

**II** The NATURALISTIC Approach

1. **RATIONALISM**

- a) became dominant in the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- b) human reasoning is the ultimate authority
  - interpretation is limited to what can be understood by natural processes and human insights
- c) the Rationalist has 3 kinds of problems:
  - 1) teachings which are considered "morally unworthy" of God:
    - His commands to kill and destroy
    - His wrath and judgment
  - 2) the miraculous cannot be accepted
    - it is explained as myths arising around natural events
  - 3) statements of Scripture that seem to contradict either
    - \* other statements in Scripture
    - \* or physical, biological or behavioral science
- d) the result: there is no sure word from God

2. **BIBLICAL CRITICISM**

- = the skillful evaluation of the data to determine the truth about the Scripture
- a) this academic practice rose to prominence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

b) Biblical criticism took two forms:

- i) Textual or Lower Criticism
  - = the science of comparing text with text to determine the original text
  - most early textual critics took the original text to be divinely inspired
  - an accurate text was of utmost importance to them
- ii) Higher Criticism
  - examining the historical context and the literary features of the text/book
  - acknowledges only the human authorship of the Scripture
  - concludes the supernatural elements not to be true → the Bible has errors

3. **CULTURAL RELATIVISM**

- a) culture is the way a group of people does things or views things
  - the culture of
    - \* the author enhances understanding
    - \* the reader is important to application
- b) when the cultural context is emphasized at the expense of the obvious meaning the result is naturalistic
- c) Scripture was given to change the culture → became influential in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century

THE RESULT IS:

**Human reasoning rules in interpretation**

**III** The EXISTENTIALISTIC Approach

- 1. this approach arose early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to Rationalism
- 2. it holds that the Bible is the vehicle of God's revelation to man
  - a) the Bible on its own cannot be called the revelation of God
  - b) the Bible becomes revelation when mixed with faith by the reader
  - c) the Bible is not God's Word unless or until you believe it
  - d) the Bible is not an independent authority
- 3. it uses traditional terms with non-traditional meaning

THE RESULT IS:

**Belief & experience rule in interpretation**

**IV** The DOGMATIC Approach

- 1. interpretation must conform to a pre-determined system of doctrine
- 2. there is a need for a system of doctrine
- 3. the problem: objective study to determine the author's meaning is hindered
- 4. the independent authority of Scripture is replaced by a man-made system

THE RESULT IS:

**Tradition rules in interpretation**