

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, October 11. 1692 Licens'd, E. B.

Quest. 1. **T**Here was publish'd last week, A Practical Discourse on the late Earthquakes, &c. by a Reverend Divine, wherein 'tis said, "If the windy and turbulent Matter within the Bowels of the Earth, which was the cause of the late Earthquake, be not spent and exhausted, (which it is likely must be done by a violent and sudden eruption of it, which will necessarily break and scatter those parts of the Earth where it hath vent,) then we may expect an Earthquake of a more violent Nature, and such as will prove very fatal and destructive. Now I desire particularly your Thoughts upon this Assertion, as also your Opinion of this Authors Book?"

Ans. Upon perusal of this Book we find the Author of it to be a Person of great Learning and Piety; his Discourse is very seasonable, as the Title will shew, but the Book it self much more: It is calculated both for the Ingenious, and those of ordinary Rank. There is in it the most Elaborate Discourse of Prodiges, and the best Observations on the late Earthquakes we have yet seen. As to his Opinion, that another Earthquake will speedily follow this late one, 'tis our Judgments, that there may be several Eruptions from the melted Torrent, which may be contained in distinct Volts, and the most furious and Volatile Matter be discharged where it at present was raised: So a less or a more violent Earthquake may ensue of greater or lesser extent, which the Author illustrates with all imaginable perspicuity.

Quest. 2. The enclos'd came to my Hands, scrawl'd in a strange Character from an unknown Person, (the Letter it self, because of the oddness of its composition, we think fit also to insert word for word — "Monstrum Horrendum, You are one of the wickedest men in the World. Satan your Father the Devil hath fill'd your filthy Heart with Enmity against the Godly, that it runs over at your filthy mouth. The Godly who are the precious Children, Saints and Servants of God, are matter of mocking to you, and the Object of your Indignation, and so is the Worship and Service of God. Because you are such a Fool as not to know: I tell you, he that mocks the Godly, mocks God, and he that hates the Godly hates God, he that fights against the Godly fights against God; he that's the Enemy of the Godly is the Enemy of God. Madman! are you a match for God! Better you had all the World against you than have God against you, you have turned God against you to be your Enemy. Hear the Counsel of Jesus Christ — Agree with thine Adversary quickly, viz. Before he cast thee into the Prison of Hell. Hear what God saith to you, Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? O wicked man! thou shalt surely dye, saith God: God will shortly change your scornful Countenance, and send you away to the Devil: You fill up the measure of your Sins fast, and God fills up the Vials of his Wrath to pour out upon you in Hell. Mockers! you will not mock when Death kills your Body, and the Devil carries your Soul to Hell: You will not mock when you open your Eyes in Hell, and see that you are there for ever: You will not mock when you rise out of your Grave roaring, where you shall shortly ly rotting till the Resurrection: You will not mock when you see Christ come in flaming Fire to take vengeance on you for your Enmity against the Godly: You will not mock when you hear the Trumpet sound so loud, as to make the dead and all the World hear at once: You will not mock when you hold up your Hand at the Bar, to answer for all your Mocks, Scoffs, and malicious prating speeches against the Godly: You will not mock when you hear Jesus the Judge pass this Sentence upon you, De-

part ye Cursed into everlasting Fire: You will not mock when you say to the Mountains and Rocks fall on me, and hide me from the Face of him that sits on the Throne Mockers! I warn you from God to repent of mocking, and of all your wickedness, and to make your Peace with God and the Godly: O wicked man! Repent, or God will tear you in pieces: Repent! or God will plague you in Hell: Repent! or it had been better for you if you had never been born, or that a Millstone had been hang'd about your Neck, and you drown'd in the depth of the Sea seven years since, or before ever you offended the Godly. Repent, repent! O wicked man, or God will turn you into Hell to Eternity, for the poyson you have spit out at the Godly. If you are once in Hell, you are there for ever: When you have burn'd and roar'd as many thousands of years as there are drops of water in a shower, the End of your Torments will be as far off as when it first began. If you will not repent, hear what Jesus your Judge saith unto you, He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be: If you burn this Letter, or bury it in the bottom of the Sea, there will not be an End of it. God will bring this Letter into Judgment, with the Author, to witness against you; and when this dreadful day of Doom is at an End, this Letter will not be at an End. If you go to Hell this Letter will go with you, in your Memory to aggravate your Eternal Misery, and you shall never be able to forget it to all Eternity. — [These are the express words of the Letter, the Gentleman goes on] On my perusal of this Letter, several Questions occur'd to my memory, concerning which I desire your Opinion:

1. If the Author of the enclos'd be a Christian, what Sect, or Perswasion do you suppose him to be, and what are your Thoughts of his Letter?

2. Whether the Attributes of Godly, Saints, &c. be not the certain Badges of a proud Pharisee, and knavish Hypocrite?

3. Whether those who assume such high Titles, don't discover the Wolf under the Sheeps cloathing, there being many such scurrilous Letters sent up and down the Countries to Persons of no mean Reputation and Quality?

Ans. To the first Question, It's not an easie matter to guess of what Perswasion the Author of this Letter may be: But it's most probable he's a Quaker, by the Fire and Brimstone which he so plentifully throws about him; nor is it any valuable Objection against it that he uses Thou instead of Thou, for many of 'em have done the same for these several Years. As for the Letter it self, in our Judgment it has several passages in it extremely unlike the Spirit of Christianity. It Complements the Gentleman to whom its address'd, with the handsome Titles of Son of the Devil, Fool, Madman, Mockers, Enemy of the Godly, Fighter against God — Tells him, that he shall surely dye, nay positively that God shall send his Soul away to the Devil, and will pour out his wrath upon him in Hell: Nay tells him, that when the dreadful Day of Doom is at an end, this Letter won't be at an End — (sure it must be writ upon very incombustible Paper:) Not but that, in the mean time, most of what he writes is true in general, that he who hates the Godly hates God; who mocks the Godly mocks God, and must expect dreadful punishment for it without Repentance; that is, he who hates true Piety and Religion wherever he finds it, or but suspects it, making the most serious things the Objects of his scurrilous and profane Wit, he's in a very ill Condition. But if all the hard words and unlucky Jestings that are thrown about by different Parties at one another, must be reckon'd amongst ungodly words, and

and *hard speeches*, God help us all; for tho' some may be more guilty, and some may give more *occasion* than others, yet we doubt there's none can cast the first Stone. And thus in Fact we see that those who are extremely scandaliz'd and displeas'd with the *Friendly Debate*, and other Books of that Nature, can yet very well digest the *Cobler of Gloucester*, *Martin-Marr-Prelate*, or any such scandalous Libel on what they don't love — and it holds as strong on the contrary, tho' in the mean while Religion it self can't scape, but is in danger of being torn in pieces by differing Parties, each side dressing her as ridiculous as possible when they find her among their *Enemies*.

To the second Question — Whether the Titles of *Godly*, *Saint*, &c. be't the certain Badges of a proud *Pharisee* and knavish *Hypocrite*? tho' we dare not absolutely answer in the affirmative, yet if these words are restrain'd to any little narrow Party whatsoever, with exclusion of all the rest, we know not how they can escape the Censure of eternal Truth, who calls those *who trusted that they were righteous*, and despised others, *Serpents*, *Hypocrites*, *whited Sepulchres*, and many other far worse Names than they bestow upon themselves.

To the third — Whether those who are so full of their *Damnation*, &c. don't discover the *Wolf* under *Sheeps-cloathing*? We must confess we can't help believing that whoever are so very ready to *damn* a Man, wou'd with very little Provocation and Opportunity, be perswaded to Hang or Burn him; and this Experience has confirm'd, not only in the Church of *Rome*, but in many other Bodies of Men, which 'twou'd be too invidious to Name. As for what's added, that several such Letters as these are sent about to several Persons of no mean Reputation and Quality, We say, that if their Reputations are acquir'd by *Virtue* and *Religion*, and their personal good Qualities answerable to those Titles which the World give them, they'll find in their own Breasts the best Compurgators. If they really *scoff* at Piety and Religion, and whoever profess it, however Criminal the Author of this Letter may be in his particular positive Applications, yet they are certainly in a miserable Condition, and must expect all those black and dreadful Curses which he denounces against 'em, unless averted by a timely Repentance.

Quest. 6. *Some Years since a Friend of mine went to the East-Indies, where after he was arrived he sent a full Account of his Voyage, in which he says he saw the Sun, Moon, and Stars, all at once, at Noon-day; the Person is of unquestionable Integrity, and the relation appears, very unaccountable to me, I wou'd desire your Assistance, how such Phenomena may be resolved?*

Ans. Father Kircher in his Description of the Subterraneous World, lib. 2. tells us that by the help of a Telescope we may perceive the Sun a Body of Fire, unequal in its Surface, compos'd of several parts of a different Nature, some fluid, some solid, and that his Disque is a Sea of Fire, wherein one may perceive an eternal agitation of the Waves of Flame, that in some parts of it there arises a deal of smoke: Now it's very probable that a vast Quantity of Smoke might intercept and hinder the brightness of the Sun; as in 1547. from the 4th. to the 28th. of August, the Sun appear'd reddish, and not so bright as the Moon in her Total Eclipse, so that then there were many Stars visible at Noon-day; when *Cæsar* was murder'd, 'twas so for a whole Year together, and we can give no other reason for it, but the Evaporations of Smoke, which sometimes are so very great as to cause such effects.

Quest. 7. *It has been my misfortune to fall into the Company of some Young Sparks here in Town, that puzzle me about the Eternity of the World, Men, &c. which tho' I am of a contrary Opinion, yet I can't well confute, I therefore desire your Assistance how I may Answer 'em?*

Ans. As for the Eternity of the World, you perhaps may have met with this Argument, That there's no annihilation of things, but a continual Revolution and Change of one thing into another, &c. There's no dealing with these Sparks by Scripture, which tells that *God made the World*, Joh. 1. You must therefore confute 'em from their own Principles thus, *The World was not from Eternity in that State we now find; which I prove thus: Either the Day was from Eternity, or the*

*Night was from Eternity, or both together were from Eternity: If only the Day, then the Night was not; if only the Night, then the Day was not; but they could not be both together, since they are successive of one another by 12 Hours, and if we shou'd admit the contradiction that they were both together, it would yet prove our Position, which says, The World was not from Eternity in that State we now find it, for now both Night and Day are not together; and after the same manner we may prove that Winter and Summer have not been from Eternity, and consequently not that Revolution and Change of things as was at first alledg'd. Again, as to the Eternity of Men upon the Face of the Earth, We deny it, and say, If there have been successive Generations of Men from Eternity, it follows that there has been an innumerable Company of Men who have liv'd already; for if their Number was certain and determinate, we shou'd come to the first Man, and so to the second, third, fourth, &c. and so to the last; and if we have a first and a last, then Eternity loses its definition, *Duratio carens principio & fine, A duration without beginning or ending*: But the Number of Men which have hitherto lived is not infinite, therefore Men were not from Eternity: There wants only the Minor to be prov'd, thus, A Number greater than an Infinite Number can't be given, but we can give a Number greater than the Number of Men which have yet lived, viz. the Hairs of these Men's Heads, therefore the Number of Men which have yet lived is not infinite: Here the Number of Hairs contains the Number of Men, and another great Number over and above; Now whatever is contain'd or determin'd, is finite, and what is finite is not infinite, and consequently Men have not been from Eternity. Besides, We having prov'd in the preceding Argument, that Day and Night have not been from Eternity, it wou'd be a hard task for these Gentlemen to prove in what other Dimensions of time those Men liv'd in that were before Day and Night; but tho' there's little need of it, we give 'em another Argument. Those Men that have yet liv'd, have succeeded one another by a finite or infinite distance of time, not by an infinite distance, as the Succession of Families to our Knowledges shews, therefore by a finite; and infinity of duration cannot be made up of finite revolutions.*

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L O N D O N, Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry, 1692.