

What is the meaning, my brethren, of these words: Creator of heaven and earth? They mean that the world does not exist of itself; that it is the work of God; that God created the heaven and earth, with all that they contain.

To create is to draw forth from nothingness, without pre-existent matter, or, as is commonly said, to make something out of nothing. Man builds a house, but he must have the material; the sculptor carves a statue, but he must have the marble; the farmer gathers the harvest, but he must sow the seed. Man, no matter how powerful, no matter how ingenious, cannot produce something of nothing: not a grain of seed, not a blade of grass, not the smallest insect that floats in the air. God alone summons into existence that which is not. He alone works in empty space and without need of material.

It is thus He created the world, when there was neither earth, nor water, nor sun, nor stars. What, then, was there at that time? God alone: infinitely happy in Himself, in His Trinity of Persons, in His eternal glory. But, having determined to call into existence reasonable creatures destined to know Him, to love Him, to be participants of His happiness, He created the universe and all the beings that it contains, visible as well as in visible.

This work of His hands the Creator has marked with the triple character of magnificence, of beauty, and of goodness, to the end that it may proclaim the magnificence, the beauty, and the goodness of its Author. To speak here only of the magnificence of the universe, let us consider, my brethren, the dimensions of the earth on which we live. It has a circumference of twenty-four thousand miles, and a diameter of eight thousand miles. Let us then look towards the firmament, and how vast the heavenly bodies which it exhibits to us. The sun is a million three hundred times larger than the earth, and is distant from it ninety-one and a half -millions of miles: a distance so great that, supposing a road from the earth to the sun, it would take more than two hundred and sixty-one years for an express train, travelling forty miles an hour by day and by night, to cover it.

Again, the spaces of the heaven are peopled with a multitude of suns; for all the little stars which we see twinkling in the sky are suns like ours, not only as large, but far more vast in their proportions. The nearest of them is twenty trillions of miles distant from us, or two hundred and twenty-seven thousand times further than the sun. What the number of these suns is we may judge from this, that with the naked eye we can count as many as fourteen hundred, whilst with the aid of a telescope the number is innumerable. The vast luminous belt which spans the heavens, and which is called the milky way, according to the observations of astronomers is simply a dense mass of suns, which, even with the aid of the telescope, by reason of their great distance appear as the blended light of luminous points. Distinguished astronomers estimate that the milky way does not number less than eighteen millions of stars.

Knowing this, and remembering that these stars are so many suns millions of times larger than our earth, must we not acknowledge that the universe proclaims the magnificence of its Creator? What are we, my brethren, in the presence of so great a God? How bold is man to dare commit sin, to offend that Imperial Majesty!

Note: Written in 1883 so scientific measurements may have changed after further study.