

An aerial photograph of a coastline, showing the dark blue ocean meeting a white sandy beach. The water's surface is textured with small waves and ripples. The land is mostly white sand, with some darker patches of vegetation or rocks visible.

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A FRUITFUL DIALOGUE CONCERNING THE END OF THE WORLD

WILLIAM PERKINS



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A Fruitful Dialogue
Concerning the End of the World
by William Perkins

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

Thomas Lord Sorroys of the Noble Order of the Garter, and of the
Majesties Honorable Council in the North

Right Honorable, this little treatise is the first fruit of the labor of
that great and reverend Master Perkins. Many years ago set out by

himself, and now (all his Works being to be put together) held fit to be joined with the rest; for though it were written in his young years, yet did these first fruits give assurance of that plentiful harvest of instruction and consolation which the Christian world has since reaped and received from the hand and mouth of that holy man. And in this very beginning did that blessed Spirit begin to show itself which afterward was so mighty and powerful in his tongue and pen. It was first written against covetous hoarding up of corn (among other sins) and was published in a year of dearth, the fitter therefore to be now again reprinted, seeing our sins have brought upon us a dearth, and (which is more lamentable) a dearth without scarcity.

Having perused and revised this treatise, I do humbly present it to your Lordship's reading, and from you to the world's view. The Honorable conceit your Lordship has vouchsafed to hold of me and my poor labors deserve at my hand more service and duty than yet I can perform to your Lordship. Till I can, give me leave thus to rank your Lordship among the religious and honorable patrons of Master Perkins's Works. Honor and all true happiness be multiplied upon your Lordship, from God the Father in Jesus Christ. Amen. June 4, 1609.

Your good Lordship's in Christ to be commanded,

W. Crashaw

To the Christian Reader

It is not unknown to you (Christian reader) that Satan is the deadly enemy of mankind, and that he goes about continually like a hunger-bitten lion, seeking whom he may devour. For this cause he uses infinite sleights and conveyances. He lays innumerable sins and

snare to entrap men and to bring them into eternal bondage under him. Of this point, you may have a plain view in the people of this land. Some of them neither regarding God's providence nor His judgments which He may send upon them for their sins stand aghast at the signs of heaven, at the conjunctions which ordinarily befall; and at this present, their minds are greatly occupied with foolish dreams of the year next ensuing. Some others (and they peradventure of a better sort) are professors of the gospel, and yet live securely, still weltering in their old corruptions and in very truth not returning to the Lord. For they think they have done their duty and are persuaded they are truly faithful if they do not oppose themselves against the gospel, but give an outward reverence to it and to the ministers of it. As the foolish virgins contented themselves with their lamps, never seeking for oil until it was too late, so these men content themselves with outward show and profession of godliness, never regarding to feel the power of it in themselves. Others there are which no doubt might receive profit by the word which they hear preached, but they cannot abide that the word of God should be applied aright to their consciences. For they themselves never think of anything but of the promises of the gospel, and cannot abide the threatenings of the Law. Yea, they like the ministry of the word when general doctrine is delivered, but if the two-edged sword of God's word pierce into the marrow of their bones and ransack the secret affections and lusts of the flesh, then they are forth of order and storm as furious and madmen. Again, some there are which partly by reason of tenderness of their own consciences, partly by their own ignorance in the word of God are ever anon disquieted and troubled with manifold temptations. In all these sorts of men, you may easily perceive how busy Satan is to deceive and be with men and to keep them still under his dominion, that his kingdom may not be diminished. Now, for the preventing of these evils, I have drawn this little treatise. Read it at your leisure and accept in good part this my endeavor. I trust by God's blessing it shall not be unprofitable to you.

W. P.

A Fruitful Dialogue between the Christian and the Worldling, Concerning the End of the World

Christian. Well overtaken honest man, how far travel you this way?

Worldling. As far as Cambridge, God willing.

Christ. What have you a load, I pray you?

Worldl. As good wheat as ever grew on God's earth. I would I had as good a price as I could wish for it.

Christ. Why would you so?

Worldl. Alas, I have great store of corn in my house at home, and I fear me it will rot upon the floors before I shall be able to sell it, because I cannot get almost anything for it. And they which offered me four marks for a quarter of wheat will not at this present give me four nobles, and scarce twenty shillings.

Christ. Truly I perceive that you are a hard-hearted man, void of any compassion to the poor. You have been one of those that have brought our country into such misery. And to you the prophet Amos speaks after this manner: "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the poor, that ye may make the needy of the land to fail, saying, 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, and make the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsify the weights by deceit? That we may buy the poor for

shoes: yea, and sell the refuse for wheat?' The Lord has sworn by the excellency of Jacob, 'Surely I will never forget any of thy works' " (Amos 8:5–7). And even now at this time God has been mindful of His promise, for He has frustrated the desires of all such covetous men as you are; and of His mercy He has heard the cries of the poor and has now given us plenty in this land.

Worldl. I marvel why you should speak against me, and all such as I am; I tell you plainly never any man spoke so much to me as you have done now. In the parish where I dwell I am taken for an honest man; I do no man any hurt. I use not to go to the alehouse and tavern, as many naughty men do; and I have a care to provide for myself and for my family, and I hope you will not condemn me for doing so.

Christ. Did you never hear so much before? Doubtless more is the pity, and now you shall hear more even of me. For all these hoarders up of corn (among which you are one) are as bad as the vilest rascals that be in the land. You say you do no man harm—do you not? And what good ever did you? You stop your ears at the cry of the poor and say to them, "Go your way you stranger; God send you stranger, meat, drink, and clothing," as Sirach says. You play the glutton in the gospel. You do not show so much favor to poor Lazarus crying to you for relief, as the dogs did which licked his sores [Luke 16:21]. The richer sort of you, if a man in any need come to beg or buy something for his sustenance, you cry out, "Away with this beggar. Go whip this slave. To the flocks with this stinking rascal. Stand further off for filling us with your vermin, you lousy wretch." Contrariwise, you which are the poorer sort say, "God help you poor man, I have not for you. I have a great charge and am a poor man myself. You would have corn of me, but you will not go to the price of it. Thus dear it is now; I cannot abate a farthing of it. Therefore, go your ways and trouble me not." And yet forsooth you do no man any harm; you would be sorry to be charged with any dishonesty. But in truth you are murderers, because many are famished by your hoarding up of corn. You are thieves, because you keep back that which belongs to

the poor upon a reasonable price. You are cursed idolators, because you set your hearts upon your riches. And in one word, you are very atheists in the world. You distrust God's providence; you love Him not; you fear Him not. You are stark rebels to God, bowing the knees of your hearts before the prince of the world, Satan [Colossians 2; 1 John 2]. You are the rich men of which it is said, "To be an impossible thing for them to enter into the kingdom of heaven: and except with speed you repent, you shall find it to be so" (Matthew 19).

Worldl. What mean you thus to rail on us? What do we but that we may lawfully do? I pray you for all your skill, is it not lawful for us to do with our own what we will? And to make as much of it as we can? You tell us (methinks) that we cannot be saved, but I will always put a good faith in God, say you what you will, and I hope to be saved as well as you.

Christ. It is a pitiful thing to see how the world takes many things for lawful which are flat against the Word of God. As for example, it is thought no fault to raise the market and to take for a man's own whatever he can get and to sell of any price; but this is reprov'd in the place of the prophet Amos before alleged, where he denounces God's judgments against them that wait for a time in which they make the measure small and the price great and take for their corn according to their covetous desires. You say you have a good faith to Godward, but alas you deceive yourself with a fantasy; for if you had true faith indeed, you would love God with all your heart, and loving God, you would also love your poor brother in whom God's image appears. And if you had a love of your brother, you would be full of pitiful compassion toward him. You would no more sing this song, "May I not take for my own what I can get?" Nay, you would rather do as the faithful did in the primitive church, who sold their possessions and took money and divided it to the poor as they had need. And as the churches of Macedonia did, which being in extreme poverty yet did send plentiful relief to the church at Jerusalem, far distant from them. And you would rather set yourself in misery and

poverty than your poor brother, for whom Christ has shed His blood —yea, you would be content to fare hardly and to pinch yourself, that you might relieve your neighbors. For as Paul says, love is bountiful, love seeks not her own, love suffers all things and endures them (2 Cor. 12:4, 5, 7).

Worldl. For mine own part, I could have been content to have sold my corn all the year though for less price, if other would have done so; but other men were so hard that they would stick for a penny. These men indeed were they that did raise the market. I took nothing but that which was offered me; and for my part, I hope God will have me excused.

Christ. The vilest miser and most covetous carle that is among you can say so much. And how can you look for any favor at God's hands, when by your own confession you have done as others have done and given consent to their wickedness? In Sodom and Gomorrah no doubt all were not drunkards and whoremasters. Some were civil and did abstain from this filthiness. Yet because they hated not these sins but approved the doers of them, nothing disliking their filthy behavior, as Lot did, whose righteous heart was vexed at their wickedness, behold God destroys them all alike; and Paul makes him to be a covetous man that favors and gives consent to the doings of a covetous man.

Worldl. How if I should have sold my corn cheap all this year, and nobody else, what good would this have done?

Christ. You should have done great good. For in regard of yourself, you should not have been guilty of the great oppression of this land, and your doings would have condemned the devilish practices of other men, and it might have pleased God by your example to have moved other men to deal more charitably in their bargaining. And the Scripture is plain that the good works and Christian conversation of any man "shining as lights before the eyes of the world, make many men to glorify God's name."

Worldl. You say like an honest man. And I am persuaded, if you will speak your conscience, you that have spoken so much against us cannot but speak something in our behalf. You see everywhere what enclosing there is, and you cannot be ignorant that gentlemen and landlords, they have large consciences. They make nothing of it to take great sins and to double and treble their rents. Now if the poor tenants shall not be suffered to sell their corn of a dearer price, how shall they be able to live? How shall they pay their fines and their yearly rents? I tell you plainly, if this may not be suffered, we shall have beggars enough within this land. Yea, even they which are not substantial men will shortly come to vile beggary.

Christ. Indeed I doubt not but these takers of rents and these inclosers, they are unmerciful men. Surely they eat the bread of oppression, and the very stones in the walks and the beams of their fair buildings cry to God for vengeance against them. But what then? They deal unjustly with you; they rob you. Will you deal therefore unjustly and rob others? It is very like that God does use them as means to chastise you, to make you know yourselves, to know God, and to depend upon His providence. You must not therefore in any wise use unlawful means to avoid this cross which God lays upon you by these wealthy oppressors, but rather you are to bear it with patience until such time as God shall deliver you, praying to God (if it be His will) to soften the hearts of these hard-hearted men, who regard nothing but their own pleasure and case.

Worldl. Yea, we should do so indeed. But who are they which do so? I would fain see you do so.

Christ. This is the manner of you all. You think these be dreams which I speak of, and that no man ever did them. But it is a most infallible truth that all they whoever have received the Spirit of God, their minds are so enlightened, their hearts and affections so reformed and brought in order that they cannot but do these things. But you are a worldly, carnal man; you can shift in the world and make a bargain for your own advantage. But as for the will of God in

His Word and the performance of it, it seems foolishness to you. You know not the meaning and the reason of it. To let this pass, I marvel why you dare travel abroad from your own house. You seem to be sick and very low brought with sickness, and in my judgment you hazard your life. You do not well; you have small care of yourself.

Worldl. I am brought low indeed, but (I thank God) I have no sickness that I can tell of.

Christ. What is the matter then I pray you, if a man may be so bold as to enquire of you?

Worldl. As I told you, I have great store of corn, and I hoped to have enriched myself by it. Well, on the sudden, the price of corn fell very much. I tell you, it struck me to the heart, and it made me at my wits' end. If I had not been a strong-hearted man and born out my grief, I had not been here now. For when I saw I should have a great loss and almost [be] undone, I had thought to have make away myself; but I hope I shall bear it out now, and because there is no other remedy I am content. Truly, the world is come to that pass; it will not last always.

Christ. You in your talk do verify the saying of St. Paul: "That they that will be rich, do fall into temptations and snares, and into many foolish and noisome lusts, which draw men into perdition and destruction." And he adds, "That the desire of money is the root of all evil, which while some lusted after, they erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"—all which you have done.

Worldl. But I am in better case now than I have been, and I comfort myself as well as I can. For I see there is no remedy, and I shall not be always in this misery, for the world will last but a while.

Christ. These are silly comforts indeed. You should rather cut off this vice of covetousness, and then you might have found comfort. But how comes this into your mind, that the world cannot last long?

Worldl. How? Why I am sure you know as much as I. They say everywhere that the next year eighty-eight, Doomsday will be.

Christ. They are lying tales.

Worldl. Nay, I promise you. I have some skill, and I have read books of it that are printed; and talk goes that there be old prophecies of this year found in old stone walls.

Christ. I tell you plainly, they are very lies.

Worldl. It seems that you have skill this way. We have yet a good way to go before we come to our journey's end. I pray you let me hear your judgment of it. And what do you say to these verses, which every man has in his mouth:

When after Christ's birth there be expired,
Of hundreds fifteen, years eighty-eight,
Then comes the time of dangers to be feared,
And all mankind with dolours it shall fright.
For if the world in that year do not fall,
If sea and land then perish, no decay.
Yet Empires all, and Kingdom alter shall,
And man to ease himself shall have no way.

Christ. For my part, I make as little account of these verses as of the Merlin's drunken prophecies or the tales of Robin Hood. They import thus much in effect: that either the end of the world shall be the next year; or if the end of the world be not then, yet that there will be great troubles and subversions of kingdoms in the world. And for the satisfying of your desire, I will show you my judgment

between you and me: first, of the end of the world; secondly, of the troubles which (as men suppose) shall befall us this next year.

Worldl. I pray you then, what is your judgment of the end of the world? Shall it not be this next year?

Christ. My judgment is this: that it is not possible for any to find out the time of the end of the world; and if it were possible to appoint that time, yet it were not lawful.

Worldl. Everybody thinks that to learned men it is both possible and lawful; for my part I cannot tell, I would be glad to learn, and until I hear what you say, I will say as most do say.

Christ. That we may speak of this point in some order, first, let us consider whether it be possible by any means to set down the end of the world; and for a ground of all that I shall speak hereafter, this I will propound as a principle: that no man can define or truly conjecture, the hour, the day, the week, the month, the year, or the age in which the end of the world shall be.

Worldl. I think not so; how can you prove it by any good reason?

Christ. The Word of God is the ground of this my assertion. In a vision Daniel sees one angel asking another angel clothed in linen when should be the end of the miseries and troubles of the church. The answer was that it would be after a time, two times, and a half a time. Now mark the words of Daniel: "Then I heard it," says he, "but I understood it not: and then I said: O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed til the end of the time" (Dan. 12:5, 8, 9). If Daniel could not tell the time, and when an answer was made concerning the end could not understand it, what means can any man living use to conjecture at the day or the year or at the hundred year in which the world shall end? Again, when the disciples of our Savior Christ asked Him whether He would at His ascension restore the kingdom to Israel, this answer was given them: "It is not for you

to know the times and seasons, which the Father has put in His own power." Which answer makes very much for me. For it proves also that the special times in which the end of the world shall happen are unknown to man and hidden from him. God keeps them to Himself. And in the apocalypse, the souls of them that were killed for the word of God, longing for a full deliverance, cry with a loud voice, "How long Lord, holy and true?" In the answer which they receive from the Lamb, there is no special time mentioned of their deliverance; but it is told them that after a little season when their fellow servants and brethren shall be killed as they were, that then they shall see the end. In my judgment, these proofs are sufficient to continue that I said before.

Worldl. For my part I have no skill in the Scriptures as you have; you may soon deceive me. But if this be true which you say, then belike all the prophecies which go of the end of the world are false.

Christ. All prophecies are not of God and from His Spirit. Many are from the fantasies of wicked men and from the suggestion of the devil.

Worldl. I pray you therefore show me how I may discern of prophecies whether to be from God or the devil, and so which ought to be regarded as true or despised as false.

Christ. I will to my power do what I can to satisfy your request, and here I will set down certain notes by which you or any man else may discern of any prophecies. First, if the prophet be insufficient, it is a strong suspicion that he is not of God; but it argues that his prophecies come from some other cause. The sufficiency or insufficiency of a prophet may be perceived by these marks:

(1) If he maintain heresies and does not embrace the Christian religion.

(2) If his judgment be rash and inconsistent in other matters.

(3) If he be given to [?] as covetousness, or pride, for then he may be suspected, that he speaks by his prophecies to win either some gain or some glory to himself.

(4) If his complexion and the temperature of his body be strange, for then he may be thought to have some disease which hinders the reasonable part. He may have the weakness of the brain, the frenzy, or some such like. And it is certain that in all such Satan has great power and does trouble them with dreams and visions and many strong fantasies and terrors of mind.

(5) If he despise other men's judgments and counsels and sticks to his own opinion. Paul, which was rapt up in the third heaven and saw strange visions, was for all that most humble (2 Cor. 12:2).

(6) Lastly, if the prophet be a young man, not an old; if a woman, and not a man; if babbling and talkative, not silent with wisdom; if unruly and disordered, not quiet—suspicion may be gathered that the prophecy is an illusion of Satan. For in the weaker sort he most prevails.

Secondly, if it be against the Word of God or any circumstance of it; and if it reveal that particularly which the Word of God foretells in general manner, not laying down the place, the time, the persons, the manner of doing it, it may be taken for a false prophecy.

Thirdly, if the prophecy be uttered in ambiguous words or in speeches which are insolent and strange, not understood of them which hear them and never used in the Scriptures or of the church, it is like to be some sleight. For the Spirit of God speaks plainly; and if it utter things which are not to be known mystically, yet evermore it speaks like itself, as appears in the prophecies of the Old and New Testament.

Fourthly, if the end of the prophecy be God's glory and the profit of God's church, it is to be regarded; but if this be the drift of it, to put some men into a foolish fear, to make disquietness in the church and

commonwealth; if it be a platform to bring some to promotion, it is not to be regarded. For example, this is a lying prophecy: "Canterbury was, London is, and York shall be." This prophecy, if men will regard it, tends to strife, contention, and sedition; and it may be a means of wicked attempts, if hereafter time and place do serve: the devil oftentimes sows his seed a long time before he can have it grown up.

Fifthly, if it concerns some private men and some private family. It is to be supposed that the prophecies which come from God's Spirit are commonly general and tend to the profit of the whole church.

If it be false in any one little point or in any circumstance, account it of not value. For those prophecies which are of God are in no jot false; for God is truth itself.

By these notes and many other, we may judge of the prophecies of Merlin, of the prophecies of those that term themselves Elias, of Anabaptistical revelations, of dreams of these lying tales of the second coming of Christ.

Worldl. I know more now than ever I knew in all my life. And I promise you for this I will not believe prophecies which I shall hear, but as well as I can, I will rule them out. But in the meantime, let me hear of your judgment of some special prophecies which concern Doomsday. What say you to Elias's prophecy: Two thousand vaine, two thousand the Law, two thousand Christ. And for our sins which are many and marvelous, some years which are wanting shall not be expired.

Christ. Some men there are which make great account of this prophecy, but in truth it is not to be regarded. And if we shall examine it by the former notes, it will appear to be but a foolish prophecy.

First, who is the author of this prophecy? Not Elias the Tishbite, whose history we read in the Old Testament; but a fond Jew of the

same name, and the words of the prophecy are found nowhere in the Jewish Talmud.

Secondly, it is against the Word of God. From the beginning of the world to the publishing of the Law were two thousand years, says Elias; 2513, says the Scripture. From the giving of the Law to the passion of our Savior Christ were only 1542 years, says the Scripture. Now seeing two parts of this prophecy are against the chronology which is laid down in the Word of God, why should I believe that Elias says the truth in the third part, which is not yet fulfilled?

Thirdly, this prophecy is a plain viper. It eats out the guts of the Jews' Talmud, and confuses them for saying that Christ is not yet come. For Elias makes but four thousand years from the beginning of the world to the death of Christ; and now almost six thousand years are past since the beginning of the world. So that the Jews, if they will maintain their prophecy, they must grant that Christ is already come, which they deny.

Worldl. You speak too far against this prophecy. Some learned men do say that it is agreeable to the Word of God. For in the fourth [chapter] of Esdras, whereas Esdras demandeth of Vriël the Angel whether the time past be greater than the time to come, the angel does answer by two similitudes and does show to him a burning furnace and afterward a watery cloud, and said, "Mark whether the fire do overcome the smoke, and the shower the drops, or otherwise." To whom Esdras says, "I see, Lord, that a very great smoke does pass away. I see also a very great shower to come pouring down. But afterward I perceive the flame to overcome the smoke, and the drops the shower." Then says the angel, "Now judge of the continuance of the world. Even as the first smoke vanquishes the fire, and the drops the shower, so the years of the time past shall exceed the time which is to come." But now according to the computation of years it is evident that Esdras lived about the third thousand and five hundred years after the world's creation, and awhile after Cyrus's death, from which time about two thousand years are confirmed. Wherefore we

do see that this prophecy does marvelously agree with that of Elias, and the end of the world to be nigh at hand.

Christ. I perceive that you have read some books of the matter; but doubtless your reason is of no force. For that book is not canonical, and the place which you allege may be otherwise answered. For the angel by his similitudes does not so much compare the time past with the time to come, as the estate and infidelity of the time to come. For as the smoke vanquishes the fire, and the drops the flower, so shall, says the Angel to Esdras, the wickedness of the time to come be increased more than you have seen now or have heard in times past. And this is that which the Angel principally meaneth in his answer to Esdras.

Worldl. Let us go on further in this point. What say you to the prophecy of the poet Orpheus? I cannot say his words, but the meaning is this: that in the sixth age or sixth thousand year God shall destroy the world.

Christ. You say true; I remember such a thing indeed, alleged by the ancient philosopher Plato. But if the prophecy of Elias is not to be regarded (as in truth it is not), who is so mad as to give any heed to the saying of a fumbling poet? But leave your prophecies; let us hear what can you say else? For it seems that you have read some books of the second coming of Christ.

Worldl. I remember such a reason as this, drawn from the creation. God was six days in making the heaven and the earth, and He rested the seventh day. Now every day is a thousand years, as St. Peter says. Therefore, about six thousand years the end of the world shall be.

Christ. You do abuse the place of Scripture which is in St. Peter. For his meaning is this: that the greatest time and the smallest differ not in respect of God, to whom all times are present. And if your reason were good, I will make another as good sort of the same place against you, after this manner: St. Peter, which says that one day is a

thousand years, says also in the same place that a thousand years are but as one day. Out of which words I frame my reason thus: a thousand years are but as one day; the world shall last six thousand years, as you say; therefore, the world shall last but six days. Moreover, your own reason may be retorted against you, thus: you think that the end shall be of all things, this next year [15]88. But as God was six days in creating the world, and He did not rest in the sixth day, but in the seventh, so in like manner (if the six days of the creation resemble the six thousand years of the continuance of the world, as you suppose) the end of the world cannot be before the sixth thousand year be expired—as the rest was not before the sixth day of the creation was expired. And so neither you nor any other have any cause to fear the year next ensuing.

Worldl. You are too subtle for me; I have not been at the university, as you have been, though I travel that way now. But because you are so friendly in talk, I will be bold with you a little more yet. Are not these times in which we live called the last hour and the last times? I know you will grant it; for the Scripture says that our Savior Christ was once offered in the end of the world; and St. Peter says that Christ was made manifest in the last times. And if then were the last times when our Savior did suffer, the end of the world must be looked for every hour.

Christ. You must understand that the whole time of the continuance of the world is divided into the old time, which continues from the beginning of the world to the coming of Christ, and into the latter days or last hour, which is the whole space of time from the coming of Christ to the end of the world—as may appear in the Epistle to the Hebrews. So then your reason proves nothing. For these may be the latter days still and the last hour, and the world may for all that continue on a hundred years or two hundred years longer, for anything we know. Is not the coming of our Savior Christ compared to the coming of a thief, for this cause: that as no man is able truly to conjecture the coming of a thief before he begin to break into the house, so no man can truly conjecture the coming of Christ before he

see Him in the clouds; and then he may certainly determine that the end of the world is present.

Worldl. All the signs of the coming of Christ are past. Oh, what earthquakes have there been? What famine? What wars and hurly-burlies among men? What signs in the sun and moon? What flashing the air? What blazing stars? Surely, surely, the world cannot last long. There is some cause that so many men so long ago have spoken of these times, and especially of the next year. I see you do not fear, but I promise you I am afraid.

Christ. Some men these be that think that all the signs of the coming of our Savior Christ are past. And what if they be past, as you say—what then? Must of necessity the end immediately follow them? What should hinder that the coming of Christ should not be two or three hundred years after the signs which signify His coming? You have nothing to show but your own imaginations. But now if the signs of Christ's coming be not all past, what will you say then? Assuredly, very godly and learned men are of this mind.

Worldl. I pray you, show me how all the signs are not yet fulfilled which go before the end of the world.

Christ. According to that measure of knowledge which God has given me, I will do my endeavor to show this point to you. The signs of the coming of Christ are of two sorts; for either they go with the coming of Christ or before it. Of the first sort speaks our Savior Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke, saying: "Then there will be signs in the sun and moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth trouble among the nations, with perplexity: the sea and the waters shall roar"—all these signs shall be fulfilled at the very coming of Christ, "when as the heavens shall pass away with a noise, and the elements shall melt with heat, and the earth with the works that are therein shall be burnt up." The other sort of signs that go before our Savior's coming are very many:

(1) The first sign is the preaching of the gospel, as Christ says. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached throughout the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come; and this sign is every day more and more accomplished.

(2) The second is the spreading abroad of errors, heresies, and schisms—as St. Paul says, "That in the last days some shall depart from the faith, and give heed to spirits of errors, and doctrines of devils"; and our Savior Christ says, "That many false prophets shall come, and if it were possible, even to deceive the elect." We and our ancestors have seen this sign fulfilled.

(3) The third is a general security of men in every calling and in every place. Which now is evident—when was there ever more atheism? More contempt of God's holy ministry? More shameless hypocrisy, than is in these times in which we now live?

(4) The fourth sign is the apostasy and the revealing of antichrist, which now is known of all men to be the pope, and his church. And they themselves, if they were not past shame, would grant that the second beast coming forth of the earth, having the lamb's horns, but the dragon's mouth—they (I say) would grant that this beast should be the pope, their father.

(5) The fifth sign is the afflictions and miseries of the world by earthquakes, wars, pestilence, famine, and such like.

(6) The sixth sign is the conversion of the Jews to that religion which now they hate, as appears in the eleventh [chapter] to the Romans; and this sign which goes immediately before the coming of Christ to judgment is not yet fulfilled for anything I can tell. These only be the chief signs of which God's Word makes any mention. Of these, some are present, some are to come, so that for anything I can tell there is no cause why we should think that the end of the world should be the next year.

Worldl. I cannot tell whether all the signs of the coming of Christ be past or not; but sure I am that wonderful things are come to pass in these days, and the world is come to that pass of naughtiness, that it cannot last long.

Christ. That is your old song; but if the world be naughty, it is the worse by you that are so covetous. And if you think that the end of the world will be shortly, even the next year, what a mad man are you to be so covetous? Will you heap up riches which you know you shall never enjoy? And will you hoard up treasure for many years, when the world is not to continue one?

Worldl. Well, well, my covetousness is an eyesore to you; you are always harping upon it. Take no care; it shall never hurt you. You shall answer for yourself; you shall not answer for me. If you will not talk quietly with me in good neighborhood, I will hold my tongue.

Christ. I must needs admonish you of this vice which reigns in you. What if you should see a man cast into a water, swimming, and ready to be drowned. Would you not with all speed seek to save his life? And were it not a wicked part in him to be angry with you for your good will?

Worldl. Yes.

Christ. Your case is the very same. You are plunged over head and ears in this sin of covetousness. It presses down your soul to the bottom of hell, and by it you are in fearful danger of eternal death. It pities me to see you in this case. I would with all my heart do anything to bring you forth of danger. Yet for all my good will, thus I am rewarded.

Worldl. It is but your mind that I am in such danger of hellfire. I would be sorry if I had not a good heart to Godward; and I serve Him truly morning and evening, as well as God will give me grace. And if I were so bad a fellow as you would make me, good Lord! What a

miserable case is the world in? For I do nothing but that which everybody does. I pray you heartily, let us go on in our former talk.

Christ. Well, go too, I will follow your humor. Say what you can.

Worldl. You reject all prophecies of the end of the world, and all other conjecture you account them as frivolous and not to be regarded. Yet the astronomers are men that are greatly learned and can tell many things which the world knows not. I think you dare say nothing against them.

Christ. Astronomers that take upon them to prognosticate of things to come are babblers, and there is no heed to be given to their sayings. There are many of them in this land that make a living by telling of fortunes and things that are lost and stolen; but in truth they are very thieves, and the good statutes that are made against cozeners might better be urged against them than many others.

Worldl. Methinks you are very rash. Before ever I tell you what they say, you inveigh bitterly against them. They write that about [15]88, the end of the world shall be, or at the least great subversions of kingdoms, wars, confusions, etc.

Christ. In a word, they are all liars and deceivers. They are not able truly to conjecture these things, and I will show it you plainly. The Egyptians and Chaldeans of all other men were most given to the study of the stars, and never any were so skillful in that matter as they. Yet for all that, the Lord by the prophet Isaiah lays this in their teeth: that for all their skill yet they were not able to foretell their own destruction, which was at hand. "Where are now," said the prophet, "thy wise men, that they may tell thee, or may know what the Lord of hosts has determined against Egypt?" And to Babylon he says, "Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy councils; let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, and prognosticators stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee: behold, they shall be as stubble: the fire shall burn thee, they shall not deliver their own

lives from the power of the flame: there shall be no coals to warm at, nor light to sit by: thus are they with whom thou hast wearied thyself, even thy merchants that have been with thee from thy youth: everyone shall wander in his own quarter: none shall save thee."

Worldl. The prophet in these places speaks against the unskillful, not against the art of astronomy.

Christ. Yea, if you mark and consider the places well, you shall find they are against the art itself and against the most wise and skilful in all Egypt and Chaldea. The Spirit of God here confuses their arrogance and threatens revenge on them, for that they profess to foreshow those things which God has hid in His secret council and cannot be perceived by the stars.

Worldl. Do you think that God would make the heavens and the stars in them for no end? No doubt God has made them for some great use.

Christ. The beautiful frame of the heavens was created for man's use and profit, as to be signs of the ordinary and natural course of all things in the world, as of the time of sowing corn, of reaping, of planting, chopping, etc. Again, they have this use: to distinguish and to make the season of winter, summer, spring, harvest. They make day and night, and the natural course of years is by them. In a word, they are made even as a hen to foster and cherish the creatures here below, and therefore do give heat and cause rain and moisture in the season of the year. As the prophet David says, nothing is hid from the heat of the sun. And the prophet Hosea says, "And in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Israel." Now God did not make the stars to be means of foretelling things to come, and that men should learn of the them good and evil success: They that reserve the stars to this end abuse the stars and break the third commandment by taking God's name in vain. And therefore God threatens them by His prophet

Isaiah that make signs of things to come in the heavens, and says, "I destroy the tokens of the soothsayers, and make them that conjecture, fools, and turn the wise men backward, and make their knowledge foolishness." And to think that by the stars and their course a man may conjecture the end of the world is foolishness, or rather madness. For either the stars must be the cause of the end of the world, or bare signs. Causes they cannot be; for this is a property in nature that everything labours to preserve itself. And therefore it is not like that by the heavens shall be caused the end of the world, for then they should be causes of their own ruin. And again, the course of the stars cannot be a token or sign of the end. Dionysius Areopagite, when he saw the sun to be eclipsed at the full moon, being sore afraid, said, "That either the end of the world was then, or that the God of nature did suffer." And no marvel, for the extraordinary eclipse of the sun was a sign of some strange wonder. But that the natural and ordinary course of the stars in the heavens should signify strange and extraordinary things (such as are subversion of kingdoms and the end of the world), that by no reason can be showed. And yet this is that which astronomers maintain and take as granted. Again, the power and virtue and the operation of the stars is unknown to man; and if it were known, yet by the stars no man could gather what was to come, which I will show you by this similitude. Suppose twenty eggs of twenty divers birds set under one hen. Let her sit on them all and communicate her heat to them all. Can you or any other, by knowing the properties of the hen and by feeling of her heat, tell me of every egg what chickens she will hatch? Whether crows or partridges, or what other fowl? And can you tell by the same means when the hen shall die?

Worldl. I tell you, my wife hatches many chickens in the year, but this passes all my skill and hers too.

Christ. Very well. The heavens are as a hen, fostering and cherishing these earthly things under them; and you cannot by the virtues of the stars, if you knew them never so well, you cannot (I say) conjecture either the event of things upon earth or the dissolution of the world,

except you could therewithal know the secret purpose of God and the particular causes of every particular thing.

Worldl. You show me your mind plainly, and methinks it should be true you say. But everywhere there is great talk of conjunctions of planets, and you would wonder to see how simple men (such as I am) listen after such things. And some men have been ready to sell away all their goods for fear of conjunctions. I pray you, is there no such things? And if there be such things, what are they?

Christ. Indeed, astronomers have written of strange conjunctions; and among others, one Cyprianus Leovitius, a Bohemian. And because you are so earnest on me in this point, I will repeat some of his words. In the year of our Lord (says he) 1583, in the month of May, there shall happen a great conjunction of planets in the last end of Pisces, after which straightway in the year '84 shall ensue a wonderful mixture of all the planets in Taurus about the end of March and beginning of April. And which is more, a little after that shall be seen an eclipse of the sun in the twenty degree of Taurus about the head of Algol, a most cruel and hurtful fixed star, governed by Venus, which shall be linked to five planets in Aries, tending toward the twelfth degree. Here we must watch (says he), and I think it meet that all earthly cogitations be cast off, lest we be destroyed being unready. For this great conjunction is of all the last which shall happen in the end of the watery Trigon, and the watery Trigon shall have an end and be turned into the fiery Trigon. Neither shall there be any more in the space of eight hundred years; the end of the watery Trigon shall be nigh. But because about the end of the watery Trigon this Monarchy did begin, it is likely that the same also in the end of the same Trigon shall have an end—[when] sit[s] the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ our Lord, even in the end of the watery Trigon, [who] took upon Him the nature of man. For six years before His most glorious nativity, the very same conjunction in the end of Pisces and in the beginning of Aries happened. Neither came the like since that time, but when Charles the Great held his empire, which was in the year of our Lord 789; and now the second time such a

strange and great conjunction shall come, which undoubtedly does foreshow the other coming of the Son of God and Man in majesty of His glory, at which time we must render an account of life and conversation.

Worldl. I remember that I have read these words in an English book of the second coming of Christ, and I would desire your judgment of them. It seems that the man which wrote these words was deeply learned in astronomy.

Christ. You shall hear as much as I am able to tell you, and I can say somewhat because I have labored in these matters. First therefore, know thus much, that this Leovitius does not truly account the motions of the stars, but is fairly deceived, as by the most exact tables of Erasmus, Reinholdus, and Stadius may appear. And whereas he says that in the year of our Lord 1583 in the month of May there shall happen a great conjunction of the superior planets in the end of Pisces, in truth there is no such thing. For Jupiter and Saturn are almost three degrees asunder, when they are both in the end of Pisces in May; but in April, the month going before, they are in conjunction. And what strange thing can this be which has happened so often since the beginning? To wit, every 140 years, once in the same Trigon (as they say). As for that he says, that in the year 1584 there shall be a mixture of all the planets in Taurus about the end of March, there is no such thing; but in the beginning of April, Saturn and Mars are in conjunction, and then Jupiter is about twelve degrees distant from them. Other mixture of planets to be regarded, I see none. Messahala makes the greatest conjunction of planets to be when the three superior planets are joined all together in Aries, which shall not be either in the year '83 or '84. But be it that there had been then such strange conjunctions of the planets, as Leovitius speaks of—what then? What should follow? Forsooth the end of the world. And why should this be, considering that all these conjunctions are natural and come of the natural and ordinary motions of the heavens? And there have been since the beginning of the world 270 conjunctions of the superior planets Mars, Jupiter,

and Saturn. Heretofore they have portended no such dangers, as the effects declare; but there is no remedy, now they must needs signify ruins of kingdoms and the end of the world. Leovitius will have it so, for he speaks very confidently as from an oracle. No doubt (says he) this great and strange conjunction does foreshow the other coming of the Son of God and Man in majesty of His glory. But no doubt God will destroy the signs and confound the fantasies of these men, as hitherto in all ages has been seen. Albumazar, he prophesied that in the year of our Lord 1460 an end shall be made of Christian religion, and yet even then the gospel began most of all to flourish. And a Jew prophesied that in the year 1364 Messiah should come, who should deliver the rest of His own nation out of servitude under the Christians. How true this is, let they themselves judge.

Worldl. You are too sore an enemy to astronomers. You are now near the university; if you were there, you durst not say so much. He is a wise man indeed that is never deceived; and these men though they are deceived sometime, yet they often tell the very truth.

Christ. That is nothing; for it is no marvel, if a man unskillful in shooting, often hit the mark, if he continue in shooting. But I would have these propheticall astronomers show a reason why the great conjunction of planets foreshow the end of the world. Belike they will say that they know it to be so. If they know it, then their knowledge comes either by experience or without any experience. If they say that they know it without experience, then truly they deceive us; for all good knowledge in human learning is builded upon experience. If they know it by experience, then they must needs have observed this, that the destruction of the world has followed such conjunctions. If they have seen this, then they were either in the world or forth of the world. If they were in the world, how did they escape when the world was destroyed? If they were forth of the world, where stood they? But I will here cease to speak of astronomers, leaving to them their vanities until such time as it shall please God to make them acknowledge them and loathe them as the Ephesians did, who being given not to wicked and devilish arts but to such vain and frivolous

conceits as these of the astronomers are, after that they were won to the religion of Christ, brought their curious books and openly burned them. And I would have you that are an ignorant man to remember the saying of the prophet Jeremiah: "Be not afraid of the signs of heaven, though the heathen be afraid of such: for the customs of the people are vain."

Worldl. I have heard you hitherto, showing that no man by any probable conjecture can tell the special time of the end of the world. Now show me that it is not lawful for any to search out the end of the world.

Christ. Indeed, I think it is not lawful to be curious to search out the time in which the end shall be. It is a thing in which Christians are not to meddle. For it is the will of God that this should not be known. Therefore, whoever searches this time does against the will of God. To this purpose it is said in the Acts, "It is not for you to know the times and season." Moreover, God has kept the knowledge of this secret to Himself; and neither the angels nor Christ as He is man knows this time. Wherefore, it shall be pride and vanity in man to occupy himself in searching it out. (3) Lastly, the apostles and Daniel the prophet, when they were curious and desired to know the end and asked this question, "When shall these times be?" they had the repulse and never received any answer—which declares that none ought curiously to enquire of that time.

Worldl. But why is it not the will of God that this time should be known?

Christ. The same cause that moved God to conceal from us the hour of death, the same also made Him hide from us the hour and time of His coming—to wit, that we might always watch and pray and have our loins girt round about us and our lamps in our hands burning, as though we every hour did wait for the coming of Christ. And this is the reason which our Savior Christ uses. For after He had showed the uncertainty of the time of His coming, and yet that His coming was

most certain and very sudden, He adds an exhortation, saying: "Watch therefore, because you know not when the Son of man will come" (Matt. 25:13). And indeed because the time is unknown, it stirs us up to perpetual watchfulness. The master of a family, if he knew the hour in which the thief would come, he would watch only the same hour; but because he knows that he will come and is uncertain of the hour in which he will come, therefore he watches the whole night throughout.

Worldl. I thank you sir heartily, for that you have showed me your opinion so willingly and so courteously of the end of the world. But yet I would make bold with you a little more in this matter. I often come among my neighbors, and now and then we talk of these matters; and every man will have his own saying, and peradventure we are all deceived. You say it is neither possible nor lawful to search the coming of Christ by any means. How then may a man frame his talk wisely and speak the truth in these matters?

Christ. It is a good question you demand, and I will be careful to make you an answer. Therefore, when you speak with any man of the end of the world, frame your talk after this manner.

- (1) That the end of the world is most certain.
- (2) That the time of the end of the world is uncertain to man, and that he must not be curious in this matter.
- (3) That God would have this time to be unknown that men might live in the fear of His name and not defer their repentance.
- (4) That every man must long to see this day in which an end shall be made of sin and wickedness.
- (5) That God may come sooner to judgment than we are aware of or the world does imagine, as the parable of the wicked servant shows.

(6) That if God seem to defer His coming, it is that by His longsuffering He might bring us to repentance.

(7) That though God will not end the world, yet He may every moment cut off the life of man. If you shall speak of any of these points, you cannot speak amiss.

Worldl. Surely my memory is naught, and now you do me pleasure in that you tell me your whole mind so briefly and plainly. I pray you, let me make bold to confer with you of the other part of the prophecy, which is that if the end of the world be not this next year, yet there shall be great troubles and subversion of kingdoms. If I knew your opinion of this, I would cease to trouble you.

Christ. Not to make long discourses, my opinion is this: that there must be great troubles in the world, but they are not to be looked for more in the year [15]88 than any other year. And this I will briefly declare to you, and then we will end this matter.

Worldl. Show me first of all that there shall be many troubles in the world, for I would very fain know that.

Christ. Doubtless the reasons of this thing are most evident. First, God's Word threatens plagues and punishments to the disobedient and the transgressors of His commandments. If (says Moses) you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God to keep and do all His commandments which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Cursed shall you be in the town, and cursed in the field, etc. The Lord shall send upon you cursing, trouble, and shame in all that which you set your hand to do until you be destroyed and perish quickly, etc. And the Lord shall make the pestilence to cleave to you, until He has consumed you forth of the land, whither you go to possess it. The Lord shall smite you with a consumption and with the fever and with a burning ague and with fervent heat, and with the sword and with blasting and mildew. The heaven that is over your head shall be brass, and the

earth that is under you, iron. The Lord shall give you for the rain of your land dust and fleas, even from heaven shall it come upon you, till you be destroyed. And the Lord shall cause you to fall before your enemies, etc. Also, Amos the prophet speaks thus: "Behold the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful nation, and I will destroy it clean out of the earth: nevertheless I will not utterly destroy the bones of Jacob, saith the Lord." And in the third chapter, he speaks of the house of Israel, thus: "They know not to do right (saith the Lord) they stir up violence and robbery in their palaces: therefore thus saith the Lord God, An adversary shall come even round about the country, and shall bring down the strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled." And the prophet Isaiah pronounces a fearful curse against Israel for her sins: "Behold," says he, "the Lord maketh the earth empty, and he maketh it waste: he turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad," etc. Well, to the purpose, these are the times in which even through all nations sin and wickedness most abounds. These last times are compared to the days of Noah and of Lot, in which there was nothing but eating and drinking and marrying and building, and a general security possesses all men's hearts. And Paul speaks of these days thus: "This know also, that in the last days there shall come perilous times: for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, cursed speakers; disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of them that are good, traitors, heady, high minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a show of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." Wherefore, seeing God threatens His curse to the disobedient, and we know that now the whole world is given to disobey God in outrageous manner, and atheism never more abounded—who cannot be a prophet and make this conclusion of these times that there must needs be plagues and punishments in the world and great troubles? For God is not changeable; but as He threateneth plagues to the disobedient, so His immutable justice will require the same.

(2) Secondly, because these are the last times, and Satan sees that he has but a short time to continue, therefore he bestirs himself; his desire is to bring confusions and to make havoc of all. It is a death to him to see God's kingdom to be advanced, the preaching of His word to have free passage, His name to be glorified in the congregation of His saints, the clouds of ignorance be dispelled, and men that have long sat in darkness and in the shadow of death now to walk in the true light and to warm themselves at the comfortable sunshine of His gospel. He does even as tenants do with their farms. When their leaves draw near an end, then they use to rack all things to the uttermost to make money of everything and to scrape to themselves by hook and by crook whatever they can, that afterward they may have wherewith to maintain themselves. Even so fares it with the devil. This is the last hour. Therefore, now he will play reaks everywhere; he ruffles it apace, as though he were wood. He stirs seditions, conspiracies, tumults, wars; and by all means with violence he labors to overlarge his own kingdom.

(3) Thirdly, the church of God has always been subject to the cross, and none must marvel if it be. How can the world love them that hate it and have little acquaintance with it and are on the earth as pilgrims, waiting every day for happy passage through the troublesome sea of this life to their own home, even to the heavenly city of Jerusalem? And how can the prince of the world, Satan, love the faithful, that hates God? And how can he show favor to the members, that bitterly detests the head, Christ Jesus? And surely, it is the blessed will of God that His children shall welter and languish under afflictions, that they may learn to despise the world, to know themselves, to love God, to seek to Him, and to set their affections not on things on earth but on the things that are above. He lets the worldlings have their hearts' ease; He lets them feed themselves with the pleasures of this world and set themselves as oxen against the day of slaughter. With His own children He declares after another manner. He takes them as it were by the heels; He flings them into a sea of melting glass. There He lets them for a time to seethe and boil, and in great perplexity to shift for themselves. At length He drags

them to the shore and gives them ease of their former miseries. And all this is for this end: to sanctify and purify them and to cleanse them of the filthy dross of sin and to make them with joy of heart to praise and magnify His name, for which end they came into this world. And experience teaches that as there is a perpetual intercourse between day and night, so there is in the church of God not any perpetual quietness, but trouble and quietness, affliction and ease do continually succeed one another. So that it is verified of the church: "Though sorrow come in the evening, yet joy shall be in morning." In the beginning, the church was in Adam's family. And albeit for a time they had prosperity, yet through the malice of Satan, Abel was slain, Adam's only child which feared God.

Before the flood, when giants were upon the earth, what misery was the church in? How was religion profaned? What corruption of manners was there, when the sons of God married with the daughters of them that came of wicked Cain? Though the Lord preserved Noah and his family, yet pitiful is it to see the dangers in which they were after this. Abraham's family, how was it now at rest, now in trouble? He being oppressed with famine was fain to go down into Egypt, and there he was in danger of his life when he deceived the king, saying of Sarah she was his sister. But afterward being very poor, he was made rich, and the land of Canaan was promised him, and he got the victory of five kings. The propagation of God's church was to be preserved in Isaac. And see now to what a straight it is brought. Isaac is bound and laid upon the altar; Abraham stretches forth his hand and takes the knife to kill his only son. Where is now the Messiah? Where is the promised seed? A man would have thought that God would here have made an end of His church, but this was to show what shall be the estate of the church, that though in mysteries to man's judgment it may seem to be destroyed, yet God will preserve it and govern it forever. This intercourse of quietness and afflictions may be seen in Jacob, in the children of Israel being in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan. But to let pass other times, this thing is apparent: when the Israelites were governed by judges and kings, the Israelites for the space of eight years were in

bondage under Chusan, king of Aram. By Othniel afterward they were restored to their liberty for the space of forty years. Again, after this eighteen years together they were in bondage under Eglon, king of Moab, and were given to filthy idolatry. After his decease, Ehud gave them rest for eighty years together. And so to the time of Samuel, they were otherwhiles in peace and otherwhiles in trouble. So it might be showed through all histories, even until this day. And therefore no doubt the churches of God at this time, if they enjoy peace, yet are they continually to look for troubles and afflictions and calamities in this world.

And as all churches must put this in their accounts that they cannot be free from the cross, so above all other must this our church of England. We have had long peace under our gracious Deborah, and no doubt in God's good time we must drink of the cup of afflictions. The prophet Amos says, "Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Or will a Lion's whelp cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? And again, will the fowler take up the snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? Or shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?" Manifold and great are the dangers which our prince has escaped; many assaults have been made against our country. It has been in great peril by enemies at home and enemies abroad; a lingering famine has a long time afflicted us. What are all these things, and many more, but the roaring of the lion forth of the forest? And the sounding of the trumpet? These things are no doubt forerunners of greater judgments, and except we in England with speed repent, the roaring of the lion will not be in vain. Assuredly the lion will have his prey. And thus much shall suffice to declare this point, that in these days we must look for manifold afflictions in every country and kingdom.

Worldl. It is well said of you, I can you thank. I promise you, I think a man cannot speak a truer word than this that you have said; for the world is everywhere so bad, that scarce there can be any quietness or good fellowship among men. Well, I am satisfied for this matter, but

one thing I will ask you: do you think that there is no more danger to be feared the next year than any other year?

Christ. As I said, so I now say again: that afflictions, hurly-burlies, subversions of kingdoms are no more to be feared this next year than any other year.

Worldl. What reason moves you to say so?

Christ. This moves me to think so: because I can find no cause of the troubles of this year more than of any other year.

Worldl. Nay, there you are deceived. The strange conjunctions of planets will show their operation this next year. And though you will not grant that they are signs of the end of the world, yet you will confess that they are the causes of plague, pestilence, famine, wars, subversions of kingdoms, and such like; and by this means wise men have prophesied before of this year.

Christ. Your speech is full of impiety. For to divine of things to come belongs to God alone, and none must be so bold as to challenge this to himself—as the prophet Isaiah shows: "Stand to your cause (saith the Lord) bring forth your strong reasons, saith the king of Jacob, let them bring forth, and let them tell us what is to come: let them show the former things what they be, that we may confuse them, and know the latter end of them: either declare us things for to come." Also, it is a wicked part to attribute wars and alterations of kingdoms to the stars, which only belongs to God. And Daniel says, "God, he changeth times and seasons: he taketh away kings, he setteth up kings," etc. And to make wars and peace is not from any conjunctions of the stars, except the ruling of man's heart may come from the stars, which nevertheless is proper to God—as Solomon says, "The heart of the king is in the hands of the Lord, as the rivers of waters, and he turneth it withersoever it pleaseth him." Furthermore, between the heavens and things below there is a great sympathy and consent; and the stars oftentimes make tempests, whirlwinds, drought, continual

rain, and so they may be causes of some diseases, of scarcity, and of plenty. But we must account them only as instruments which God uses to bring to pass His council—and this not always, but only at some times. For example, when David was bidden to choose of three diverse things which he would suffer, he chose the plague. Now there is not any man (I think) that will attribute this plague to the stars. And the famine which was in Judea in the days of Elijah and the want of rain was not from any constellations. Nay, rather all these things befall us by reason of our sins, and our wickedness is the chief cause that provokes God to pour these punishments upon us, as that blessed martyr Master Hooper shows, whose words I will recite: The prognostications (says he) of these blind prophets, are good to be borne in a man's bosom, to know the day of the month. The rest of their practices is not worth a haw—as Moses teaches (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; Malachi 2), whereas you may see all these evils, and many more than the astronomers speak of come to us for sin and the transgression of God's commandments. It is neither sun nor moon, neither Jupiter nor Mars that is the occasion or matter of wealth or woe, plenty or scarcity, war or peace. Neither is pestilence caused by the putrefaction of the air (as Galen writes), but contempt of God's commandments is the cause, as you may read in the places before alleged. The air, the water, nor the earth have any poison in themselves to hurt their Lord and master man. But first man poisons himself with sin, and then God uses these elements ordained for the life of man to be the occasion of his death. Read the places and know that good health is numbered among the blessings of God and appertains to those that fear and keep God's commandments, and not to those that be destined to live long by the favor and aspects of planets. And the evil of whatever kind it be is the malediction of God against sin. The physicians say that the chiefest remedy against the pestilence is to flee from the place where the air is corrupt. God's law says, flee whither you will; the Lord shall make the pestilence cleave and associate you, till it confine you from the world. Again, in the same chapter, the disease or sickness shall be faithful—that is to say, stick fast to you, use what medicines you will. Galen says that the chief remedy to preserve from pestilence is to purge the body from

superfluous humors, to have a free and liberal wind, and to avoid the abundance of meat and drink. God says, nothing preserves, but the keeping of His commandments. If we offend, the best remedy is repentance and amendment of life. It makes no force how corrupt the air may be, so the conscience of man be clean from sin. Though there die a thousand on the one side of you, and ten thousand on the other side, you shall be safe, etc. (Psalm 91). And now to make an end, I hope I have satisfied your mind concerning the year next ending [15]88, though I know I am not able to satisfy the learned, neither was it ever my purpose or my thought.

Worldl. Yea, sir, you have indeed. I thank you for it. I hope I shall be the better for your talk as long as I live. I warrant you I shall remember you when you think little on me. And because you are now come to Cambridge, if you will, I will bestow the courtesy of the town on you, even with all my heart.

Christ. I thank you heartily; but the best courtesy you can show to me is this: to relieve the poor, wherein you have been faulty.

Worldl. Alas man! What should we do? The world is hard. But I shall not forget you. Your sayings will make me do more than ever I had thought to have done. Well sir, if it do not please you to take the courtesy of the town at my hands, I will take my leave of you.

Christ. The Lord be with you, and with all them that fear His name. Amen.

FINIS.

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