

7. Let us return now to the matters needing to be explained in detail with which we are presently especially occupied. In the summer of the year 6962, in the western part of the horizon, regularly every night after the setting of the sun a comet similar to a romphaeae¹ began to appear; which when it was near the moon bright with a full light, it happened that an eclipse² of the moon occurred, according to the sequences and revolution of celestial bodies, as it³ customarily occurs. When they saw a certain comet similar to a sword⁴ from the western region proceed to the east and come near to the moon, and they perceived the total darkness of the eclipse, they were assuming this comet and the darkened moon signified the western Christian leaders who, having formed a conspiracy, were about to advance against the Turks and defeat them. Meanwhile, the Turks themselves, when they saw these things, fell into not insignificant fear and apprehension. Indeed also, when on those nights there was a full moon, lightning flashes⁵ and thunders did not cease on any given evening right up to the second watch. Moreover, for eighteen days early in the morning the earth used to quake slightly. The heat of the sun through that time was not insignificant.

Indeed, then, let us in only a few respects interpret concerning the nature of comets, lightning flashes, thunders, thunderbolts, the motions of the earth, and the elements. For my part, I will teach⁶ with all my might about these matters. Therefore, listen.

8. Comets are said to be appearances taken up from earth into the sky, which some call stars, not knowing what they say. Others say they are evil spirits, who themselves do not know what they say, and blaspheme severely; for evil spirits are not bright, but dark, and not able to be discerned by human sight. Therefore those who say such a thing talk nonsense, and sin. If, on the other hand, they were stars and from that cause they were falling from all time, the sky would not be adorned with stars. And so they are neither stars nor evil spirits, but comets. For comets are produced in this way. Winds blowing above the earth and through the air remove the smallest material of the earth to the heavenly fire, and that material, carried away by the power of the wind, does not descend, except while the winds are still. Then they drop down, the winds having replenished and poured out the material into the appearance of a laurel leaf; the wind having been ignited by the upper fire naturally assumes the form like a leaf. Thus comets are produced. If the ignited wind falls into the cold, it becomes dark again and is mixed of itself with similar air.

9. This flashing lightning only happens when, the winds contending and clouds dashing together by the power of the winds, the crashing arises, for the fire from the celestial fire is pulled off by the crash. For it is caused by the thunder before the lightning; but because we have sharper sight,

¹ The text transliterates the Greek noun ῥομφαία (romphaia) rather than translating with a Latin noun such as *gladius* or *ferrum*.

² *Defectio* is the technical term for ‘An eclipse (of a heavenly body)’ (*OLD*, 498).

³ The verb is singular.

⁴ This time it translates, and the noun is *gladius*.

⁵ Strictly, *fulgur* is ‘a lightning flash’ as opposed to *fulmen* ‘a thunderbolt’, appearing in the next paragraph.

⁶ In contrast to the Greek, the Latin is unambiguous in its translation.

we first see the lightning, then we hear the thunder which is slower to be heard. See, the proof of this thing for you. If somebody cuts down firewood at a distance from you, you see the inserted axe; a little while after you hear the sound.