

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, January 30. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether Zerah the Ethiopian, and his ten hundred thousand men, mention'd 2 Chron. 14. 9. were inhabitants of that Countrey we commonly take to be Prester Johns, or Abyssines or no? If they were, what might be the distance between that Countrey and Judea, and thro' what Countreys must they march to get thither?

Ans. For the number of Zerah's Host, 'twill never be question'd either by those who have read the Story of Xerxes, who with an equal, if not a superior Number, invaded Greece; nor by any who consider the numerous Subjects, and vast Territories of those Eastern Monarchs. In answer to the Question, Whether that Countrey whence Zerah came were the Abyssines Countreys, or no? We say there's neither necessity that it should be, nor necessity that it should not be so. For the first it has been unanswerably prov'd by several learned Men, especially Sir Walter Rawleigh, that there are two Ethiopias, or Chus's; one what we now call Abyssinia, bordering on Egypt on one side, near the Arabians, both of which Nations the Egyptians were generally in League with, as being near kin to 'em, no farther off than Cousin Germans, the Egyptians from Mizraim, the Ethiopians from Cush his Brother, both the Sons of Canaan. Of the latter sort was Zipporah, Moses's Wife, who is call'd an Ethiopian, because her Family was planted in that Countrey, and as it were naturaliz'd among 'em: These are also several times mention'd in Holy Scripture, as particularly 2 Chron. 21. 16. The Arabians which were near the Ethiopians; which must be understood of those which lay near the Holy Land. But where the Ethiopians are mention'd together with the Libyans, or Libians their Neighbours, there's no room for doubt but the African Ethiopians are thereby intended. Thus Ezek. 30. 5. Ethiopia and Libya, and 38. 5. Ethiopia, and Libya: So Jer. 46. and 9. Ethiopians and Libians; and to name no more, Dan. 11. 43. Egypt, and the Libyans and Ethiopians. Of the former of these, most Commentators understand this Zerah to be King, namely, the Arabian Chusites or Ethiopians, which indeed appears very probable both from the quality of the spoil the Conquerors got, in the last part of the Chapter, wherein the History is related, they smote also the Tents of Cattel, and carry'd away Sheep and Camels in abundance and because of the difficulty of marching a million of men thro' so vast a Tract of ground; but notwithstanding all this, we must confess we are inclin'd to think they were the African, as we now call 'em, Abyssinian Ethiopians. Our Reason is, because they are joyn'd with the Libians, Libians in the next Chapter but one, and the 8th. v. are not the Ethiopians and the Libians a huge host, with very many Chariots and Horsemen? (and that this was their way of fighting, we learn from Heliodorus) which is also mention'd coming to aid the Egyptians in their Expedition under Shishak against Jerusalem, with 12000 Chariots and 60 thousand Horsemen, and the Libians and the Ethiopians. Nor do we read, unless we are mistaken, of any Chariots the Arabians had, tho' their Horse was always strong: The difficulty, How such an Army should go so vast a distance thro' such barren Countries. For the distance, its not so far as Tamerlan went, and that with a huge Army, when he made his progress from Samersand to Persia, and fought all his Army. Besides, they travell'd thro' a Friends Countrey, the Egyptians, who its likely would with'em in the Enterprize, as they before with the Egyptian, when they learnt the richness of the Countrey, and were thereby, its probable, induc'd to make a second attempt upon it, their first having so well suc-

ceeded. For their passing the Desarts between Egypt and Judea, they might miss most of 'em, and cross over by Pelusium, which is scarce a Fortnights march: And besides, how have other Armies often gone the same way in the Wars between the Ptolomy's and Pharo's, and several of the Asiatick Princes. For the Camels, Sheep, Tents, &c. The first is the common carriage of all the Eastern Nations, Turk and all, to this day; the second was for Food, the third for Lodging to the Army.

Quest. 2. What is the meaning of the word Fame, and whether do you think a man famous or infamous for an ill Action?

Ans. Twould not much edifie the Querist if we should let him know that Servius upon Virgil tells us Fame is *ex τῶν μέσων*, and therefore we'll in plain English tell him 'tis a middle word, or of a doubtful signification, and is taken either in a good or bad sence: the Latin word *Fama*, (from whence to be sure the English *Fame*) being deriv'd as some think from *fando*, which signifies speaking or discoursing, so that its no more than whatever is divulg'd, be it good or bad, tho' more fairly 'tis deriv'd from the Greek *ἐφήμι*, the 2 *Eta's* being chang'd by a Dialect into *Alpha's*, according to the manner of the Roman Language, as some Gramarians observe, who have treated of its Original, tho' the matter is still the same, and comes from the Verb *ἐφήμι* of the same signification with *Fari*. Accordingly we seldom meet it in good Authors, but with an Epithet to distinguish it, much after the same rate with the word *Name*, whose sence is not far different from it: Thus we say a good Name, or an ill Name, and *Fama bona*, & *honesta*, or *mala*. So Horace, *Bonam deperdere famam*; and of t'other side Virgil calls her not only *Bad*, but *Badness* it self, *Fama malum, quo non aliud velocius ullum*. Indeed we can't find in any good Latin Author that 'tis taken when by it self in any but that middle sence before mention'd, either for the Heathen Goddes so call'd, whom they pleasantly Fable to be born to the Earth, on purpose to publish the Rogueries of their Gods, after they had destroyed the Gyants, or else for a great Discourse or rumour of any person or thing to which Fame is attributed, whether good or bad. As for the word *Fame* it self, we use it in our Languages indeed sometimes as the Latins did, in a middle Sence, but more often, and more properly in a good than a bad one — We have a word that's some kin to't, which will illustrate what we mean, tho' by a contrary speaking 'tis notorious, which as all who are acquainted with old Writers know, was formerly used in a good Sence, and thō now only in a bad, and tho' the Notation or Derivation of the word leaves it perfectly indifferent.

But here we must remark once for all, that Etymology or Derivation is no certain Rule for the present Sence of English words, or indeed of any other Language; nay not so much as the usage of those who have bin in their time excellent Authors, the propriety of words, being purely *ex instituto*, or arbitrary, as far as we can guess, is to be known from the present use of 'em both in refin'd and common Speech, and among good Authors; and indeed after all, rather to be tast'd than describ'd. Thus there the word *Famous* as well as *Fame*, is used by the Latins in a middle Sence, tho' we believe for the most part in a bad one, contrary to our English, as in Horace, where he brings in old Lucilius (the Chaucer of the Romans) attacking *Lupus*, whoever he was, with *Famosis versibus*, which we should render Lampoons, or Defamatory Verses, in which Sence the middle Finger is also stiled *Famosus Digitus*: Then for infamous, the Latins and we take in the same Sence,

Sence, always for the worse — Let's now apply this to the Question, *What's the meaning of the word Fame, and whether we think a man famous or infamous for an ill action*: We reply, positive Judgment is from the observations we have made on the usage of our Language, That in the most proper and usual Sence of the word *Fame*, 'tis taken for the better, and that a Man is only properly famous for good actions, and infamous for ill ones, and that when we call a notorious Villain a Man of *Fame*, or a Famous Fellow, its only in our Language, a Catechetical, or improper Expression, and used in an Ironical manner, as when we say of a great Rogue, he's a fine, or a brave Fellow, tho' he has perhaps stood in the Pillory, and been whipt in Bridewell.

Quest. 3. *A certain Lady whom I am concerned withal I have sworn to continue in my Amours, and wished all things which I undertake may never prosper, if ever I act otherwise; besides, I have promised to live single, till it shall please God to take her Husband away, and then to marry none but her, I am sensible that all the time I live in a damnable sin, and now I have the opportunity to marry a Vertuous good Woman, but am timorous, having made such solemn promises to the other Lady: Pray please to give me the best Advice, and you will oblige your Servant unknown?*

Ans. This is one of the most ridiculous and foolish Impieties we ever met with; 'tis a breach of the tenth Commandment to covet our Neighbours Wife, but to covet vertuously what is not, or what is dispos'd of already, which is much the same, is a contradiction: Nor are the Terms or Conditions of the Amour less foolish, to wit, *To marry at the decease of her Husband*; for how knows he that the date of the Husbands Life is short, or that the Wife may not dye before the Husband, or whether his own Life may not be shorter than either of theirs, for in any of these three Cases there is an impossibility of performing the said rash promise. The whole Transaction is very wicked and foolish, and such as God has forbidden: So that if to vow an ill Action is a Sin, to continue in the Action is a greater, by so much as an habituated Sin is worse than a single Act. Such Vows oblige no persons. All that can be done, is to leave the Folly, and ask God pardon; nor is the Woman less, but rather more to be blam'd than the Man, not only for entertaining his Amours, but because God had already settled her Condition, and provided such a Companion for her as he thought convenient.

Quest. 4. *It is very common, a Person being dead, that if one that is ignorant thereof shou'd in a Minute afterwards ask how the party did, it wou'd be answer'd, I hope he is Happy, notwithstanding the wonderful distance between Heaven and Earth: Now I wou'd know how far it is to Heaven, and how long a Soul is before it gets thither, after its separation from the Body?*

Ans. This is an intricate sort of a Question, and not to be resolv'd to a Demonstration, since we have no intelligence from such Souls as have made Experiment: However we shall give our Opinion, and such a one as we hope may not be repugnant to either Scripture or Philosophy.

We have already spoken something about the Locality or Scituation of Heaven in our former Papers, and we here again offer, That 'tis very probable there can be no such a place as a Local Heaven, or a separate place design'd for the reception of happy Spirits. For proof of this Assertion, we shall give these two Reasons. First, *God Almighty* is not at all confin'd, not ty'd to this or that place, but is every where, and this by a virtual Contact of his very being, not of the Emanation of his power, or a Communication of his Attributes; if it were not so, he wou'd be finite, Comprehensible, in short, he wou'd come in a great manner under the same predicament with his Creatures. This consider'd, that Text which says, *The Soul returns to God that gave it*, can be only thus interpreted, viz. that it has finish'd its commission in actuating its Body, and is again at the immediate Disposal of its Creator, who being every where, there needs no local motion to find him out. (2.) Our second Argument is from the Nature of a Spirit, which according to the best defini-

tions is a *Cogitative Substance* and if so, not to be determin'd by place or Matter; that is, it can't be said to be in a place locally, because it can't be circumscrib'd or included in a place, by any material division, or limitation: the reason of it is this, *Spirits and Matter cannot be mutually passive*; that is, tho' Spirits can work upon Matter, as greater Powers command lesser, yet Matter cannot work upon Spirits; for a Spirit can as easily pass thro' Glass, Gold, Stones, Wood, &c. as through Air. Indeed we must allow, that tho' Spirits can't be said to be in a place, yet they may be in a space, for thus they are distinguished from the Nature of God Almighty, by a space we mean thus; a Spirit may be said to be in Germany, when at the same time it cannot be said to be in Ireland, tho' we don't at all doubt but it cou'd get to Ireland in the hundredth part of a Minute after it leaves Germany: All this consider'd, we can't but believe, 'tis we find better Reasons to the contrary, that Heaven is every where, and that Hell is also every where; we mean, that departed Spirits upon their Separation from their Body carry their Heaven or Hell with 'em, to wit, a Similitude to the Divine Being in having been holy, which is the parent of Happiness, or Heaven; or Dissimilitude to the Divine Being, in having been unholy, which is the parent of Unhappiness, or Hell; 'tis not at all to be doubted but that a Soul so soon as it is separated from the Body, has more exact and adequate Conceptions than it had whilst in the Body, and by consequence sees it self naked and without prejudices, and knows its future Condition by a reflection of that Habit which Vertue or Vice has fastned upon it in the Body, and accordingly Commences its Heaven or Hell; If this be truth, the Querist is now able to answer his own Question; if it is not truth, we are willing to retract what we have here advanc'd, as soon as any will show us where in this Assertion contradicts either Scripture or Philosophy. But be it as it will, since 'tis no Article of Faith, 'tis not derogatory to the Christian Religion, nor have we advanc'd this upon any other Principle than *Speculative Philosophy*.

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