

# The Vicar and the Earthquake: Conflict, Controversy, and a Christening during the Great Lisbon Disaster of 1755

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## Abstract

This article examines five letters written by Richard Goddard, an Anglican pastor from Swindon, England and a survivor of the Lisbon earthquake. Produced on faded paper in a legible cursive script, they offer a personal, detailed, and highly revealing description of the events of All Saints' Day (November 1) 1755, discussing not only the earthquake and tsunami, but also the great fire that began almost immediately after the first tremor and burned for more than a week. In one notable and well publicized episode at the time, Reverend Goddard is forcibly baptized into the Catholic Church by a crowd of pious *Lisboetas* in the hour after the earthquake.

## Keywords

Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, Richard Goddard, anti-Catholicism, religious toleration, eighteenth century; natural disaster

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa cinco cartas escritas por Richard Goddard de Swindon, Inglaterra, um pastor anglicano e um sobrevivente do terramoto de Lisboa. Produzido em papel desbotado, em escrita cursiva legível, eles oferecem uma descrição pessoal, detalhada e altamente reveladora dos eventos do Dia de Todos os Santos (1 de Novembro) de 1755, discutindo não só o terramoto e tsunami, mas também o grande incêndio que começou quase imediatamente depois do primeiro tremor e continuou durante mais de uma semana. Num episódio notável e bem divulgado na época, o Reverend Goddard foi batizado à força na Igreja Católica por uma multidão de Lisboetas devotos na primeira hora após o terramoto.

## Palavras-chave

Terramoto de Lisboa de 1755; Richard Goddard; anti-catolicismo; tolerância religiosa; século XVIII; desastre natural

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The Lisbon Earthquake of November 1, 1755 was a cataclysm of decidedly international impact. Originating along a fault line several hundred kilometers southeast of Cape St. Vincent in the Atlantic Ocean—and registering between 8.5 and 9.1 on the moment magnitude scale ( $M_w$ )—the mega-quake was felt across much of western Europe and the northwest coast of Africa, while the resultant tsunami ravaged stretches of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Moroccan shoreline, sending shock waves as far as England, Ireland, Canada, Brazil, and the West Indies. Much of the damage and most of the deaths, however, occurred in Lisbon, the capital of a vast trading empire and home to a large and diverse community of foreign merchants, craftsmen, and sailors. In the aftermath of the disaster, many of the survivors of this non-native population wrote home to inform family, friends, and business associates of their survival and recount their experiences. These foreign accounts constitute a sizeable proportion of all extant eyewitness testimonies to the earthquake.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, many remain unstudied (or undiscovered) in archives and personal collections throughout the world.

This article will comment on five letters written by earthquake eyewitness Richard Goddard, the vicar of Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire, UK.<sup>3</sup> Produced on faded paper in a clear cursive script, they present a detailed and deeply personal description of the events of All Saints' Day (November 1) 1755, discussing not only the earthquake and tsunami, but also the great fire, which began almost immediately after the first tremor and burned without interruption for more than a week. Unlike the vast majority of eyewitness accounts which offer a single composite view of the tragedy, Goddard's letters follow the progression of events in Lisbon over a period of several months, providing a valuable new perspective on each stage of the tragedy and its aftermath.

Most significantly, they offer a unique window into the world of British Lisbon, as seen through the eyes of a visiting brother of a local British merchant. Of particular interest is an intriguing episode in which Goddard, a Protestant minister, is forcibly baptized into the Roman Catholic Church by a crowd of fervent Portuguese earthquake survivors immediately after the disaster. Illustrative of the complex and precarious relationship

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<sup>2</sup> With several notable exceptions (António Pereira de Figueiredo's *Commentario Latino e Portuguez Sobre o Terremoto e o Incêndio de Lisboa*, Joaquim José Moreira de Mendonça's *História Universal dos Terremotos*, Miguel Tibério Pedegache's *Nova e Fiel Relação que Experimentou Lisboa, e Todo Portugal no 1 de Novembro de 1755*, and Manoel Portal's *Historia da Ruína* [...]), only a few *Lisboetas* who survived the earthquake felt the need to commit their personal experiences to paper in any extended fashion. The reasons for this remain unclear. Perhaps the shared nature of the disaster among survivors (the earthquake was felt throughout Portugal and the tsunami impacted almost the entire Portuguese coastline), as well as the fact that many people fled to the homes of relatives across the country, made such communication unnecessary. *Lisboetas* did, however, produce a substantial quantity of poems, essays, histories, and commentaries on the earthquake disaster.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Goddard was the vicar of Lacock from 1753 until his death on May 2, 1758.

between Catholics and non-Catholics in mid-eighteenth-century Lisbon, as well as an example of how disasters can transform human behavior, this episode will be the primary, although not the only, concern of this article.

Perhaps because of their relatively recent entry into the public domain, Goddard's letters have never been the subject of study and have only been quoted once before, in Edward Paice's *Wrath of God: The Great Lisbon Earthquake of 1755* (2008). Four of the five letters were donated to the Manuscripts Collection of the British Library by Capt. John Goddard in 1990 (the same year that the most comprehensive assemblage of British sources on the Lisbon earthquake, *O Terramoto de 1755 Testemunhas Britânicas The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 British Accounts*, was published). A fifth letter resides in the Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre, National Archives, UK.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike most eyewitness narratives of the earthquake, which were written by authors who left little or no record of their existence (many of the accounts are anonymous), Goddard's letters were produced by someone with a traceable past. Although he was not a man of conspicuous accomplishments or fame, Goddard was widely known in the upper strata of British society because of his pedigree. The scion of the prominent and well-established Goddard family of Swindon, England, he was born in 1728, the son of Ambrose Goddard MP and his wife Elizabeth.<sup>5</sup> On August 30, 1746, at the age of eighteen, he matriculated at New College, Oxford (UK). In 1753, he received his Bachelor of Civil Law degree and was appointed the vicar of Lacock, Wiltshire (whose medieval abbey has served over the years as a picturesque backdrop in numerous films, including several in the Harry Potter series). Two years later, Goddard sailed for Lisbon on a "packet ship," a common eighteenth-century conveyance which carried mail, goods, and passengers between embassies and colonial possessions throughout the empire (Foster, vol. II, 1891: 532).

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<sup>4</sup> Numbered in order of the date that they were written for the purposes of this article, Letters #1, #3, #4, and #5 (Dated October 22, 1755, November 18, 1755, February 10, 1756, and March 30, 1756 respectively) reside in the Manuscripts Collection of the British Library (Add. 69847), while Letter #2 (dated November 7, 1755) can be found in the Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre, National Archives (1461/2732). Letters #3 and #4 are contemporaneous copies written by Richard Goddard. The recipient of Letter #3 is unknown, while Letter #4 was probably written to John Ivory Talbot, the owner and renovator of Lacock Abbey. When Talbot expressed his intention of rebuilding the Abbey's Great Hall in 1753, it was Richard Goddard who suggested the architect Sanderson Miller. Miller's subsequent work on Lacock Abbey is considered a pioneering example of Gothic revival architecture. See Goddard's letter of introduction to Miller in *An Eighteenth-Century Correspondence*, Lilian Dickins and Mary Stanton, (eds.) (New York: Duffield & Co., 1910), 301-302. J. Nozes, introduction, translation, and notes, *O Terramoto de 1755 Testemunhas Britânicas The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755 British Accounts* (Lisbon: Lisóptima Edições, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> A Goddard family pedigree can be found in the Manuscripts Collection of the British Library, Add. 23237.

Why did he go? As Goddard explained in his first letter (dated October 22, 1755) to his eldest brother Thomas (the inheritor of the family's Swindon estate), the "principal Errand" of his journey was his "Health," although he also wished to check up on the progress of his younger brother Ambrose, a local merchant and principal of the firm Jackson, Branfill & Goddard (Sutherland, vol. 3, no. 3, 1932: 373, 378-379). "I ... found Brosius [as Ambrose was known by his family] very well by his own Account," he wrote Thomas, "and I think to all Appearances as well as I ever knew him" (Letter #1, BL, Add. 69847). The Goddard family had followed the longstanding tradition of the British landed gentry whereby the firstborn son inherits the country estate (in this case Thomas, who became a Member of Parliament like his father), the second son enters the clergy (Richard), and the third is set up in business or commerce (Ambrose).

Unfortunately for him, Richard Goddard's voyage had been anything but pleasant. At Falmouth, his ship had been detained for three weeks due to "contrary Winds," and although the journey from "Land to Land" had only taken ninety-seven hours, the weather had made it unusually rough. "I had not been an Hour on Board," he wrote, "before I was forced by my Sickness to betake myself to my Cabbin [sic], and I had neither Spirits not Inclination to leave it ... it was the most intolerable Dungeon imaginable." When the ship finally arrived at the mouth of the Tagus, his elation was tempered by the appearance of the surrounding countryside, which had been "burnt up with the Heat of Summer" and thus afforded "the most dreary barren and uncomfortable Scene imaginable." Nevertheless, the ailing young minister was in remarkably good spirits as he disembarked in the Portuguese capital, where he hoped to spend an agreeable and uneventful winter away from the cares of his vicarage.<sup>6</sup>

While in Lisbon, he would reside with Ambrose, a member of the flourishing British merchant community known as the British or English Factory (*Feitoria Inglesa*).<sup>7</sup> Formed in the seventeenth century as a result of the bilateral treaties of 1642, 1654 and 1661, which gave British merchants in Lisbon both freedom of trade and the right to practice their Protestant faith without fear of harassment from the Portuguese Inquisition, the Factory was both the commercial and social center of British Lisbon.<sup>8</sup> As a result of

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<sup>6</sup> Letter #1, BL, Add. 69847.

<sup>7</sup> Ambrose Goddard (1729-1815) was educated at Winchester School. He was agent for the Post Office in Lisbon until 1772 and later a Member of Parliament for Wiltshire (1772-1806), where, according to the *Monthly Magazine*, "his diffident habits and the state of his nerves precluded him from public speaking." L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1754-1790* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1964), 508. See his obituary in *The Monthly Magazine, or British Register*, vol. XL, part II (London & Boston, 1815), 370-71.

<sup>8</sup> See Isabel M.R. Mendes Drumon, *Os Estrangeiros e a Inquisição Portuguesa (XVI-XVII)* (Lisbon: Hugin, 2002).

the lucrative export trade (mainly textiles), many British merchants would amass substantial fortunes and build palatial homes in Lisbon's best neighborhoods.<sup>9</sup> Although successfully ensconced in a merchant house which bore his family's name, Ambrose had not, it seems, been in Lisbon very long before Richard's visit (Factory records indicate that he was first officially admitted to the Factory on February 2, 1756, three months after the earthquake) (Walford, 1940: 72). Yet, in the wake of the disaster, Ambrose's signature, as well as that of his business partner Benjamin Branfill, appear on several Factory petitions pleading for economic aid from King George II.<sup>10</sup> Lisbon's British merchants would suffer significant economic losses as a result of the earthquake (those of *Jackson, Branfill & Goddard* were, according to Richard Goddard, "uncommonly severe"). (Letter #2, SW (Swindon and Wiltshire), 1461/2732). Even so, the British Factory would survive well into the nineteenth century.

However, the close political and economic bonds between Britain and Portugal predate the Factory by more than five centuries. During the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), Portugal provided valuable support to England; and, in 1386, the two small maritime nations sealed their friendship in the Treaty of Windsor, regarded by many as the oldest diplomatic alliance still in existence. In 1703, both countries signed the famous Methuen Treaties, which would define the economic and diplomatic relationship between Britain and Portugal in the half century before the earthquake. In it, the British were given the right to sell textiles and other goods at a reduced duty in Portugal, a country that had few industrial products of its own.<sup>11</sup> In return, the British granted privileged status to Portuguese wine (primarily Port) in its markets and agreed to use its formidable fleet to safeguard Portugal's New World trade and ensure its continued independence from Spain. The former had become increasingly important since the 1690s when gold was discovered in enormous

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<sup>9</sup> See Walford, *The British Factory*, and R. Lodge, "The British Factory at Lisbon," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th Series, vol. XVI (London, 1933), 211-247; L.M.E. Shaw, *Trade, Inquisition and the English Nation in Portugal, 1650-1690* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1989); J.B. de Macedo, *Problemas de História da Indústria Portuguesa no Século XVIII* (Lisbon: Associação Industrial Portuguesa, 1963); idem., *A Situação Económica no Tempo de Pombal: Alguns Aspectos*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Lisbon: Moraes Editores, 1982); C.R. Boxer, "Brazilian Gold and British Traders in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century," in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. XLIX, no. 3, August 1969; H.E.S. Fisher, *The Portugal Trade: A Study of Anglo-Portuguese Commerce, 1700-1770* (London: Methuen, 1971); S. Sideri, *Trade and Power: Informal Colonialism in Anglo-Portuguese Relations* (Rotterdam: Rotterdam University Press, 1970); J.D. Tracy, *The Political Economy of Merchant Empires: State Power and World Trade, 1350-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); John Delaforce, *The Factory House at Oporto*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Christie's Wine Publications, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> The National Archives of the UK (TNA); Public Record Office, State Papers (Portugal), SP 89-50, 173, 224-5.

<sup>11</sup> See A.D. Francis, *The Methuens of Portugal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); José Luís Cardoso, et al., *O Tratado de Methuen (1703) diplomacia, guerra, política e economia* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2003); José Vicente Serrão "O Quadro Económico," in *História de Portugal*, José Mattoso, (ed.) (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1992-3), Vol. 4 (of 8), *O Antigo Regime* (1620-1807), 71-117.

quantities in the central Brazilian plain of what would later be known as Minas Gerais. Thirty years later, diamonds and other precious gems were found (Boxer, 1962: 30-60, 204-225). By 1755, Lisbon was (once again) one the wealthiest cities in the world and the third busiest European port after London and Amsterdam—though much of the gold that arrived there ultimately found its way to the British Isles, where it would play an important role in financing the early stages of the Industrial Revolution (Birmingham, 1993: 2).<sup>12</sup>

While Richard Goddard's sojourn in Lisbon was more personal than economic, it would be inaccurate to say that he was on holiday, for he had agreed to provide assistance to the chaplain of the Factory, the Reverend John Williamson, during the length of his stay.<sup>13</sup> On the Sunday prior to the earthquake, Goddard had preached to the Factory's congregation (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847); and on the Saturday morning of the disaster, he was slated to help Williamson with the service (November 1 was a "Church Day" for the Factory).<sup>14</sup> However, in the hour or so beforehand, Goddard was "tempted by the Beauty of the Morning" to take a stroll along the viewing platform atop St. George's Hill, the highest point in the city. It was a decision, he would later admit, to which he owed his "Preservation," for the platform was (and still is) an expansive open area largely devoid of any large structures that might have collapsed on top of him (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847).

When the first tremor began, Goddard, like many earthquake eyewitnesses, attributed the noise and shaking to the approach of "several Coaches." However, he was "most dreadfully undeceived," for the "motion of the earth increased so much," he had difficulty staying on his feet. Only by grabbing a nearby flagstaff was he able to keep himself from falling (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847). Because Rev. Goddard was wearing a watch, he is able to provide us with a uniquely authoritative time for the beginning of the earthquake of two minutes after "three quarters after nine," i.e., 9:47 a.m. Many twentieth-century scholars—following the testimony of a single eyewitness account in Francisco Luís Pereira de Sousa's seminal study *O Terremoto de 1 de Novembro de 1755 em Portugal e um Estudo*

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<sup>12</sup> See also Virgilio Noya Pinto, *O ouro brasileiro e o comércio anglo-português* (São Paulo, 1979); and Kenneth R. Maxwell, *Conflicts and Conspiracies: Brazil and Portugal 1750-1808* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>13</sup> Reverend Williamson was Factory chaplain from 1749 until 1763, the year of his death (Nozes, *O Terramoto de 1755*, 256).

<sup>14</sup> A merchant states that Saturday, November 1, 1755 "was a Church-Day to the *English* Factory". Anonymous, *An Account of the Late Dreadful Earthquake and Fire which destroyed the city of Lisbon, The Metropolis Of Portugal. In a Letter from a Merchant Resident there, to his Friend in England*, Second Edition (Boston: Green & Russell, 1756), 17.

*Demográfico*—give the time of the beginning of the first tremor at 9:40, several minutes earlier.<sup>15</sup>

From his vantage point overlooking the city, Goddard saw the Castle of St. George, which stood atop the hill that had given it its name, fall—after which a great “Cloud of Dust” arose, obscuring what he remembered as “the brightest sun I had ever seen.”<sup>16</sup>

No Words can express the Horror of my Situation at that Instant, involved in almost total Darkness, surrounded with a City falling into Ruins, and Crowds of People screaming, and calling out for Mercy, while from the violent and convulsive Motions of the Earth, we expected every Moment to be swallowed up. Such a Situation I apprehend is not easily to be imagined by those who have not felt it, nor to be described by those who have. God grant you may never have a just Idea of it, which is to be had only by Experience. (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847)

When the shaking ceased, Goddard knew that his troubles were far from over. He spoke little Portuguese and had only the slightest acquaintance with the geography of the city, which was now in ruins. More importantly, he had no idea how to locate his brother, who had left that morning on several business errands, and little hope of finding his way back to Ambrose’s house without being injured by falling debris. “It is not easy to imagine,” he wrote, “how much I suffered from this complicated Distress” (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847). Besides the general physical ruin that lay all about him, he was immediately confronted with the equally unsettling scene of hundreds of terrified Catholics running amuck, many believing the world was coming to an end. As they ran through the streets kissing “their Crucifixes [and] the Images and Pictures of their Saints,” he could not suppress his disgust. As a respectable Protestant clergyman, he admitted that he was “greatly scandalized by the large Mixture of Idolatry and Superstition;” nevertheless, he did not “doubt the Sincerity of their Devotion on such an Occasion.”<sup>17</sup> When the crowds started to congregate around him and ask him questions in a language that he did not understand, he began to fear that as a non-Catholic or “Heretick,” as he put it, he would be blamed for the catastrophe and flung to his death from the platform.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Francisco Luís Pereira de Sousa, *O Terremoto de 1 de Novembro de 1755 em Portugal e um Estudo Demográfico*, vol. 4 (Lisbon: Tip. do Comércio, 1919), 516.

<sup>16</sup> One eyewitness, a Mr. Braddock, referred to this obscuring of the sun by the “prodigious clouds of dust and lime” as an “Egyptian Darkness.” Charles Davy, *Letters Addressed to a Young Gentleman Upon the Subject of Literature*, Vol. 2 (of 2) (London: Bury St. Edmunds, 1787), 17.

<sup>17</sup> Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of British Anti-Catholicism, see C. Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, c. 1714-1780: A Political and Social Study* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993) and R. Tumbleson, *Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination: Nationalism, Religion, and Literature, 1660-1745* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Goddard's distress was not completely unfounded, for although Protestant residents of Lisbon were generally treated humanely by their Portuguese neighbors, incidents of abuse (mainly verbal) did occur from time to time, especially on religious holidays. According to an article in the *London Magazine* in December 1755:

[because] insults are frequently offered to Protestant strangers, if met in the streets [on All Saints' Day], most of the gentlemen of the English factory go the night before to their country houses, and do not return till the second of November, when everything is quiet. To this unhappy bigotry, which brings many of the country inhabitants to Lisbon to see the show, the great loss of the Portuguese, and, on the other hand, the preservation of the English, is said to be owing. (*The London Magazine*, Dec. 1755: 587)

Several British earthquake survivors expressed similar fears that they would fall victim to a Catholic population that, in their opinion, had been whipped into a religious frenzy. In the words of British merchant Thomas Chase, who found himself in the Terreiro do Paço on November 2,

The fear ... that my condition [as a British Protestant] might kindle up their piety, at such a time as this, when all government was at a stand, and it was impossible to guess what turn their furious zeal might take against that worst of criminals a *Heretic!* this made me dread the approach of every person. (*The Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1813, Vol. LXXXIII: 110)

Another British merchant, while escaping the post-earthquake chaos in a low-lying house, reported "the sudden Entrance of some *Portuguese*, whose malicious and revengeful Countenances [and] Whisperings, ... seemed to bode no Good to Strangers [i.e. foreigners], and whom I found but too ready to impute this awful Judgment to their Government's suffering such a Number of *Heriticks* to reside among them" (*Two very Circumstantial Accounts...*, 1756: 10). Fleeing to the Rossio, he:

found several Gentlemen of the *English* Factory, and among them a certain Noble Lord, whom, with myself, the superstitious *Portuguese* obliged to fall down upon our Knees, and kiss the Cross; and even proceeded so far as to insist upon his Lordship's performing this idle Ceremony without his Wig. Which last Circumstance, together with the mad Behaviour, stern Countenance, and incessant Murmurs of the People, giving me too much Reason to apprehend they might soon carry Matters to a more enormous length, I advised his Lordship and the other Gentlemen to retire as fast as possible: Which we happily found Means to do, glad to escape with our Lives from an



infatuated Mob, whose cruel Principles naturally led them to believe they might appease the Wrath of Heaven by our Destruction. (*Two very Circumstantial Accounts*, 1756: 11-12).

In the eyes of many Europeans, eighteenth-century Portugal was a dangerous, intolerant place still mired in its barbaric past. Jews and Catholic heretics continued to be burnt at the stake in elaborate *autos-da-fé* in the Rossio and the Terreiro de Paço (though their frequency had diminished considerably over the decades); and Enlightenment *philosophes* like Voltaire frequently skewered the Portuguese for their religious bigotry.<sup>19</sup>

This image of Portugal was undoubtedly on Goddard's mind when, following a severe aftershock at 11 a.m., a crowd of more than one hundred and fifty *Lisboetas* suddenly "surrounded and seized ... [him] in the most violent Manner." They began to ask him a series of questions which he could not comprehend. When one priest recited to him what he thought was the Apostles Creed, Goddard attempted ("as much as was in my Power") to convey that he was indeed a Christian—but to no avail. When the cleric finally uttered a phrase that he did understand—"Vis Baptizari?" ("Will you be baptized?")—the crowd immediately began to encourage the Englishman to respond in the affirmative by chanting "*Volo, Volo, Volo*" ("I do"). Not wanting to antagonize the crowd with his "Refusal," Goddard remained "passive and affected not to understand them." In spite of this, the priest forged ahead and baptized the Englishman "in Form," that is, without Goddard having provided his "Formal Assent" (Letter, #4, BL, Add. 69847).

At this point, the "Mob," as Goddard referred to them, began to celebrate without restraint, "almost killing me with their Embraces; several Priests falling down before me, embracing the Knees and kissing the Feet of their New Convert." They apparently believed, explained Goddard, that in helping to save an infidel's soul they had earned "a Fund of Merit sufficient to atone for the most profligate Life" (Letter, #4, BL, Add. 69847). This jarring—and somewhat comic—contrast between Goddard's initial terror (caused as much by his reflexive anti-Catholic bigotry as his poor grasp of Portuguese) and the wild celebrations of the Portuguese in the midst of Lisbon's almost complete destruction is a deeply ironic testament to the extraordinary nature of the day. It may also reveal a disparity between British perceptions of the Portuguese and the actual reality.

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<sup>19</sup> See Voltaire, *Candide*, trans. Daniel Gordon (Boston, 1999), 52: "When this earthquake, which had destroyed three-quarters of Lisbon, came to an end, the wise men of the land could think of no more effective way of avoiding total ruin than to give the people a fine auto-da-fé. The faculty of the University of Coimbra had concluded that the spectacle of roasting several persons over a slow fire in a ceremonious fashion is an infallible secret for preventing the earth from quaking."

From what Goddard had previously heard about Portuguese intolerance, he was clearly surprised that they had not physically mistreated him.

Indeed, I must do them [i.e., the Portuguese] the Justice to observe that their Moderation in this Respect was much greater than could have been expected on such an Occasion, considering their excessive Bigotry. For except what happened to me, which was entirely owing to my Ignorance of the Language, there is scarcely an Instance to be produced of their having interfered with the Strangers [i.e., foreigners] on the subject of Religion. (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847)

In this, he appears to have been correct. There are no extant accounts of any violent attacks on Protestants on the day of the disaster or in the weeks and months afterwards.

Perhaps this should not seem unusual. By the mid-eighteenth century, merchant communities from Great Britain, Sweden, Berlin, Hannover, and other predominantly Protestant centers, were well established in the Portuguese capital. Many of their members lived in the *Baixa*; and most regularly and peaceably interacted with the city's inhabitants. Of course, not all non-Catholics were accorded the same level of toleration. In May 1756, little more than six months after the earthquake, Lisbon's general council (*Conselho Geral*) proposed the transfer of 10 or 11 prisoners (most likely suspected Jews) to the city of Évora where they would be directed to "the first available *auto-da-fé*" (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, *Inquisição de Évora*, L<sup>o</sup> 46, fl. 162).<sup>20</sup>

Although greatly relieved by his survival, Goddard remained so disturbed by the incident that several days later he personally reported it to the Papal Nuncio, Filippo Acciaiuoli, whose own multi-letter account of his earthquake experiences was recently discovered in the Vatican Library.<sup>21</sup> It is significant that Acciaiuoli was (according to Goddard) entirely sympathetic to his viewpoint, expressing particular outrage at the unknown Catholic priest who performed the baptism. "If he could be found out," Acciaiuoli declared to Goddard, "he deserved to be severely reprimanded for his Ignorance as well as his Presumption and Impertinence, for he ought to have known that the Council of Trent has declared the Baptism of Hereticks valid." Acciaiuoli's unqualified repudiation of the actions of the priest appears to indicate that relatively close relations existed between high Catholic officials in Lisbon and their social equals in the British Protestant community, possibly reflecting the fact that in many, if not most, circumstances, class

<sup>20</sup> I wish to thank Prof. Fernanda Olival for this reference.

<sup>21</sup> See A.P. Cardoso, "O Terramoto de Lisboa (1755) Documentos do Arquivo do Vaticano," *Revista de História das Ideias*, 18 (1996), 441-510, and idem., ed. and trans., *O Terrível Terramoto da Cidade que foi Lisboa: Correspondência do Núncio Filippo Acciaiuoli (Arquivos Secretos do Vaticano)* (Lisbon, 2005).

identity among eighteenth-century European elites trumped religious affiliation. Therefore, social snobbery may also underlie the reactions of Goddard and the Nuncio towards the simple priest and the Portuguese “Mob.”

The elements that make Goddard’s enforced baptism so compelling to the modern reader were also, it seems, of great interest to his contemporaries, for reports of the “Affair” or the “Adventure,” as it was referred to, appeared in at least two separate published accounts of the earthquake disaster (it is also briefly alluded to in a footnote on page 36 in Kendrick’s *The Lisbon Earthquake* of 1956). Although the first account (by an anonymous British merchant) in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* is brief and Goddard’s name is never explicitly mentioned, it is an unmistakable reference to the incident.

Some willing to do a meritorious act on this occasion, laid hold of a young English gentleman, who could not speak a word of the language, and christened him by force. It was happy their frenzy went no further; which some principal gentlemen had reason to fear; for, in their presence, the people were taught it was a judgment for suffering heretics among them, and they were obliged to many compliances for their safety. (*The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Vol. xviii, February, 1756: 94).

The second and more extensive version, written by another anonymous British merchant, is remarkable both in its faithfulness to Goddard’s narrative and for the suggestion, in the following humorous addendum, that the story was internationally known.

I shall end my Account of this Adventure with acquainting you, that the word Minister in the Language of this Country as well as ours, is used in a double sense; when the Affair began to be noised abroad, the Abbess of a Nunnery wrote a congratulatory Letter to the British Envoy on his Conversion [The British Envoy to Portugal from 1749 to 1757 was Abraham Castres], and desired, as a Testimony of his true Catholicism, a suitable Charity for the Sisterhood under her Care; by which means, the Holy Mother encountered a Rebuke, and lost, by the claim of Piety, the Contribution which Humanity might otherwise have afforded. (Anonymous, *An Account of the Late Dreadful Earthquake ...*, 1756: 19).

How was this merchant able to provide such an accurate account of Goddard’s story? Perhaps he had direct contact with him. Both the merchant’s letter (dated 20 November 1755) and Goddard’s Letters #2 and #3 (dated 7 November and 18 November 1755, respectively) were written in Marvila, then a rural parish to the east of Lisbon. It is known that the British Consul and several prominent members of the British Factory were residing at Marvila during this time. An article published in the *Whitehall Evening Post* addressed from

“Marvilla, near Lisbon” (dated 20 November 1755) refers to a letter presented to José I by the “Consul-General ... Merchants, [and] Subjects of his Britannic Majesty” offering “Condolences” and their resolve to “prosecute ... a Commerce so particularly necessary at this Time, and always so advantageous to the Kingdoms of Great Britain and Portugal” (*The Whitehall Evening Post*, 27 December to 30 December 1755: No. 1536).

In Letter #4, Goddard expands his narrative with a discussion of the two other principal elements of the disaster: the tsunami and the fire.<sup>22</sup> Not long after escaping the crowd of pious Portuguese, Goddard heard “a Report that the Sea was breaking in and all the lower Part of the City already under Water.” Soon, people began to stream up the sides of St. George’s Hill for safety, including one family of the British Factory “consisting of several Gentlemen and Ladies”. On the Tagus, “the Water ebbed on a sudden in such a Manner that the boats were all aground,” wrote Goddard of the tsunami, “but on looking down the River the Sea appeared to be breaking in, in such mountainous Waves over the Bar as astonished the older Sailors, and seemed to threaten the City with inevitable Destruction.” Here, Goddard relates the recollections of sailors that he communicated with in the weeks and months after the disaster. (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847). Goddard also discusses the disappearance of the imposing Stone Quay (*Cais de Pedra*) that had recently been constructed along the Terreiro do Paço, as well as the widely held belief that hundreds of earthquake survivors who had been standing on top of it were swept away to their death by the tsunami.<sup>23</sup>

Although Goddard admitted to knowing little of Lisbon (and thus refrained from providing a detailed list of the principal structures destroyed), he did mention having witnessed the partial collapse of the city’s cathedral, *Santa Maria Maior*, on the southwestern face of St. George’s Hill. He also spoke at great length of the great fire, which, from his vantage point overlooking the city, he “saw break out in several Places at the same time.”<sup>24</sup> From its inception, he realized that Lisbon was doomed.

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<sup>22</sup> Since he had a copy of Letter #3 in his possession and since both letters contain passages that are practically the same, he undoubtedly used it while composing Letter #4.

<sup>23</sup> There is some disagreement about the manner in which the *Cais de Pedra* (Stone Quay) was destroyed. See Kendrick, *The Lisbon Earthquake*, 57-58, and Moreira de Mendonça, *História Universal dos Terremotos* (Lisbon, 1758), 134. Moreira de Mendonça argues that the quay had already been shattered by the earthquake before the tsunami pulled it into the river. One eyewitness claims that more than 900 people died on the Stone Quay and in the Tobacco Garden. Sousa, *O Terremoto...*, 539. From a manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal: Fundo Geral, Codice no. 1772.

<sup>24</sup> See Mark Molesky. “The Great Fire of Lisbon, 1755,” Chapter 7 in Greg Bankoff, Uwe Lübken, and Jordan Sand, (eds.), *Flammable Cities: Urban Conflagration and the Making of the Modern World* (Madison, WI: University Of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

Had the City been only shook to Pieces [sic] by an Earthquake, everything of value might have been recovered from the Ruins; but in the present Case everything must be given up to Destruction, for 'twas impossible to put a stop to the Progress of the Fire, and there was scarce any Body that would venture to save their Effects for Fear of a Return of the Earthquake. (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847).

It was the threat of the fire that convinced Goddard to attempt to flee the city for a country house two miles away (possibly in Marvila) with a group of Englishmen that he had met on St. George's Hill. En route, they met Edward Hay, the British Consul and the chief representative of British trading interests in Lisbon, who related to them the harrowing escape of his wife Mary (née Flower), who was carried naked from their collapsing house by a nurse.<sup>25</sup> This story has never appeared before in any known account. After encountering Hay, Goddard would receive the happy news that his brother Ambrose had also survived the earthquake and was now safe aboard the British packet ship. Eventually, Goddard and his party would reach their destination in the countryside, although smoke on the horizon convinced him "that nothing would be able to escape ... [the fire's] Fury" (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847). Goddard's belief that "about 30,000 persons ... perished" in Lisbon can be added the list of contemporary and admittedly conjectural estimates of the number of earthquake deaths and is well within the range given by the majority of survivors (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847). The Papal Nuncio, Filippo Acciaiuoli, for example, believed that there were forty thousand victims.<sup>26</sup>

In his final letter (dated March 30, 1756), Goddard reported that, because the Factory Chaplain had not found an acceptable replacement, he (Goddard) was considering remaining in Lisbon through the summer and possibly through the following winter.<sup>27</sup> In a reflection of his high social status within the British community, he added that he was lodging with Consul Hay and his wife, "where I suppose I shall continue during the Remainder of my stay in the Country" (Letter #5, BL, Add. 69847). After this last

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<sup>25</sup> Edward Hay (1722-1829), Consul to Portugal 1754-1757, Envoy 1757-1767, Governor of Barbados 1772-1779. See R. Macaulay, *They Went to Portugal* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), "Envoy and Consul Mr. Castes and Mr. Hay [1755]," 277-282. Unlike the Envoy, who was frequently abroad, the Consul was the true representative of British trading interests and the leader of the British community in Lisbon. Many meetings of the Factory took place at his residence. The Hay baby, born on October 20, 1755, was named Margaret. See Egerton Bryces, *Collin's Peerage of England*, vol. VII (of 9) (London, 1812), 211-212.

<sup>26</sup> See A.S. Pereira, "Opportunity of a Disaster: The Economic Impact of the 1755 Lisbon Earthquake," *The Journal of Economic History* (2009), 69: 466-499. While some scholars accept Moreira de Mendonça's relatively conservative estimate of ten thousand victims in his *História Universal dos Terremotos* (five thousand on the first day and another five thousand who died during the first month due to injuries, gangrene, etc.), others embrace much higher numbers, usually between fifteen and forty thousand. For Acciaiuoli's estimate, see Cardoso, "O Terrível Terramoto," 48.

<sup>27</sup> SP 89-50, f. 243. In a letter to Whitehall dated May 8, 1756, Edward Hay states, "Mr. Williamson his Majesty's Chaplain to the Factory is gone home for his health... He is a most worthy Man, & will deserve your acquaintance & Esteem."

communication, Richard Goddard's actions and whereabouts are unknown. In his second letter from Lisbon, he wrote that Lisbon's climate was beginning to have "the most desirable [sic] Effect" on his health—that is, until the earthquake intervened and scuttled his plans for a peaceful convalescence. He would die three years later in England on 2 May 1758, at the age of twenty-nine or thirty (Letter #2, SW (Swindon and Wiltshire), 1461/2732).

On account of their extraordinary content, Goddard's five letters constitute a valuable historical source for one of Europe's greatest natural disasters. As an Oxford-educated clergyman, a gentleman from a wealthy and well-connected family, and the brother of an English merchant, Goddard brought a unique worldview to his description of these events. In the complex, multi-cultural world of eighteenth-century Lisbon, the earthquake severely tested the relationships between groups of different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Although Goddard's anti-Catholic bigotry and snobbery are palpable, it is, ultimately, his compassion for the Portuguese as fellow survivors of the disaster that prevails in his letters. Indeed, he expresses his sincerest hope that their "mistaken Piety might be accepted [by God]" (Letter #4, BL, Add. 69847).

While this attitude was surely reflective of Goddard's own humanity, it was also partially derived, one suspects, from changing views in Britain concerning Catholics and Catholicism. Sermons preached in Britain in the months after the disaster show this plainly.<sup>28</sup> In one sermon delivered in Daventry, England, on December 7, 1755, the Rev. Samuel Clark discussed the meaning of the Lisbon Earthquake to his Protestant worshipers. While acknowledging that the Catholic Church was in error, Clark emphasized the common bonds that connected the British people with the Portuguese victims of the disaster.

Are they [the Portuguese] not *Men*? Are they not our *Brethren*, the Children of one common Father, Partakers of the same nature, and designed like ourselves for Immortality? ... Are they not *Christians*? Though unhappily fallen into many Errors; yet do they not acknowledge the *same* God, and are they not Disciples of the *same* Jesus with ourselves? ... Let us pray, that the Survivors may be supported under this heavy Trial; that the Father of Mercies would look down upon them with Pity in this their low Estate and afford them all needful Succor and Relief. (Clark, 19-21).

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<sup>28</sup> See João Almeida Flor. *Sermões ingleses sobre o desastre de Lisboa*. In Helena Carvalhão Buescu and Gonçalo Cordeiro (eds.), *O Grande Terramoto de Lisboa. Ficar Diferente* (Lisbon: Gradiva, 2005).

In his *Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Earthquake at Lisbon* (1756), the Anglican cleric John Wesley found it perfectly logical that God had chosen to destroy the seat of the *Inquisição*. But he also dared to imagine himself a pitiful Catholic inhabitant of Lisbon on the morning of All Saints' Day. "It comes!" he wrote. "The Roof trembles. The Beams crack! The Ground rocks to and fro. Hoarse Thunder resounds from the Bowels of the Earth. And all these are but the Beginning of Sorrows" (Wesley, 13). He certainly did not believe that his fellow Protestants were safe from the ultimate judgment of God. "Supposing the Earthquake which made such Havock [sic] at Lisbon should never travel so far as London, is there nothing else which can reach us?" he asked. "What think you of a Comet? Are we absolutely out of reach of this?" (Wesley, 14). In Wesley's eyes, Catholics and Protestants were united as Christian sinners in a fallen world.

For their part, the Portuguese had also shown tolerance. Their first inclination on St. George's Hill had been to save Goddard's soul, not, as he had first feared, murder him for his heretical views. Although the Inquisition was still in operation in mid-eighteenth-century Lisbon, its role in Portuguese life had declined markedly over the previous century (and it would be further marginalized after the post-earthquake rise to power of the future Marquês de Pombal). Although still preoccupied with religion, the city that Richard Goddard visited in October 1755 was no longer the seat of fanaticism and intolerance that many (especially in the Protestant world) believed it to be. While the old divisions of the Reformation still lived on in various forms in both Portugal and Britain (it had been only ten years since the Second Jacobite Rebellion and was twenty-five years before the Gordon Riots), much of the underlying animosity had begun to drain away.

Curiously, Reverend Goddard never discusses the role that God may have played in causing the disaster (as many clerics did in countless sermons delivered in Britain and throughout Europe), nor does he engage in any extended philosophical or scientific speculation on the possible causes of the event, though he does admit to having "Pretentions to Philosophy" (Letter #3, BL, Add. 69847).<sup>29</sup> He is instead content to relate

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<sup>29</sup> For works on the great Lisbon Earthquake debate, see T.D. Kendrick, *The Lisbon Earthquake* (London: Methuen & Co., 1956); *O Grande Terramoto de Lisboa. Ficar Diferente*, H.C. Buescu and G. Cordeiro, (eds.) (Lisbon: Gradiva, 2005); U. Löffler, *Lissabons Fall – Europas Schrecken* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999); *Das Erdbeben von Lissabon und der Katastrophendiskurs im 18. Jahrhundert*, G. Lauer and T. Unger, (eds.) (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2008); G. Quenet, *Les tremblements de terre aux XVII et XVIII siècles: La naissance d'un risque* (Seyssel, France: Champ Vallon, 2005); J.P. Poirier, *Le tremblement de terre de Lisbonne* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005); *The Lisbon Earthquake of 1755: Representations and Reactions*, T.E.D. Braun and J.B. Radner, (eds.) (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005); *O Terramoto de 1755: Impactos históricos*, A.C. Araújo, J.L. Cardoso and N.G. Monteiro, (eds.) (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2007); I.M.B. Campos, *O Grande Terremoto (1755)* (Lisbon, 1998); Maria Fernanda Rollo, Ana Isabel Buescu, Pedro Cardim, Coordinators, *História e Ciência da Catástrofe: 250 Aniversário do terramoto de 1755* (Lisbon: Colibri, 2007); *1755: Catástrofe, Memória e Arte*, H.C. Buescu, M.

his dramatic experiences in a straightforward and modest manner. “I beg Pardon,” he writes at the conclusion of Letter #4, “for having been so long the Hero of my own Story.” Hopefully, future research will uncover more information (and more letters) concerning Richard Goddard’s eventful Lisbon sojourn.



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