

# **In the Beginning God Created the Heavens and the Earth**

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Your Excellency, Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

Unfortunately, my brother Bernhard Philberth, is unable to be here today and he sends his apologies and greetings; however, I shall include some of his thoughts in my address. I ask for your understanding if I speak about the topic “In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth” rather than the originally intended topic “The Trinitarian Worldview and the Origin of the Universe”. My presentation will include deliberations on the origin and the structure of the cosmos as well as those on the earth and human beings.

Man’s disposition asks for an encounter with God. He is called to a conscious ‘I-You’-partnership with the Lord, his creator. As a creature he is finite, as a child of God he is eternal. In this lies his dignity which essentially distinguishes him from animals. Created for eternity, man can find no fulfilment in his earthly existence. He feels restricted by his natural limitations. He tries to push the boundaries back and to transgress them. Please don’t think that this is just conjecture. Every year I visit children’s homes on several occasions to have discussions with my young friends and provide pastoral care. As I am a priest as well as a scientist, we are never short of topics to discuss. Often the children ask: “How big is the universe? Where are its borders? How old is the universe? How did it start?” Once I said to them: “I am glad to answer your questions, but first tell me this: You don’t need to know all this for your report, for your Job, or for your daily life. Why do you want to know?” They could not find an answer and I said: “I can tell you – because you are human”.

These questions have been asked by man since his beginning. In the mythologies of ancient Babylon, the Orient and Scandinavia, everywhere the problem of boundaries surfaces. And the more man shifts from a mythical to a scientific way of thinking, the more pressing the question of boundaries becomes. What if – even in thought only – man tries to climb over the edge of the world or slide down the vault of the firmament or if he dares to climb over the Midgard serpent? There is no rational answer.

Last century, at the height of rationalism and the Enlightenment, the problem of cosmic boundaries had been thoroughly removed. It was believed that only one concept was possible, namely that of a static, infinite cosmos. That is, a spacious and motionless cosmos, which contains infinite mass, existed and will exist for an infinite length of time and expands infinitely in all directions. In those days one had a great talent for giving simplistic answers to complex questions. Matter was considered to be eternal, all that exists was considered to be matter, there was no room for free will. It was difficult to be a Christian and a scientist at the same time. But conditions have changed and today the situation is different. Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle has unmasked as nonsense the notion of matter being a law unto itself and the associated negation of free will. In the free world there would hardly be any leading scientist who still considers matter to be eternal and the only manifestation of existence.

What about the idea of a static, infinite cosmos? At the turn of the century, there was a rude awakening from this dream. H. von Seeliger proved that such a cosmos cannot exist if one respects the most elementary aspects of physics. His argument is remarkably simple. A cosmos – in those days, of course, thought of in Euclidean terms – with infinite time and space and containing uniformly scattered stars in a vast space would, according to the proven Newtonian law of gravitation, lead to immense gravitation potentials. H. von Seeliger’s calculations are so simple that they can be carried out and understood by any VCE student.

Why didn’t anyone think of this before and carry out such calculations? There can only be one convincing answer: Such questions were simply suppressed, because one did not want to lose the only remaining worldview available at that time. At the turn of the century the prevailing scientific arrogance and omniscience changed to dispirited despondency. The structure of the cosmos was not known and not even a physically plausible possibility of its construction could be given.

Only modern physics – Einstein’s physics of relativity and quantum physics (Planck, Heisenberg and others) – was able to tear the straitjacket of rational, classical thinking and make room for a wider vision. As scientists, my brother and I have for many years dealt with these questions. It is magnificent to witness that modern physics does not only make room for faith but almost leads to it. There is no space and time without matter. They belong together. The question what was before the beginning of the cosmos twenty billion years ago is empty; the cosmos is not imbedded in an absolute category of space and time, but has its own space/time. This is a statement of unimaginable significance. It points out that matter, space and time are no absolutes. Space/time is curved and subject to change. It came into existence twenty billion years ago.

The nature and astrophysical structure of matter, space and time offer many analogies with spiritual truths. Unfortunately there is no time to explain this in detail. All of a sudden, questions which have troubled theologians again and again, find answers from the perspective of modern physics. For instance, the question of predestination: How is it possible that God in his omniscience knows everything, even in advance, and yet man is free? How do we understand eternity? Does this eternity continue indefinitely, in the same manner as the number one billion is followed by one billion and one? No, eternity is quite different. It is the absolute existence of God, independent of space and time of this our cosmos which is his creation. God is the master not only of matter, life, and all created spirits, but also of space/time. Eternity does not mean a perpetual continuation in this time, but not to be bound to and restricted by it. If somebody should ask: “When did Lucifer, who revolted against God, fall from heaven? Was that millions or milliards of years ago?” it would be a silly question. Here, a transcendental event is concerned which cannot be attributed to an historical, philosophical, or astronomical time. It is always present.

My brother, Bernhard Philberth, in his book ‘Der Dreieine’ (The Triune God) has depicted creation as image or reflection of the Triune God. The book ‘Das All’ (The Universe), which we co-authored, deals with the same topic with additional cosmological investigations. Wherever you look at creation with open eyes, you come across triality. In the astronomic world we find, first of all, the great triplet of the macro-cosmos: space-time, matter, and gravity. Or, if we switch to the micro-cosmos, the cosmos of atoms and elementary particles: wave, particle, interaction. The same can also be observed in the spiritual world: Creation is the image of the Triune God.

At present we are engaged in a fight against materialism, although materialism has already been struck at its core. A new danger looms, namely the danger of pseudo-spirituality. In the end, the alternative will not be matter or spirit, but the choice between world immanence or a transcendental spirituality. If we only have the old enemy of materialism in mind, then we will not be able to win the fight against ‘New Age’ and the occult, against relativism supported by psychology, against emancipation that does not respect life, and, finally, the Anti-Christ himself. Here, we are not just dealing with a flat or dialectic materialism, but with spheres of spiritual power: the sphere of a world-immanent spirit, and – in the final analysis – the spirit of Lucifer. To be human means to be asked to choose between the spirit of this world and the Holy Spirit of God.

At this point, I would like to relate an anecdote. A few years ago, I had a discussion with a Nobel Prize winner – not a scientist – who shall remain unnamed for reasons of privacy. We had a lively discussion on economic and other matters. All of a sudden he asked: “Aren’t you a Catholic priest?” I affirmed this. “Maybe you can answer the following question: Doesn’t the Church teach that there is a God, who is transcendent, i.e. existing beyond creation, not only in a material/physical sense, but also in a spiritual sense?” I said: “Yes, that is what the Church believes and it is also my personal conviction. A God who were not transcendent but world immanent, i.e. belonging to this world, would not deserve to be called God but would be an idol only.” He continued: “You are a scientist and as such should know for system/theoretical reasons, that it is fundamentally impossible to enter from a subordinate into a higher sphere, for example from a two-dimensional into a three-dimensional world. If the Church, nonetheless,

speaks of a transcendent God – an opposite that cannot be perceived for system/theoretical reasons – then she either speaks of a God pertaining to this world, or presents a fairy-tale”. My answer went like this: “I agree totally that it is impossible to penetrate into a system/theoretical higher sphere, not even with the mind.” I even gave him a few examples for this which surprised him. I continued: “Now, will you allow me to pose a question to you? Is it possible to enter from a higher sphere – either mathematical, physical or spiritual – into a subordinate sphere, a space imbedded therein?” He said: “Yes, of course, it is possible”. And I concluded: “It has never been the teaching of the Church that man can bridge the gap between himself and God by his own intelligence, talent or strength. From the human side the gulf is infinite and cannot be bridged. Therefore, if we as humans can seek and find God, then only because the transcendent God, who is not bound by time, space, and matter, in His mercy reaches out to us. He comes to us across this gulf, which, for Him, is not infinite because He is the Creator”.

It is of greatest importance to emphasize the transcendence of God and make it plausible. In doing so, we have to take into account that contemporary man thinks to a great degree in scientific-technical terms. We should not try to corroborate Christianity by scientific means; even philosophy and theology can only be aids to, but not the basis of, faith. However, all sciences are called to help man in his search for the truth. The science of physics in particular, which has been so opposed to the Christian faith during the last century, can now be a valuable aid, even a signpost to faith.

Since the beginning of our careers, my brother and I have worked as engineers and made a living from inventions for industry. We have grown up with the mindset of technical intelligence. It requires simplicity of thought, intuition, and practical experience. Many engineers and technicians distance themselves from the Church, because their hearts are not touched by the way of thinking of theology. Often, they are not deaf to the Word of God, but to a too philosophical interpretation. It is simple – not primitive – thinking that asks: “Does the Bible really contain the Word of God; aren’t there contradictions between what Holy Scripture says and what science teaches?” This brings me to the second part of my lecture, namely planet earth and its creatures.

Let us begin with the Old Testament and the days of creation. People complain that they don’t agree with today’s knowledge. They say: “Look, not even the sequence is correct: 1st day: let there be light; 2nd day: separation of waters; 3rd day: vegetation; 4th day: sun, moon, and stars; 5th day: fish and birds; 6th day: mammals and man.” You may know what theologians are likely to reply: “Holy Scripture is not a science textbook. It is the spiritual content that matters and there is no need for statements on nature to be correct”. This is a bit of a dilemma for us, because we are convinced that God has inspired Holy Scripture in a real sense not just verbally, or, put differently, the content is inspired and not just a verbal dictation. But God does not inspire anything false. Therefore, the credibility of Holy Scripture is at stake. For this reason, previous controversies between the faith of the Bible and natural science were so destructive. This makes the discovery, that statements in Holy Scripture about natural events agree with present day scientific knowledge, all the more pleasing. I would like to illustrate this briefly with regard to the six days of creation.

The previous misunderstanding of the creation story was rooted in the classical way of thinking which assumed a fictional ‘abstract’ point of observation. But, according to the understanding of the general theory of relativity, any observer is free to choose the point of observation which seems most suitable for his description. And why should Holy Scripture not choose the location of the surface of the earth, a location chosen by God for the drama of salvation?

As per current astro-physical thinking, planet Earth was initially surrounded by a thick layer of clouds and therefore dark, about 4 500 milliard years ago. Continuous cooling triggered a downpour and it became lighter (1st day). This rain meant separation of the waters: one part remained as clouds in the sky, the other part fell to earth (2nd day). The water that fell to earth created rivers, lakes, and oceans. Through the

interaction of sedimentation and erosion and the lifting and falling of the earth's crust, firm land masses were formed, where in the dim light of the sun the first plants could grow (3rd day). The mass of clouds became thinner and finally broke up so that blue sky could be seen. Sun, moon, and stars became visible from earth. Only now 'were they there' (4th day). As early representatives of highly developed life, fish and birds appeared (5th day). A new age on earth brought forth mammals and finally humans (6th day). So the sequence of the Bible is correct. We need not be perturbed by the word 'day' used in the Bible. In the original Hebrew text the word 'yom' was used which means in general terms a period of time.

The biblical/scientific comparison of creation becomes convincing only if the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament is used as a base and not any translation. Here we find a clear distinction between the word 'create' in the sense of 'producing out of nothing', and 'create' in the sense of 'shaping', in amazing agreement with modern understanding of astronomy and palaeontology. This is only one example in the comprehensive texts of the Bible, and, as such, is no proof of the inspired nature of Holy Scripture. And yet, I find this example particularly important because the very first sentences of the Bible are concerned, as it were, the laying of the foundation stone. Therefore, I invite you to a more profound study of this subject. It is worthwhile!

In this context, I can warmly recommend the book 'Die Bibel bestätigt das Weltbild der Naturwissenschaft' (The Bible confirms Natural Science's View of the World) by Karel Claeys. In this work, the statements of the Bible referring to the real world, have been compared with modern scientific knowledge by means of a painstaking study of the language of the original text. Many of these comparisons are strikingly convincing, others are at least plausible, whilst a few seem somehow artificial but by no means unacceptable. Most of the scientific insights on which the comparisons were based could not have been foreseen in ancient times. Therefore, I agree with Karel Claeys if he sees these striking agreements as proof of the inspired nature of the Bible. The authors of Holy Scripture could not have known the connections; they wrote down insights which the all-knowing spirit of God gave them.

After having spoken about the beginning of Holy Scripture, I now would like to say something about its ending, namely the Book of Revelation or Apocalypse. My brother, Bernhard Philberth, has written the book 'Christliche Prophetie und Nuklearenergie (Christian Prophecy and Nuclear Energy)'. It illustrates how events described in the Book of Revelation – and also foretold by Jesus – which will happen at the end of time, concur with frightening precision with events that experts believe will happen in the event of a nuclear war. Here I would like to point out that this book does not proclaim fatalism but the opposite. My brother received many letters and phone calls with regard to this book which can be divided into two groups. One group of people said: "No, we don't want to be hit with a hammer", the other group said: "Thank you for this consoling book". We soon found the reason for these contradictory reactions. Those who don't want to acknowledge the terror of a looming nuclear catastrophe feel hit with a hammer when confronted with facts. But those who don't delude themselves and who – may be as professionals – know what is at stake, recognize the consoling character of the book. It shows that neither scientific developments, political power play, military manoeuvres, nor chance events determine our fate alone, but that God is the master over life and death. How long we will survive and in what manner depends on whether He continues to protect us. If we observe His commandments and respect human life we may ask for His mercy, if we do the opposite, we forfeit His mercy. Do we really consider our own life as more important than that of the unborn, whom we feel free to kill?

Now to the last part of my address, namely the origin of man. If you ask your children or grandchildren for their textbooks on sociology and biology, you will be surprised to learn how much the authors of these books believe they know. Many parents are dumbfounded when their twelve-year-old speaks of TMU and then informs his parents condescendingly that this means, of course, 'Tier-Mensch-Übergang' (transition from animal to man) two and a half million years ago. This is outrageous. All that authors have to do is to throw around such buzz words and the naive and trusting pupil takes it for granted that man descended

from animals. This is only one example of many. Wolfgang Kuhn, Professor of Biology at a Teachers' College, has told me how much trouble it causes him to correct the erroneous concepts of his school-age relatives. He is not alone in this fight. Everywhere, you come across mistakes, half-truths, and misrepresentations. It begins with the results of the experiment by Miller on the origin of the first macro-molecules capable of replication, and continues with the evolution of life, the 'TMU' mentioned before, the human brain, and the nature of man.

In the United States, two strong camps have formed. On one side you have creationists and on the other evolutionists. These two extremes no longer have anything in common with true science. I was drawn into the arguments concerning the human species in particular, but also plants and animals, more deeply than I had wanted to. I have reached a point where I don't want to use the word 'evolution' at all because it is so misleading. Often evolution is understood to mean Neo-Darwinism, which holds that higher forms of life, even man himself, evolved by mutation and selection, i.e. by spontaneous jumps in heredity and subsequent selection. This view is often connected to the doctrine that everything happened by self-organisation of matter without spiritual guidance. This is not objective science but materialistic ideology, which is unacceptable to Christians. The concept of the self-organisation of matter is a materialistic dream. Leading scientists of today consider it as disproven. Professor Vollmert will demonstrate this convincingly in a subsequent lecture.

On the other hand, as natural scientist, astronomer, and nuclear physicist, I am convinced – because of various and independent proofs – that the universe dates back 20 milliard years, the earth 4-5 milliard years, and the first sign of life 3-4 milliard years. I can't see a problem here, neither with the Bible nor with the teachings of the Church. I like to speak of 'upward leading creation'. This term expresses that plants, animals, and humans have been created and that this creation moves from the simpler to the higher forms of life. It means an upward movement which is guided by God. To differentiate between evolution guided by God, and evolution as understood in materialistic terms, my brother speaks of 'guided evolution'. How this upward moving evolution occurred is important for scientists but not from the Christian viewpoint.

All these questions have to be approached with an unbiased and simple way of thinking. This is as true for the spiritual, as it is for the technical and scientific sphere. As I said before, my brother and I live from inventions for industry and hold over 100 patents. Looking back I can say that the good inventions are always simple. Even Einstein thought simply, he did not 'over'-think but 'under'-think his contemporaries: he questioned what others thought was self-evident and found ingenious answers. So, let us ask simply: "What is a human being?"

If you ask a palaeontologist he will most likely answer: "If a creature walks on two legs and its set of teeth don't show the gap typical of monkeys, it is a human being." When I was still young and inexperienced, I continued to ask: "How do you know that that is a human being?" "Well, we describe human beings as follows: two legs, no monkey gap – that is the definition." But human beings can also be defined as creatures which make tools, cave paintings, and fire.

What is of interest to Holy Scripture and Christians is not the 'monkey gap' which might be of relevance for dentists, but the question of the relation that this creature has to God, his calling by God. "I have called you by your name". According to the Bible, God created Adam as progenitor of the human race by shaping him from clay and breathing the breath of life into him. Sometimes people question me on this: "It is not biblical when you, as a physicist, are of the opinion that first traces of life are over a milliard years old, and, in biological terms, man may have a chain of ancestors reaching far back into time". My answer to this is as follows: "This is in fact biblical because God is in no hurry. This creature from 'clay' – meaning the natural earthly substance – could have been created by Him during a time span of three milliard years, culminating in the breathing in of His spirit, which makes it human. To be human means

much more than walking on two legs, superior intelligence and awareness of self – it means to have a personal relationship with God, it means to be a child of God.

The child of God has been given responsibility. He/she has a lot of freedom but also limitations to his/her freedom. He/she makes a decision whether he/she is going to respect these limitations. This is mentioned for the first time in the second chapter of Genesis. Here it is said that God gave man the following commandment: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die”. The third chapter speaks of the serpent which asks the woman: “Did God say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?” It feigns ignorance and implies that Adam and Eve are oppressed creatures, with no freedom, who need to be set free from this tyranny. But Eve knows and says: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die’”. She knows quite well, that the midst of the garden, something central, is concerned, not just any poisonous tree that God warns them of as parents would warn their children of a belladonna plant.

As it is written, the serpent then said to the woman “You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The serpent creates the impression that God gave this commandment out of jealous imperiousness, so that man does not become like Him. God said: “You will die”. The serpent contradicts: “You will not die”. Our ancestral parents believed more in the serpent than in God, they were seduced to commit the original sin.

Shakespeare said in his drama Macbeth something like: “The devil lies even with the truth”. Man did not die, the human race survived up to this day – and yet he died: his true nature, namely the timeless bond with God was broken; man became part of the fallen world – the sphere of power of Lucifer who rebelled against God. His eternal being in God changed and became subject to constant change and the power of death.

God alone is the Lord of the Judgement. He alone sets the standard of what is good and what is evil. For those who belong to God, good is what God wants, and evil is, what God detests. If we try to find and apply a different measuring stick for good and evil, we separate ourselves from God. This is the original sin. Lucifer’s objection: “I don’t want to serve”, in the final analysis, is his refusal to recognize God’s measuring stick of good and evil. The devil sets his own standards and creates a sphere of existence which is separate from God’s dominion, namely hell. Ever since the original temptation, he seduces people anew to set their own standards of good and evil, making them belong to him and not to God.

“Eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and you will be like God”.

This satanic presumption of being equal to God today reaches apocalyptic dimensions. The recurrent idolatry of the old covenant, rejected by God, is now culminating in the idolatry of world wide ideologies. God’s place is occupied by the nation, the party, higher development, or self-realisation. Whatever serves these idols, is good. But you can recognize them by their fruit:

If that is good which serves the nation, then those considered enemies of the people, or racially or biologically inferior, have no right to live;

If that is good which serves the party, then there is no room for the glorification of God, and the one who dares to differ will be brainwashed or eliminated;

If that is good which serves the higher development of the human species, then the law is on the side of those who are successful in surviving – the weaker ones will have to make room and die;

If that is good, which serves our own self-realisation, then each one of us seeks the fulfilment of our own will, our careers, and our social prestige – and marriage and family will wither and the unborn is allowed to be killed.

Does man have to recognize God's measuring stick? Does he have to recognize God Himself? These questions touch on the deepest mystery. Man has been created for eternal salvation in God, and yet, on account of the freedom that has been granted to him, he may decide against God and for his own doom. God does not want to be master of those who reject him. He does not want to be the commander of a concentration camp. He wants to be there for those who belong to Him as children and who want to honour Him as Lord. That is why He invites us to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name" According to the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation, the elders say to God: "worthy art Thou our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power". God, the supreme sovereign, does not need our veneration, but He would like to receive it, for our own sake. Because, where people revere God, there is heaven, and where people reject God, there is hell.

Again and again, efforts are being made to anchor the dignity of man horizontally, i.e. within the world. All these attempts misjudge the nature of man and lead to a catastrophe. Then, woe to those who have the wrong race and beliefs, those who are physically or mentally handicapped, and those who, as unborn, have no social relevance yet. Only if we consider ourselves children of God are we given absolute dignity. If we honour God, we also honour our fellow human beings as images of God.

Our families are at risk from a reciprocal degradation of man, woman, and child, because of a self-centered pursuit of self-realisation, and a relentless struggle for dominance. True dignity cannot be achieved by laws and cannot be enforced through violence; it can grow only where people, out of their free will, honour and serve each other in love. The husband can only be at the head of the family if his wife grants him this dignity, and the wife can only be the heart of the family if the husband grants her this dignity.

As the most beautiful fruit of their loving union they may produce human life. Created by God in unique, untouchable dignity, the child is entrusted into the care of the parents. This is their greatest task. It means taking part in God's work of creation. Married couples are free, through procreation, to allow a new human being to enter this world; but they are not free to terminate this new life. Abortion is a terrible abuse of freedom and an arrogant incursion of God's exclusive right over life and death.

A popular catch-cry is: "let pregnant women decide for themselves". This is in blatant contradiction of a principle which, today, is universally accepted beyond all religious and confessional borders, namely, that no-one can become the disposable property of someone else. Even the unborn is entitled to the right of self determination which is so in vogue today. The parents are the custodians, not the executioners, of the unborn. Human life is something absolute. It cannot be denied at any stage, or in any state, of human existence. If we allow it to be violated unpunished at any point, it will be like the bursting of a dam; life as such is at stake, not only that of the unborn, but also that of the handicapped and the aged, and, in the end, life in any unwanted form or shape.

We are asked to make a decision in a matter where there cannot be any compromise: Either we hallow God's name and respect human life as 'in His image', and we can trust in His protection – or we set our own rules for life and death, and we expose ourselves to human arbitrariness, and, most probably, the terror of another world war.

It was right of Pope John Paul II, in 1984, to declare abortion as an unspeakable crime and to say: "If the weak are already vulnerable at the time of conception, then they will also be vulnerable in old age ..... or by means of the destructiveness of nuclear weapons".