

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, November 29. 1692. Licens'd, E. B.

Quest. 1. **T**Here is a young Gentleman of my familiar Acquaintance, whose unhappy Fate it has been to fall into the Company of a sort of Sparks, profess'd Atheists, who by the subtilty of their Arguments have so blinded his Reason, as to possess him with Doubts of a future State, and the Immortality of the Soul; there is no dealing with him by Scripture, and the matter being too Metaphysical for my mean Conceptions, I dare not undertake to demonstrate it Philosophically: I therefore (being very desirous to convince my Friend) have thought good to send to you, humbly desiring your instruction how I may handle the Point, so as by force of Arguments to undeceive him?

Ans. It's impossible to give particular Instructions in such a General Case: If your Friend and his Associates will send in their Objections in writing to us, we'll endeavour an Answer; and we hope they are at least so reasonable, to hear what can be said against their Opinions, before they absolutely determine, and settle their Judgments. A just Judge will hear both Parties; and 'twill argue an inexcusable rashness, and a prejudice to Truth not to be willing to be undeceiv'd, where there's a possibility of it, and so fair a one too as this is, where the joynt Suffrage of Humanity (both as to the greatest and soberest part) seems to stamp infallibility upon it.

Quest. 2. Whether I'm oblig'd to forgive one that has wrong'd me, without Repentance?

Ans. The Christian Religion obliges us to be charitable to all men, to forgive our Enemies, to pray for our Persecutors, to bear no malice nor hatred; and many more such Texts there are to the same purpose: But certainly there's still a reserve, warranted not only by that Justice we owe to Eternal Reason and Truth, and the Example of God Almighty himself, and the actual decission of this very case by our Saviour, who also inculcated this Precept of Forgiveness, with more earnestness than any of the Prophets, or Apostles. Our Saviour has decided the Case thus; If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and turn again to thee saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him; here Repentance is the Condition. God Almighty only forgives conditionally, and we are advis'd to imitate him, and to be perfect as he is perfect; to be reconcil'd to an obstinate Injustice, or any Vice, is to authorize and approve it. Our Duty under an Injury is this, to be angry only at the Sin, not the Person; to tell him of it, and to endeavour by all common Offices of Friendship to win upon him to an acknowledgment of his Fault, to pray for him, that God would change his Heart, and if he repents towards God, he will certainly do it towards us; if this will not do, we are not oblig'd to a Familiarity, nor to an acknowledgment of Reconciliation, but only look upon him as a Stranger, and yet be always in a Capacity, and readiness of Mind to forgive him, whenever he shall perform the Condition.

Quest. 3. Whether a Minister ought to be blam'd, who out of Conscience shall refuse or scruple the giving the Blessed Sacrament to a Person that never took it before, and desires it now only upon a Civil, or State account, because he is to enter upon a new Office?

Ans. Charity must certainly be the great Rule of our acting in this Case: We are not the Searchers, nor Judges of Mens Hearts, we can only act by probability of outward Circumstances, and where the Case will bear the least probability, our Charity must prevail in the Dispensation; if a Man has been vicious, and tells me he has reclaim'd on a sudden, and is sincere, I am to hope he may be so, and endeavour to perfect it.

We ought therefore first to examine and weigh Circumstances, to ask the party a reason of his Faith and Hope, and if we find him not ignorant in his Duty, and perceive the least probability of Sincerity, we are to admonish him, lay before him the Danger and Impiety of tempting God. In short, we are to do our Duty, and leave the rest to him to whom all things are naked and open. Our Saviour, and (after his Example) the Christian Church in all Ages, has esteem'd Visibility, and an outward Profession, a sufficient warrant for admittance into the privileges of Church Communion. But when Men have lived in open defiance to the Doctrine and Communion of the Church many years, and only take the Sacrament to qualify them for an Employment, there is good reason the Minister should require an Acknowledgment of his Fault, and a Promise to continue for the future in the Communion of our Church; and if he will not do this, he ought to be rejected.

Quest. 4. On Saturday the 12th. Instant, a Soldiers Wife was brought to Bed at the Sugar-loaf at Nine-Elms, of a Child with two heads, one over the other, some part of the Body, as Shoulders, is woolly, and some part of the Face hairy: In both Heads there were Eyes, Mouth, and Nose very visible when born, (as Mrs. H— the Midwife, who lives at Fox-hall, has assured me) but they now seem to be sunk in the upper head, which seems to be without Bones, in other parts it seems to be perfect. It lived several hours, and seem'd as if it had been a year old; it cry'd very much, but quite different from a Child. Sirs, I desire your Opinions of the Natural Occasion, and knowing you to be inquisitive in these Affairs, I thought fit to give you this Account?

Ans. We have lately discours'd upon Monstrous Births, and thither we refer you.

Quest. 5. You have answered the Question lately about a living Fish in a Tub of water, that will weigh no more than the Tub of water did without the Fish; it seems by the Question the Querist was satisfied of the effect, for he desired only a Reason to be given, Why it was so: And I having read in a German Author, 50 years since, that it was so, without giving reason why, I did in the tryal not only find it to be so, but that which I think will satisfy any rational Person, the Cause why it is so, for whilst the Fish swam to and agen, the Scales remain'd ballanced, but when I saw the Fish-tub sway down, and return to his Ballance again, I took observations, and found as often as the Fish rubb'd or touch'd the side or bottom of the Tub, so often the Fish-tub sway'd down; and no sooner swam in the Tub without touching it, but the Scale return'd into the Ballance again, and continued so till the swimming Fish toucht the Tub. Now Gent. you have demonstration, but here wanteth your Ingenious Illustration why, which doubtless will satisfy the Querist, as well as your humble Servant, unknown to the Querist?

Ans. We knew nothing of such an Answer, nor by what means it was put in; and for the future we shall take such a Course, that the Press shall father nothing upon us, but what is our own, (Advertisements excepted.) He must be unacquainted with the Elements, and the first Principles of Common Reason, that can imagine (by the Vertue of Antiquity) that 2 and 1 make but 2, that if a weight be added to a weight, the whole should be equal to its part. Had not the Experiment of the Royal Society in this very matter evinc'd the contrary to what is pretended in the above Quest. it might be reasonable enough to conclude, that a living Fish wou'd weigh just so much out of the water, as it adds to the weight of a Vessel of Water, a little allowance being made for that weight which the Elasticity and Springiness of the Air in the Bladder and Body of the Fish, takes off. The Experiment in the Question must be erroneous, from the hard turning of the Scales, besides,

sides, its probable this Fish was very small, and if one of a considerable bigness had been us'd in the Experiment, the difference wou'd have been more sensible. And the Reason why the Scales gave way at the Fishes touching the sides, or bottom of the Tub, (a Vessel very improper for the Experiment) must be this, The Particles of Water parted so easily whilst the Fish swam, that it caused no External Motion, and consequently shook the Scales no more than if it had lain still; but when it hit upon the sides, it shook the Tub, which therefore ascended or descended, according to the impression of the first Motion, as a Man put into a Scale and weigh'd exactly, may by Motion in the Scale make it ascend or descend; commonly the last, because that the Motion he uses receives its life from the resistance of the Scale-board which he presses upon in order to move; but we shall have occasion to treat upon the Principles of Motion some other time.

Quest. 6. We find in the Old Testament there are the Names of several Months call'd Nisan, Tisri, &c. by the Jews, now the Historical part would be more intelligible, if we knew how their Months answer'd to ours, therefore I believe it will not only Oblige me but many more, to give us what Account you can in the Matter?

Ans. They are called also the first, second, third Month, &c. which We shall give you in their Order, only their Months not beginning at the same time as ours do, we must be forc'd to set them double; as for instance, their Month Nisan answer'd to part of March and part of April, and so of the rest.

1. Nisan, which is also called Abib,	March, April.
2. Fiar,	April, May.
3. Sivan,	May, June.
4. Thamuz,	June, July.
5. Ab,	July, August.
6. Elul,	August, September.
7. Tisri, which is also called Ethanim,	September, October.
8. Marche Suan, or Bul,	October, November.
9. Cisleu,	November, December.
10. Tebeth,	December, January.
11. Schebeth,	January, February.
12. Adar or Veadar,	February, March.

Quest. 7. In the Gospel we meet with a Man, out of whom our Saviour cast many Devils, which are there term'd Legion, pray what Company might there be, or how many does the word Legion signifie?

Ans. The Roman Forces were anciently divided into two parts, *Auxilia* & *Legiones*, into Auxiliary Bands and Legions. The Auxiliary were such as the Neighbour Tributary Countries did send in to the Romans: As for the Legions, they were a choice select Party taken out of all the Roman Souldiers, and were called Legions, *ab eligendo* from choosing. *Rosin. Antiq. lib. 10. cap. 4.* supposes *Romulus* was the first Author of this Method, and his Legion at first contain'd 3000 Footmen and 300 Horsemen, afterwards he augmented it to 4000 Footmen; whence it was call'd *Quadrata Legio*, but in Process of time it encreased unto the Number of 6000, which it seldom exceeded, as *Sigonius* tells us, and of this last Number it was accounted by the Romans at that time that our Saviour was in the World; as also the Jews had the same Computation, they being a mixt People, and then Tributary to the Roman Empire, *Pilate* and *Herod* being Romans: So that the Devil which spoke out of the Wretch for himself and partners in Answer to our Saviour's Question, *What his Name was?*

meant by Legion, that they were about 6000 who were permitted to Tyrannize over and possels that one Man.

Quest. 8. What is meant by that Passage of St. Paul, that he fought with Beasts at Ephesus?

Ans. *Damnatio ad Bestias*, or Condemning to the Wild Beasts was a frequent Punishment amongst the Romans, and those that suffered thus were call'd *Bestiarii*. There are some of the Learned that believe St. Paul was cast to the Wild Beasts, and fought with 'em in a Literal sense, and that they cou'd not have Power to destroy him; which Interpretation is a stronger Argument that St. Paul believ'd the Resurrection, and would not refrain the Preaching thereof, tho' it hazarded his Life, which he knew he shou'd receive again: And this is the scope of the Text, and to this sense We adhere, more especially since We perceive it can be of no ill consequence. There are some who understand by the word Beasts, *Demetrius*, and others that oppos'd St. Paul at Ephesus, and so make the Fight to be Metaphorical. The Querist is at liberty to take which side he pleases, for both the Expositions are safe.

Quest. 9. I read in Baker's Chronicle, in the Reign of Q. Eliz. that it was reported of Sir T. Cheyney, that his Pulse did beat more than three quarters of an hour after he was dead, as strongly as if he had been still alive: Query, Whether 'tis not more probable he was alive so long, since 'tis well known by the Recovery of several that have been given over for dead that there has been life, when not the least symptom of it hath appeared?

Ans. We know 'tis so reported, but he was certainly alive, for Matter can't move it self, nor cou'd the Vital Spirits keep up the Circulation of the Blood, without being held in Motion by the Nobler Part, which therefore must by the indisposition of the Organs be incapacitated to exert any further Offices of Life.

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