

V. *A Letter from Dr. Wallis to Dr. Sloan, Secretary to the Royal Society, concerning some supposed Alteration of the Meridian Line ; which may affect the Declination of the Magnetical Needle, and the Poles Elevation.*

Oxford, June 21. 1699.

S I R,

I Received (two days since) a Letter (to me directed) from an unknown Person (without any name Subscribed, or mention of the Place from whence,) containing a Suggestion about some *Variation* of the *Meridian Line*, (which, if so, may consequently affect the variation of the *Magnetick Needle*, and the Elevation of the *Pole*,) which he desires may be Communicated ; and is *Verbatim*, as followeth,

“ For the Reverend Dr. *John Wallis* Geometry Pro-  
 “ fessor in *Oxford*, these, *June 12, 99*. *Sir*, This comes  
 “ from one who is no stranger to your Abilities, though  
 “ unknown to your Person ; however I presume on a  
 “ Minute of your Leisure, without any further Apo-  
 “ logy, than that I hope it may tend to promote a  
 “ Point of Learning. Upon Reading the *Philosophical*  
 “ *Transaction*, *Num. 241*. And as I was wondering how  
 “ an ordinary *Mathematician* could miss so easy a thing  
 “ as the drawing a true *Meridian*, I hit upon a Thought,  
 “ that *Meridians* must needs vary ; but whether in such  
 “ manner, and proportion, as appears in the Instance  
 “ of that *Transaction*, I am not able to determine :  
 “ Having contented my self with such skill in Astrono-  
 “ my as serves only to contemplate the wonderful Fa-  
 “ brick of the visible Heavens, without adding so much  
 “ Geome-

" Geometry and Arithmetick, as are needful for ma-  
 " king Calculations. What I would offer, is this, Taking  
 " for granted that the Earth moves, &c. You know,  
 " that besides the Diurnal and Annual Revolutions,  
 " there must also be a Third, to account for that slow  
 " Motion of the fixed Stars, upon the *Poles* of the  
 " Ecliptick, in about 25000 Years; which is solved by  
 " the direction of the Earth's Axis from one Point to  
 " another of the Polar Circle. And that direction be-  
 " ing nothing but a certain wobble in the Earth's Mo-  
 " tion, must needs make the Noon-shade of a Perpendi-  
 " cular not lye always in the same Line. I would re-  
 " quest, that this hint might be improved in one of the  
 " next *Transactions*, if I were sure that it were not  
 " a Blunder. But if so, I have this to excuse, that I  
 " have not made it tedious. *I am, Sir, your most*  
 " *humble Servant.*

Now, this being a new Suggestion, and which (if  
 well grounded) may be of considerable consequence  
 (both as to the Declination of the *Magnetick Needle*,  
 and the *Poles* Elevation,) and therefore deserving to be  
 well considered: And, it not being very probable, that  
 so careful a Man as *Ticho*, and those concerned in the  
 Church of *St. Petronio* (mentioned in the *Transactions*,  
*Num. 241.*) should be so much mistaken in the *Meridian*  
*Line*: I thought fit to recommend it (as is desired)  
 to your consideration, and (thereby) to the Thoughts  
 of others. But, if there be ought of this nature; it  
 must arise from a change of the *Terrestrial Poles* (here  
 on Earth) of the Earths Diurnal Motion; (not of their  
 pointing to this or that of the fixed Stars:) For, if  
 the *Poles* of this Diurnal Motion remain fixed to the  
 same place on the Earth; the *Meridians* (which pass  
 through these *Poles*) must remain the same.

*Your Humble Servant,*

John Wallis.

VI. An.