

in the form of literary, philological, and historical criticism, permeated, and ultimately dominated, the scholarly literature of that country. One of the first fruits of that other and independent line of thought which we trace back to Kant was the appearance in the year 1791 of Fichte's anonymously published 'Criticism of Revelation.' It created such a stir that it was in the beginning taken for a work of Kant himself. It was followed, in the year 1793, by Kant's work, entitled 'Religion within the Limits of Pure Reason.' In these writings, as also in those of many other followers of Kant and Fichte, an idea was more systematically worked out, which we find already in Lessing, and in a vaguer form in Herder: the idea of regarding religion in its historical development, and especially revealed religion, as an educational process, which, under Divine guidance, has led mankind on to a purer morality and a more spiritual life. This idea was worked out from various points of view, more or less poetically, intellectually, ethically, or spiritually, according to the personal bias and tastes of different writers. From the position taken up in this respect by Lessing, Herder, Kant, and Fichte, the way could easily be found into all shades of orthodoxy or rationalism, of deism or supernaturalism, of theism or pantheism, of a prosaic moralising or a poetical idealisation.

As history has shown, none of these ways remained untrodden,¹ so great was the perplexity in which thinkers found themselves involved, so great the desire

¹ This is fully brought out in the 'History of Protestant Theology in Germany' by J. A. Dorner (Eng.

trans. by Robson and Taylor, 1871), see vol. ii. pp. 293-344, and especially the retrospect, pp. 345-47.

46.
First application of criticism to religion by Fichte and Kant.