

earth. She shows us how wonderfully it is fitted for us to live upon; she shows us the perfectness of the smallest part of the humblest flower that blows; she tells us of long periods of time in the course of which the surface of the earth attained its present shape. But she knows little after all. She cannot be sure whether any other creatures, endowed with reason, possessed the world before us, nor how long the substance of the earth existed before man stood upright on it, in the image of his Maker. One thing only we know for certain: that, when God willed to do so, He created the earth, and furnished and adorned it as a home for the race of man.

Of this work the Lord speaks to Job. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measure thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched a line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

And why did the sons of God rejoice? and why are the stars said to have sung in their courses, when God made the earth? Partly, perhaps, because all loyal servants of the Most High would rejoice that His dominions were enlarged, and would triumph in this new proof of His power and glory. Perhaps, also, it was seen to add in some way to the completeness of the heavenly host, just as every leaf, as it unfolds, adds something to the perfect beauty of a tree.

And was there not a special reason why the lovers of God should rejoice when He made *this* world? Perhaps it was known that this earth would be the scene of one of the very greatest of all God's miracles of mercy and loving kindness; that though the race of man was to be made lower than the angels, and would fall far below them by sin, yet, that through redeeming grace, we should be brought nearer to God than the very angels themselves. Of the Son of God it is said, "Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." Perhaps it was known in the worlds above us that in the fulness of time the Incarnate Son would offer His flesh, and pour forth His blood to redeem the children of men, and would make peace by His cross between them and their God. This was a new wonder in heaven; and if they caught, in those realms of light, a glimpse of the coming glories of the gospel, a thrill of joy might well pass through all the worlds where God is honoured, when He created the earth, and made it ready for the use of man. The sons of God rejoiced in their several homes. The morning stars sang together when their new sister started on her course. They hailed it as another realm to send tribute to the King whom they loved; as another world, from which, daily and hourly, might rise up the sweet incense of prayer and praise, and in which, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the Lord's name might be magnified and adored.

And if there was joy on high when the world was made, it would surely not be wanting when the new creation was begun, and the Church of Christ founded, which He purchased with His