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A  
S E R M O N ✓

On the Late  
EARTHQUAKES,

More particularly  
THAT AT LISBON;

Part whereof was Preached *December 31. 1755,*  
and the other Part *February 4. 1756,* in the  
Parish Church of *St. Andrew, Plymouth :*

W H E R E I N

The Subject is considered both in a Philosophical  
and Religious Light.

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By THOMAS ALCOCK, M. A.  
Of Braze-Nose College, Oxford.

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*Omnia ejusdem Sortis sunt, & si nondum mota, tamen mobilia.  
Hunc fortasse in quo securius consistis locum, hæc Nox, aut hic  
ante Noctem dies scindet. Senec. Nat. Quæst.*

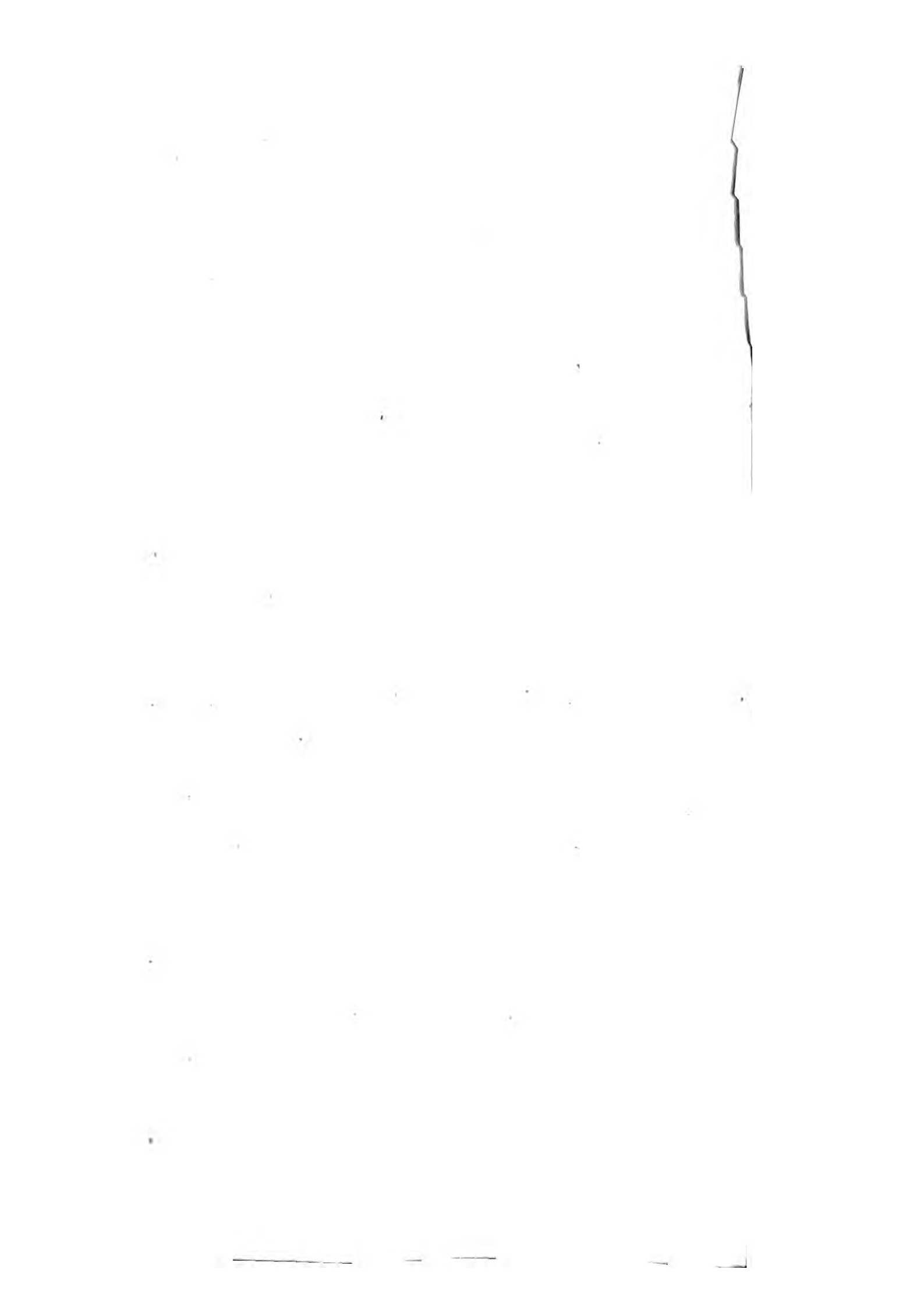
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O X F O R D,

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M D C C L V I.

(7)



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 LUKE XIII. 2, 3, 4, 5.

*And Jesus answering, said unto them; suppose ye, that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay: But except ye repent, ye shall All likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell and slew them, think ye, that they were Sinners above All Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: But except ye repent, ye shall All likewise perish.*

**I**T is a Notion, that hath been much entertained, even by Christians, as well as Jews and Heathens, that those who are the greatest Sufferers must consequently be the greatest Sinners, and that their Sufferings or Calamities are Judgements upon them for their Wickedness. What the Barbarians in the Island of *Malta* thought of *St. Paul*, when they saw a Viper fasten upon his Hand, is but too commonly the Way of judging of many People in these Days. They immediately fancied this was a Curse upon Him for his Crimes. *No doubt, said they among themselves, this Man is a Murderer, whom though He hath escaped the Sea, yet Vengeance suffereth not to live*<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Acts 28.

From a Consideration of this general Propensity in Men to impute Calamities to the unhappy Sufferers, as divine Punishments, there was but too much Reason to apprehend, that this Way of judging would prevail among many Persons with regard to the poor unfortunate Inhabitants of *Lisbon*. Upon first hearing of the dreadful Disaster that had befallen them, it immediately occurred to me, that the World would be apt to judge hardly of them, that many Persons would be ready to pronounce them, a most sinful Nation, and that their Impieties had occasioned this Manifestation of divine Vengeance.

Accordingly, we have since seen these uncharitable Notions advanced and propagated, both in Prints and Pamphlets, in News Papers and Conversation. The Character of the *Portuguese* hath suffered a severe Scrutiny, hath been censured with great Prejudice and Prepossession, and exhibited in the worst of Lights. From the Accounts of their *Acts of Faith*, their Treatment of relapsed Converts, and their Persecutions and Cruelties to Protestants, many have been almost ready to say; that their Suffering was but their Desert; and, *let them go down quick into Hell, for Wickedness is in their Dwellings, and among them*. The Righteous, it is said, have been separated from the Wicked, the *English* from the Natives, on this Occasion: And still to make it look more like a Judgment, the Day of their exercising their Cruelty, hath been made the very Day of their Calamity: And when all the lofty Temples, and other Popish religious Houses  
have

have been thrown down and laid in Ruins, a single Protestant Chapel, the only one in the Place, hath been left standing.

But such a Way of judging and concluding, is hasty, is wrong, is unchristian, and inhuman. Some of these Accounts perhaps may not be true, or may be otherwise explained, without supposing any miraculous Interposition of the Deity. — It is *breaking the bruised Reed*, and adding *Sorrow to their Sorrow*, to ascribe all their Sufferings to the vindictive Wrath of Heaven. — It is the Way to make us *shut up all our Bowels of Compassion* from them, and leave them to perish in their Distress; as looking upon them accursed of God, and not entitled to our Mercy or even the Benefits of common Humanity — As thinking we should counteract the Intentions of the Almighty, if we should offer to save those, whom He had devoted to Destruction.

At the same Time we shall be apt to grow too secure, too presuming, and self-confident, when we make unjust Comparisons between them and ourselves; and because we have escaped Punishment, shall flatter ourselves, that we have deserved none — that we are more righteous than all others — and that God must be our peculiar Friend and Protector, because we do not feel Him as an Enemy and Avenger.

Be it, that the *Portuguese* had many great and crying Sins. Have not we, and many other Nations, as many and as great Sins, either of the same, or of some other Kind? Is *Lisbon* worse than any other City of *Europe*? Is there

more Curfing and Swearing, Perjury and Prophaneness, more Drunkenness, more Robbery, more Rapine and Murder there, than in *London*? More Lewdness, Adultery, Luxury, and Profligacy, than at *Paris*? Is the *Portuguese* Bigot worse than the *English* Infidel or Atheist? Or, if Popish Superstition and Cruelty made *Lisbon* to fall, how came *Rome* to stand? *What then? Are we better than they?* No: I am afraid in no wise, as to our moral Character. Sinners indeed we All are, and it is of the *Lord's Mercies*, that we are not All consumed. If God should enter into strict Judgment, no Man living could be justified. If God should be extreme to mark all that is done amiss, no Flesb could abide it.

But in Truth there does not seem to have been any remarkable Wickedness in the *Portuguese* at this Time, that was not equally flagrant in many other European Nations. If they fell by Justice therefore, remember, that *thou standest* by Mercy. *What if God willing to shew his Wrath, and to make his Power known, after much Long-suffering, let fall his Judgments upon some, and spare others? Be not high minded, but fear.* The *Portuguese*, we must bear them Record, have a Zeal of God, though not according to Knowledge. In their moral Character, they are not inferior to their Neighbours: Punctual and honest in their Dealings, and by their Trade and Alliance extremely beneficial to this Nation. Their Royal Family are decent, and generally well spoken of. The King on this sad Disaster behaved with a noble Firmness and Magnanimity,



mity, and when he had lost his Capital, the Strength and Glory of his Kingdom, expressed his Thankfulness to Providence for his Preservation.

It is therefore unjust, cruel, and inhuman to pass so severe a Censure upon them — to interpret their Misfortunes as Curses — to aggravate their Calamities by branding them with the Imputation of divine Judgments — and to fix upon them a Mark of Infamy and Contempt, by pointing them out as more notoriously sinful and wicked than other Nations, and as being in a particular Manner the Object of God's Displeasure and Punishment. — But hear what our Saviour saith upon this Subject.

Certain Persons, we are told in the first Verse of this Chapter, had taken an Occasion of speaking to Him concerning the *Galileans*, whom being Zealots for their Law and Liberty, and violent Enemies to the *Roman* Government, *Pilate* the *Roman* Governour had lately slain, as they were offering Sacrifice at the Temple, and thereby had mingled their own Blood with the Blood of their Sacrifices. Upon this, these Persons concluded within themselves, and no doubt hinted the same to our Saviour, that these *Galileans* must have been extremely wicked — that certainly *they must have been Sinners above all the Galileans*, since they died such a shocking and dismal Death. But Jesus Christ, who well knew God Almighty's Ways in dealing with Mankind, assured them of the Wrong and Falsity of such Notions, and declared, that People  
are

are not to be thought greater Sinners than all others, because they have been greater Sufferers. *Suppose ye, that these Galileans were Sinners above All the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay: But except ye repent, ye shall All likewise perish. You, that have had no such Calamity happen to you, may be equally Objects of God's Anger — may be as wicked, or more wicked than they were, and therefore unless you avert it by Repentance, you may share the same, or a worse Fate, you shall All likewise perish. — And to pass from these Sufferings of the Galileans, to other Accidents and Calamities, that happen to Mankind in general; You know the Tower in Siloam lately fell down, and crushed eighteen People to Death by the Fall of it. But do ye think, that those eighteen were Sinners above All Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? No, they were no worse than the other Inhabitants. Only the Tower in Siloam being weak and ruinous, I suppose, happened just to tumble down in that very Instant, when these eighteen Persons were standing under it. This then was not to be considered as a Judgment upon them for any extraordinary Sins, nor could it hence be inferred, that they were worse than the rest of their Neighbours. It is appointed unto all Men once to die, and Saints and Sinners must alike perish when such massy Stones or Buildings fall upon them, unless a divine Power interpose for their Deliverance, which is not ordinarily to be expected.*

Our Saviour then in the Scripture before us, plainly teaches these two Things. First, that  
Mens

Mens Sufferings in this World are no Proof, that the Sufferers are greater Sinners than All those that have not suffered. *Suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such Things? I tell you, nay.* And therefore, Secondly, that those who have suffered no such Calamities or Afflictions, may yet be in as dangerous or a worse Condition. *I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall All likewise perish.*

First then, I say, Mens Sufferings in this World are no Proof that they are Sinners above All those that have not suffered. As Prosperity is no Proof of Righteousness, so neither is Adversity any Proof of Wickedness. The wicked are sometimes suffered to flourish like a green Bay-Tree. Nay, the Psalmist thought they were more prosperous than the Righteous. *He was grieved, He says, to see the ungodly in such Prosperity. They are lusty and strong, they come into no Misfortune like other Folk, neither are they plagued like other Men<sup>a</sup>.* On the other Hand, the Righteous are often persecuted and afflicted: yea, sometimes, *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer Persecution.* Holy Job, most of the Prophets, our Saviour and his Apostles, many Saints and Martyrs are sufficient Instances of the Sufferings of the Righteous. — The World is not a Place to bestow Rewards in, or inflict Punishments according to Mens Deserts. That is left to the great Day of Retribution hereafter, *when every one shall receive according to*

<sup>a</sup> Pf. 73.

*the Things done in the Body, whether they be good or evil.* Under the Theocracy of the Jews indeed Life and Death were set before them; Blessing or Cursing immediately followed Obedience or Disobedience, and Mercies and Judgments signalized the divine Administration. But under the Gospel it is not so. Our Saviour took up the Cross; and so must many of his righteous Followers, and here *suffer with Him*, if they would hereafter *reign with Him*. Many of the Evils or Sufferings of this Life in Scripture-Account are no Evils at all. Sicknes, loss of Life, or Fortune make a great Part of these Sufferings. But Sicknes is a paternal Chastisement<sup>a</sup>, *to die is gain*<sup>b</sup>, and *to suffer the loss of all Things is nothing, if we can but win Christ*<sup>c</sup>, at least, *the Sufferings of this present Time are so inconsiderable, that they are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed in us*<sup>d</sup>. Immediate Punishment of Evil is not practicable in the present State of Things. To *pull up all the Tares*, would greatly injure, if not destroy the *Wheat*. Such are the necessary Connections among good and bad Men in this Life, that Judgments cannot be inflicted on the latter, without involving the former in their Miseries and Ruin. Thus it is evident, from the Constitution of the World, that all the public Calamities of Plague and Pestilence, bad Seasons and Famine, Fire and Sword, Storms and Tempests, Earthquakes and Vulcanos, must in every

<sup>a</sup> Heb. 12. 5.    <sup>b</sup> Phil. 1. 21.    <sup>c</sup> Phil. 3. 8.    <sup>d</sup> Rom. 8. 18.

Country where they happen, sweep away and destroy the Righteous and the Wicked without Distinction. Nor can private Judgments be inflicted on Individuals, without the innocent and virtuous, in most Instances, partaking of the Sufferings and sharing the Fate of the sinful and vicious. To punish a wicked Man with some signal Infamy, with Poverty, with Sicknes, or with Death, must bring Disgrace, Sorrow, Want, and Misery upon his Family, his near Relations, Friends, or Dependents; some of whom, it is highly reasonable to suppose, may be very innocent good People. On the contrary, some Blessings could not be given to the Righteous, without the Wicked's partaking of them. *The Sun ariseth on the Evil and on the Good, and Rain is sent to the Just and Unjust.* So that bad Men are permitted to enjoy many of the Goods of this Life in common with good Men: And good Men, in common with bad, are left to suffer in the Misfortunes and Calamities of the World.

These Misfortunes or Calamities very often arise from the general established Laws of Nature — they are what must happen in the necessary Course of Things — are natural Effects of plain and natural Causes. Fire will burn, Water will drown, and the Point of a Sword will wound, if we come within their Reach or Power, *and the Things, that should have been for our Wealth, may by Accident or Abuse, be unto us an Occasion of falling.* If a Man die by a Fall from his Horse, by the burning or falling of his  
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House,

House, by sailing on the Sea, or fording a River, is this any wonder, or can such an Accident with any Reason be called a Judgment? Is it not a greater wonder, that Men so often escape, and that so few Accidents happen of this Sort, considering what Numbers of People are daily exposed to them? Must the Fire cease to burn, must the Waters stand on an Heap, must the Tides not flow, nor the Winds arise, must the Sun stand still, and Nature stop her usual Operations for the Sake of my Life or Fortune, or must I otherways be supposed to have died or suffered by a Judgment? Whenever we hear of any such Accidents or Misfortunes as these, instead of looking upon them as divine Judgments, or of having Recourse to some extraordinary Sins as the Cause, we should rather be inclined to believe, that they may proceed from the ordinary Powers of Nature, which always produce such Effects in such and such Cases, unless God Himself should immediately interpose, and suspend their Power of acting. Our Saviour tells us, a Man may have very great bodily Misfortunes happen to him, without having sinned either himself or his Fathers, so as to have given Occasion to them. *His Disciples asked Him; who did sin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered: Neither hath this Man sinned, nor his Parents: But that the Works of God should be made manifest in him*<sup>a</sup>.

Different Inhabitants upon different Parts of the Earth are subject to several Diseases, Acci-

<sup>a</sup> John 9. dents,

dents, and Calamities, by the very Nature of their Situation and Climate.

On a hasty View of Things, one would be naturally lead to imagine, that *Moscow*, *Petersburgh*, and other Cities in the more northern Parts of the World, were punished by the Wrath of Heaven in the great Devastations so frequently made there by dreadful Fires. But when we duly attend to the particular Circumstances of these terrible Events, the Wonder in great Measure ceases. The Buildings here, consisting chiefly of Wood abounding with an oily sulphureous Principle or Rosin, are composed of very combustible Materials. In these northern Climes too, the Days in Summer being very long and the Nights proportionally short, the Heat becomes excessively great in the inland Countries, and far exceeding even that of the torrid Zone in many Parts of the Earth <sup>a</sup>. Inasmuch that both Houses and large Tracts of dry Land are sometimes actually set on Fire and consumed by the sole Force of the Sun's Heat <sup>b</sup>. These Particulars being considered, we are no

<sup>a</sup> The absolute Heat at *Petersburgh*, lying in about 60°, of north Latitude; is surprising: Farenheit's Thermometer having sometimes stood there at 98°. Whereas in twice crossing the Line, near the Coasts of south *America*, the same Kind of Thermometer never rose higher than 76°. Lord *Anson's* Voyage round the World.

<sup>b</sup> The *Czar's* chief Physician told Mr. *Boyle*, that in the Year 1664. large Tracts of dry Land in *Russia* were set on Fire and miserably wasted by the Heat of the Sun: And that the like Accident happened at a Place called *Bearhaven* in *Norway*, where, beside Tracts of dry Ground, several timber or wood Houses were set on Fire and consumed by the great Heat and Drought.

longer surprized, that Fires should so frequently happen in these Parts of the World, and burn with such Rapidity and Violence.

Vast Swarms of Locusts, of Muscatos, of Frogs, and other troublesome and noxious Insects, found on different Parts of the Globe, are oftentimes the natural Productions of the Place, and not Judgments on the Inhabitants<sup>a</sup>.

A Plague or Pestilence, which in *England* is reckoned a divine Scourge, in *Turkey*, in *Egypt*, and some other hot Countries, is Endemial, and is known to arise from the Heat and Moisture, from the putrid Vapours and Exhalations of the

<sup>a</sup> The frequent Destruction made by immense Swarms of Locusts in some particular Parts of the World, by devouring all Kinds of Vegetables, and thereby occasioning great Scarcity and Want, is too well known to need further mention. The Stench and Infection of the Air by their Putrefaction when dead, have sometimes given Rise to pestilential Diseases. There is a considerable Country on the Coast of *Terra Firma*, though excellent for Sugar Plantations, rendered almost uninhabitable by the Muscatos; the Slaves being so tormented with them, that it is impossible for them to follow their Labor. This Place is thence called the *Muscato Shore*, and is a dry sandy Soil, in which these noxious Vermin are only found. In *Lapland* and other northern Countries, the Muscatos or Flies, in summer Time, are so very numerous and insufferable, that the *Swedish* Soldiers here, who are greatly used to all Kinds of Hardship, are obliged to wrap up their Faces, or cover them with Tar; And the *Laplanders* and *Rain-Deer*, in this Season, are drove, by these furious Insects, from their Habitations to seek shelter on the Coasts of the Ocean. *Figure de la Terre, par Mons. Maupertuis.*

*Balaffore* and other low flat Places in the Bay of *Bengal*, after Inundations, to which they are very liable, are greatly infested with Frogs; and the endemial pestilential Fevers, which rage at these Seasons, are supposed chiefly owing to the noisom Effluvia of these putrefied dead Insects. *Holland*, from a like Situation, would probably be subject to the same Evils, were it not for the Storks, that devour the Frogs in such Abundance.

Country,



Country, and People that die there of this Disease, are not supposed to die of any very uncommon or extraordinary Death.

Thunder and Lightning, Vulcanos and Earthquakes, from the particular local Constitution of the Earth and Atmosphere, may be considered as being in a Manner natural to some Countries: and are owing to vast Quantities of Iron, Sulphur, Pyrites, and Naphtha, producing violent Fermentations and Explosions in the Bowels of the Earth, and filling the Air with their sulphureous inflammable Vapors. Thus a Composition of the Filings of Iron, Sulphur, and Water, mixt together cold in Form of a stiff Paste, and buried under Ground, will in a short Time ferment, excite great Heat, produce a vast Quantity of clastic explosive Air and Vapors, make the Earth tremble, heave and rent, and, at length, burst forth into Flames, with a prodigious explosive Force, and fulminating Noise, producing a true Earthquake or Vulcano<sup>a</sup>: which will be more or less violent and of greater or less Extent, according to the different Quantity of the Materials and their different Depth within the Ground. In like Manner the Pyrites, which are a Composition of Iron, Sulphur, and the fossil Acid of the Earth, when exposed in a pretty large Quantity to the Air and Moisture, either above or below Ground, ferment, grow very hot, fume, take Fire, and, if confined, explode with great Violence and a thundering Noise.

<sup>a</sup> Sub pedibus mugire solum, & juga alta moveri.

The

The inflammable sulphureous Vapors exhaled from these Kinds of fossil Bodies; as also those arising from many other Substances greatly abounding with a sulphureous Principle (as the Ores of Metals and Semimetals, Beds of Bitumen and Naphtha, burning Fewel, the inflammable sulphureous Earth of Morasses, the oily Parts of Animals and Vegetables, &c.) naturally contain a great deal of Fire, attract one another, and being condensed by the Cold in the superior Region of the Air, form sulphureous Electric Clouds. These being carried about by the Winds, and striking against watery Non-electric Clouds, flash into them with a fulminating Noise, and produce Thunder and Lightning.

From these Reasonings and Experiments, you see, it clearly appears, that Thunder and Lightning, Vulcanos and Earthquakes, have a pretty near Affinity, and are not ordinarily to be looked upon as Prodigies and Judgments, but as the natural Productions of a Combination of certain natural Bodies. They happen but seldom indeed, particularly I mean Earthquakes happen but seldom in any great Degree, especially in our Parts, and therefore when they do happen, they are the more surprizing and apt to be thought supernatural, as Comets were formerly thought, and to be sent as Plagues and Punishments. But whenever they do thus happen in the ordinary natural Way, tho' they bring much Evil along with them, yet they are preventive of greater,

That

That they bring much Evil along with them, we have many woeful Proofs. The present ragged and broken Surface of the Globe is supposed, by some Philosophers, to be in great Measure owing to Earthquakes. Indeed if such dreadful Havock hath been lately made in the Earth only in the Space of one or two Months, what may we imagine to have happened in a Course of five or six thousand Years? Islands torn from the Continents — Rocks and Mountains split asunder, or removed from their former Situation — Whole Islands carried down into the Deep, and sometimes new Islands and immense Rocks raised up from the Bottom of the Ocean — Springs and Rivers choaked up and destroyed, or forced to find out new Beds and Channels — Towns, Cities, Territories swallowed up by the Earth, or immersed in the Sea: These are some of the astonishing and dreadful Effects of Earthquakes. *Greece* had two Cities, *Helice* and *Buris*, swallowed up by the Sea. *Asia Minor* lost twelve Cities by the same Disaster. All the Islands and Coasts of the *Mediterranean*, and indeed Islands and Sea Coasts in general, have commonly been very subject to Earthquakes, as well as to burning Mountains. *Sicily* and the Coast of *Campania* in *Italy* have suffered particular Ravages both these Ways. *Herculaneum*, a City about six Miles from *Naples*, was sunk and ingulphed by an Earthquake in the Time of *Nero*. It lies buried not very deep under its Ruins to this Day, and many curious Pieces of Antiquity have lately been dug out of it. *Catanea* in *Sicily*, we may say,

say, within our own Memory, was totally destroyed, and all its Inhabitants, eighteen thousand Souls, went down alive into the Pit: And *Salerno*, still fewer Years ago, suffered almost the same Fate.

Mountainous Places and broken rocky Lands, bordering on the Sea Coast or in Islands, have always been remarked to be the most liable to these Disasters of Earthquakes, as well as to Vulcanos. Mountains are the Repositories of all Kinds of Fossils, Metals and Minerals, and must contain in their Bowels proper Matter for the Formation of Earthquakes and Vulcanos. Through the long Course of the *Andes* in south *America*, the greatest Range of Mountains in the World, particularly in the Province of *Quito*<sup>a</sup>, Earthquakes, as well as burning Mountains, are most frequent, and most dreadful. There was a melancholy Instance of this about nine Years ago in the Destruction of the Port of *Callao*, and the City of *Lima*, on that Coast. Islands in general may be justly considered as Sea Mountains. All the *American* Islands, as well as the mountainous Coast of *Peru* and *Chili* above-mentioned, are very subject to Earthquakes, and abound with Vulcanos. *Jamaica* in particular hath suffered so often and so much this Way, that it may be called the Island of Earthquakes<sup>b</sup>.

a We had Accounts last Week in the public Papers, that the City of *Quito* and a considerable Territory round about it, were entirely devoured by an Earthquake.

b The Reason why Islands, Sea Coasts, and Sea-port Towns are more liable to Earthquakes and Vulcanos, than Continents and inland Countries, may be this. Water is a necessary Ingredient

But to come nearer Home and to the present Time; *Lisbon*, unfortunate, unhappy *Lisbon*, that chiefly gave Occasion to my present Subject, how dreadful have been Her Sufferings! We may say of Her, as the Prophet doth of *Tyre*; *"The City of Confusion is broken down: Every House is shut up, that no Man may come therein. The new Wine mourneth, the Vine languisheth, all the merry hearted do sigh. In the City is left Desolation, and the Gate is smitten with Destruction.* So that, as the same Prophet speaks in the next Chapter, *of a City She is made an Heap, of a defenced City a Ruin*, is utterly ruined and subverted. If any Thing can equal Her miserable Fate, it is the Ruin of the two large and capital Cities of *Fez* and *Mequenez* in the Kingdom of *Morocco*.

Indeed it seems to me, that large Towns and Cities have been more visited with Earthquakes, than any other Places. Whether it be, that such Towns and Cities are generally Sea-ports, and situated at the Mouths of Rivers, or on a maritime Coast, Places remarkably obnoxious to Earthquakes, as hath been already observed — Or whether the Buildings and close Pavements in great Towns and Cities may hinder the pent-

dient to make the Acid of the Sulphur act upon the Iron, and produce the Fermentation and Explosion before mentioned. Hence these Phænomena generally happen after high Tides, great Floods, and Rains, and more frequently in the Winter than Summer, as the *French* Gentlemen sent to *Peru* to measure a Degree of Latitude observed more particularly of *Vulcanos* there. *Figure de la Terre, par Mons. Bouguer.*

a *Isaiah* 24.

up explosive Vapors from evaporating and spending their Force through the Surface of the Earth there, though they cannot make such Resistance, as to restrain or overcome the Power of these compressed elastic Vapors, and therefore are shocked and subverted: whilst the neighbouring Places, that are not built upon, allow some Sort of Vent through the Pores and Crannies of the Earth, and so fare better: Not to mention, that such Places though equally shook and agitated, cannot shew such Marks of the Shock, nor so easily be laid in ruinous Heaps, as large and lofty Buildings, whose Tops begin to totter upon the least Shock of their Foundation<sup>a</sup> — Or lastly, whether supposing Earthquakes to be divine Judgments, as oftentimes, no doubt, they are, Cities may be most visited, as being generally most wicked. For Cities abound most with Wealth, the Means of Luxury, Vice, and Corruption; and commonly most indulge in them. Beside that Cities are Places of Resort for all the Scum of the Land: The Idle, the Vagrant, the Pick-pocket, Thieves, Whores,

<sup>a</sup> It is observable, that those Towns and Parts of Towns which stood on Rocks always escaped with the least Damage; and those, on the contrary, that stood on common Earth or sandy gravelly Soils suffered most. The Rocks were able to resist the Force of the Shock, or gave Vent to the Matter of the Earthquake, by some natural Caverns, or violent Rents and Openings. But other loose Soils, being built upon, were neither able to resist, nor give sufficient Vent, without being subverted. This was the very Case at *Lisbon*, as well as many other Places. The Key which stood on the level Beach or Sand was the only Place that sunk: and a Gentleman from *Lisbon* assured me, there were then sixty Feet of Water upon it. See *Philos. Transf.* No. 209.

and

and Beggars as naturally flocking to such Places, as Eagles do to a Carcass — Whatever the Cause may be, it seems to me indisputable, that Cities, especially those situated upon the Mouths of large Rivers and Sea Coasts, have most severely felt this Sort of Calamity.

But, I say, notwithstanding all the Evil that Earthquakes and Vulcanos are *naturally* productive of, they are preventive of greater. All Parts of Nature, animate and inanimate, are so wisely framed and constituted, as to be able, by their own innate Powers, Operations, and established Rules of OEconomy, to resist to a considerable Degree, or elude external Injuries and Violence, and preserve themselves from Destruction and Ruin. The Earth when shocked by an Earthquake rather receives than does an Injury; she is as it were in Pain and Travel; she is torn in her Bowels, and wants only to disgorge the peccant Matter, to discharge herself of that Wind, and Fire, and Vapor, that torture and throw her into Convulsions, and threaten her with Destruction. A Village, a Town, a City, or small Territory may sometimes be destroyed by these violent Throws and Convulsions. In the late unhappy Case at *Lisbon*, 'tis said, sixty thousand, perhaps one fourth of the Inhabitants, perished by these tremendous Shocks. But if the explosive Matter of Earthquakes did not every now and then, at different Times, discharge itself in smaller Portions, by these local Eruptions, but were retained and collected in large Quantities at great Depths, its Force would become so

enormous and irresistible, that the whole Globe of the Earth, like a Shell or Bomb full of Powder, would be split to the Centre, would be burst and torn to Pieces, and all the Inhabitants perish in the bottomless Gulphs<sup>a</sup>.

In like Manner burning Mountains or Vulcanos, however terrible and sometimes destructive to the neighbouring Inhabitants, are yet of great Service to the Place in general. By their Means Earthquakes are both fewer and milder: The Matter of them here meeting with a ready Vent through these Spiracles, and preventing the fatal Effects that a large Collection of it would otherwise produce. Many Places much annoyed with Earthquakes, by the bursting out of Vulcanos, have in a Manner been quite freed from them, as the Islands of *Monserat* and *St. Christopher* in the *West Indies*.

The same Reasoning holds good with Respect to many other Things, which, though partially Evil, are for the general Good, and instead of being Tokens of God's Anger, are Proofs of his Wisdom and Kindness. Lightning and Thunder, high Winds and Storms, whatever Damage they may now and then cause to Houses and Buildings, to Ships and Mariners, are upon the whole of Benefit to the World, and serve

<sup>a</sup> Concerning the stupendous Force of this explosive Matter of Earthquakes, the same with which is not unfrequently met with in Mines, See *Philos. Transf.* N<sup>o</sup>. 136, and 318. The Power of Gun-Powder is entirely owing to the confined elastic Air and Vapours generated or separated from the Ingredients by the Fire and expanded by the Heat,



to purge and purify the Air and Waters, and hinder them from growing stagnant, putrid, and poisonous to Men and Creatures.

Many of the Disasters and Calamities then, that happen to Men in this World, arise, you see, from the present Constitution of Things, and not from any Anger of the Deity. They are natural Effects of natural Causes, and though partial Evil, are universal Good. There may be *a great and strong Wind<sup>a</sup>, that shall rent the Mountains and break in Pieces the Rocks, and yet the Lord not be in the Wind: And after the Wind, an Earthquake, and yet the Lord not be in the Earthquake: And after the Earthquake a Fire, and yet the Lord not be in the Fire.*

Not but God sometimes, oftentimes overrules, or suspends, these Powers of Nature, and turneth and disposeth them, as seemeth best to his godly Wisdom: Sometimes exerting immediate Acts of Omnipotence, and sometimes turning even natural Accidents into Menaces and divine Judgments. Thus the Scripture hath recorded several Earthquakes, as Instances of God's particular Vengeance upon Sinners. <sup>b</sup> *Sodom and Gomorrha, and the Cities about them, giving themselves over to Fornication, and going after strange Flesh, libidinous unnatural Mixtures, are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire.* In this Judgment, it is most probable, that God did not exert immediate Acts of his Omnipotence, but made use of natural Means, and as it were Things on the Spot,

<sup>a</sup> 1 Kings 19.      <sup>b</sup> Jude V. 7.

for the Accomplishment of his Purposes. The Country about *Sodom* and *Gomorrba* abounds with Naphtha and bituminous inflammable Matter. This, we may suppose, without impeaching the Miracle or Judgment, God made use of when *He rained upon them Brimstone and Fire, from Heaven.* The bituminous Matter kindling in the Earth by the divine Command, caused a dreadful Earthquake, with great Eruptions of Fire. *The Smoke went up from it, like the Smoke of a Furnace*<sup>a</sup>. The Ground being shook, rent and hollowed underneath, all the Surface fell in: And the Waters at the same Time rushing out, formed a great Lake or Sea, called the Lake of *Asphaltus*, or dead Sea, from the bituminous, and noxious Quality of its Waters, which remains to this Day.

Another Earthquake recorded in Scripture as a Judgment, was that, which caused the Death of *Corah*, and all his Company. *Corah* and his Party were *Levites*: *Dathan* and *Abiram* were Descendants of *Reuben*, *Israel's* First-born. They murmured against *Moses*, and against *Aaron*, for *Taking too much upon them*, for assuming the Priesthood and Supremacy to themselves, and excluding them, who, they thought, were equally entitled to the Priesthood, as being *Levites*, and to the Supremacy as being *Reubenites*. In short, they prophanelly invaded the Priest's Office, now appropriated by the divine Command to the House of *Aaron*, and through a Pretence of remonstrating against his Ministers,

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 19. 28.

broke out into Rebellion against God. *Moses* put the Truth of his being directed herein by God, upon the following Event, and by a Prophetick Spirit said: *“If these Men die the common Death of All Men, or if they be visited after the Visitation of All Men, then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new Thing, and the Earth open her Mouth, and swallow them up, with All that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the Pit, then shall ye understand, that these Men have provoked the Lord. And while He yet spake, the Ground clave asunder, that was under them, and the Earth opened her Mouth, and swallowed them up, and their Houses, and All the Men that appertained to Corah, and all their Goods: They All went down alive into the Pit, and the Earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the Congregation. And All Israel, that were round about them, fled at the Cry of them: Fearing, lest the Earth should swallow up them also. — And there came a Fire from the Lord, and consumed the two hundred and fifty Men, that offered Incense.*

Here again we observe, that sulphureous Blasts, or a deadly consuming Fire accompanied this Earthquake, sulphureous Fire and explosive Vapours being the common Matter of all Earthquakes. — Next Day the Plague began, and so fatal was it, that *fourteen thousand seven hundred* died of it, beside them that died about the Matter of Corah.

This of Plague or Pestilence also is no uncommon Circumstance attending an Earthquake in the natural Way<sup>a</sup>. The sulphureous and arsenical Vapours or Effluvia, which are raised by Fire in a greater or less Quantity from the Ores of almost all Metals and Semimetals, are extremely noxious. The pestilential Fever at *Rouen* in *Normandy* about two Years ago seemed justly supposed to be owing to a thick sulphureous Fog. All Tradesmen, that work much in Smelting Ores, in Quicksilver, and Sulphur, are sickly, and generally short lived. Damps in Mines and Coal Pits are often instant Death: No wonder then that the vast Quantities of these Vapours, issuing out of the Bowels of the Earth at an Earthquake, should oftentimes produce Sickness and Death. *Seneca* has observed<sup>b</sup>, that a Plague was the common Consequence of an Earthquake, and that a Flock of six hundred Sheep died at that of *Herculaneum*. Their Deaths were owing, as he justly supposes, to poisonous Vapours, and tainted Waters, bursting out from the Earth; which infecting the Herbage, and Air near the Ground, affect the grazing Cattle first and most, as sucking in the very Poison with their Breath and Food<sup>c</sup>: And would soon affect

<sup>a</sup> In most of the Earthquakes we have any particular Accounts of, I find great Sickness and Mortalities generally were the Consequences; occasioned partly by the infected Air, and partly by the bad Diet, bad Lodging, and Poverty that ensued.

<sup>b</sup> *Natur. Quæst.* l. 6.

<sup>c</sup> At *Harleck* in *Mereoneth-shire*, about once a Week, for many Months together, in the night Time, there hovered about the Surface of the Earth a luminous fiery Vapour of so destructive and deleterious a Nature, that, beside firing a great many Hay Ricks,

Men too, if the Malignity was not dispersed by Winds, or guarded against by good Fires, dry Food, and wholesome Houses. And even in our own northern Climate, Earthquakes are recorded to have happened, particularly one in *England* in 1048, that were attended with great Mortality among the Cattle, and a Kind of running sulphureous Fire, *Wild Fire* it is called, that at the same Time did vast Damage to the Corn and Fruit.

We have not heard, that this Misfortune of Pestilence hath also befallen the poor Inhabitants of *Lisbon*. But if it be true, that one Misfortune seldom comes alone, we may justly say so in the present Case, and apply the Words of the Prophet: *“Fear, and the Pit, and the Snare are upon thee, O Inhabitant of the Earth! And it shall come to pass, that he, who fleeth from the Noise of the Fear, shall fall into the Pit: And he, that escapeth the Pit, shall be taken by the Snare. For the Windows from on high are open, and the Foundations of the Earth do shake.* — First the Stones and Buildings, by the dreadful Concussions, being thrown down, either crush the Inhabitants in their Houses, or dash out their Brains in the Streets. At the same Time the Earth *opens her ponderous marble Jaws*, and swallows up Numbers alive. Flying from these Deaths on Land, the Bellowing Ocean meets

Ricks, it poisoned the Grass wherever it came in such Manner, that all the Horses, Cows, Sheep, Goats, Hogs &c. that eat of it immediately died.

a *Isaiah 24.*

D

them;

them, and though then at low Water and retired into his inward Channels, heaves in a Body of Waters, that threatens to deluge the whole Country — If they still escape, the Fires beset them, scattered up and down the City by cursed Incendiares, whose Safety consisted in the publick Wreck: The Fires, I say, beset them; and a general Conflagration completes the wretched Scene. *Completes* do I say? No: Escaped all these, two most dreadful Evils may still remain for them, Pestilence and Famine. Brisk Winds, and the cold Season of the Year may prevent the former. But we have already Accounts, that the latter rages among them; Hundreds, and thousands being driven into the Fields, without Meat or Drink or Money or Utensils, many almost without Cloaths; their Corn mostly spoilt and their Mills destroyed. — It was a noble Charity in this Nation, and what every private compassionate Heart must approve of, that of the King and Parliaments sending 100,000*l*, or the Value of it in Corn, and Bread, and Flesh, and Cloathing, and Materials and Implements for Building, and other Necessaries. In this our King and Senators acted as Citizens of the World, as well as Christians, and laying aside all the little Prejudices of Sect or Party, Nation, Religion, or Country, relieved the distressed from the common Principles of Humanity, as well as being *of the Household of Faith*. The Charity was great, as to the Amount of it, but still greater, by the Seasonableness and Dispatch of it: What is given quickly, being a  
Sign

Sign that it is given willingly: Beside, that the Sufferers must have starved by Delay.

In Times of such general Confusion and Calamity, we see how little avail Wealth or Riches, Distinctions or Titles, the Earthquake ravages every where alike: Command and Obedience are at an End: and all Calls to order disregarded. The louder Calls of Fear and Self-Preservation prevail: Every Man is for himself, and the King and the Beggar are almost upon the same level. *\* As with the People, so with the Priest: As with the Servant, so with his Master: As with the Maid, so with her Mistress: As with the Buyer, so with the Seller: As with the Borrower, so with the Lender: As with the Giver of Usury, so with the Taker of Usury.* The King, that hardly used to put his Foot on the bare Ground, that at a Word, a Look, had thousands at his Nod, had Courtiers, and Guards, and Soldiers, and Horses, and Mules, and Coaches, and every Thing to attend him, now sat almost naked, *like Job*, stripped of All, *in the Ashes*: Sat neglected by himself for some Hours, stunned and confounded amidst the general Dismay, and could get no Body to come to him, and convey him off from the impending Ruin. And when at last, *he escaped for his Life*, he was forced to abide in Tents, *and found no City to dwell in*, a Mock-Prince, rather than a King, being destitute in a Manner of every Thing, without Subjects, without Servants, without Cloaths, without House, without Money, without Bread.

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 24.

As the loftiest Buildings suffered most, and fell soonest by the Shocks: So was it in some Sort with the highest Orders of men. Royalty is most helpless, when it most stands in need of Help: And having so little been accustomed to use its own Legs, is ill provided to shift for itself, when every Body is running away from it.

To the other great Calamities before-mentioned there needs be but one more added to complete their Destruction, and that is the Sword. An Evil always to be apprehended, either from the Invasion of neighbouring Princes, or the Defection of faithless Subjects, at a Time of such general Calamity, when a Nation could make but feeble Resistance, already half conquered by the furious Elements: And more especially to be apprehended in a Nation, not *rich in Men or a fertile Soil*, where all the Wealth and Strength of the Kingdom was in a Manner accumulated in the Capital, and by the Ruin of that Capital all their main Resources of Wealth and Strength cut off. Their next Neighbour indeed hath shewed himself inclined rather to be a Protector than an Invader. And it is well, that his whole Kingdom intervenes as a Barrier to another Nation, who are governed more by their Interest, or Ambition, than by Amity, Compassion, or publick Faith; and who might have been very apt to have taken Advantage of this Distress of their Neighbours. In such a Case the *Portuguese* might say, as the old *Britons* did upon the Invasion of the *Picts* and *Scots*:

\* *The*



<sup>a</sup> *The Enemy drives us to the Sea, and the Sea drives us back again upon the Enemy: And between these two Kinds of Death we are All overwhelmed and destroyed.*

But I am afraid, you have almost lost Sight of the Point we had in view; which was an Account of several Earthquakes recorded in Scripture, as Judgments upon some People, and for a Warning and Terror to others.

Indeed, after all our natural Explications, wherever an Earthquake happens, it never fails to strike us with a most awful Impression of the divine Majesty; no Shock, like this, being able to give us such tremendous Proofs of God's Power and Terror. And therefore we find that the Lord himself is described, as attended with Clouds and Darknes, with Lightning and Thunder, and Earthquakes, which may be called the Artillery of Heaven, in order to spread Terror before Him, whenever He comes to visit the Earth. Thus when the Lord appeared on Mount *Sinai* to give the Law, it is said, <sup>b</sup> *there were Thunders and Lightnings, and a thick Cloud upon the Mount, and Sinai was altogether on a Smoke, because the Lord descended on it in a Fire: And the Smoke thereof went up, as the Smoke of a Furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly. And so terrible was the Sight, that Moses, though the Minister of God, and familiarised to the divine Presence, said, I exceedingly fear and quake.* The holy Psalmist thus describes the Descent of the Lord in his Anger. <sup>c</sup> *The Earth trembled*

<sup>a</sup> *Camden.*    <sup>b</sup> *Exod. 19.*    <sup>c</sup> *Pf. 18. Heb. 12.*

*and*

*and quaked: the very Foundations also of the Hills shook, and were removed, because He was wroth. There went a Smoke out in his Presence, and a Consuming Fire out of his Mouth, so that Coals were kindled at it. He bowed the Heavens also, and came down, and it was dark under his Feet. He rode upon the Cherubims, and did fly: He came flying upon the Wings of the Wind. He made Darkness his secret Place, his Pavilion round about Him, with dark Water, and thick Clouds to cover Him. At the Brightness of his Presence, his Clouds removed, hail Stones, and Coals of Fire. The Lord also thundred out of Heaven, and the Highest gave his Thunder, hail Stones, and Coals of Fire. He sent out his arrows, and scattered them: He cast forth his Lightnings, and destroyed them. The Springs of Waters were seen, and the Foundations of the Round World were discovered at thy chiding, O Lord, at the Blasting of the Breath of thy Displeasure.*

This, stripped of all its Poetical Imagery, which is extremely grand and beautiful, is only a Description of an Earthquake, at the Descent of the Lord, with all its dreadful Concomitants, Clouds, Darkness, Thunder, Lightning, Fire, Flood, Openings of the Earth in large Chasms, and noxious deadly Blasts and Vapours. — Du-

a Heathens expressed their Notions of the angry Deity in much the same Terms.

Cœlo Tonantem credidimus Jovem

Regnare: ————— Hor. Od. 5. l. 3.

————— neque

Per nostrum patimur scelus

Iracunda Jovem ponere fulmina. Hor. Od. 4. l. 1.

ring

ring the late Convulsions of the Earth, we had several Instances in different Parts of the World, of Lakes and Rivers being suddenly dried up, and as suddenly filled again with an Inundation of Water. The Psalmist seems to ascribe the sudden drying up of the *Red Sea*, and the River *Jordan* to the same Cause. <sup>a</sup> *What aileth thee, O thou Sea, that thou fleddest, and thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye Mountains, that ye skipped like Rams, and ye little Hills, like young Sheep? Tremble, thou Earth, at the Presence of the Lord.* — When the Son of God was crucified, much the same Phænomena happened, as at the Descent of the Lord. *The Sun was darkened, or as the <sup>b</sup> Prophet says, the Sun was ashamed, and hid away his Face from beholding so foul a Deed: <sup>c</sup> The Vail of the Temple was rent in twain from the Top to the Bottom. And the Earth did quake, and the Rocks rent, and the Graves were opened; and many Bodies of Saints, which slept, arose, and came out of their Graves.*

Graves or Tombs of the Jews were often hewn out of the Rocks, as you may see by that of *Joseph of Arimathea*, which he had dug out of the Rock for himself, wherein he deposited the Body of *Jesus*: The Entrance into which Sepulchre or Grave was closed up by a huge Stone, or large Piece of Rock. There is a particular Propriety therefore in saying, *after the Rocks were rent, the Graves were opened*; the Latter being a Consequence of the Former. The Rocks being split asunder by the Earthquake, of Course

a Ps. 114.

b Is. 24.

c Matt. 27.

the Tombs hewn in those Rocks, were opened, and Egress thereby made for the Bodies contained in them. — All Nature seemed to suffer with the Saviour of the World. The Shock made a very awful Impression, as God, no doubt, intended it should, upon the Hearts of the Beholders, who, before this, little thought whom they had crucified. *When the Centurion, and they, that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the Earthquake, and those Things that were done; they feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God:* Justly accounting such dreadful Appearances at such a critical Instant to be manifest Indications of God's Regard for the Sufferer, and of his Displeasure against those, that made Him suffer. There was also a great Earthquake at the Resurrection of the Son of God. *For the Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and came, and rolled back the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre.* The Soldiers upon watch were so much affected, *that they shaked with fear, and became as dead Men.*

From these Accounts it appears, that Earthquakes, particularly under the Jewish Theocracy, were oftentimes the immediate Acts of God, or Effects of his Presence; and were designed as Judgments and Threatenings, as Punishments upon some, and for a Terror and Warning to others.

The World has been apt to run into two Extremes, which I think equally wrong, with Regard to their Opinions upon this Subject. Some are for accounting for every Thing by natural Means,

Means, and thereby would exclude God, and his Providence. And some are always for having Recourse to Curfes and Judgments, and are fancying and finding out some extraordinary Wickedness, as a Cause for every Calamity or Accident. But I hold it equally wrong, to think that no Disasters or Calamities are Judgments, and that All are. For as to the first Opinion: Suppose an Event may seemingly be well enough accounted for in a natural Way, yet this must not exclude the Interposition of Providence. God, when He established the Laws of Nature, never put them out of his own Hands — never gave them a Power to act independently of Himself: After all the subtle Disquisitions of the Philosophers employed in Search of a Chain of secondary or subordinate Causes, the great primary ones of Gravity, Attraction, &c. can only be resolved into the immediate Influence of the great Creator and Governor of the Universe. Were this Influence of the Deity, which necessarily supports and actuates the World, withdrawn, all the Operations of this wonderful Frame and Mechanism we call Nature, like those of a great complicated Machine when its moving Principle, the Element of Water, Air, or Fire is intercepted, would be entirely at a stand. Nature itself therefore is nothing but the Power of God exerted in the Cause, Operation, and Production of Things in one constant, regular, uniform Manner. And though upon some Occasions we may distinguish between God and Nature, between what is the ordinary and what

is the extraordinary Work of Providence, yet in many Instances it is impossible for us to make this Distinction. The Event, in Appearance, may have been brought about by natural Means, and yet the Hand of God might extraordinarily interpose and influence those Means, might give them their particular Power, Direction, or Application, and make them break out in such a critical Manner, Time, and Place. Infidels are for exploding the Miracle, when they can find natural Agents made use of in the Production of it<sup>a</sup>: Not considering, that God seldom exerts immediate Acts of his Omnipotence — that He chuses to do every Thing by natural Means or the Operation of second Causes, when they can be made to answer his Purpose; the Miracle being sufficiently evinced by the Time and Manner of applying these natural Agents, and by the extraordinary Effects proceeding from them.

On the other Hand, I think it wrong to judge always so hardly of other People's Misfortunes, as to pronounce every Accident a Curse, every Calamity a Judgment, and to conclude, that the greatest Sufferers in this World, are therefore the greatest of all Sinners. For, as I proposed secondly,

<sup>a</sup> *Naaman the Syrian* refused to wash seven Times in the River *Jordan* in order to be cured of his Leprosy. He imagined the Prophet would only have moved his Hand over the Place, and immediately have pronounced Him cured, without using any subordinate Means: If such second Means were to be used, He thought He might as well use the Rivers of his own Country, which He said were better than all the Waters of *Israel*.  
2 Kings 4.

Those

Those who have as yet suffered no such Calamity, may be equally Objects of God's Anger — may be in as dangerous, or a worse Condition. *I tell you, except ye Repent, ye shall All likewise perish.*

Our Saviour doth not deny, but that these *Galileans*, who suffered such Things, might suffer justly, and receive the due Reward of their Deserts. But He says, they were no greater Sinners, than those that had not suffered. If Judgment had overtaken Some, it would soon overtake the Rest, if they did not escape it by Repentance. *I tell you, except ye Repent, ye shall All likewise perish.* — This afterwards proved to be the miserable Case of the People our Lord spoke to. They were All become guilty before God: They did not repent: And therefore they All very soon did perish: *And the Romans came and took away both their Place and Nation.* — What therefore though one Person, or City, or Nation, be visited with some very severe Affliction or Calamity? Others, that have hitherto escaped this Visitation, may be equally deserving of the same or a worse Fate, and may be standing on the Brink of Destruction themselves, while, negligent of their own Danger, they are cruelly insulting the Misfortunes of their poor unhappy Neighbours, and deluded by Self-Flattery into a vain Opinion of their own Innocence, are triumphing in an imaginary Security. Our Saviour tells the People of *Capernaum*, at a Time when they seemed to be in a very happy flourishing State, that it should fare better with *Sodom*

hereafter, than with them. \* *And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be brought down to Hell. For if the mighty Works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have repented, and thereby have remained unto this Day. But it shall be more Tolerable for the Land of Sodom, in the Day of Judgment, than for Thee.*

Those therefore, that have as yet suffered no such Calamities, may as much deserve them — may now be equally the Objects of God's Anger, and may soon become the Subjects of his Vengeance.

Instead then of *Judging* or *Condemning* those, who labour under any such Afflictions or Calamities, we should rather judge and condemn ourselves — *look well if there be any way of Wickedness in us, that Iniquity may not be our Ruin.* This would be making a right use, the very use our Saviour would have us make, of what we looked upon as divine Judgments, when we learn to take warning by other People's Misfortunes, and refrain from those Sins, which we imagined brought down the Curse of God upon them. *It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the Living God. He shall rain upon the wicked Fire and Brimstone, Storm and Tempest: This shall be their Portion to drink.* If we think there is *Wrath* gone out from the Lord, and that his Judgments are begun, let us with our Prayers and Repentance endeavour speedily to make an *Attonement*. Let us stand in the Gap between the

\* Matt. 11,



*Dead and the Living, that the Stroke may be stay-  
ed, and the Calamity spread no further. Let us  
remember, that at the Intercession of Abraham,  
God would have spared Sodom, if only Ten  
Righteous Persons could have been found in the  
City; And that therefore the Piety of a Few  
may prevent the Destruction of Many.*

As for those, who think such Calamities to  
be no Judgments, but merely natural Effects of  
natural Causes, let them learn from hence at  
least to consider, how short and uncertain their  
Continuance is here, and how vain it is to set up  
their Rest in this World, or *think that their  
Houses shall continue for ever, or their dwelling  
Places endure from one Generation to another.* For  
though some Countries may be more subject to  
Earthquakes, than others: No Land is free  
from them; they are felt from the Torrid to  
the Frigid Zone. This our Land hath frequent-  
ly been moved, and our Capital within these  
five Years hath been shook, twice shook, by an  
Earthquake — How sudden and surprizing is  
the Invasion of this terrible Evil! How dreadful  
and inevitable the Destruction! <sup>a</sup> Against other  
Kinds of Evil, we can in some Measure guard  
Ourselves. We can keep off an Enemy with-  
out by Walls and Ramparts. Or if He should  
enter the City, a few only of the most obnoxious  
are slaughtered: The Rest with their Houses  
and Goods are generally spared. From Tem-  
pests at Sea we can retire into Havens of Secu-  
rity. From Hardships on Land, from Wind,

<sup>a</sup> See *Senec. Natural. Quæst. l. 6.*

and

and Rain, and Hail, and Frost, and Snow, we have Houses to shelter us. When Lightning and Thunder threaten, we can take Refuge in deep Vaults, and subterranean Cells. A Fire or Conflagration, we can most of us with our Persons, if not with our Effects, flee from. In a Pestilence we can change the Climate, if we cannot by any Means stop the Rage of it. Many Evils we can foretell and provide against. But an Earthquake is an unforeseen, unavoidable, relentless, all-devouring Evil. No Wisdom can calculate its Approach, or say when, or where, or in what Manner it will spend itself. No Power can withstand its Force, no Speed or Sagacity escape the Reach of it. He, that shall go to save his Life, may lose it; and in endeavouring to run from Death, we may run directly into it.

How doth it surprise People in their Health and Strength, amidst their Pleasures, their Passions, their Follies, Vanities and Crimes! <sup>a</sup> *For when they shall say, Peace and Safety: Then sudden Destruction cometh upon them, as a Travail upon a Woman with Child, and they shall not escape.* <sup>b</sup> *As it was in the Days of Noah, they did eat, they drank, they married Wives, they were given in Marriage, that is, they lived in all Kinds of Riot, Festivity, and Pleasure, unto the very Day that Noah entred into the Ark, and the Flood came, and destroyed them All. — Or, as it was afterwards in the Days of Lot: They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted,*

<sup>a</sup> Theff. 5.      <sup>b</sup> Luke 17.

*they*

*they builded: They were wholly taken up with worldly Projects and Enjoyments, little thinking of the Fate approaching. But the same Morning that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained Fire and Brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them All.*

In short, whether Earthquakes be natural Effects of natural Causes, or preternatural Manifestations of divine Vengeance, they are extremely alarming in their Attack, and most dreadful in their Operation and Consequences: And never were more so, I believe, since the World began, than they have been of late; whether we consider their Violence or Degree, their Extent, or Duration. <sup>a</sup> — It is a Shock, that is enough to make the stoutest Heart to tremble — to make the Infidel and Atheist, those who made a Mock of God and Goodness, and worshipped only the Idols of their own Heart, *to make them cast their Idols of Silver, and their Idols of Gold to the Moles and to the Rats, to go into the Clefts of the Rocks, and into the Tops of the ragged Rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the Glory of*

<sup>a</sup> By Accounts hitherto received, it appears, that the Earthquakes have continued for the Space of near three Months, namely from the 1st of *November* to the last of *January*; and have been felt more or less during that Time in different Places, from *Iceland* almost to the Tropic of *Cancer*, and from the Kingdom of *Morocco* on the Continent of *Africa*, quite across the *Atlantic Ocean* to the Isles and Continent of *America*: A Course of about 4000 Miles from East to West, and more than 2000 from North to South: A superficial Extent of 8,000,000 Miles, which is about one twenty fifth Part of the whole Earth: For the Diameter of the Earth, 8000 Miles, being multiplied into its Periphery, 25000 Miles, gives the Content of the whole Surface of the Earth, 200,000,000 Miles: Of which the above Extent comprehended by the Earthquakes is a 25th Part.

*bis*

*his Majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the Earth.*<sup>a</sup>

The affrighted Inhabitants of *Lisbon*, and of many other Places, thought *the Lord was come to smite the Earth with a Curse*<sup>b</sup> — thought *the great and terrible Day of Judgment was at Hand, in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat: The Earth also and all the Works that are therein shall be burnt up.*<sup>c</sup>

Nor was it without Reason, that they entertained these Apprehensions: As there were Signs almost sufficient to make them expect that Catastrophe. For our Saviour has foretold; *that there shall be*<sup>d</sup> *Wars and Rumors of Wars, Nation shall rise against Nation, and great Earthquakes shall be in divers Places, and Famines, and Pestilences, and fearful Sight, the Sea and the Waves roaring; Mens Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those Things which are coming on the Earth: For the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken: That these shall be the Beginnings of Sorrows, and some of the previous Signs of his Coming. And though the Lord still delayeth his Coming, yet seeing*<sup>e</sup> *all these Things most certainly shall be dissolved, we know not how soon, what Manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness! Looking for, and hasting unto the coming of the Day of God!*

In such Shocks and Convulsions of Nature, *when*<sup>f</sup> *the Earth reels to and fro like a Drunkard, and*

<sup>a</sup> Isaiah 2.    <sup>b</sup> Malachi 4.    <sup>c</sup> 2 Ep. Peter 3.    <sup>d</sup> Luke 21.  
<sup>e</sup> 2 Ep. Peter 3.    <sup>f</sup> Isaiah 24.

*all her Foundations are out of Course*, when that which is the only firm Basis and Support of All, the Earth itself, fails us, and sinks away under our Feet, what must become of us in this dreadful Dissolution of Nature, if the God of Nature, if *the God of the whole Earth*, doth not reach out an helping Hand to save us, and snatch us from the Jaws, the flaming Jaws of the wide-gaping Earth! At this Time *God is our only Help and Strength: A very present Help in Trouble*. And if God be our Helper, we need not fear, <sup>a</sup> tho' the Earth be moved, and tho' the Hills be carried into the midst of the Sea. Tho' the Waters thereof rage and swell, and tho' the Mountains shake at the Tempest of the same. For when these *our Houses of Clay, our Earthly Tabernacles, are dissolved, He is able to receive us into everlasting Habitations*. If God be our Helper, it is of no Consequence, what becomes of the Body here for a while, or how its Separation from the Soul is effected. It matters not, whether a small Stone strikes me down dead, or a whole Mountain falls and covers me — whether I be buried three Feet, or three thousand under Ground. The same good God is all sufficient for me, and can raise me up from the lowest Pit: So that the *Deep shall give up her Dead, and the Earth shall no more cover her slain*.

To Conclude, Such fatal Catastrophes, the Overthrow of so many Towns and Cities, shew us, by woeful Experience shew us, that <sup>b</sup> *here*

<sup>a</sup> Psalm 46.

<sup>b</sup> Hebr. 13.

*we have no continuing City, and therefore that we should seek for One to come: That we should place our Interest and Affections in that Jerusalem, which is above, and is the Mother-City of us All: A City, which will for ever stand unmoved against all the Shocks of Time, and Tempest, and raging Elements: A City, which hath Eternal Foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God.*



*F I N I S.*



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