themselves own (as Bishop *Andrews* tells us in his *Discourse of Catechizing*) that the Reformed won so much Ground of 'em in so little a time; and if the Reformation has not made a proportionable progress since its rise, as it did then, we may fairly see to what neglect the obstruction of it has been owing; and from the same Fountain undoubtedly sprung the general Debauchery of Manners that reigns in their Churches almost as much as even among the Papists themselves; and we wish we may not be too true Prophets, when we fear 'twill n'ere be much better till a *New Race* of Men arise, better instructed in Faith and Manners than the present is, which being generally educated in the Looseness and want of Discipline; ill-grounded in the Principles either of Morality or Religion, and too Proud to learn, are easily carry'd away, either by Atheism or Debauchery, whither the Tempter pleases— Now were this particular Office of the Catechist agen renewed, and encouragements given to it in every Church, the duty would certainly be perform'd— or were it but united to the Reader's Place—but this is not very likely to be done in such an Age, since the Readers Places themselves, even in this City, are generally so small, the Clerks being commonly twice as much, that few, but very Young Men will accept of 'em, who must almost starve upon 'em too, unless they have apply'd themselves to something else to help— Nor is there any great likelihood things should be better, the Maintenance of the Clergy having been plundering ever since *K. Harry* the 8th's time; and that little they have left is thought too much for 'em by some sort of People: nor are we very likely to see a *New Office* erected in the Church, when 'tis so ill able to maintain the *Old*. For those who think one Minister is very well able, if not lazy, to Read Prayers, and Preach twice a day, and besides, Catechize, Baptize, Christen and Bury— We only wish they were themselves to try the Experiment for one Quarter of a year, and see how well they'd like it.—

Qu. 6. *Whether as long as the Body remains Tenantable, the Soul can Separate from it without Death for some time limited, as is reported of some, who for some time have lain in a Trance, and come to themselves agen, and have related what they pretend to have seen and heard in places remote; or of Witches, who have their Nocturnal Revels in Remote places?*

Ans^r. We believe those Reports to have been little more— Thus far it's true, we may be as certain as we can well be made of any matter of Fact— That some Persons have fallen into Trances, and reveal'd what has actually pass'd in very remote places— but we believe this to be onely the effects of Diabolical Agents, who shut up the Senses of the poor deluded Witches, and brought 'em what News they pleas'd from distant places, impressing it on their Fancies, and making 'em believe they really saw what they no more did, than Sick Men do in a Fever those shapes which seem to pass before 'em.