

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, May 3. 1692.

Quest. 1. **I**N the History of the ATHENIAN SOCIETY, publisht last Week, 'tis said, that the Members of that Society design to insert in their Mercuries a formal Challenge to Vice. Now I desire to know whether 'twill be writ in Prose or Verse, and when we may expect it?

Ans. This Challenge (which the Querist mentions) will be writ in Verse, and is to be continued from time to time in our Poetical Mercuries, a Specimen whereof we shall insert in next Tuesdays Mercury.

Quest. 2. You are desired to tell, what unquestioned Popish Authors do justify the killing and deposing of Kings to be lawful, by the Popes Authority, it being generally held by Protestants to be a Popish Tenet, but denyed so positively by some Papists, that one of them has promised to renounce that Religion, the day it can be made appear: Your speedy answer to this may be of great use to the publick, as well as to my particular Friend?

Ans. This Deposing Doctrine is not grounded upon the Scripture, or Custom of Nations: but if a King displease the Pope, or favour the Doctrine of Christ, or its Professors, that's enough to excommunicate him, and then his Subjects are absolved from Allegiance if the Pope pleases, tho' this is but *Brutum fulmen*. *Costerus, Molina, Saunders, Cuswell*, and many more Jesuits justify this sort of deposing; but the extent of their Doctrine is best Learned from \* Pope Xistus, who 1589. Sept. 2. made an Oration in his Consistory, in Commendation of the Monk that had done that memorable Act to stab King Henry the

\* This Speech was Reprinted at London in the Late Popish Plot.

III. at the head of his Army, whose hand God guided, and the King perished in his Sin (his Sin was he favoured the Protestants) by this Religious Man, so he calls this Murtherer; and Pope Pius by his Bull commanded Q. Elizabeth's Subjects to rebell against her, because she promoted the primitive Worship of Christ and the Apostles, and not the Novel upstart worship of the Papists.

Quest. 3. Knowing that you are commonly wont to answer Miscellaneous Questions, I have made the more bold once to offer to you, it may be one of the most intricate and difficult Questions in Philosophy, that is, Whether Matter be infinitely divisible or no?

Ans. This Question is already answer'd in Vo. 1. Num. 2. 16.

Quest. 4. How Abraham going for Canaan after the days of his Father, could be but 75 years old, Gen. 12. 4, 5. when his Father liv'd 205 years, Gen. 11. and he was born in his Fathers 70th. year, v. 26.

Ans. We have already said something on this Head, but we can't promise it was so satisfactory as this Account of it, for which we are oblig'd to an unknown Hand, whose kindness we are ready to acknowledge.

1. Most plain it is, that *Ḥaran*, out of which he came, is the very same Name and place with *Ḥarran*, compare the Hebrew Text with the LXX.

2. It is then as plain, that at 75 years old Abraham went out of Haran, or Charan, or Charran, into Canaan, Gen. 12. 4, 5. called by Stephen, the Land in which you now dwell. So that the Question recurs, That seeing his Father was dead when he came into Canaan, how he could be no more than 75 years old?

1. That in the Samaritan Copy (which Bp. Usher with so much cost at last procur'd) Terah's Age is set down to be 145. and that granted, the doubt vanisheth.

At Terah's 70. year he is born.

Add to that 75 of his own Age.

It makes 145. the Age of Terah, after which immediately he goes out of Charran into Canaan. Or else,

2. You must answer from the Text that speaks of Abrahams Birth, Gen. 11. 26. Terah liv'd 70 years, and begat Abram, Nabor and Haran; by supposing that Abram, tho' mention'd first, *Ratione dignitatis*, was not Terah's eldest Son, but that at 70 years old he begat Haran, or Nabor, and Abraham in his 130th Year, (you have such an Instance in the Sons of Noah, tho' Japhet was the first born, yet Sem is always put first, because in him runs the line of Christ.)

Abraham born	130th.	year of Terah,
was	75	years old, when he went out of
(Haran,		
which makes	205.	years of Terah's Life, immedi-
ately after the expiration of which, he goes out of Haran into Canaan.		

Quest. 5. Gent. If you design for the future to treat of Witches, &c. take these few Observations along with you:

"That an Appearance of Persons both of Good and Evil Life in this World, hath been by Almighty Permission for some extraordinary End of detecting Murder, Recovery of Estate, &c. and still may be.

"That the strange Notices of the Deaths and Births of Persons and Families have bin, and are very consonant to the Essences of our Creator. But,

"That the Feats of Witches and Devils in hurt to Mankind, and the more Innocent persons; immediate possessions of the Devil, and all outward and bodily violence of the Devil, by himself, or his Witches, or that there are any such People who can invisibly, or at distance endamage any Person, is utterly deny'd, and easie to be prov'd against the Essence of God Almighty, as has very judiciously by various Persons been made appear in Print, and scarce any famous Story of Witchcraft, &c. but has been detected to have been Artifice, or Natural.

"Gent. Pray observe the differences in supernatural and Natural appearances, and that any thing ascertained for Truth, disagreeing with Divine Truth, may not be taken notice of, such I take the Power of Witches, Devils, and Possessions, &c. to be, which if you are not of the same mind, it is expected you make a Learned and clear proof to the contrary of what I assert, and maintain'd by divers very Learned and good Authors.

Ans. Sir, We return you our hearty Thanks for the Advice and Instruction we have receiv'd from you, as well as several other persons, and desire your pardon that we can't subscribe to your third position, and cou'd wish that in the second you had express'd your self so, that we might have had a clear Idea of what you mean by consonant to the Essences of our Creator; if you mean, becoming the Nature and Wisdom of God, we agree with you in that as well as the first: We wish we cou'd answer the latter end of your Letter to your Satisfaction, which we shall endeavour, after we have reduc'd your third position into 2 Heads:

1. Witchcrafts (so suppos'd) are either Artificial or Natural.
2. That Persons are not hurt by Devils or Witches, are not possess'd by Devils, nor suffer any Bodily Violence.

Against the First we offer these Arguments:

1. All Nations can't agree and conspire to find out a word expressive of a Non-entity, as Witchcraft is, if there be no such thing; but we find no Nation or Language whatever without some word expressive of the Idea we have of Witchcraft, therefore there's more than Nature and Artifice in't.



2. It wou'd have been disagreeable to the Wisdom and Justice of God Almighty to have made a particular Law to destroy Witches, if either there was none such, or if such, cou'd not have easily been discover'd by humane knowledge from an Artifice, or the effects of Nature.

3. If there be no such thing as Witchcraft, all Legislators, Juries, Witnesses, nay and thousands of Witches themselves who have dy'd for't, and at their Execution confess'd themselves guilty of their Charge, have acted unaccountably, which is impossible, therefore there's something beyond Nature or Artifice.

Obj. *A great many notorious Stories under that Name, have bin discover'd to be meer Trick and Fuggle?*

Ans. We grant it; but its ill Logick to say, *Some are Tricks, Ergo all are Tricks.* We believe the greatest part may be justly reckon'd amongst idle Stories, but the many credible Instances we have, that have all the attestation that any thing that comes under the cognizance of our Senses can be capable of, assures us that there are some true Instances.

Against the third we offer these Arguments.

1. The Scripture gives Instances of Persons that have been hurt by Devils, as *Job*, have been possess'd, as *Mary Magdalen*; have suffer'd violence, as he that was thrown sometimes into the Fire, and sometimes into the Water: Now if these things have been, it ought to be prov'd how and when the Devil lost this power, or else this Consequence is very fair, *these Instances may yet be.*

2. That a Spirit can act upon Bodies, (tho' we don't know, since matter is not apply'd to matter in order to motion) its plain, from every mans own Experience, who finds that his Soul wills, acts and moves his Body, the manner of the motion comes not within the dispute, the Question is, whether they move at all.

Obj. *There's no reason why innocent persons shou'd be subject to the power of the Devil?*

Ans. *Job* was, and thousands have been, and yet are, for such ends as God in his Wisdom and Justice thinks fitting; the same Objection was made to our Saviour, *Why a Man shou'd be born blind, before he had sinn'd*, if you please consult our Saviours answer. As for that passage in the last position, which speaks of peoples being invisibly in a place, we don't at all believe it; and we have credible Instances enough by us to periwade us that Witches are deluded, and think they go *Journeys*, eat, drink, revenge themselves, turn into strange shapes, &c. when 'tis nothing else but the Devil, and that they at the same time lie in their Chamber, or somewhere else exanimated, insensible of burnings, cuttings, &c. has been often try'd upon 'em.

And now Sir, if you, or any other Gentlemen will be so kind as to send in your Objections against what we have here offer'd, we'll be so just as to print 'em without any disadvantage, and our farther Answers to 'em.

Quest. 6. *'Tis a great while since I sent you a melancholly account of my condition, hoping some relief from you, but hitherto I have been disappointed. Hard Fate! when neither Heaven nor Earth relieve us, were it the heaviest misfortune the World could have laid upon me, I cou'd have been content; but this marrs all my Joys, and breaks my peace, yet, ah! can I not overcome it: If I retire from business and Company, and fall to study, alas, all my prayrs and tears are too too weak, I fall a sacrifice to the Tempters allurements, and my own lusts; there's no sin I more abhor than this, and none I so often commit; how often have I wish'd for Death? (and sometimes almost thought of hastning it) when I reflect on the horrid aggravation of that sin in me: Be no longer silent, but assist me both by your direction and prayrs, who am, if redeem'd by the blood of Christ the most ungrateful on Earth, and if I have not an Interest there, the most miserable of mortals?*

Ans. We have treated upon several such Questions in one large Answer, as we take it 'tis in the beginning of the 3d. Vol. the Quest. is something about habits, as, *Whether Habits may be broken*; there the Nature of good and ill habits is consider'd, and the best Remedies we cou'd think of laid down, whither we referr our Querist.

Quest. 7. *Not long since I had a very great occasion for a certain sum of Moneys, and having no Acquaintance in Town where I could borrow it for such a time as I wanted it, I cheated my Master of the same, at the expiration of the time I*

*made up a greater sum, (and gave it to him for goods, which were never sold) in our Books, which will be some money due profit to him when we come to cast up our Accounts: Querist In your Opinion whether or no this is a Sin before God Almighty and whether I can be pardoned for the same without Repentance?*

Ans. We look upon the Action not at all justifiable to dispose of another Mans money, &c. without his knowledge, tho' with a sincere design of restitution, 'twas a transgression of the Golden Rule, *Do as thou wou'dst be done by*; possibly the money might have bin wanted before the time it cou'd have bin repaid; as it is, the Circumstances of the action attenuates the fault, and 'tis very well there's so much sincerity and honesty as to make Restitution: We don't think you oblig'd ever to make on it to him, for the World is reflective; only thus much beg God Almighty's pardon for so inconsiderate an Action, and do so no more, and you may be assured your innocence will be as secure as your Credit.

Qu. 8. *I being at this time under some Affliction, I heartily desire your consideration therein, and to give me your thoughts on the matter, viz. I now living with a Father and Mother which have not proved so kind to me as I expected, and some time since make a Vow to go from them, and to take up of the first opportunity that I might get a Decent and comfortable livelihood by, which now offering, am unwilling to break my Vow, tho' something desirous to stay with them notwithstanding they continue in the same unkindness: Now I would desire your favour me with your Instruction for my better guidance therein?*

Ans. Your Vow does not oblige you, for your duty is the Goods of your Father, and you can't lawfully dispose of your self without his knowledge and consent, so that you ought to beg God Almighty's pardon for your Rashness; only thus far, if your Father compels you to ill actions, and you see no probability of dissuading him from it, we believe you may lawfully dispose of your self, but you'd best we well advis'd, and take up your own Counsel as to the matter of Fact, whether it be just or not, and whether 'tis a sufficient occasion for such an unhappy choice.

☞ The Questions concerning *Trisumia Patritiorum* in St. Pauls Rapture, those words of a certain Author, *Certum est quia impossibile est*, the knowledge of Letters and things, Mr. Boyles monthly Lecture, a Christian Magistrates tolerating the Jews, the pronunciation of V Consonant by the old Romans, &c. shall be answered next Saturday.

☞ That Scheme of Enquiries which was proposed by the Athenian Society to all ingenious Gentlemen, and other Inquisitive persons, containing Instructions in order to form a Body of the Natural, Artificial, and Civil History of England, and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, with the Foreign Plantations thereunto belonging, may be had Gratis of J. Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry till the last day of the present Term, tho' so by a free Distribution of these Papers, this useful Undertaking may be the more generally known.

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\* \* The Modish Penman, or a New Copy Book, containing variety of all the usual hands now practised in England. With Directions, whereby any Person may attain to write any of those Hands, with little practice. Likewise excellent Receipts for making several sorts of Ink, and other Curiosities. By William Elder. The second Edition with additions, price 1 s. Sold by Chr. Coningsby at the golden Turks head in Fleetstreet over agt S. Dunstons Church.

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