

Quotes:

[sources yet to be attributed]

"Willingly would I burn to death like Phaeton, were this the price for reaching the Sun and learning its shape, its size, and its distance."

-Eudoxus

"If God himself has waited six thousand years for someone to contemplate his works, my book can wait for a hundred."

-Johannes Kepler

"..I discovered further movement, and only then did I conclude that Mercury had come in on his splendid wings."

-Pierre Gassendi commenting on the first observed transit of Mercury in 1631

"To give up the study of philosophy on account of the difficulties in my way was weak and unworthy of my soul. I decided, therefore, that weariness in study was to be overcome by industry; poverty by patience, since there was no other way; in default of a Master I must use astronomical books."

-Jeremiah Horrocks

"But America! Venus! what riches dost thou squander on unworthy regions which attempt to repay such favours with gold, the paltry product of their mines. Let these barbarians keep their precious metals to themselves, the incentives to evil which we are content to do without. These rude people would indeed ask from us too much should they deprive us of all those celestial riches, the use of which they are not able to comprehend."

-Jeremiah Horrocks

"I omitted no available opportunity of observing her ingress...being called away in the intervals by business of the highest importance which, for these ornamental pursuits, I could not with propriety neglect."

-Jeremiah Horrocks

"...the clouds, as if by divine interposition, were entirely dispersed, and I was once more invited to the grateful task of repeating my observations. I then beheld a most agreeable spectacle, the object of my sanguine wishes...I could scarcely have wished for a more extended period."

-Jeremiah Horrocks

"[William Crabtree] was gratified by beholding the pleasing spectacle of Venus upon the Sun's disc. Rapt in contemplation, he stood for some time motionless, scarcely trusting his own senses, through an excess of joy."

-Jeremiah Horrocks

"Thy return Posterity shall witness. Years must roll away, but then at length the splendid sight again shall greet our distant children's eyes."

-Jeremiah Horrocks

"Scarce any problem will appear more hard and difficult, than that of determining the distance of the Sun from the Earth very near the truth: but even this...will without much labour be effected."

-Edmond Halley

"This sight...is by far the noblest astronomy affords..."

-Edmond Halley

"I earnestly wish them all imaginable success; in the first place that they may not, by the unseasonable obscurity of a cloudy sky, be deprived of this most desirable sight; and then, that having ascertained with more exactness the magnitudes of the planetary orbits, it may redound to their eternal fame and glory."

-Edmond Halley

"We will not proceed thither [to Bencoolen], let the consequence be what it will."

-Charles Mason

Pleasures of the like nature may sometimes be experienced; but at this instant, I truly enjoyed that of my observation, and was delighted with the hopes of its being still useful to posterity, when I had quitted this life."

Jean-Baptiste Chappe d' Auteroche

"Liquor gives us the necessary strength for determining the distance of the Earth from the Sun."

-Alexandre-Gui Pingré

"That is the fate which often attends astronomers...exiling myself from my motherland, only to be the spectator of a fatal cloud, which arrived in front of the Sun at the precise moment of my observation, snatching from me the fruit of my efforts and exertions."

-Guillaume Joseph Hyacinthe Jean Baptiste Le Gentil

"I know that I have only a little time left to live, but I have fulfilled my aim and I die content."

-Jean-Baptiste Chappe d' Auteroche

"...the several Powers of Europe will again contend which of them shall be most instrumental in contributing to the solution of this grand problem. Posterity must reflect with infinite regret upon their negligence or remissness, because the loss cannot be repaired by the united efforts of industry, genius or power."

-Thomas Hornsby

"When we consider the ingenuity of the method employed in arriving at this determination [of the Astronomical Unit], and the refined nature of the process by which it is carried into effect, we cannot refrain from acknowledging it to be one of the noblest triumphs which the human mind has ever achieved in the study of physical science."

-Robert Grant

"Still, to have seen even a part of a transit of Venus is an event to remember for a lifetime, and we felt more delight than can easily be expressed at even this slight gleam of success."

-Robert Ball

"We are now on the eve of the second transit of a pair, after which there will be no other till the twenty-first century of our era has dawned upon the earth, and the June flowers are blooming in 2004. When the last transit season occurred the intellectual world was awakening from the slumber of ages, and that wondrous scientific activity which has led to our present advanced knowledge was just beginning. What will be the state of science when the next transit season arrives God only knows. Not even our children's children will live to take part in the astronomy of that day. As for ourselves, we have to do with the present..."

-William Harkness

"L'homme propose-- Dieu dispose."

-Excerpt from 1882 *Illustrated London News*

"No reader of this [*Sky & Telescope*] magazine will purposely miss such a rare event--a chance to stand beside Edmond Halley and James Cook and take a dip into the magic waters of astronomical history."

-David Levy

"Since no living person can lay claim to having seen a Venus transit, I expect the upcoming events to be very high on many observers' 'must-see' lists."

-Dennis di Cicco

"It should be asked, how can man know these things? I have one plain answer to give, which is, that man knows how to calculate an eclipse, and also how to calculate to a minute of time when the planet Venus in making her revolutions around the sun will come in a straight line between our earth and the sun...As, therefore, man could not be able to do these things if he did not understand the solar system, and the manner in which the revolutions of the several planets or worlds are performed, the fact of calculating an eclipse, or a transit of Venus, is a proof in point that the knowledge exists; and as to a few thousand, or even a few million miles, more or less, it makes scarcely any sensible difference in such immense distances. "

-Thomas Paine

"For everyone hoping to see the transit on June 8, 2004, there are certainly lessons to be learned from the past. Those who wish to time the contacts would be well advise to practise ahead of time with computer simulations and to be well aware of the different states that might be observed near internal contact such as the halo that surrounds the planet before, and the formation and breaking of a dark thread after contact. Even with such modern trappings as radio-time signals, video and digital recording, can any observers time the contacts better than their forebears of the nineteenth or even the eighteenth century? Will we do better than our great-grandparents did in providing good information to the public for safe viewing? Will the media cover the event as thoroughly as they did in 1882? Will we be better at encouraging young people, especially, to get up early in the morning to see something no living person has ever seen? Who knows how many of them will be motivated to learn more about the heavens when they see the next occurrence of this rare spectacle unfolding exactly as predicted on 8 June 2004?"

-Peter Broughton at <http://www.rasc.ca/historical/transit.pdf>.

"I think the astronomers of the first years of the twenty first century, looking back over the long transit-less period which will then have passed, will understand the anxiety of astronomers in our own time to utilise to the full whatever opportunities the coming transits may afford...;and I venture to hope...they will not be disposed to judge over harshly what some in our own day may have regarded as an excess of zeal."

[Richard Proctor](#), *Transits of Venus, A Popular Account*, 1875

www.transitofvenus.org

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