

4. Historical Criticism-- human reason was now free from the restrictions of dogma and Scripture. The interpreter could now approach the text as he found it, albeit within the presuppositions of rationalism. In this way rationalism combined with the grammatical-historical interpretation of the Reformation to produce the historical-critical or literary-critical approach to biblical interpretation which continues to have much impact even to the present.

It now dominates ~~western~~ western Protestantism today, and since Vatican II, now in Roman Catholicism to some degree

G. The Nineteenth Century

This century saw the full bloom of the historical criticism. As Robert Grant (Interpretation of the Bible, p. 153-54) states:

"Historical criticism of the Bible was not new; but it has usually been employed either by opponents of Christianity or by minority leaders within the Church. Now with the rise to importance of the German universities, the study of the Bible left the control of the Church and moved to the somewhat secularized school. This movement was like that in the twelfth century when biblical study was transferred from the cloister to the university; but the spiritual atmosphere of a nineteenth-century German university was very different from that of Paris, for example, in the Middle Ages. Above all, in the German university there was a new and romantic sense of freedom."

We should discuss a number of particulars:

1. The Rise of Theological Liberalism

The end of this century saw the development of Protestant Liberalism, which, though rooted in Germany, was to have an impact throughout Europe, Britain, and America. The term "Liberalism" as a religious notion originally stressed the idea of freedom of expression in regard to doctrinal outlook.

Its doctrinal outlook is often summed up on the basis of Adolf von Harnack's What is Christianity? (1901). Here the teaching of Jesus is presented under three main heads: the coming of the Kingdom of God; the Fatherhood of God and the infinite worth of the human soul; the command of love. Lacking any significant doctrine of sin, this teaching was excessively optimistic about human progress and the future of the race. As we shall see, it did not long survive the turn of the century in Europe.

a. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

A pietistic background.

Raised among the Moravians. He became professor of theology at Halle and later at Berlin. He presented a theology of Christian experience (pietism and Romanticism) in opposition to the rationalism of the Enlightenment and the biblicism and confession-alism of Protestant Orthodoxy. His fundamental principle was that there is in every individual a feeling of absolute dependence which bears witness to a direct relationship with God.

He rejected both orthodoxy (and its deadness as he saw it) and rationalism (and its exaltation of cold reason) for subjectivism