

THE PENTATEUCH

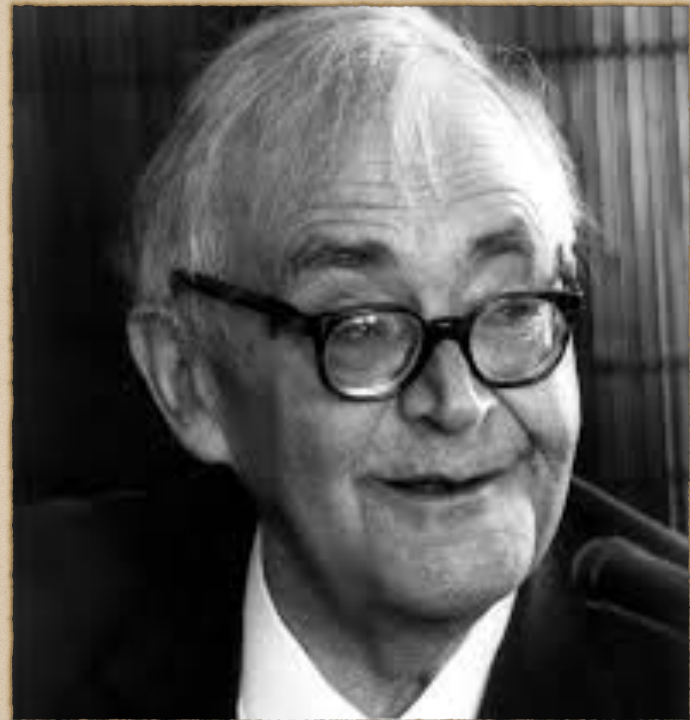


PASTOR'S CLASS WINTER 2021



“The Strange New World of the Bible”

Karl Barth



The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ Karl Barth — 1916. in Essay
 - ◆ Disillusioned as “The Great War” proceeds.
- ◆ Again in 1919 — Commentary on Romans.

The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ You cannot find morality in the Bible
- ◆ You cannot find history in the Bible
- ◆ You cannot find religion in the Bible
- ◆ WHAT YOU FIND IS . . .
 - ◆ The God who does not fit into any of our categories.
 - ◆ “Ganz Anders” = wholly other.

The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ The theological crisis of our time in the PC (USA) is a crisis created by our uncritical acceptance of a God who fits into our categories.
- ◆ This is crisis of both Conservatives & Liberals. (Barth would have called them in his time Pietists and Rationalists)

The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ Conservative ideology typically makes God familiar, manageable, and convenient to the ruling class/empire.
- ◆ Liberal ideology typically domesticates the Almighty by assuming it knows too well the mind of God. Its tendency is to reduce Gospel to social justice.
- ◆ BOTH assume they know more than can be known.

The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ So why do I start with this?
- ◆ Both Liberals, and Conservatives would do well from a re-reading of these texts which call into question all ideologies in favor of paying attention to the wild, feral God of the Bible.

The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ Barth would say that neither liberals nor conservatives “know the mind of God” until God freshly chooses to disclose it — and that disclosure is nearly always unsettling and surprising.

The Strange New World of the Bible

- ◆ My teacher (Walter Brueggemann) would insist that, “God is not yet finished disclosing who God will yet be.”
- ◆ You see how that leaves things open...

A SURVEY OF THE PENTATEUCH - GENESIS THRU DEUTERONOMY

- ❖ Introduction: What is the Pentateuch? Overview of these 5 books.
- ❖ Quick survey of chapters I-II.
- ❖ Genesis 12-19 Abraham and Sarah
- ❖ Genesis 20-22 New Birth, Deception, Testing & Providing
- ❖ Genesis 25:19-28:9 Jacob & Esau - Blessing, Birthright, Conflict, & Providence
- ❖ Genesis 28:10- 29:30 - Jacob's Conflicts with Laban

WHAT IS THE PENTATEUCH?

- ❖ **Genesis:** Creation & Pre-history, Stories of Patriarchs/Matriarchs
- ❖ **Exodus:** Egypt, the Escape, Wilderness Wandering
- ❖ **Leviticus:** A “Worship book,” About Priests, Cleanliness, Sacrifice — but *also* with some ethical/moral teachings too.
- ❖ **Numbers:** More Worship materials, Wilderness Wandering
- ❖ **Deuteronomy:** “Second Law,” Moses’ long instruction before entering the Promised Land.

WHAT NAME FOR THESE BOOKS?

- ❖ **Pentateuch/ *H'umash***: Greek & Hebrew for “five.”
- ❖ ***H'amishah H'umshey torah***: Fuller Hebrew name “five fifths of Torah.”
- ❖ **Torah**: “Teaching,” or “Instruction.” Sometimes translated “law.”
- ❖ **Books of Moses**: Acknowledging traditional ascription of authorship to Moses (though, of course, this is problematic).
- ❖ **Deuteronomy**: “Second Law,” Moses’ long instruction

WHEN WERE THESE BOOKS WRITTEN?

❖ **Complex Creation:**

- ❖ Several layers of writing/authorship. J, E, P, D.
- ❖ Likely reached final edited form in the 7th-6th century BCE.
- ❖ Philological evidence makes it clear that there are written sources as old as 1000 BCE and also much later voices in these texts.

MAJOR QUESTION WITH BIBLICAL SCHOLARS OF 20TH C.

- ❖ **Are these text (and really all of Hebrew Bible) about:**
 - ❖ **Creation**
 - ❖ **Covenant**
- ❖ **What is the dominant category?**

GENESIS 1:1-2:4



THE FIRST CREATION STORY
USING THE TRANSLATION OF ROBERT ALTER

“When God began to create heaven and earth, and the earth then was welter and waste and darkness over the deep and God’s breath hovering over the waters, God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good, and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And it was evening and it was morning, first day. And God said, “Let there be a vault in the midst of the waters, and let it divide water from water.” And God made the vault and it divided the water beneath the vault from the water above the vault, and so it was. And God called the vault Heavens, and it was evening and it was morning, second day. And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered in one place so that the dry land will appear,” and so it was. And God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of waters He called Seas, and God saw that it was good.”

“And God said, “Let the earth grow grass, plants yielding seed of each kind and trees bearing fruit of each kind, that has its seed within it upon the earth.” And so it was. And the earth put forth grass, plants yielding seed, and trees bearing fruit of each kind, and God saw that it was good. And it was evening and it was morning, third day. And God said, “Let there be lights in the vault of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and they shall be signs for the fixed times and for days and years, and they shall be lights in the vault of the heavens to light up the earth.” And so it was. And God made the two great lights, the great light for dominion of day and the small light for dominion of night, and the stars. And God placed them in the vault of the heavens to light up the earth and to have dominion over day and night and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.”