

Homily VI.

**St. Basil, Archbishop of Caesarea Cappadocia**



The creation of luminous bodies.

1. At the shows in the circus the spectator must join in the efforts of the athletes. This the laws of the show indicate, for they prescribe that all should have the head uncovered when present at the stadium. The object of this, in my opinion, is that each one there should not only be a spectator of the athletes, but be, in a certain measure, a true athlete himself. Thus, to investigate the great and prodigious show of creation, to understand supreme and ineffable wisdom, you must bring personal light for the contemplation of the wonders which I spread before your eyes, and help me, according to your power, in this struggle, where you are not so much judges as fellow combatants, for fear lest the truth might escape you, and lest my error might turn to your common prejudice. Why these words? It is because we propose to study the world as a whole, and to consider the universe, not by the light of worldly wisdom, but by that with which God wills to enlighten His servant, when He speaks to him in person and without enigmas. It is because it is absolutely necessary that all lovers of great and grand shows should bring a mind well prepared to study them. If sometimes, on a bright night, whilst gazing with watchful eyes on the inexpressible beauty of the stars, you have thought of the Creator of all things; if you have asked yourself who it is that has dotted heaven with such flowers, and why visible things are even more useful than beautiful; if sometimes, in the day, you have studied the marvels of light, if you have raised yourself by visible things to the invisible Being, then you are a well prepared auditor, and you can take your place in this august and blessed amphitheatre. Come in the same way that any one not knowing a town is taken by the hand and led through it; thus I am going to lead you, like strangers, through the mysterious marvels of this great city of the universe. Our first country was in this great city, whence the murderous dæmon whose enticements seduced man to slavery expelled us. There you will see man's first origin and his immediate seizure by death, brought forth by sin, the first born of the evil spirit. You will know that you are formed of earth, but the work of God's hands; much weaker than the brute, but

ordained to command beings without reason and soul; inferior as regards natural advantages, but, thanks to the privilege of reason, capable of raising yourself to heaven. If we are penetrated by these truths, we shall know ourselves, we shall know God, we shall adore our Creator, we shall serve our Master, we shall glorify our Father, we shall love our Sustainer, we shall bless our Benefactor, we shall not cease to honour the Prince of present and future life, Who, by the riches that He showers upon us in this world, makes us believe in His promises and uses present good things to strengthen our expectation of the future. Truly, if such are the good things of time, what will be those of eternity? If such is the beauty of visible things, what shall we think of invisible things? If the grandeur of heaven exceeds the measure of human intelligence, what mind shall be able to trace the nature of the everlasting? If the sun, subject to corruption, is so beautiful, so grand, so rapid in its movement, so invariable in its course; if its grandeur is in such perfect harmony with and due proportion to the universe: if, by the beauty of its nature, it shines like a brilliant eye in the middle of creation; if finally, one cannot tire of contemplating it, what will be the beauty of the Sun of Righteousness? If the blind man suffers from not seeing the material sun, what a deprivation is it for the sinner not to enjoy the true light!

2. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to divide the day from the night." Heaven and earth were the first; after them was created light; the day had been distinguished from the night, then had appeared the firmament and the dry element. The water had been gathered into the reservoir assigned to it, the earth displayed its productions, it had caused many kinds of herbs to germinate and it was adorned with all kinds of plants. However, the sun and the moon did not yet exist, in order that those who live in ignorance of God may not consider the sun as the origin and the father of light, or as the maker of all that grows out of the earth. That is why there was a fourth day, and then God said: "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven."

When once you have learnt Who spoke, think immediately of the hearer. God said, "Let there be lights...and God made two great lights." Who spoke? and Who made? Do you not see a double person? Everywhere, in mystic language, history is sown with the dogmas of theology.

The motive follows which caused the lights to be created. It was to illuminate the earth. Already light was created; why therefore say that the sun was created to give light? And, first, do not laugh at the strangeness of this expression. We do not follow your nicety about words, and we trouble ourselves but little to give them a harmonious turn. Our writers do not amuse themselves by polishing their periods, and everywhere we prefer clearness of words to sonorous expressions. See then if by this expression "to light up," the sacred writer sufficiently made his thought understood. He has put "to give light" instead of "illumination." Now there is nothing here contradictory to what has been said of light. Then the actual nature of light was produced: now the sun's body is constructed to be a vehicle for that original light. A lamp is not fire. Fire has the property of illuminating, and we have invented the lamp to light us in darkness. In the same way, the luminous bodies have been fashioned as a vehicle for that

pure, clear, and immaterial light. The Apostle speaks to us of certain lights which shine in the world without being confounded with the true light of the world, the possession of which made the saints luminaries of the souls which they instructed and drew from the darkness of ignorance. This is why the Creator of all things, made the sun in addition to that glorious light, and placed it shining in the heavens.

3. And let no one suppose it to be a thing incredible that the brightness of the light is one thing, and the body which is its material vehicle is another. First, in all composite things, we distinguish substance susceptible of quality, and the quality which it receives. The nature of whiteness is one thing, another is that of the body which is whitened; thus the natures differ which we have just seen reunited by the power of the Creator. And do not tell me that it is impossible to separate them. Even I do not pretend to be able to separate light from the body of the sun; but I maintain that that which we separate in thought, may be separated in reality by the Creator of nature. You cannot, moreover, separate the brightness of fire from the virtue of burning which it possesses; but God, who wished to attract His servant by a wonderful sight, set a fire in the burning bush, which displayed all the brilliancy of flame while its devouring property was dormant. It is that which the Psalmist affirms in saying "The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire." Thus, in the requital which awaits us after this life, a mysterious voice seems to tell us that the double nature of fire will be divided; the just will enjoy its light, and the torment of its heat will be the torture of the wicked.

In the revolutions of the moon we find anew proof of what we have advanced. When it stops and grows less it does not consume itself in all its body, but in the measure that it deposits or absorbs the light which surrounds it, it presents to us the image of its decrease or of its increase. If we wish an evident proof that the moon does not consume its body when at rest, we have only to open our eyes. If you look at it in a cloudless and clear sky, you observe, when it has taken the complete form of a crescent, that the part, which is dark and not lighted up, describes a circle equal to that which the full moon forms. Thus the eye can take in the whole circle, if it adds to the illuminated part this obscure and dark curve. And do not tell me that the light of the moon is borrowed, diminishing or increasing in proportion as it approaches or recedes from the sun. That is not now the object of our research; we only wish to prove that its body differs from the light which makes it shine. I wish you to have the same idea of the sun; except however that the one, after having once received light and having mixed it with its substance, does not lay it down again, whilst the other, turn by turn, putting off and reclothing itself again with light, proves by that which takes place in itself what we have said of the sun.

The sun and moon thus received the command to divide the day from the night. God had already separated light from darkness; then He placed their natures in opposition, so that they could not mingle, and that there could never be anything in common between darkness and light. You see what a shadow is during the day; that is precisely the nature of darkness during the night. If, at the appearance of a light, the shadow always falls on the opposite side; if in the morning it extends towards the setting sun;

if in the evening it inclines towards the rising sun, and at mid-day turns towards the north; night retires into the regions opposed to the rays of the sun, since it is by nature only the shadow of the earth. Because, in the same way that, during the day, shadow is produced by a body which intercepts the light, night comes naturally when the air which surrounds the earth is in shadow. And this is precisely what Scripture says, "God divided the light from the darkness." Thus darkness fled at the approach of light, the two being at their first creation divided by a natural antipathy. Now God commanded the sun to measure the day, and the moon, whenever she rounds her disc, to rule the night. For then these two luminaries are almost diametrically opposed; when the sun rises, the full moon disappears from the horizon, to re-appear in the east at the moment the sun sets. It matters little to our subject if in other phases the light of the moon does not correspond exactly with night. It is none the less true, that when at its perfection it makes the stars to turn pale and lightens up the earth with the splendour of its light, it reigns over the night, and in concert with the sun divides the duration of it in equal parts.

4. "And let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years." The signs which the luminaries give are necessary to human life. In fact what useful observations will long experience make us discover, if we ask without undue curiosity! What signs of rain, of drought, or of the rising of the wind, partial or general, violent or moderate! Our Lord indicates to us one of the signs given by the sun when He says, "It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering." In fact, when the sun rises through a fog, its rays are darkened, but the disc appears burning like a coal and of a bloody red colour. It is the thickness of the air which causes this appearance; as the rays of the sun do not disperse such amassed and condensed air, it cannot certainly be retained by the waves of vapour which exhale from the earth, and it will cause from superabundance of moisture a storm in the countries over which it accumulates. In the same way, when the moon is surrounded with moisture, or when the sun is encircled with what is called a halo, it is the sign of heavy rain or of a violent storm; again, in the same way, if mock suns accompany the sun in its course they foretell certain celestial phenomena. Finally, those straight lines, like the colours of the rainbow, which are seen on the clouds, announce rain, extraordinary tempests, or, in one word, a complete change in the weather.

Those who devote themselves to the observation of these bodies find signs in the different phases of the moon, as if the air, by which the earth is enveloped, were obliged to vary to correspond with its change of form. Towards the third day of the new moon, if it is sharp and clear, it is a sign of fixed fine weather. If its horns appear thick and reddish it threatens us either with heavy rain or with a gale from the South. Who does not know how useful are these signs in life? Thanks to them, the sailor keeps back his vessel in the harbour, foreseeing the perils with which the winds threaten him, and the traveller beforehand takes shelter from harm, waiting until the weather has become fairer. Thanks to them, husbandmen, busy with sowing seed or cultivating plants, are able to know which seasons are favourable to their labours. Further, the Lord has announced to us that at the dissolution of the universe, signs will appear in the sun, in the moon and in the stars. The sun shall be turned into blood and the moon shall not give her light, signs of the consummation of all things.

5. But those who overstep the borders, making the words of Scripture their apology for the art of casting nativities, pretend that our lives depend upon the motion of the heavenly bodies, and that thus the Chaldæans read in the planets that which will happen to us. By these very simple words "let them be for signs," they understand neither the variations of the weather, nor the change of seasons; they only see in them, at the will of their imagination, the distribution of human destinies. What do they say in reality? When the planets cross in the signs of the Zodiac, certain figures formed by their meeting give birth to certain destinies, and others produce different destinies.

Perhaps for clearness sake it is not useless to enter into more detail about this vain science. I will say nothing of my own to refute them; I will use their words, bringing a remedy for the infected, and for others a preservative from falling. The inventors of astrology seeing that in the extent of time many signs escaped them, divided it and enclosed each part in narrow limits, as if in the least and shortest interval, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to speak with the Apostle, the greatest difference should be found between one birth and another. Such an one is born in this moment; he will be a prince over cities and will govern the people, in the fulness of riches and power. Another is born the instant after; he will be poor, miserable, and will wander daily from door to door begging his bread. Consequently they divide the Zodiac into twelve parts, and, as the sun takes thirty days to traverse each of the twelve divisions of this unerring circle, they divide them into thirty more. Each of them forms sixty new ones, and these last are again divided into sixty. Let us see then if, in determining the birth of an infant, it will be possible to observe this rigorous division of time. The child is born. The nurse ascertains the sex; then she awaits the wail which is a sign of its life. Until then how many moments have passed do you think? The nurse announces the birth of the child to the Chaldæan: how many minutes would you count before she opens her mouth, especially if he who records the hour is outside the women's apartments? And we know that he who consults the dial, ought, whether by day or by night, to mark the hour with the most precise exactitude. What a swarm of seconds passes during this time! For the planet of nativity ought to be found, not only in one of the twelve divisions of the Zodiac, and even in one of its first subdivisions, but again in one of the sixtieth parts which divide this last, and even, to arrive at the exact truth, in one of the sixtieth subdivisions that this contains in its turn. And to obtain such minute knowledge, so impossible to grasp from this moment, each planet must be questioned to find its position as regards the signs of the Zodiac and the figures that the planets form at the moment of the child's birth. Thus, if it is impossible to find exactly the hour of birth, and if the least change can upset all, then both those who give themselves up to this imaginary science and those who listen to them open-mouthed, as if they could learn from them the future, are supremely ridiculous.

6. But what effects are produced? Such an one will have curly hair and bright eyes, because he is born under the Ram; such is the appearance of a ram. He will have noble feelings; because the Ram is born to command. He will be liberal and fertile in resources, because this animal gets rid of its fleece without

trouble, and nature immediately hastens to reclothe it. Another is born under the Bull: he will be enured to hardship and of a slavish character, because the bull bows under the yoke. Another is born under the Scorpion; like to this venomous reptile he will be a striker. He who is born under the Balance will be just, thanks to the justness of our balances. Is not this the height of folly? This Ram, from whence you draw the nativity of man, is the twelfth part of the heaven, and in entering into it the sun reaches the spring. The Balance and the Bull are likewise twelfth parts of the Zodiac. How can you see there the principal causes which influence the life of man? And why do you take animals to characterize the manners of men who enter this world? He who is born under the Ram will be liberal, not because this part of heaven gives this characteristic, but because such is the nature of the beast. Why then should we frighten ourselves by the names of these stars and undertake to persuade ourselves with these bleatings? If heaven has different characteristics derived from these animals, it is then itself subject to external influences since its causes depend on the brutes who graze in our fields. A ridiculous assertion; but how much more ridiculous the pretence of arriving at the influence on each other of things which have not the least connexion! This pretended science is a true spider's web; if a gnat or a fly, or some insect equally feeble falls into it it is held entangled; if a stronger animal approaches, it passes through without trouble, carrying the weak tissue away with it.

7. They do not, however, stop here; even our acts, where each one feels his will ruling, I mean, the practice of virtue or of vice, depend, according to them, on the influence of celestial bodies. It would be ridiculous seriously to refute such an error, but, as it holds a great many in its nets, perhaps it is better not to pass it over in silence. I would first ask them if the figures which the stars describe do not change a thousand times a day. In the perpetual motion of planets, some meet in a more rapid course, others make slower revolutions, and often in an hour we see them look at each other and then hide themselves. Now, at the hour of birth, it is very important whether one is looked upon by a beneficent star or by an evil one, to speak their language. Often then the astrologers do not seize the moment when a good star shows itself, and, on account of having let this fugitive moment escape, they enrol the newborn under the influence of a bad genius. I am compelled to use their own words. What madness! But, above all, what impiety! For the evil stars throw the blame of their wickedness upon Him Who made them. If evil is inherent in their nature, the Creator is the author of evil. If they make it themselves, they are animals endowed with the power of choice, whose acts will be free and voluntary. Is it not the height of folly to tell these lies about beings without souls? Again, what a want of sense does it show to distribute good and evil without regard to personal merit; to say that a star is beneficent because it occupies a certain place; that it becomes evil, because it is viewed by another star; and that if it moves ever so little from this figure it loses its malign influence.

But let us pass on. If, at every instant of duration, the stars vary their figures, then in these thousand changes, many times a day, there ought to be reproduced the configuration of royal births. Why then does not every day see the birth of a king? Why is there a succession on the throne from father to son? Without doubt there has never been a king who has taken measures to have his son born under the star

of royalty. For what man possesses such a power? How then did Uzziah beget Jotham, Jotham Ahaz, Ahaz Hezekiah? And by what chance did the birth of none of them happen in an hour of slavery? If the origin of our virtues and of our vices is not in ourselves, but is the fatal consequence of our birth, it is useless for legislators to prescribe for us what we ought to do, and what we ought to avoid; it is useless for judges to honour virtue and to punish vice. The guilt is not in the robber, not in the assassin: it was willed for him; it was impossible for him to hold back his hand, urged to evil by inevitable necessity. Those who laboriously cultivate the arts are the maddest of men. The labourer will make an abundant harvest without sowing seed and without sharpening his sickle. Whether he wishes it or not, the merchant will make his fortune, and will be flooded with riches by fate. As for us Christians, we shall see our great hopes vanish, since from the moment that man does not act with freedom, there is neither reward for justice, nor punishment for sin. Under the reign of necessity and of fatality there is no place for merit, the first condition of all righteous judgment. But let us stop. You who are sound in yourselves have no need to hear more, and time does not allow us to make attacks without limit against these unhappy men.

8. Let us return to the words which follow. "Let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years." We have spoken about signs. By times, we understand the succession of seasons, winter, spring, summer and autumn, which we see follow each other in so regular a course, thanks to the regularity of the movement of the luminaries. It is winter when the sun sojourns in the south and produces in abundance the shades of night in our region. The air spread over the earth is chilly, and the damp exhalations, which gather over our heads, give rise to rains, to frosts, to innumerable flakes of snow. When, returning from the southern regions, the sun is in the middle of the heavens and divides day and night into equal parts, the more it sojourns above the earth the more it brings back a mild temperature to us. Then comes spring, which makes all the plants germinate, and gives to the greater part of the trees their new life, and, by successive generation, perpetuates all the land and water animals. From thence the sun, returning to the summer solstice, in the direction of the North, gives us the longest days. And, as it travels farther in the air, it burns that which is over our heads, dries up the earth, ripens the grains and hastens the maturity of the fruits of the trees. At the epoch of its greatest heat, the shadows which the sun makes at mid-day are short, because it shines from above, from the air over our heads. Thus the longest days are those when the shadows are shortest, in the same way that the shortest days are those when the shadows are longest. It is this which happens to all of us "Hetero-skii" (shadowed-on-one-side) who inhabit the northern regions of the earth. But there are people who, two days in the year, are completely without shade at mid-day, because the sun, being perpendicularly over their heads, lights them so equally from all sides, that it could through a narrow opening shine at the bottom of a well. Thus there are some who call them "askii" (shadowless). For those who live beyond the land of spices see their shadow now on one side, now on another, the only inhabitants of this land of which the shade falls at mid-day; thus they are given the name of "amphiskii," (shadowed-on-both-sides). All these phenomena happen whilst the sun is passing into northern regions: they give us an idea of the heat thrown on the air, by the rays of the sun and of the effects that they produce. Next we pass to autumn, which breaks up the excessive heat, lessening the warmth little by little, and by a

moderate temperature brings us back without suffering to winter, to the time when the sun returns from the northern regions to the southern. It is thus that seasons, following the course of the sun, succeed each other to rule our life.

“Let them be for days” says Scripture, not to produce them but to rule them; because day and night are older than the creation of the luminaries and it is this that the psalm declares to us. “The sun to rule by day...the moon and stars to rule by night.” How does the sun rule by day? Because carrying everywhere light with it, it is no sooner risen above the horizon than it drives away darkness and brings us day. Thus we might, without self deception, define day as air lighted by the sun, or as the space of time that the sun passes in our hemisphere. The functions of the sun and moon serve further to mark years. The moon, after having twelve times run her course, forms a year which sometimes needs an intercalary month to make it exactly agree with the seasons. Such was formerly the year of the Hebrews and of the early Greeks. As to the solar year, it is the time that the sun, having started from a certain sign, takes to return to it in its normal progress.

9. “And God made two great lights.” The word “great,” if, for example we say it of the heaven of the earth or of the sea, may have an absolute sense; but ordinarily it has only a relative meaning, as a great horse, or a great ox. It is not that these animals are of an immoderate size, but that in comparison with their like they deserve the title of great. What idea shall we ourselves form here of greatness? Shall it be the idea that we have of it in the ant and in all the little creatures of nature, which we call great in comparison with those like themselves, and to show their superiority over them? Or shall we predicate greatness of the luminaries, as of the natural greatness inherent in them? As for me, I think so. If the sun and moon are great, it is not in comparison with the smaller stars, but because they have such a circumference that the splendour which they diffuse lights up the heavens and the air, embracing at the same time earth and sea. In whatever part of heaven they may be, whether rising, or setting, or in mid heaven, they appear always the same in the eyes of men, a manifest proof of their prodigious size. For the whole extent of heaven cannot make them appear greater in one place and smaller in another. Objects which we see afar off appear dwarfed to our eyes, and in measure as they approach us we can form a juster idea of their size. But there is no one who can be nearer or more distant from the sun. All the inhabitants of the earth see it at the same distance. Indians and Britons see it of the same size. The people of the East do not see it decrease in magnitude when it sets; those of the West do not find it smaller when it rises. If it is in the middle of the heavens it does not vary in either aspect. Do not be deceived by mere appearance, and because it looks a cubit’s breadth, imagine it to be no bigger. At a very great distance objects always lose size in our eyes; sight, not being able to clear the intermediary space, is as it were exhausted in the middle of its course, and only a small part of it reaches the visible object. Our power of sight is small and makes all we see seem small, affecting what it sees by its own condition. Thus, then, if sight is mistaken its testimony is fallible. Recall your own impressions and you will find in yourself the proof of my words. If you have ever from the top of a high mountain looked at a large and level plain, how big did the yokes of oxen appear to you? How big were the ploughmen



themselves? Did they not look like ants? If from the top of a commanding rock, looking over the wide sea, you cast your eyes over the vast extent how big did the greatest islands appear to you? How large did one of those barks of great tonnage, which unfurl their white sails to the blue sea, appear to you. Did it not look smaller than a dove? It is because sight, as I have just told you, loses itself in the air, becomes weak and cannot seize with exactness the object which it sees. And further: your sight shows you high mountains intersected by valleys as rounded and smooth, because it reaches only to the salient parts, and is not able, on account of its weakness, to penetrate into the valleys which separate them. It does not even preserve the form of objects, and thinks that all square towers are round. Thus all proves that at a great distance sight only presents to us obscure and confused objects. The luminary is then great, according to the witness of Scripture, and infinitely greater than it appears.

10. See again another evident proof of its greatness. Although the heaven may be full of stars without number, the light contributed by them all could not disperse the gloom of night. The sun alone, from the time that it appeared on the horizon, while it was still expected and had not yet risen completely above the earth, dispersed the darkness, outshone the stars, dissolved and diffused the air, which was hitherto thick and condensed over our heads, and produced thus the morning breeze and the dew which in fine weather streams over the earth. Could the earth with such a wide extent be lighted up entirely in one moment if an immense disc were not pouring forth its light over it? Recognise here the wisdom of the Artificer. See how He made the heat of the sun proportionate to this distance. Its heat is so regulated that it neither consumes the earth by excess, nor lets it grow cold and sterile by defect.

To all this the properties of the moon are near akin; she, too, has an immense body, whose splendour only yields to that of the sun. Our eyes, however, do not always see her in her full size. Now she presents a perfectly rounded disc, now when diminished and lessened she shows a deficiency on one side. When waxing she is shadowed on one side, and when she is waning another side is hidden. Now it is not without a secret reason of the divine Maker of the universe, that the moon appears from time to time under such different forms. It presents a striking example of our nature. Nothing is stable in man; here from nothingness he raises himself to perfection; there after having hastened to put forth his strength to attain his full greatness he suddenly is subject to gradual deterioration, and is destroyed by diminution. Thus, the sight of the moon, making us think of the rapid vicissitudes of human things, ought to teach us not to pride ourselves on the good things of this life, and not to glory in our power, not to be carried away by uncertain riches, to despise our flesh which is subject to change, and to take care of the soul, for its good is unmoved. If you cannot behold without sadness the moon losing its splendour by gradual and imperceptible decrease, how much more distressed should you be at the sight of a soul, who, after having possessed virtue, loses its beauty by neglect, and does not remain constant to its affections, but is agitated and constantly changes because its purposes are unstable. What Scripture says is very true, "As for a fool he changeth as the moon."

I believe also that the variations of the moon do not take place without exerting great influence upon the organization of animals and of all living things. This is because bodies are differently disposed at its waxing and waning. When she wanes they lose their density and become void. When she waxes and is approaching her fulness they appear to fill themselves at the same time with her, thanks to an imperceptible moisture that she emits mixed with heat, which penetrates everywhere. For proof, see how those who sleep under the moon feel abundant moisture filling their heads; see how fresh meat is quickly turned under the action of the moon; see the brain of animals, the moistest part of marine animals, the pith of trees. Evidently the moon must be, as Scripture says, of enormous size and power to make all nature thus participate in her changes.

11. On its variations depends also the condition of the air, as is proved by sudden disturbances which often come after the new moon, in the midst of a calm and of a stillness in the winds, to agitate the clouds and to hurl them against each other; as the flux and reflux in straits, and the ebb and flow of the ocean prove, so that those who live on its shores see it regularly following the revolutions of the moon. The waters of straits approach and retreat from one shore to the other during the different phases of the moon; but, when she is new, they have not an instant of rest, and move in perpetual swaying to and fro, until the moon, reappearing, regulates their reflux. As to the Western sea, we see it in its ebb and flow now return into its bed, and now overflow, as the moon draws it back by her respiration and then, by her expiration, urges it to its own boundaries.

I have entered into these details, to show you the grandeur of the luminaries, and to make you see that, in the inspired words, there is not one idle syllable. And yet my sermon has scarcely touched on any important point; there are many other discoveries about the size and distance of the sun and moon to which any one who will make a serious study of their action and of their characteristics may arrive by the aid of reason. Let me then ingenuously make an avowal of my weakness, for fear that you should measure the mighty works of the Creator by my words. The little that I have said ought the rather to make you conjecture the marvels on which I have omitted to dwell. We must not then measure the moon with the eye, but with the reason. Reason, for the discovery of truth, is much surer than the eye.

Everywhere ridiculous old women's tales, imagined in the delirium of drunkenness, have been circulated; such as that enchantments can remove the moon from its place and make it descend to the earth. How could a magician's charm shake that of which the Most High has laid the foundations? And if once torn out what place could hold it?

Do you wish from slight indications to have a proof of the moon's size? All the towns in the world, however distant from each other, equally receive the light from the moon in those streets that are

turned towards its rising. If she did not look on all face to face, those only would be entirely lighted up which were exactly opposite; as to those beyond the extremities of her disc, they would only receive diverted and oblique rays. It is this effect which the light of lamps produces in houses; if a lamp is surrounded by several persons, only the shadow of the person who is directly opposite to it is cast in a straight line, the others follow inclined lines on each side. In the same way, if the body of the moon were not of an immense and prodigious size she could not extend herself alike to all. In reality, when the moon rises in the equinoctial regions, all equally enjoy her light, both those who inhabit the icy zone, under the revolutions of the Bear, and those who dwell in the extreme south in the neighbourhood of the torrid zone. She gives us an idea of her size by appearing to be face to face with all people. Who then can deny the immensity of a body which divides itself equally over such a wide extent?

But enough on the greatness of the sun and moon. May He Who has given us intelligence to recognise in the smallest objects of creation the great wisdom of the Contriver make us find in great bodies a still higher idea of their Creator. However, compared with their Author, the sun and moon are but a fly and an ant. The whole universe cannot give us a right idea of the greatness of God; and it is only by signs, weak and slight in themselves, often by the help of the smallest insects and of the least plants, that we raise ourselves to Him. Content with these words let us offer our thanks, I to Him who has given me the ministry of the Word, you to Him who feeds you with spiritual food; Who, even at this moment, makes you find in my weak voice the strength of barley bread. May He feed you for ever, and in proportion to your faith grant you the manifestation of the Spirit in Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.