

The Strange New World within the Bible¹

By Karl Barth

We are to attempt to find an answer to the question, What is there within the Bible? What sort of house is it to which the Bible is the door? What sort of country is spread before our eyes when we throw the Bible open?

We are with Abraham in Haran. We hear a call which commands him: Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land that I will show thee! We hear a promise: I will make of thee a great nation. And Abraham believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. What is the meaning of all this? We can but feel that there is something behind these words and experiences. But what?

We are with Moses in the wilderness. For forty years he has been living among the sheep, doing penance for an over-hasty act. What change has come over him? We are not told; it is apparently not our concern. But suddenly there comes to him also a call: Moses, Moses! — a great command: Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that [29] thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt!—and a simple assurance: Certainly I will be with thee. Here again are words and experiences which seem at first to be nothing but riddles. We do not read the like either in the daily papers or in other books. What lies behind?

It is a time of severe oppression in the land of Canaan. Under the oak at Ophrah stands the farmer's son, Gideon. The "angel of the Lord" appears to him, and says, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. He sees nothing amiss in protesting, If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? But "the Lord" knows how to bring him to silence: Go in this thy might, and *thou* shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not *I* sent thee?

In the tabernacle at Shiloh lies the young Samuel. Again a call: Samuel, Samuel! And the pious priest Eli, to whom he runs, wisely advises him to lie down again. He obeys and sleeps until, the call returning and returning, he can no longer sleep; and the thought comes to the pious Eli: It might be ... ! And Samuel must hear and obey.

We read all this, but what do we read behind it? We are aware of something like the tremors of an earthquake or like the ceaseless thundering of ocean waves against thin dikes; but what really is it that beats at the barrier and seeks entrance here?

We remember how Elijah felt himself called of "the Lord" to offer defiance to the whole authority of his king, and then himself had to make the [30] acquaintance of this "Lord," not in the wind and storm but in a "still, small voice" — how Isaiah and Jeremiah wished not to speak but had to speak the secrets of divine judgment and divine blessing upon a sinful people—how, later, during the deepest humiliation of this people there stood up strange and solitary "servants of God" who struggled ever more fiercely with the question, Where is now thy God? and forever gave the answer, Israel hath yet God for consolation! — how in the midst of all the wrongdoing and misery of the people they could but blare out, as it were, the announcement: Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee! What does it mean? Why do these men speak so? Whence is kindled all the indignation, all the pity, all the joy, all the hope and the unbounded confidence which even today we see flaring up like fire from every page of the prophets and the psalms?

Then come the incomprehensible, incomparable days, when all previous time, history, and experience seem to stand still — like the sun at Gibeon — in the presence of a man who was

¹ The original German title was simply "Die neue Welt in der Bibel."

no prophet, no poet, no hero, no thinker, and yet all of these and more! His words cause alarm, for he speaks with authority and not as we ministers. With compelling power he calls to each one: Follow me! Even to the distrustful and antagonistic he gives an irresistible impression of "eternal life." "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, [31] and the poor have the gospel preached to them." "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," cry the people. And the quieter and lonelier he becomes, and the less real "faith" he finds in the world about him, the stronger through his whole being peals one triumphant note: "I am the resurrection and the life! Because I live — ye shall live also!"

And then comes the echo, weak enough, if we compare it with that note of Easter morning—and yet strong, much too strong for our ears, accustomed as they are to the weak, pitifully weak tones of to-day—the echo which this man's life finds in a little crowd of folk who listen, watch, and wait. Here is the echo of the first courageous missionaries who felt the necessity upon them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Here is the echo of Paul: "The righteousness of God is revealed! If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. And he which hath begun a good work in you will finish it!" Here is the deep still echo of John: "Life was manifested. . . . We beheld his glory . . . Now are we the sons of God. . . . And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Then the echo ceases. The Bible is finished. Who is the man who spoke such words and lived such a life, who set these echoes ringing? And again we ask: What is there within the Bible? What is the significance of the remarkable line from Abraham to Christ? What of the chorus of prophets and apostles? and what is the burden of their song? [32] What is the one truth that these voices evidently all desire to announce, each in its own tone, each in its own way? "What lies between the strange statement, In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, and the equally strange cry of longing, Even so, come, Lord Jesus! What is there behind all this, that labors for expression"?

It is a dangerous question. We might do better not to come too near this burning bush. For we are sure to betray what is — behind *us*! The Bible gives to every man and to every era such answers to their questions as they deserve. We shall always find in it as much as we seek and no more: high and divine content if it is high and divine content that we seek; transitory and "historical" content, if it is transitory and "historical" content that we seek—nothing whatever, if it is nothing whatever that we seek. The hungry are satisfied by it, and to the satisfied it is surfeiting before they have opened it. The question, What is within the Bible? has a mortifying way of converting itself into the opposing question, Well, what are you looking for, and who are you, pray, who make bold to look?

But in spite of all this danger of making embarrassing discoveries in ourselves, we must yet trust ourselves to ask our question. Moreover, we must trust ourselves to reach eagerly for an answer which is really much too large for us, for which we really are not yet ready, and of which we do not seem worthy, since it is a fruit which our own longing, striving, and inner labor have not planted. What [33] this fruit, this answer, is, is suggested by the title of my address: within the Bible there is a strange, new world, the world of God. This answer is the same as that which came to the first martyr, Stephen: Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Neither by the earnestness of our belief nor by the depth and richness of our experience have we deserved the right to this answer. What I shall have to say about it will be only a small and unsatisfying part of it. We must openly confess that we are reaching far beyond ourselves. But that is just the point: if we wish to come to grips with the contents of the Bible, we must dare to reach far beyond ourselves. The Book admits of nothing less. For, besides giving to every one of us what he rightly deserves—to one, much, to another, something, to a third, nothing—it leaves us no rest whatever, if

we are in earnest, once with our shortsighted eyes and awkward fingers we have found the answer in it that we deserve. Such an answer is something but, as we soon realize, not everything. It may satisfy us for a few years, but we simply cannot be content with it forever. Ere long the Bible says to us, in a manner candid and friendly enough, with regard to the "versions" we make of it: "These may be you, but they are not I! They may perhaps suit you, meeting the demands of your thought and temperament, of your era and your 'circle,' of your religious or philosophical theories. You wanted to be mirrored in me, and now you have really found in me [34] your own reflection. But now I bid you come seek *me*, as well. Seek what is here." It is the Bible itself, it is the straight inexorable logic of its on-march which drives us out beyond ourselves and invites us, without regard to our worthiness or unworthiness, to reach for the last highest answer, in which all is said that can be said, although we can hardly understand and only stammeringly express it. And that answer is: A new world, the world of God. There is a spirit in the Bible that allows us to stop awhile and play among secondary things as is our wont — but presently it begins to press us on; and however we may object that we are only weak, imperfect, and most average folk, it presses us on to the primary fact, whether we will or no. There is a river in the Bible that carries us away, once we have entrusted our destiny to it—away from ourselves to the sea. The Holy Scriptures will interpret themselves in spite of all our human limitations, "We need only dare to follow this drive, this spirit, this river, to grow out beyond ourselves toward the highest answer. This daring is *faith*; and we read the Bible rightly, not when we do so with false modesty, restraint, and attempted sobriety, for these are passive qualities, but when we read it in faith. And the invitation to dare and to reach toward the highest, even though we do not deserve it, is the expression of *grace* in the Bible: the Bible unfolds to us as we are met, guided, drawn on, and made to grow by the grace of God. What is there within the Bible? *History!* The [35] history of a remarkable, even unique, people; the history of powerful, mentally vigorous personalities; the history of Christianity in its beginnings — a history of men and ideas in which anyone who considers himself educated must be interested, if for no other reason than because of its effects upon the times following and the present time.

Now one can content himself for a time with this answer and find in it many true and beautiful possibilities. The Bible is full of history; religious history, literary history, cultural history, world history, and human history of every sort. A picture full of animation and color is unrolled before all who approach the Bible with open eyes.

But the pleasure is short-lived: the picture, on closer inspection, proves quite incomprehensible and flat, if it is meant only for history. The man who is looking for history or for stories will be glad after a little to turn from the Bible to the morning paper or to other books. For when we study history and amuse ourselves with stories, we are always wanting to know: How did it all happen? How is it that one event follows another? What are the natural causes of things? *Why* did the people speak such words and live such lives? It is just at the most decisive points of its history that the Bible gives no answer to our *Why*. Such is the case, indeed, not only with the Bible, but with all the truly decisive men and events of history. The greater a crisis, the less of an answer we get to our inquisitive *Why*. And *vice versa*: the smaller a man or an era, the [36] more the "historians" find to explain and establish. But the Bible meets the lover of history with silences quite unparalleled.

Why was it that the Israelitish people did not perish in the Egyptian bondage, but remained a people, or rather, in the very deepest of their need, became one? *Why?* There was a reason! Why was it that Moses was able to create a law which for purity and humanity puts us moderns only to shame? There was a reason! Why is it that Jeremiah stands there during the siege of Jerusalem with his message of doom, an enemy of the people, a man without a country? Why Jesus' healing of the sick, why his messianic consciousness, why the resurrection? Why does a Saul become a Paul? Why that other-worldly picture of Christ in the fourth

gospel? Why does John on the Isle of Patmos — ignoring the Roman Empire in its very heyday — see the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband? There was a reason!

How much trouble the Bible makes the poor research workers! There was a reason (with an exclamation point)! is hardly an adequate answer for a history; and if one can say of the incidents of the Bible only There was a reason! its history is in truth stark nonsense. Some men have felt compelled to seek grounds and explanations where there were none, and what has resulted from that procedure is a history in itself—an unhappy history into which I will not enter at this time. The Bible [37] itself, in any case, answers our eager Why neither like a sphinx, with There was a reason! nor, like a lawyer, with a thousand arguments, deductions, and parallels, but says to us, The decisive cause is *God*. Because *God* lives, speaks, and acts, there was a reason . . . !

To be sure, when we hear the word "God," it may at first seem the same as There was a reason! In the leading articles of our dailies, and in the primary history readers of our Aargau schools one does not expect to have events explained by the fact that "God created," or "God spoke!" When God enters, history for the while ceases to be, and there is nothing more to ask; for something wholly different and new begins—a history with its own distinct grounds, possibilities, and hypotheses.

The paramount question is whether we have understanding for this different, new world, or good will enough to meditate and enter upon it inwardly. Do we desire the presence of "God"? Do we dare to go whither evidently we are being led? That were "faith"! A new world projects itself into our old ordinary world. We may reject it. We may say, It is nothing; this is imagination, madness, this "God." But we may not deny nor prevent our being led by Bible "history" far out beyond what is elsewhere called history—into a new world, into the world of God.

We might also say, There is *morality* within the Bible. It is a collection of teachings and illustrations of virtue and human greatness. No one has [38] ever yet seriously questioned the fact that in their way the men of the Bible were good representative' men, from whom we have an endless amount to learn. Whether we seek practical wisdom or lofty examples of a certain type of heroism, we find them here forthwith.

And again in the long run we do not. Large parts of the Bible are almost useless to the school in its moral curriculum because they are lacking in just this wisdom and just these "good examples." The heroes of the Bible are to a certain degree quite respectable, but to serve as examples to the good, efficient, industrious, publicly educated, average citizen of Switzerland, men like Samson, David, Amos, and Peter are very ill fitted indeed; Rosa of Tannenburg, the figures of Amicis' "Courage" (*Il Cuore*), and the magnificent characters of later Swiss history are quite different people! The Bible is an embarrassment in the school and foreign to it. How shall we find in the life and teaching of Jesus something to "do" in "practical life"? Is it not as if he wished to say to us at every step "What interest have I in your 'practical life'? I have little to do with that. Follow after *me* or let me go my way!"

At certain crucial points the Bible amazes us by its remarkable indifference to our conception of good and evil. Abraham, for instance, as the highest proof of his faith desires to sacrifice his son to God; Jacob wins the birthright by a refined deception of his blind father; Elijah slays the four [39] hundred and fifty priests of Baal by the brook Kishon. Are these exactly praiseworthy examples?

And in how many phases of morality the Bible is grievously wanting! How little fundamental information it offers in regard to the difficult questions of business life, marriage, civilization,

and statecraft, with which we have to struggle! To mention only a single problem, but to us today a mortal one: how unceremoniously and constantly war is waged in the Bible! Time and again, when this question comes up, the teacher or minister must resort to various kinds of extra-Biblical material, because the New as well as the Old Testament almost completely breaks down at this point. Time and again serious Christian people who seek "comfort" and "inspiration" in the midst of personal difficulties will quietly close their Bibles and reach for the clearer-toned lyre of a Christian Fürchtegott Gellert or for the books of Hilty, if not toward psychoanalysis — where everything is so much more practicable, simple, and comprehensible. Time and again the Bible gives us the impression that it contains no instructions, counsels, or examples whatsoever, either for individuals or for nations and governments; and the impression is correct. It offers us not at all what we first seek in it.

Once more we stand before this "other" new world which begins in the Bible. In it the chief consideration is not the doings of man but the doings of God—not the various ways which we may take if we are men of good will, but the power [40] out of which good will must first be created—not the unfolding and fruition of love as we may understand it, but the existence and outpouring of eternal love, of love as God understands it — not industry, honesty, and helpfulness as we may practice them in our old ordinary world, but the establishment and growth of a new world, the world in which God and *his* morality reign. In the light of this coming world a David is a great man in spite of his adultery and bloody sword: blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity! Into this world the publicans and the harlots will go before your impeccably elegant and righteous folk of good society! In this world the true hero is the lost son, who is absolutely lost and feeding swine—and not his moral elder brother! The reality which lies behind Abraham and Moses, behind Christ and his apostles, is the world of the Father, in which morality is dispensed with because it is taken for granted. And the blood of the New Testament which seeks inflow into our veins is the will of the Father which would be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We may have grasped this as the meaning of the Bible, as *its* answer to our great and small questions, and still say: I do not need this; I do not desire it; it tells me nothing; I cannot get anywhere with it! It may be that we really cannot get anywhere with it on our present highways and byways — on our byways of church and school, for example, and, in many instances, on the byway of the personal life which we have been traveling with such [41] perseverance. There are blind alleys of a thousand types, out of which the way into the kingdom of heaven can at first lead only backwards. And it is certain that the Bible, if we read it carefully, makes straight for the point where one must decide to accept or to reject the sovereignty of God. This is the new world within the Bible. We are offered the magnificent, productive, hopeful life of a grain of seed, a new beginning, out of which all things shall be made new. One cannot learn or imitate this life of the divine seed in the new world. One can only let it live, grow, and ripen within him. One can only believe — can only hold the ground whither he has been led. Or not believe. There is no third way.

Let us seek our way out on still another side: let us start with the proposition that in the Bible we have a revelation of true *religion*, of religion defined as what we are to think concerning God, how we are to find him, and how we are to conduct ourselves in his presence — all that is included in what today we like to call "worship and service" (Frömmigkeit). The Bible as a "source-book for godly living"— how much has been said and written upon this theme in the last years! And such the Bible is. It is a treasury of truth concerning the right relation of men to the eternal and divine—but here too the same law holds: we have only to seek honestly and we shall make the plain discovery that there is something greater in the Bible than religion and "worship." Here again we have only a kind of crust which must be broken through. [42]

We have all been troubled with the thought that there are so many kinds of Christianity in the

world—Catholic Christianity and Protestant, the Christianities of the various communions and of the "groups" (Richtungen) within them, the Christianity of the old-fashioned and the Christianity of the modern—and all, all of them appealing with the same earnestness and zeal to the Bible. Each insists, *Ours* is the religion revealed in the Bible, or at least its most legitimate successor. And how is one to answer? Does it not require a generous bit of effrontery to say, "We Protestants, or we members of such and such a communion or society are right, for such and such reasons; and all the others are wrong? When once one knows how easy it is to find "reasons," the pleasure of participating in this eternal game begins to pall.

Then shall we take the position that fundamentally we are all right? Shall we dip our hands into that from which the spirit of the Bible silently turns away, the dish of tolerance which is more and more being proclaimed, especially in our national church, as the highest good?

Or may we all, jointly and severally, with our various views and various forms of worship, be— wrong? The fact is that we must seek our answer in this direction—"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar." All religions may be found in the Bible, if one will have it so; but when he looks closely, there are none at all. There is only—the "other," new, greater world! When we come to [43] the Bible with our questions—How shall I think of God and the universe? How arrive at the divine? How present myself?—it answers us, as it were, "My dear sir, these are *your* problems: you must not ask *me!* Whether it is better to hear mass or hear a sermon, whether the proper form of Christianity is to be discovered in the Salvation Army or in 'Christian Science,' whether the better belief is that of old Reverend Doctor Smith or young Reverend Mr. Jones, whether your religion should be more a religion of the understanding, of the will, or of the feelings, you can and must decide for yourself. If you do not care to enter upon *my* questions, you may, to be sure, find in me all sorts of arguments and quasi-arguments for one or another standpoint, but you will not then find what is really here." We shall find ourselves only in the midst of a vast human controversy and far, far away from reality, or what might become reality in our lives.

It is not the right human thoughts about God which form the content of the Bible, but the right divine thoughts about men. The Bible tells us not how we should talk with God but what he says to us; not how we find the way to him, but how he has sought and found the way to us; not the right relation in which we must place ourselves to him, but the covenant which he has made with all who are Abraham's spiritual children and which he has sealed once and for all in Jesus Christ. It is this which is within the Bible. The word of God is within the Bible. [44]

Our grandfathers, after all, were right when they struggled so desperately in behalf of the truth that there is revelation in the Bible and not religion only, and when they would not allow facts to be turned upside down for them even by so pious and intelligent a man as Schleiermacher. And our fathers were right when they guarded warily against being drawn out upon the shaky scaffolding of religious self-expression.

The more honestly we search the Scriptures, the surer, sooner or later, comes the answer: The right forms of worship and service?—"they are they which testify of *Me!*" We seek ourselves — we find God; and having done so stand before him with our religions, Christianities, and other notions, like blundering scholars with their A B C's. Yet we cannot be sad about it but rejoice that we have found, among all lesser considerations, the chief one, without which every form of religion, even the most perfect, is only a delusion and a snare. This chief consideration contains, again, the living grain of seed out of which a right relation to God, a service of God "in spirit and in truth," necessarily must issue, whether we lay stress more upon this detail or that. The word of God! The standpoint of God!

Once more we have every liberty of choice. We may explain: "I cannot get anywhere with this: the conception of the 'word of God' is not part of my philosophy. I still prefer the old

ordinary Christianity of my kind of 'worship' and my own particular standpoint." Or we may be willing to hear [45] what "passeth all understanding"; may desire in the power of God and the Saviour to let it grow and ripen within us according to the laws of the great life process set forth in the Bible; may obey the spirit of the Book and acknowledge God to be right instead of trying to prove ourselves right; may dare — to believe. Here we find ourselves faced once more by the question of faith. But without anticipating our answer to it, we may rest assured that in the Bible, in both the Old and the New Testaments, the theme is, so to speak, the religion of God and never once the religion of the Jews, or Christians, or heathen; that in this respect, as in others, the Bible lifts us out of the old atmosphere of man to the open portals of a new world, the world of God.

But we are not yet quite at an end. We have found in the Bible a new world, God, God's sovereignty, God's glory, God's incomprehensible love. Not the history of man but the history of God! Not the virtues of men but the virtues of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light! Not human standpoints but the standpoint of God!

Now, however, might not a last series of questions arise: Who then is God? What is his will? What are his thoughts? What is the mysterious "other," new, greater world which emerges in the Bible beyond all the ways of men, summoning us to a decision to believe or not to believe? In whom did Abraham believe? For whom did the heroes fight and conquer? Whom did the prophets prophesy? In whose power did Christ die and rise again? [46] Whose name did the Apostles proclaim? The contents of the Bible are "God." But what is the content of the contents? Something "new" breaks forth! But what is the new?

To these questions there is a series of ready answers, serious and well-founded answers taken from the Bible itself, answers to which we must listen: God is the Lord and Redeemer, the Saviour and Comforter of all the souls that turn to him; and the new world is the kingdom of blessedness which is prepared for the little flock who escape destruction. Is not this in the Bible? . . . Again: God is the fountain of life which begins its quiet murmuring when once we turn away from the externalities of the world and bow before him in silence; and the new world is the incomparable peace of such a life hid with Christ in God. Is not this also in the Bible? . . . Again: God is the Lord of the heaven which awaits us, and in which, when our journey through the sorrows and imperfections of this life is done, we are to possess and enjoy our citizenship; and the new world is just this blessed other life, the "still eternity" into which the faithful shall one day enter. This answer also comes directly from the Bible.

These are true enough answers. But are they *truth*? Are they the whole truth? Can one read or hear read even as much as two chapters from the Bible and still with good conscience say, God's word went forth to humanity, his mandate guided history from Abraham to Christ, the Holy Spirit descended [47] in tongues of fire upon the apostles at Pentecost, a Saul became a Paul and traveled over land and sea — all in order that here and there specimens of men like you and me might be "converted," find inner "peace," and by a redeeming death go some day to "heaven." Is *that* all? Is *that* all of God and his new world, of the meaning of the Bible, of the content of the contents? The powerful forces which come to expression in the Bible, the movements of peoples, the battles, and the convulsions which take place before us there, the miracles and revelations which constantly occur there, the immeasurable promises for the future which are unceasingly repeated to us there — do not all these things stand in a rather strange relation to so small a result — if that is really the only result they have? Is not God—greater than that? Even in these answers, earnest and pious as they may be, have we not measured God with our own measure, conceived God with our own conceptions, wished ourselves a God according to our own wishes? When we begin to read the Bible carefully, must we not grow beyond these answers, too?

Must we not also grow beyond the strange question, Who is God? As if we could dream of asking such a question, having willingly and sincerely allowed ourselves to be led to the gates of the new world, to the threshold of the kingdom of God! There one asks no longer. There one sees. There one hears. There one has. There one knows. There one no longer gives his petty, narrow little answers. [48] The question, Who is God? and our inadequate answers to it come only from our having halted somewhere on the way to the open gates of the new world; from our having refused somewhere to let the Bible speak to us candidly; from our having failed somewhere truly to desire to—believe. At the point of halt the truth again becomes unclear, confused, problematical—narrow, stupid, high-church, non-conformist, monotonous, or meaningless. "He that hath *seen* me hath *seen* the Father." That is it: when we allow ourselves to press on to the highest answer, when we find God in the Bible, when we dare with Paul not to be disobedient to the heavenly vision, then God stands before us as he really is. "Believing, ye *shall* receive!" God is *God*.

But who may say, I believe?—"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." It is because of our unbelief that we are so perplexed by the question, Who is God? — that we feel so small and ashamed before the fullness of the Godhead which the men and women of the Bible saw and proclaimed. It is because of our unbelief that even now I can only stammer, hint at, and make promises about that which would be opened to us if the Bible could speak to us unhindered, in the full fluency of its revelations.

Who is God? The heavenly Father! But the heavenly Father even upon *earth*, and upon earth really the *heavenly* Father. He will not allow life to be split into a "here" and "beyond." He will [49] not leave to death the task of freeing us from sin and sorrow. He will bless us, not with the power of the church but with the power of life and resurrection. In Christ he caused his word to be made flesh. He has caused eternity to dawn in place of time, or rather upon time—for what sort of eternity were it which should begin " afterwards"! He purposes naught but the establishment of a new *world*.

Who is God? The Son who has become "the mediator for my soul." But more than that: He has become the mediator for the whole world, the redeeming Word, who was in the beginning of all things and is earnestly expected by all things. He is the redeemer of my brothers and sisters. He is the redeemer of a humanity gone astray and ruled by evil spirits and powers. He is the redeemer of the groaning creation about us. The whole Bible authoritatively announces that God must be all in all; and the events of the Bible are the beginning, the glorious beginning of a new *world*.

Who is God? The Spirit in his believers, the spirit

..... by which we own
The Son who lived and died and rose;
"Which crystal clear from God's pure throne
Through quiet hearts forever flows.

But God is also that spirit (that is to say, that love and good will) which will and must break forth from quiet hearts into the world outside, that it may be manifest, visible, comprehensible: behold the tabernacle of God is with men! The Holy Spirit [50] makes a new heaven and a new earth and, therefore, new men, new families, new relationships, new politics. It has no respect for old traditions simply because they are traditions, for old solemnities simply because they are solemn, for old powers simply because they are powerful. The *Holy* Spirit has respect only for truth, for itself. The Holy Spirit establishes the righteousness of heaven in the midst of the unrighteousness of earth and will not stop nor stay until all that is dead has been brought to life and a new *world* has come into being.

This is within the Bible. It is within the Bible for us. For it we were baptized. Oh, that we dared in faith to take what grace can offer us!

I need not suggest that we all have need of this. We live in a sick old world which cries from its soul, out of deepest need: Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed! In all men, whoever and wherever and whatever and however they may be, there is a longing for exactly this which is here within the Bible. We all know that.

And now hear: "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many; and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready! ..."

This address was delivered in the church at Leutwil on February 6, 1917.

Source: Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, edited and translated by Douglas Horton (Pilgrim Press, 1928), pp. 28-50.