

the authority of demonstrated fact. Whatever negative effects historical criticism has had, it has rendered a positive service in emancipating exegesis from individual caprice and unfettered imagination and restoring the authority of the original intention.

When we have determined the meaning, we still have to decide whether it is true. Neither the Bible nor any other statement of what is to be believed and done can be accepted wholesale in advance. But if, having tried various sources and means of knowledge and insight, we find that one of them actually contains all that is best and most important for us, then we can say that here we have found our authority. This is what we do find in the Bible. On the most basic questions of faith and life we get from it more light than we get anywhere else. This is a statement of experience. It may not be true for all people individually; but historically for our culture, it is a fact that our best spiritual insights and highest ideals have come to us through the experiences recorded in the Bible. The present generation has received most of this indirectly, as a part of its cultural tradition. It could receive much more from the Bible directly if it knew the Bible.

Thus the question of authority cannot be settled by a simple appeal to the letter of the Bible. Truth from God may be found outside the Bible, and the fact that an idea or ideal is stated in the Bible does not guarantee its truth or divine origin. The Bible is the word of God in the sense that it contains the record of a long series of authentic and supremely important revelations, each to be understood, evaluated, and applied on its own merits, and also in the sense that as a whole, rightly understood and properly used, it expresses the highest ideals and most profound truths ~~XXI~~ given to man, including all that he needs for salvation here and hereafter. It is the permanent, universal standard of Christian faith and practice, because in it are preserved the historic origins of Christianity, by comparison with which all later variations and developments must be understood, evaluated, and, if need be, corrected. PAGES 50 and 51.