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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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By Charles Fitzhugh Talman,
Authority on Meteorology.

OPPOSITION TO LIGHTNING-RODS

Nowadays, when churches throughout Christendom are, as a rule, equipped with lightning-rods, it is difficult to realize the violent opposition that religious fanaticism once offered to the use of these devices even on secular buildings.

The great earthquake of November 18, 1755, in New England was widely ascribed to Franklin's then newly invented rod. The terrible Lisbon earthquake had occurred in the same month. The Rev. Thomas Prince, pastor of the Old South Church, published a sermon on this subject and expressed the opinion that the frequency of these disasters was due to the erection of "iron points invented by the sagacious Mr. Franklin." He goes on: "In Boston are more erected than anywhere else in New England, and Boston seems to be more dreadfully shaken."

Three years later, John Adams, speaking of a conversation with Arbuthnot, a Boston physician, says: "He began to prate upon the presumption of philosophy in erecting iron rods to draw the lightning from the clouds. He railed and foamed against the points and the presumption that erected them. He talked of presuming upon God, as Peter attempted to walk upon the water, and of attempting to control the artillery of heaven."

"As late as 1770," says Dr. Andrew D. White, "religious scruples regarding lightning-rods were still felt, the theory being that, as thunder and lightning were tokens of the divine displeasure, it was impiety to prevent their doing their full work."

In Catholic countries the use of lightning-rods was long opposed by the clergy, not only on the ground that they were designed to thwart the will of God, but also because they were the invention of a heretic.

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