

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, January 19. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**hat's the Reason that his present Majesty, King William has never yet toucht for the Evil, and why is that Divine Gift neglected, which has been so many Ages inherit in all the lawful Kings of England?

Ans. We don't pretend to have any Privy Councils among us, and think it as dangerous a business to question Kings, as to advise Parliaments. Perhaps his Majesty is yet too busie in preserving the Lives and Liberties of the whole, to be able to mind the sick, unless it be in his Hospitals, and works so many miracles abroad, that he's not yet at leisure to do any at home. But what're the Reasons may be, we shall dive no further in 'em, only having luckily another Question, sent us very much to the same purpose, but clear of t'other side of the Post, we'll e'ne let it start just as we receiv'd it, and they shall have a fair run one against t'other. The Question it self, with what follow'd was in these express words.

Quest. 2. Whether or no the Kings of England really cure the Disease call'd the Kings-Evil? After which are added several Arguments against it, some whereof as follows:

1. 'The Causes for which God gave such miraculous Gifts, were the confirmation of the Gospel and Godhead of Christ; but there being no more need of such proofs now, we have no reason to think they shou'd be still continued.

2. 'This Gift was claimed by a Succession of persons without any other Qualification but that Succession, and also by Popish, superstitious, and very wicked men, nay by those that were USURPERS as well as such as were in the right Line.

3. 'The Work did very often visibly fail in the Hands of the best of Kings, which wou'd not have bin had they bin really impowr'd from God.

4. 'The Original of it came from Edward the Confessor, a Popish Saint, it being attributed to him for the Honour of his Saintship.

Objection. The Kings Touch has actually cur'd, as the Parties confess?

Ans. Many come to the King many miles, and thereby obtain change of Air, change of Diet, motion of their Bodies, and (N.B.) Directions from the King's best Surgeons and Physicians; — and these things may effectually cure 'em tho' the King shou'd never see 'em, nay many may be cur'd by the meer strength of Nature.

Thus far he; for what remains we'll sum it fairly up together, and leave every one to judge as he is most inclin'd: in answer to what is said against the Miracle — That it often fails in the Hands of the best of our Kings, those who are for it, will readily say, That then 'tis not the King's Evil, but some other Disease. But 'tis still reply'd, and Instances may be given of several persons in the same Family affected exactly in the same manner, some of which have been cur'd by the Touch, others not; 'tis rejoynd, because some want Faith. But they have been all Children, and their Parents and Friends have brought 'em. — Then they belike had Faith for one and not for another: But if by Faith be meant strong persuasion, as no more can be in this case, 'tis certain they have had more, the second than the first Time, the former Cure having rendred 'em confident of the latter. Another Argument for the Miracle is, That it tends much to give the people a great Idea of their Prince, (as Vespasians curing the Blind man.) But 'tis easily reply'd by their Antagonist, that our Monarchs are great enough of themselves when lov'd by their People, and need no little pretended Miracles to render 'em more venerable. And this is most of what is said Pro and Con in this Argument.

Quest. 3. A Person who had the hard Fortune to be extremely in Debt, was advised to settle some of his Estate in Trust so firm, that no Law cou'd touch it, for the maintenance of himself, his Wife and Children, it being no more than just a competency whereby they mayn't be chargeable to others, which accordingly he did. Now the Remainder of his Estate being not above half enough to satisfy his Creditors, he's extremely dissatisfied in his Conscience, almost to Despair, about his not being able to make 'em full Restitution, except it shall please God to raise his Fortune in the World, and then he fully designs to do it whether the Law obliges him to't or no. He desires to know whether he may not upon his sincere and hearty repentance, thro' the merits of our Saviour hope for Mercy, tho' it never please God to enable him to make full Satisfaction; and if there be any comfort for such a person in distress, for Gods sake let him have it, &c.

Ans. This Question being of so much moment we have propos'd it at large in the very Terms, we receiv'd it. — In answer, supposing here any fraudulent conveyance, and voluntary breaking, or what's equivalent to't, on purpose to cheat the Creditors, and run away with vast Estates, the common Trick of some Bankers, and others, as nothing can be a fowler Cheat, so there's no hopes of pardon without Restitution to the utmost ability. Further, supposing our own carelessness and extravagance, have brought such a misfortune upon us, 'twill be a more melancholly consideration to reflect on, than if 'twas purely the effect of Gods Providence. But taking the Question here as truly and fairly stated, we reply, That if by his keeping that part of the Estate yet in his own possession, he be in any probable Capacity of afterwards paying the whole Debt, we think he offends not in doing it, for there are few Debts to be paid at a day. But if he may do thus much, he ought however to spend no more than just what's absolutely necessary for him and his Families Subsistence, that he may save whatever may be, to satisfy his Creditors; nay, if he has any Friends with whom his Family may live; or if by their own Labour they can get their Living, he ought to satisfy to the utmost Farthing of his Estate, unless his Creditors will voluntarily mitigate it, which if they have any thing of humanity, they will certainly do, when they see him bear so honest a Mind. And without thus much at least, he can't justly expect pardon — But after all we wou'd not have him entirely acquiesce in our Judgments, but consult better, which he can't fail of here in London, if he's willing to enquire.

Quest. 4. Whether or no the Doctrine of Ireneus concerning the State of the Soul after Death be according to Scripture?

Ans. That Opinion of his which we suppose the Question intends, is, That the Souls of good men go not immediately to Heaven after their departure from the Body, but are reserv'd in Paradise till the day of Judgment; which is not only his Opinion, but that of all the Church of God in those first Ages, nay, 'twas inserted into their very Liturgies, and no other thing intended by that perfection, Confirmation, and Refrigerium or refreshment which they desired for 'em; and to this they referr'd those phrases we meet with in the Scripture of Abrahams Bosom, not thinking it congruous that the Souls of the Faithful shou'd at the day of Judgment be turn'd out of Heaven agen, and expos'd a second time at the Bar of Gods Justice: Which Opinion is at present also embraced by very great and Learned Men in the Church of England, Dr. Sherlock himself as good as positively asserting it in a Sermon of his upon Judgment, and answering all the Scriptures brought against it. All that we shall say to it is, that this middle State is far enough from either the Popish Purga-

Purgatory, or Soul-sleepers Dream. And that the Scriptures say but little explicitly and clearly of the intermediate State of the Soul between this and the Day of Judgment, whether they shall be in Heaven, or any other place, tho' its sure from thence that they are not yet compleatly happy: We esteem it therefore a probable Opinion, and as such we leave it.

Quest. 6. *What is the meaning of the Urim and Thummim mentioned in the Scripture?*

Ans. There are so many various Opinions in this matter, that there needs now a new Oracle to tell us the method and meaning of the World, and what was said of those who pretended to the Priesthood, but come not to prove their pedigree, seems applicable to this, *That it can't be decided till there arise a Priest with Urim and Thummim.* However, we'll recite the principal opinions of Learned Men, and let the Querist know to which of em we are most inclin'd. For the words themselves, we are like to get but little Light from em, whatever they may carry in their Names, *Urim* being the plural number of the word  $\text{אור}$  as we write it *Ur*, tho' more properly *Aur*, (whence the Latin word *Aurum*, and the French *Or*, for *Gold*) signifying either *Light* or *Fire*; accordingly what we read *Ur* of the Chaldees, taking it for the proper name of a place, it seems the Rabbins took for an *Apellative*, signifying *Fire*, and thence have a Story that *Abraham* underwent a sort of an *Ordeal*, being thrown into the *Fire* by the Idolatrous Chaldeans, because he would not worship it as they did, and some of the same parts do to this day. *Thummim* signifies *Integrities* or *Perfections*, from the Root  $\text{תם}$ , perfect, or *righteous*: So that *Urim* and *Thummim* are *Lights* and *Perfections*, but what these are, is still the Question. *Aben-ezra* plainly acknowledges, — *Qualia fuerint non scimus* — We cant tell what to make of em. The difficulty of understanding their meaning is render'd greater, because they were not under the 2d. Temple, as appears by the Text already quoted, any more than the Ark of the Covenant, all that looks like em in any of their Historians, being what *Josephus* records — that when God accepted the Sacrifice, the Onyx on the Priests left shoulder gave a glorious and miraculous Light, tho' ceas'd as he acknowledges some hundreds of years in his Time, which the Learned Mr. *Mede* thinks related to the *Thummim* only, which he takes to be distinct from the *Urim*, tho' others judge em the same. Whatever they were, this we are sure of em, 1. That they were put in the Breast-plate which was fastned to the Ephod over against the Heart of the H. Priest, *Exod. 28. 30. Thou shalt put in the Breast-plate of Judgment the Urim and Thummim, and they shall be on Aarons heart when he goeth in before the Lord.* We are further sure that they were an Oracle, or that the Priest gave answers by them from God, *Num. 27. 21. Foshia shall stand before Eleazar the Priest, who shall ask counsel for him by the judgment of Urim before the Lord, and so David* when at *Keilah*, *Abiathar* having brought the Ephod with him. Thus far we think all are agreed — But here some think they were only the Name *Febova*, put within the foldings of the Breast-plate, whence proceeded those strange operations; but this seems too fanciful a conceit to be much insisted on. *A. E.* says, the Breast-plate was call'd the Breast-plate of Judgment, because thereby Gods Judgment and Decrees were known, and thinks the *Urim* and *Thummim* were somewhat made by the Artificer, tho' *Nachman* thinks they were *Opus Divinum*, and given by God to *Moses* in the Mount together with the 2 Tables of Stone, tho' it's not likely had such a thing bin, that *Moses* would have omitted it. Some think it was only the stones in the Breast-plate which did shine when God granted or answer'd, but not shine when he refus'd to grant, the Question being propos'd Disjunctively, as in *Dauids Case* — *Shall I go up, or not go up*: But this others disallow, because they seem mention'd distinctly from those stones, *Exod. 28. 29, 30. Aaron shall bear the names of the Children of Israel in the Breast-plate of Judgment upon his Heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually — And thou shalt put in the Breast-plate of Judgment the Urim and Thummim, and they shall be upon Aarons heart when he goeth in before the Lord, and Aaron shall bear the Judgment of the Children of*

*Israel upon his Heart before the Lord continually.* — Unless we say these two Scriptures are explanatory of each other, the Expression being almost the same. And indeed our Judgment is, That this Opinion stands firm for the Truth. Its certain, the *Urim* and *Thummim* whatever they were; were to be just in the Breast-plate, were these Names. They were to be upon *Aarons* heart whenever he went into the Holy Place, so were the Names; other circumstances might be added where they agree to explain this in the case of *David*, 2 Sam. 2. 1. *Abiathar* having brought the Ephod with him, *David* enquir'd of the Lord shall I ascend into any of the Cities of *Judah*? Now the Names of all the 12 Tribes being engraven on the stones, there wanted but a few Letters to compleat an Alphabet, which to do, the Jews tell us the Names of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, and these two words,  $\text{שמו ישרא}$  the Tribes of *Israel* or *Feshurun* were added. Now when a Question was propos'd, some, as before, believe all the Stones either shin'd, or were dim, and this only pass'd for a grant or denial; others that those particular Letters shin'd but in the Stones, which made up the answer, as when *David* Question was,  $\text{אלי לך}$  The Letter *Y* in *Shimeon* *Levi*, and *Y* in *Febuda*, put themselves out, or shin'd brighter than all the rest, forming the word  $\text{אלי}$ , *ascend*. If this still be thought too fanciful, ther'e's another yet behind, which perhaps to some may appear more probable than either of the other — That when the Priest put on those Sacred Ornaments, he was immediately inspir'd by God, and himself  *viva voce*, utter'd an answer to what was propos'd. And thus much of this great Question.

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