

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, May 21. 1692.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether the present Hebrew Text, or the Translation of the LXX, be of greater Authority? If the Hebrew, why was the LXX only, or most commonly us'd by the Christians the first 500 years next after Christ, and always referr'd to in the New Testament?

Qu. 2. Though there be many various readings in the Translations of the S. Scriptures, yet all agreeing in the substantial and Doctrinal part, whether it be not a clear Evidence of the Authority and Truth of the Doctrine there delivered, to the Confusion of the Atheist?

Ans. The present Hebrew Text is of greatest Authority, and the LXX was used because the Greek Tongue was at that time best understood by the Christians: But there is in the Press a Discourse concerning the Integrity and Purity of the Hebrew Bible, wherein 'tis hoped the Querist may find as much satisfaction as will be expected from 3 sheets, whereunto it is confined, being part of a Treatise entituled, *A Compleat Library*, that will be published for the Month of May. And as to the 2d. Question, 'tis likewise hoped he will find by the Proæmium, and body of the afore said Discourse we shall have no need of that last Relief against Atheism.

Quest. 3. I desire your Sentiments on that passage, Mat. 27. 52, 53. where it is written, that the Graves opened, and the Saints arose at the Earthquake, which was at our Saviours Crucifixion; and yet it says again, that the Saints did not come out of their Graves till after the Resurrection? I am a sober sincere enquirer; I have no books but the Bible, which according to a famous Doctor, is sufficient; but notwithstanding my sober inquiry, I cannot understand, that there were any glorified Saints before our blessed Saviours Ascension, or who Canoniz'd them; or whether they return'd to their Graves, or were their Bodies assumed into Heaven, or to what purpose did they appear, or what was their Errand and design; or whether there is any Tradition in the Catholick Church concerning that Miracle?

Ans. Mr. Pool in his *Synopsis Criticorum*, after having examin'd many Opinions about this Text, tells us, that St. Matthews design here was rather to relate the many surprizing Miracles that hapned about that time, than the order and distinction of the times in which they fell out; nor does such a recital bring the truth of the relation into question, no more than if any other Author or Person by bringing two different things into one relation which are both truth, does make 'em contemptory.

The word *Slept* in the Text, means Persons in the State of Death, as is evident by other parallel places in Scripture, as *Lazarus* was said to sleep when he was dead, and *Stephen* was said to fall asleep, when he was stoned to Death: 'Tis also a common expression amongst Heathen Authors, both Greek and Latin, thus *Homer* in *Il. X. 241.*

Ὁ δὲ μὲν αὖτε πρὸν κοιμήσατο χεῖλεσσιν ὕπνον.
i.e. Sic quidem *Lapsum dormivit ferreum Somnum.* And *Catullus* says, *Nox est perpetua una dormienda.* — Our Saviour was the first-fruits from the dead, not the first as came again to Life, for there were the *Shunamites* Son, *Lazarus*, and many more, but he was the first that rose with a material dead Body, and took it with him into Heaven: As for the Term *Holy City*, Interpreters generally agree that 'twas *Jerusalem*, which was commonly called so by the Jews, because of the *Holy Temple and Worship of God* which were in it: So that the meaning of the place is thus, When our Saviour suffer'd, there was a great Earthquake; &c. and when he arose again from the dead, and had by his rising show'd that he had overcome Death, he also rais'd several other Holy persons which were also dead, for the greater manifestation of his Power. Thus far we are certain, and we are inclin'd to believe, that those very per-

sons which he rais'd dy'd no more, but after their appearance ascended to Heaven, from several passages that we meet with in the Fathers, That Christ descended alone, but ascended to his Father with a great multitude. Thus *Thaddeus*, *Ignatius*, *Macarius*, *Ambrose*, *Epiphanius*, and others are of the same Opinion; and some pretend to tell who they were, as *Adam*, *Job*, others that they were *Noah*, *Abraham* and *David*; others again that they were *Simeon*, *Anna*, *Zacharias*, *John the Baptist*. There's a Book call'd the Gospel of *Nichodemus* (a Romish Legend) which gives you a more particular account of their number, &c. if you please to believe it; *Theophylact* indeed believ'd, that when they had appear'd they went down again into the Grave, but we find no body else of his Opinion.

Quest. 4. Whether you have not given a signal Demonstration of your Capability of writing a Natural History, when in a paragraph about the middle of your Justification, 'tis visible you cannot write true sence, as appears by the following words, wherein there is no Principle Verb. Mer. Apr. 23d. A Gentlemans Friend of our Society Travelling in the West of England, in a Valley betwixt two high Hills, extending Eastward and Westward, the Sun just setting, where there fell a small shower of Rain, which he affirms did by means of the Scituation of the place give the unusual Phenomenon of an entire Circular Rainbow.

Now I'll venture to hold a Mess of Frumenty, to bestow upon the poor Society (which will be more edifying and better understood by them, than one of *Jus Nigrum*) they take you to be the Author of this Question. Pray resolve this difficult point as soon as may be.

Ans. If you please to supply one Monosyllable which the Printer left out, to wit, *saw* betwixt *England* and *in*, you'll find your Complement too hasty.

Quest. 5. *Plautus* in his *Amphitryo*, introduces *Sofia* swearing by *Hercules* before he was born; Mr. Dr-d-n in his Play bearing the same Title, gives a Covetous Judge the Name of *Gripus*, which as we take it, is no Greek Name, but apparently refers to the English word *Gripping*. Qu. Which is the most excusable Error of the two; for having to do with persons of their reputation, I dare not say which is the worst?

Ans. *Plautus* liv'd 1015 years after *Hercules*, so that the word being not only common, but perhaps in Vogue, he might utter it without overthinking in that Play, and be no less a Man (that is subject to Error sometimes) than our Modern Spartanes are. As for Mr. Dr-d-n, he is not to be censur'd, but the contrary, for giving the Name of *Gripus* to a Covetous Judge, since the Greek word *Τελπος* and *Τελπος*, signifies *rete*, a Net, or *γελπος*, *piscator*, from whence the French lay *Griper*, to *inatch*: This makes good our English Proverb of a Covetous Man, to whom all's Fish that comes into the Net.

Quest. 6. Gent. Pray give us the resolution of the following Question in your next Mercury, because a considerable Wager depends upon it, Whether are we to pronounce it *Cleomēnes* or *Cleomēnes*?

Ans. Mr. Dr-d-n in his Verse pronounces it *Ceomēnes*, and not *Cleomēnes*, and with all the reason in the World, for by this he does not only keep up the softness of the sound, (no mean Grace in Speech) but also sticks to the General Rule,

Si ultima syllaba sit longa, accentus erit in Antipenultima. Now the Exception of Authority or Custom breaks not a General Rule, unless the Custom is General, but that the Authority or Custom of pronouncing *me* in *Cleomēnes* short is not general, is very certain, since 'tis not only disputable, but perhaps the greater party pronounce it long according to the Greek accent; *pi* in *Euripides* indeed is pronounc'd short for every one that understands but a little Greek, knows that *i* is short in the *Penultima* before all Consonants, few excepted, and so also is *a* as in *Aristophanes*, there's

there's also but a very few excepted, besides Custom has secur'd any Change in their Expression. A late *Facobite* Author has done his Party but little Service by saying, "It wou'd certainly be very ridiculous to imagine, that in any Language words shou'd be differently pronounced in Verse from what they are in Prose, &c." but he has not thöly considered the Greek Language now in dispute, for its well known by every body that knows *Homer*, *Hesiod*, &c. that it wou'd be very ridiculous to read a Verse in *Homer*, as we do the Arguments of his Subjects which is writ in Prose.

Quest. 7. *Pray what was the reason of those false Quantities in last Saturdays Mercury, since you have a certain Enemy that has improv'd 'em at an extravagant rate?*

Ans. The occasion of 'em we have noted in an Advertisement in our last Mercury; the Original Copy that went to the Press is in our Booksellers hands as it came from the Press without any alteration, and we are not answerable for the blunders of the Printer, nor the Malice of our Adversary, who has put in *tendit ad errorem*, for *sistit ad errorem*, to render us more ridiculous, thö if he'd been as sharp as he was willing to expose us, he might have seen a greater blunder in these Verses than a false Quantity, viz. *Sudastras efficit Auras*, the Winds, instead of *Aures* Ears. The Verses were these, and we desire the Reader to alter the other with his Pen.

Omne petit Metam propriam, molimina vertens
In finem Motu dignum, quä fallitur ultrö
Sistit ad errorem, nova bisque pericla retentat.
Sic catulus titubat Spartanus in Ubera felis
Matre absente suä, quoad ungula crimen acerbatur.

Quest. 8. *Whether the Athenians had a Frenchman amongst 'em when they translated Marechal a Marshal, instead of a Fariner?*

Ans. There's not one of our Society ever saw that Translation, or so much as one tittle of the whole Book, till after it was publish'd.

Quest. 9. *Whether Unguis, Unguiculus, and Ungula are not originally the same? and which is most expressive of a Lacedemonian Cats paw?*

Ans. The former part of the Question may bear an Affirmative; as to the latter part, the *Lacedemonian* Cats (as they tell us) are retromingent, and couple prone and supine: Now we believe there are no such Animals, but if there be, *Ungula* is the proper'st word to express a very dull, heavy paw.

Quest. 10. *A Gentleman of great worth both of Mind and Estate, hath conceived a Notion (from the Preaching of a person in the Fleet) that our Saviour will come upon Earth in person, and reign a thousand years, in which time all things shall be in common, and a kind equality among all persons, and that the precise time of this mighty Change will commence in the year 1697. The Gent. is in a perfect way of Reformation, and hath quite abandoned the common Pleasure of life; we cou'd be willing to comfort him could we be satisfy'd of the ways you will direct, or of your Opinion in the matter?*

Ans. This is already answer'd in Vol. 4. Numb. 6. in a whole Mercury on that Subject.

Quest. 11. *How the punishing Temporal Sins with an Eternity of Torment consists with the infinite Justice and Goodness of the Divine Nature?*

Ans. God who owes nothing to any Man, and who made all things for his Glory, can't be disappointed in his designs, he will be glorify'd either in our Happiness or Misery; but this his Sovereignty and power are not at all contradictory to his Justice and Goodness, for he has enjoyn'd nothing, but what there's the highest Equity in Nature for.

If we consider after retributions, which is the Case in the Question, his Justice is yet more apparently signal, in punishing the obstinate with Eternal Torments. There are many reasons which will justify this dispensation.

1. That an Eternity of Rewards is oppos'd to an Eternity of Punishments; and if so, there's as much Reason to ask how God can be just, and make such an unproportionable Recompence, as Eternal Happiness for a few temporary Services and an imperfect Obedience.

2. Eternal Punishment is an ill Mans Choice, and to one that's willing there can be no injury, *volenti non fit injuria*. Suppose I'd a Kingdom in possession, and out of

my free will and Goodness, shou'd send to an attainted rebellious Subject, and assure him by the most certain demonstrations that he was capable of receiving, that I'd adopt him my heir to my Crown and Kingdom, if he'd but gratefully acknowledge it; if not, he shou'd lye in his Attaindure, and be always subject to my displeasure: Now if instead of complying with my Goodness, and his own Interest, he shou'd scorn my favour, and make choice of his shame and folly, wou'd it not be just in me to give him his choice, nay rather wou'd it not be injustice not to do it? 'Tis Man that condemns himself, not God; 'tis Man that's so barbarous to his own Soul, and snatches damnation out of the hands of God whilst he's intreated to forbear.

3. An infinite God is offended, therefore the punishment shou'd be infinite. He that assaults a Peasant, deserves not the same punishment as he that assaults a King.

4. A Man habituated to a vicious Life wou'd sin on to Eternity if he were to carry a body about him so long: So that Eternal desires of sinning have but an equal retribution.

5. All such as make this plea, are either in earnest or not, if they are in earnest, they'l secure themselves; if they're in jest, and look upon Hell to be a Dream, or a Chimera, or a Flea-bite, they can't say they are hardly dealt by if they undergo such a sleight punishment. But we shall add no more upon this Subject, having largely already handled this point in those 12 Numbers that complete our 6th. Volume, which were publish'd last Thursday.

Quest. 12. *Why was Gods Anger kindled against Balaam, for going with the Princes of Moab, Num. 22.23. whereas it is expressly said, v. 20. that God came to him at Night, and said, if the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them.*

Ans. The preceding part of the Relation gives us an Account that the King of Moab had sent before for Balaam to come and curse Israel, but that God wou'd not permit him to go; and 'twas upon a second Importunity that God suffer'd it, yet with a proviso, *The word that I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do*, v. 20. Now it appears that Balaam, who is elsewhere call'd a Lover of the wages of Unrighteousness, had a design to alter the word which he shou'd receive from the Lord, and order matters so as to secure his Interest and Promotion with the King of Moab, and hence it was that the Angel said, *Thy way is perverse before me*; and put him in mind again of the restriction he had before receiv'd in his Commission, v. 35. *Go with the men, but the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak*: So that this is not any contradiction at all in God Almighty, but a reprehension of Balaams Covetousness, who wou'd feign have bin cursing Israel for a little Honour and Riches.

Quest. 13. *Gent. Your Adversaries have acquainted the World that they wou'd expose your Ignorance about Plautus, which they have endeavour'd, but to no purpose at all, for the whole of their discourse Centers in this (for no man living can make any more of it) you said, that Horace was as culpable as Plautus, being guilty of Flattery and Obsequy: Now I wou'd feign know how this concludes that you were more ignorant of Plautus than of Horace.*

Ans. Our Adversaries are out of their Element when they come to prove any thing, they meant (when they threatned) that they wou'd make a noise at us, which with all their Party passes for demonstration. 'Tis plain, and we'll refer it to all the World that they have not bin as great as their word, but only say that *Horace* was no Flatterer; we'll not be Judge in our own Case, but stand by the determination of the Learn'd, whether ever any Man was more guilty of it than he, in l. 4. Ode 5. addressing himself to *Augustus*, he begins with *Divis orbe bonis*; and there's almost such another passage in lib. 2. Ode 5. besides, we find that *Suetonius*, who gives a short Account of his Life, quotes a passage in a Letter of *Augustus* to *Mecenas*, where speaking of *Horace*, he says, *Veniet igitur ad ista parafitica mensam ad hanc regiam*, this was a little before *Augustus* made him his Secretary. As for his Obsequy 'tis granted already; and as for *Plautus*'s Obsequy which you deny, read the Scene in his *Casina* that begins *Sine modo rus veniat*, &c. and that which begins, *que ego quo fugiam neq; ubi lateam*, &c. of the same Play; and to English this in his mules *Gloriosus neq; ego unquam alienum secum subagito in convivio*; or this in *Casina*, *Nunc tu si velis me subeunus proba est occasio*. Qu. Whether any thing in the *Priapeia* be worse than these 2 Scenes in *Casina*. So that our Charge is good in every particular, and their's good in nothing unless it be an excellence to tell an idle Story instead of proving what they wou'd do: but we suppose this vweak effort was made against us because we had exposed their horrid nonsensical Translation of *Speſtar trifurria paritorem*, Juv. Sat. 8. near the end, see the 1st Qu. N. 12. of our Paper. As for their Threats about the *Dissenters Schism*, we advise 'em to look to their Conclusions a little better than they have yet done.

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