

our cultural heritages. We learn Abraham Kuypeis cultural mandate from the Reformed theology in the Netherlands, so we, the students of Korea Theological Seminary in Pusan, quite often discuss Calvinism and culture. Many books on that are translated into Korean. However, we did not take our traditional culture and the values of the old religions seriously. It seems to us that Reformed Theology might be irrelevant to issues such as demon possessions, angels, ancestral worship in Korea, since it is not much concerned with these matters. Instead of that our professors may be sometimes be teaching subjects that have less prolitical value to our Korean students. Seminary professors are scratching where it didn't itch.!

Contextualization is also the urgent issue for the Korean church. While the radical Christian groups are too keen in socio-political issues neglecting the essential tasks of the Church ; the conservative group are too keen in the orthodox doctrines neglecting the social application of the Gospel to the controversial issues such as social justice and unification. We need the relevancy of Reformed Theology to the Korean contexts. We will close this paper by quoting from Dr. Richard R. De Ridder :

The real task of the witness of Christ is to enable men to be obedient within the context of covenant, to make the covenant relevant, and to let the tradition touch today's situation in a life-giving way. This is not always easy since the implications of covenant life are not always easy since the implications of covenant life are not always clear and it can not always be said with the kind of definiteness we would like what the covenant life must be like in the present. The record of the past is crystal clear concerning God's gracious and liberating deeds in the past ; to assert the same thing as positively in the present is difficult. One witnesses God's continuing work of grace when he walks the way of obedience. The stipulations of the covenant are one of its gracious elements ; God has not left his people in the dark concerning his expectations from them in their covenant life.<sup>22)</sup>

(This paper was delivered at the 2nd meeting of International Conference of Reformed Church held in Langley, British Columbia, Canada. June 18-30, 1989.)

22) Richard R. De Ridder., *Discipling the National*(Grand Rapids : Baker Book House, 1971), p. 222.

## The Rise and Nature of Historical Criticism

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#### Introduction

The roots of historical criticism lie as far back as the Enlightenment of the eighteenth

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century. While we can trace its prehistory back to the early stage of Renaissance humanism,<sup>1)</sup> it was in the period of the Enlightenment during the latter part of the seventeenth and the eighteenth century that the historical-critical method was extensively developed and applied to the study of the Bible.<sup>2)</sup> To grasp the philosophical and theological roots of historical criticism, we shall look into its birth and initial development in the era of the Enlightenment. And then we will try to determine the nature of historical criticism by examining its main presuppositions which have been consistently functioning as the very framework of the Enlightenment critics.

## 1. The Origin of Historical Criticism : The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a great watershed in the development of Western thought. Far from appearing from nowhere on the stage of history, however, the Enlightenment too had been developing under several earlier influences. The Enlightenment (Aufklärung), first of all, represents an outgrowth of the sixteenth-century Renaissance humanism which developed not only a secular world view but also the representation of a free-thinking man as an eminent creature of reason.<sup>3)</sup>

René Descartes (1596~1650), the father of modern philosophy, encouraged modern man to doubt everything except what is so evident to reason that it cannot be doubted. This throughgoing critical principle of Descartes introduced the method of systematic skepticism as the bases of philosophy and science.<sup>4)</sup> By the transference of this principle to historiogra-

- 1) See H. G. Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1985), pp.9~73 ; Harry E. Barnes, "History, its rise and development," *Encyclopedia Americana*, pp.215~218 ; Some scholars even traced the origin of historical criticism back to the ancient Church. However, many scholars generally maintained that it is improper to attribute the historical-critical method to primitive Christianity prior to the Enlightenment. Historical criticism is definitely the child of the Enlightenment. See G. Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1963), pp.22ff ; W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament : The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (Nashville : Abingdon Press, 1972), p.13.
- 2) G. F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids : Eerdmans Publishing CO., 1978), p.25.
- 3) B. Demarest, "The Bible in the Enlightenment Era," *Challenges to Inerrancy* (eds. G. Lewis & B. Demarest ; Chicago : Moody Press, 1984), p.12.
- 4) Cf. E. Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1975), p.13 : Krentz summarizes the basic principles of Descartes. "(1) Man, as thinking subject, is the center of philosophical inquiry, *Cogito, ergo sum*, (2) Nothing is accepted as true simply because it is in the tradition... (3) Reason is the sole criterion of truth."

phy, the eighteenth-century historians were assuming that all historical material was suspect until verified.<sup>5)</sup> Furthermore the modern scientific revolution, a leading factor of the Enlightenment movement, which had its culmination in the work of Isaac Newton, gave human reason the confidence to offer a completely immanent explanation of the world without recourse to the authority of the Bible.

Thus "the most prominent features" within the framework of the Enlightenment was precisely its belief in, and propagation of the autonomy of human reason. Kant defined the Enlightenment as follows :

The Enlightenment is the advance of man beyond the state of voluntary immaturity. Immaturity means the inability to use one's own understanding except under the guidance of another... *Sapere aude !* Have the courage to use your own understanding ! This is the slogan of the Enlightenment. If the question be asked, "Do we live in a free-thinking age ?" the answer is "No ; but we live in an age of free-thought."<sup>6)</sup>

This well-known epithet of Kant that "the Enlightenment dealt with man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity was in practice interpreted as a battle for freedom against all sinister, oppressing forces, among which the church was included."<sup>7)</sup> Kant, in fact, identified the Enlightenment with "the maxim of the autonomous use of the understanding" : the autonomy of human reason.<sup>8)</sup> It followed from this autonomy of reason that human reason became the standard by which all things were measured. In other words, no belief not justified before the bar of reason could be accepted as true.

The Enlightenment men stressed the essential goodness and ability of natural man, the sufficiency of natural laws to explain everything, and revolted against old forms of external authority, such as the Bible, Church, and Creed. Because they had assumed that all causation in the universe could be explained in terms of the closed continuum of cause and effect. For them, there was no reason to resort to divine activity. This assumption, as a matter of fact, had received a great impetus from the scientific assumption of Newton : "We

- 5) R. W. Lyon, "Evangelicals and Critical Historical Method," *Interpreting God's Word for Today* (eds. W. McCown & J. E. Massey ; Indiana : Warmer Press Inc., 1982), p.139.
- 6) I. Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage : Was ist Aufklärung ?" *Sammliche Werke*, 11 vols, Berlin : n.p., 1900, 4 : 169. as quoted from Bruce Demarest, *op.cit.*, p.12.
- 7) G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (trans. E. W. Leverenz & R. F. Norden ; St. Louis : Concordia Publishing House, 1977), p.14.
- 8) F. H. Heinemann, "John Toland and The Age of Reason," *Archive für Philosophie*, 4, 1950, p.64.

are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances."<sup>9)</sup> For Newton, only natural causes were the "true and sufficient" ones. Acting on this Newtonian assumption, the Enlightenment critics either denied the historical factuality of the miracles recorded in the Bible by declaring them to be contrary to reason, or tried to strip them of their miraculous characters by presenting a rational explanation of these miracles. Armed with the autonomy of critical reason and the laws of nature, they began to exert pressure on the notion of biblical authority and to reinterpret the Bible for modern man, minus the pre-scientific world-view of its human authors. The hermeneutical significance of this Enlightenment principle was that human reason is the only genuine and autonomous interpreter of all things.

Furthermore, the Enlightenment critics were stimulated by the example of the Renaissance to study classical texts, and they developed a critical sense of historiography in their handling of historical documents.<sup>10)</sup> By means of this, they believed, history can be interpreted more adequately without recourse to theological bias. When the Bible is dealt with as a historical text, according to them, it must be treated like any other human document transmitted from the past.

All these elements of the Enlightenment represent the building blocks of historical criticism. Now we devote attention to two main expressions of the Enlightenment spirit, English deism and German rationalism.

### 1.1 English Deism

English deism, the "Enlightenment philosophy of religion", is the rationalistic movement of thought which took the first steps towards inaugurating modern historical criticism into Christian theology. The basic postulate of English deism was the primacy of human reason as the source of all truth, English deists progressed to the conviction that human reason, as a meaningful creation, is the touchstone and yardstick of everything revealed in Scripture.<sup>11)</sup>

This assumption of the deists in which all truths of Scriptural revelation must accord with the judgments of human reason, led them to propound a natural religion without providential history, without miracles, and without special inspiration of Scripture. Moreover, deists believed that there could be no deviations from the fixed course of nature. Accordi-

9) Issac Newton, *Mathematical Principles*, (trans. A. Mott : University of California Press, 1960), p.389.

10) H. E. Barnes, *op. cit.*, p.215.

11) G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, p.13.

ngly, the inspiration and miracles of the Bible had to be denied as impossible contraventions of the natural order.

From this general ethos of English deism, we will examine how English deists showed a number of anticipations of later critical ideas about the Bible.

#### 1.1.1 John Toland

By showing in his *Christianity Not Mysterious*(1696), that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to reason, but also nothing above reason, John Toland (1670~1722) intended to apologize for Christianity before the forum of reason which is the absolute standard of judgment about all things.<sup>12)</sup>

Despite this assured apologetic concern, Toland rather reduced Christianity to a natural religion or a religion of reason by rationalizing all the Christian doctrines. For Toland too was preoccupied by the conviction of the Enlightenment that the natural light of reason is adequate to establish true religion. Toland assumed, as the guiding principle of his investigation, that Christianity as "the true religion must necessarily be reasonable and intelligible".<sup>13)</sup>

According to Toland, "all the doctrines and precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed divine) must consequently agree with natural reason, and our own ordinary ideas."<sup>14)</sup> By this assumption, he had constructed a critical hermeneutical principle which provided the back-bone of much of historical criticism of the Bible : "nor is there any different rule to be followed in the interpretation of Scripture from what is common to all other books."<sup>15)</sup>

Toland tried to intellectualize and rationalize the revelation and miracles of the Bible, in a way constant with human reason which is the primary source of all religious truth. Asserting the critical research of revelation, Toland argued that not only can there be

12) H. G. Reventlow, *op.cit.*, p.295.

13) John Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious* (New York & London : Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978), the Preface. XXVII.; cf. G. R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason* (Cambridge : The Cambridge University Press, 1950), 141 : Toland was trained in John Locke's (d.1704) critical epistemology. "Whereas Locke was content to show that Christianity is reasonable," Toland, a devoted disciple of Locke, tried to prove that "nothing contrary to reason and nothing above it can be a part of Christian doctrine... 'Reasonable' now means 'not mysterious'"; F. H. Heinemann, "John Toland and the Age of Reason," *Archive für Philosophie*, 4 (1950), p.59 : "whereas Locke chooses sound reasoning as man's guide, Toland accepts human reason as the measure of all things, of being and not being, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil."

14) John Toland, *op.cit.*, Sect. II., ch. III., p.46.

15) *Ibid.*, Sect. II., ch. III., p.49.



no genuine revelation contrary to reason, but also can there be no one above reason, and no supernatural signs can give it an authority which it does not intrinsically possess.<sup>16)</sup> Against the Christian view that reason is the servant of revelation, Toland asserted that reason is the critical standard of revelation.<sup>17)</sup> The role of divine revelation, according to Toland, is no more than a "means of information" for our knowledge.<sup>18)</sup> In this context, Toland could not believe anything purely upon God's word "without evidence in the things themselves", which consists in "the clear conception" man himself forms of what God says,<sup>19)</sup> because revelation has to prove itself before the court of human reason which is "the only foundation of all certitude."<sup>20)</sup> So Toland could assert that "to believe the divinity of Scripture, or the sense of any passage thereof, without rational proofs, and an evident consistency, is a blameable credulity."<sup>21)</sup> Actually anything a person believes must be within the bounds of human reason. This represents the definitive autonomy of the Enlightenment man which can justify his own actions as a free and reasonable man.

According to Toland, miracles too cannot be contrary to reason: "whatever is contrary to reason can be no miracle."<sup>22)</sup> So he reinterpreted biblical miracles and tried to rationalize them, by giving them a natural explanation. Toland explained the wondrous presence of God manifested in the pillars of cloud and fire which guided the Israelites through the wilderness (Ex., 13 : 21, 22) as a natural event: "a beacon which was carried before the people on their journey through the wilderness in a container and which by day directed them with its cloud of smoke and by night with its glowing fire."<sup>23)</sup> Here Toland was one of the first biblical critics to explain the miraculous narratives of the Bible in natural terms.

Toland explained the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Old Testament as a pagan deviation from the original Mosaic law which corresponds to the laws of nature. It is really interesting to find the same model on which the pattern of the history of Israelite religion is based in J. Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*.<sup>24)</sup> Toland was the inaugurator of

16) C. H. Talbert, "Introduction," Reimarus: Fragments, pp.16f.

17) B. Demarest, op.cit., p.19.

18) John Toland, op.cit., Sect. I., ch. III., pp. 14~16. : Here Toland mentioned the four means by which we can come to our knowledge: "the experience of the senses, the experience of the mind, humane and divine revelation," ; cf. G. R. Cragg, op.cit., p.145.

19) Ibid., Sect. II., ch. II., p.38.

20) Ibid., "The State of the Question," p.6.

21) Ibid., Sect. II., ch. I., p.36.

22) Ibid., Sect. III., ch. IV., p.150. : cf. G. R. Cragg, op.cit., p.157. : "Toland demanded that a miracle 'must be something in itself intelligible and possible'."

23) H. G. Reventlow, op.cit., p.306.

24) Ibid., pp.303~306.

historical criticism, producing results which anticipated much of the historical-critical theology in the modern time.<sup>25)</sup>

### 1.1.2 David Hume

The Enlightenment was a significant period in history. It produced English deism, German rationalism, and British empiricism. David Hume (1711~1776) was influenced by all these schools of thought, but he was also critical of each of these movements. Especially, Hume represented a way of criticizing the rational certainty of the enlightenment by his fundamental empirical skepticism.<sup>26)</sup> Therefore, he is sometimes categorized either as a British empiricist or an English deist. Even though not strictly a deist, Hume, "the fulfiller and conqueror of the Enlightenment,"<sup>27)</sup> reached many of their conclusions; for instance, like some of the deists he rejected miracles and special revelation.

To arrive at a judgment as to what the most "probable" explanation of a given event was, Hume appealed to common experience and past observation, i.e., the principle of analogy:

The maxim, by which we commonly conduct ourselves in our reasonings, is, that the objects, of which we have no experience, resemble those, of which we have; that what we have found to be most usual is always most probable; and that where there is an opposition of arguments, we ought to give the preference to such as are founded on the greatest number of past observations.<sup>28)</sup>

According to Hume, what we have observed as the uniformity of nature's law is common to our daily experience. Miracles as a violation of the laws of nature can not occur, for they are disproved by the superior evidence of the uniformity of nature's law, as witnessed by the experience of mankind:

25) Paul Tillich, *Perspectives on 19th and 20th Century Protestant Theology* (ed. C. E. Braaten; New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp.93-94. ; In his apology Reimarus, the man who exercised an influence upon Lessing, referred to John Toland as a English deist by whom he himself had been influenced. cf. D. F. Strauss, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus und Seine Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* (Bonn: Emil Strauss, 1862), p.84.

26) Paul Tillich, op.cit., p.61.

27) Ibid., p.59.

28) D. Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1955), Sect X.(of Miracles), pt.II. (ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge: Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1902), p.117. : In this case, Hume had already expounded the principle of analogy which were later taken up by E. Troeltsch.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature ; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined.<sup>29)</sup>

Thus, the laws of nature themselves provide proof against miracles. Then he argued that "nothing is esteemed a miracle if it ever happens in the common course of nature."<sup>30)</sup> In other words, anything occurring in nature must be only a natural event.

By assuming that whatever happens in the world is, because of the uniformity of human experience about nature's law, naturally caused, Hume denied the actual possibility of miracles in advance. Furthermore, he ignored even such miracles that he admits have a strong positive evidence,<sup>31)</sup> because he assumed a conclusion in advance that "no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle."<sup>32)</sup> As a matter of fact, he ruled out miracles a priori not because of an insufficient basis of testimony, but because of the assumed impossibility of all miracles. A significant point to note here is that Hume's argument was undertaken with its conclusion already foregone and pursued in a spirit that was blind even to adequate evidences.

By casting doubt on miracles, he also rejected the claim that Scripture is an inspired revelation from God, as a form of miracle. Needless to say, if Hume is granted his anti-miraculous presupposition, the Bible cannot be a divine revelation nor can any event, including the resurrection of Christ, be a miracle.<sup>33)</sup> Hume's rejection of miracles has been the chief inspiration for the modern critical rejection of the inspiration of Scripture.

He insisted that the Bible too should be tested to see whether it contains "any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number" and "any experimental reasoning concerning

29) *Ibid.*, Sect. X.(Of Miracles), pt. I., p.144.

30) *Ibid.*, Sect. X.(Of Miracles), pt. I., p.115.

31) *Ibid.*, Sect. X(Of Miracles), Pt. II., pp.124~125. : When Hume evaluated the evidence of the Jansenist miracles, he declined to accept them as valid claims though they were clearly proved even in accordance with his own assumed criteria of miracles--the credibility of witnesses and the intrinsic probability of the event allegedly witnessed(cf. Sect. X., pt. II., pp.116~121.) : "Many of the miracles were immediately proved upon the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now in the world"(p.124).

32) *Ibid.*, Sect. X.(Of Miracles), pt. I., pp.115~116.

33) N. L. Geisler, "Philosophical Presuppositions of Biblical Errancy," *Inerrancy* (ed. N. L. Geisler : Grand Rapids : Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p.322.

matter of fact and existence."<sup>34)</sup> In other words, only the statements that are true by definition or that correspond to empirical data can be said to be knowable. If any statement does not belong to these two categories, then it cannot be true. To put it differently, if a statement can not be verified or falsified according to the empirical criteria of meaning, then it must be regarded as factually meaningless : "it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."<sup>35)</sup> Since the inspiration of Scripture cannot be true by definition or by empirical verification, Scripture itself cannot be used for drawing an objective epistemological conclusion. From this Hume could conclude that the Christian religion can be believed by faith alone and can not be defended by reason : "mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity."<sup>36)</sup> By all this, in fact, Hume denied the validity of the objects of belief though he did not deny belief itself.<sup>37)</sup> Furthermore, by means of his strict empiricism Hume tried to undercut the attempt of men to treat all the problems of life only on the basis of reason. This attempt of Hume then influenced logical positivism and linguistic analysis which flourished during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>38)</sup>

When he regarded morality as simply and directly rooted in the specific moral feeling and the moral judgment, Hume contributed considerably to the awakening of historical thinking. For he was in fact presenting a psychological and historical analysis of ethics. With his critical historiography, e. g. in his *History of England*, Hume did what was typical of the Enlightenment, viz. to give to history a critical function.<sup>39)</sup> And so the older and generally accepted view of miracles that had been so popular with Christian historians was completely discredited by Hume. When Hume made an indirect reference to miracles associated with the death of Jesus of Nazareth, he clearly implied that "a critical historian will not accept any of the alleged miraculous events of the New Testament as historical."<sup>40)</sup> If we have to judge the historical events and records by the assumptions that Hume used to judge miracles, history itself would be in question. But Hume, as a historian who was also involved in the writing of history was inconsistent in not being able to rule out all of ancient history upon those criteria.<sup>41)</sup>

34) D. Hume, *op.cit.*, Sect. XIII. (Of the Academical or Skeptical Philosophy), pt. III., p.165.

35) *Ibid.*

36) *Ibid.*, Sect. X. (Of Miracles), pt. II., p.131.

37) R. J. Rushdoony, *The One and the Many* (Virginia : Thoburn Press, 1978), p.295.

38) Paul Tillich, *op.cit.*, p.62.

39) L. F. Schulze, *From Reformation to Revolution* (Potchefstroom : PU for CHE, 1980), p.17.

40) S. Brown, *Hume's Essays on Miracles and Providence* (Milton Keynes : The Open University Press, 1980), p.16 ; cf. D. Hume, *op.cit.*, Sect. X. pt. II. pp.127~129.

41) G. R. Habermas, "Skepticism : Hume," *Biblical Errancy* (ed. N. L. Geisler ; Grand Rapids :

The older idea of a gradual decline or retrogression from a primordial "golden age" was also replaced in the writings of Hume by the concept of orderly development and continuity in social, as well as natural processes.<sup>42)</sup> In *The Natural History of Religion*, Hume went a step further: he analyzed the origin of religion critically by means of his evolutionary view of history; he asserted that the earliest religion of mankind was not a monotheism, but rather a polytheism that evolved into montheism.<sup>43)</sup> By the way, few thinkers have created more doubt concerning the tenets of Christianity than Hume.<sup>44)</sup> And yet, with his successful philosophical criticism of the capabilities of human reason to arrive at a certain religious knowledge, English deism as a historical movement came to an end: its time was past.<sup>45)</sup> But it lived on, even till today, in the slightly different guise of German rationalism<sup>46)</sup> and Hume's influence can clearly be seen in Kant.

## 1.2 German Rationalism

German rationalism, as was stated above, was properly the intellectual heir of English deism. By adopting the basic principles of English deism that human reason is the primary source of religious knowledge, German rationalists gradually undermined the traditional doctrine of biblical revelation and inspiration. They separated the Word of God from the Bible as a mere human book and relativized many biblical teachings and doctrines in terms of cultural relativism. Oddly enough, what had already been taught in English deism and run its course to an end became so popular that it dominated the whole course of mental taste in Germany for generations.<sup>47)</sup> With deistic presuppositions, the historical-critical method appeared as the standard-bearer of critical reason on the stage of German rationalism. To put it more precisely, the German rationalists resolved to adopt historical criticism as their legitimate principle of biblical hermeneutics, "under the aegis of a synthesis of revelation and reason in the notion of a rational religion and in a view of history as the upward moral development of mankind."<sup>48)</sup>

Zondervan, 1981), p.42. : Hume's historical opus is *The History of England*, 6 vols (London : Gilbert and Revington, 1848).

42) H. E. Barnes, *op.cit.*, p.221.

43) G. R. Habermas, *op.cit.*, p.29.

44) *Ibid.*, p.30.

45) H. G. Reventlow, *op.cit.*, p.410.

46) B. Demarest, *op.cit.*, p.24.

47) A. L. Drummond, *German Protestantism since Luther* (London : Epworth, 1951), p.81.

48) P. Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1977), p.40.

### 1.2.1 J. S. Semler

Johann Salomo Semler (1725~1791) employed the scalpel of the historical-critical method in the study of Scripture and rejected the genuineness of the received Scriptural Canon. This critical attitude earned him the title of "the father of historical-critical theology."<sup>49)</sup>

The first critical insight of Semler was the distinction between theology and revelation.<sup>50)</sup> He asserted that theology was neither necessary for nor useful to Christian religion and life. Revelation, on the other hand, is an inner experience worked by the grace of God and inviting one to an inner religious life of devotion and an outer life of moral conduct. By means of this distinction he created a division between objectively held beliefs and subjectively lived faith, and argued that one could be a Christian at heart without accepting the theological precepts of the Bible with the mind.<sup>51)</sup>

This distinction between theology and revelation entails a new concept of the nature of revelation and Scripture. Scripture itself is not revelation or the word of God but only an occasion that may call forth in the individual soul the enlightening occurrence of revelation. In other words, the Bible does no more than furnish man with an expression of revelation. Thus, Holy Scripture and the Word of God are not at all identical for Semler,<sup>52)</sup> for Scripture merely contains the Word of God. This implies that not all parts of the Bible are inspired and that the Bible is a purely historical document which, as any other such document, is to be investigated with a purely historical and thus critical methodology.<sup>53)</sup> However true the written word or the Bible may be, it cannot remain true if it is handed down by mere repetition. Actually, for Semler the written words remained somewhat inert and dead until the subject matter they represent is grasped and became the basis for an understanding of them.<sup>54)</sup> And so Semler had to purify the substance of the message, the essential truth, from the original historical accidentals of the Bible by way of the historical-critical method. By so doing, he also made a distinction between essential truth and historical accidentals in the Bible.

Semler's teaching, moreover, undermined the orthodox doctrine of verbal inspiration.

49) E. Krentz, *op.cit.*, p.19.

50) Cf. J. S. Semler, *Lebensbeschreibung von ihm selbst abgefasst* (Halle, 1971), vol.1, p.96.

51) B. Demarest, *op.cit.*, p.28.

52) W. G. Kümmel, *The New Testament : The History of the Investigation of Its Problems* (trans. S. Gilmour & H. C. Kee ; London : SCM Press Ltd., 1973), p.63.

53) G. F. Hasel, *op.cit.*, p.21.

54) W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids : Baker Book House, 1981), p.28.



No evidence for the theory of verbal inspiration, he argued, can be found in the New Testament. The idea of verbal inspiration, in fact, can be traced back to the legend of the seventy translators of the Septuagint, who claimed to have been led by the Holy Spirit in the selection of the exact words they used. He asserted that the church appealed to the doctrine of inspiration only when it perceived the need to guarantee the contents of the Bible.<sup>55)</sup> With this analysis Semler redefined the concept of the inspiration of Scripture. B. Lohse has pointed out that change in Semler's concept of inspiration as follows :

He conceded that Scripture indeed derives from an infusion, but this infusion must not be understood as verbal inspiration but rather as "real" inspiration. This means that the inspiration concerns the reality, the content, the message of Scripture and not the Bible as a whole. In essence Semler distinguished between form and content, or, as he put it, between Scripture and the Word. The Word of God, according to him is firstly Christ himself, and them also the apostolic witness to Christ.<sup>56)</sup>

As a result it is impossible for Semler to establish the immutable dogmas and the genuine saving faith on the basis of the precepts of the Bible. He asserted that "The root of the evil(in theology) is the interchangeable use of the terms 'Scripture' and 'Word of God'," <sup>57)</sup> and that conservatives worship the Bible rather than God Himself and thus are guilty of bibliolatry.

Revelation has to be inserted in the life of reason in order to become conscious and expressed in terms of human thought which is evolutive by its very nature. If there is this inner continuity, there must be an inner coherence linking revelation with natural reason. Thus, starting from the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Semler held that natural reason must be able to provide a definite system of moral and religious truth, and consequently revealed truth must agree with the truth of reason. Rightly understood, for him revelation amounts to little more than a confirmation of the judgments of reason.

Along with the distinction between theology and revelation, Semler also made another distinction between interior and exterior religion. Interior religion is the substance of Christian life, but exterior religion is a condition necessary for its diffusion in a social, historical

55) B. Demarest, *op.cit.*, p.28.

56) As quoted from L. F. Schulze, *op.cit.*, p.17.

57) J. S. Semler, "Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon," *Texte zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte*, 5(Guetersloh, 1967), p.52, as quoted from G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, p.15.

world. He thought that the history of Christian religion developed by an evolutionary and dialectical interplay between interior and exterior religion.

Semler insisted that one must understand the past as past. According to him, we have to interpret the past as a result of social and historical circumstances that no longer exist and will never come back. We must also interpret the succession in time as an evolutive process of development with an immanent goal: the ethical and religious perfection of men.<sup>58)</sup> By this line of argument, Semler developed the theory of cultural relativism which means that Scripture was applicable only to the time and culture in which it was written. He thus maintained that the New Testament was of only temporary relevance to later generations of people living in other cultural contexts, and that the Biblical text was a witness to its own time without intending to speak to the modern reader.<sup>59)</sup> The Apostles and Christ himself could only express the new truth of the Gospel in such a way that their hearers were guided to it by religious representations that were valid in their milieu and depended upon a world view proper to the culture in which they were living.<sup>60)</sup> For Semler the New Testament gives but an initial, imperfect expression of the truth it conveyed. In other words, the Bible's teaching is only a time-bound expression of faith from which no eternal essence can be extracted. Therefore, Semler insisted that later generations were to go beyond the New Testament, a literature meaningful only to a first-century Judaic mind, cleansing its true meaning and setting it free from linguistic forms that were outstripped by the evolution of the human mind.<sup>61)</sup>

#### 1.2.2 G. E. Lessing

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729~1781), the well-known German philosopher and dramatist mentioned God as the educator of the human race. And he argued that revelation is not a thing that is past and completed but a progressive and never-ending event as God's educative process for the spiritual enrichment of the human race. Thus he said:

That which education is to the individual, revelation is to the race. Education is revelation coming to the individual man; and revelation is education which

58) J. H. Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal Development* (London: Hutchinson & CO., Ltd., 1972), p.198~9.

59) J. S. Semler, *Vorbereitung zur theologischen Hermeneutik* (Halle, 1760), pp.6~8, 149f., 160~162, as quoted from G. F. Hasel, *op.cit.*, p.28.

60) J. H. Walgrave, *op.cit.*, p.200.

61) *Ibid.*

has come, and is yet coming, to the human race.<sup>62)</sup>

Furthermore when Lessing said that revelation does not give man anything which human reason could not also discover just as education does not give man anything he might not also take from within himself,<sup>63)</sup> the meaning of revelation in his sense is only the progressive realization of the possibilities proper to and inherent in human reason.<sup>64)</sup> Therefore, revelation is actually not God's education to man but only the self-education of human reason. Though Lessing did not say it openly, he actually meant that revelation is the development of human understanding of religion. In this understanding of revelation, Lessing in fact preached the gospel of ultimate human self-sufficiency.

Lessing also conceived of history as humanity in the making, proceeding from a mere possibility toward its full actualization.<sup>65)</sup> This strain of progression that was incorporated in Lessing's view of history was in fact typical of "the humanistic optimism and naturalism of the Enlightenment."<sup>66)</sup> In this progression of history, Christianity has been and still is an important factor in the making of humanity. But, Christianity is not the last and highest form of religion; it is only a historical religion in the process of development—one among many. For if history is progressing, religion would also proceed to ever greater heights in the future. He thus held that no dogmatic creed is to be considered as final. And he constantly emphasized the everlasting search for the truth rather than the possession of truth; there is only "the one ever-active urge to find the truth."<sup>67)</sup>

Lessing wrestled with the difference between a generation directly contemporaneous with a historical event—the truth of experience—and later generations that have only histori-

62) G. E. Lessing, *The Education of the Human Race* (trans. F. W. Robertson; London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1881), paragraph 1~2.

63) *Ibid.*, paragraph 4: "Education gives to man nothing which he might not educe out of himself; it gives him that which he might educe out of himself, only quicker and more easily. In the same way, too, revelation gives nothing to the human species, which the human reason left to itself might not attain."

64) Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl* (New York: Book for Libraries Press, 1971), p.147.

65) Cf. J. H. Walgrave, *op.cit.*, pp.201~2.

66) L. F. Schulze, *op.cit.*, p.22.

67) *Lessing's Theological Writings*, III., (trans. Henry Chadwick, A. & C. Black; London, 1957), p.26., as quoted in K. Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl*, p.149; cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp.85, 61.

cal reports and can only believe them.<sup>68)</sup> According to Lessing, only the contemporary who has experienced particular events can possess the proof that they were true, while all the later historical reports or records can not convey the force of proof that the past historical events were true. In this line of Lessing's argument the historical testimonies of Scripture (virgin birth, miracles, and resurrection, etc.), by the very contingent nature of historical reports, must fall short of proved certainty. That is to say, the historical event and record of the resurrection of Christ cannot establish the certainty of religious truth that He is the Son of God, because we cannot arrive at demonstrative certainty from the contingent facts of historical events. Thus Lessing highlighted the "ugly broad ditch" between history and religious belief that cannot be bridged:

The only passage from an historical report to the foundation of eternal blessedness is the way of a leap...I cannot get across, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make the leap.<sup>69)</sup>

When the truth of any religion is not to be found in past historical testimonies, it is natural for Lessing that refuge should be taken in human reason. So he went on to say that the certainty of religious truth must be founded not on accidental data of history but on necessary truths, proved to be such by man's own reason and experience. To put it again according to his famous dictum: "the accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."<sup>70)</sup> By this radical philosophical humanism of Lessing the trustworthiness of Scripture as a historical document was completely denied and man himself was designated as the only reliable source of religious truth.

It is further interesting to note that we can hear the genuine ring of twentieth-century existentialism in Lessing who had placed considerable emphasis on the personal experience of truth. Philip Hughes pointed this out:

68) Niels Thulstrup, "Commentator's Introduction," Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p.1.

69) G.E. Lessing, as quoted from G.C. Berkouwer, *A Half Century of Theology* (trans. L. B. Smedes; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p.125.

70) G. E. Lessing, "Über den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft," *Werke* (ed. L. Zscharnack; Berlin: 1925~35), vol.23, p.44., as quoted in Cunliffe-Jones and Drewery(eds.), *History of Christian Doctrine*, p.7; this well-known dictum may have prompted Kierkegaard, the advocate of an extremely sceptical attitude to history, to write as follows: "Lessing says that from the historical account, i.e. from their admitted reliability, no conclusions can be drawn." See Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p.88.



He(Lessing) granted that if one's personal feeling of experience of truth happened to coincide with historically communicated truth, then, but only then, could the accidental truth of the latter convey the force of proof and become one with the necessary truth of reason : it must be my truth, not someone-else's.<sup>71)</sup>

All certainty, for Lessing, can therefore be personally experienced as the truth. Lessing, as a matter of fact, had struggled against the tendency to place faith within the grasp of historical criticism with its relativizing of certainty. So he asserted again and again that no certainty was possible through historical investigation. However, Lessing completely isolated faith from history and transferred it to human subjectivity. This amounts to a compromise with or a capitulation under the relativising force of historical criticism.

## 2. The Nature of Historical Criticism : Its Presuppositions and Definition

We have attempted to highlight the major philosophical and theological roots of historical criticism embedded in the Enlightenment era of the 18th century. Looking back on the origin of historical criticism, we can see the common feature that it is a product of the time, dressed in the current dominant thought of the times. This means that the historical-critical method is not an objective and neutral method but rather a subjective product conditioned by the philosophical presuppositions of the times.

From the preceding survey of the historical development, we can see several philosophical assumptions which are part and parcel of historical criticism. By way of further elaboration and documentation, we shall now proceed to take a closer look at some of the philosophical presuppositions and crucial theological consequences that are implicit in and that naturally flow from the former. We cannot, of course, attempt here a complete account of the presuppositions of historical criticism. We shall try to articulate the main premises which have been working persistently within the framework of the Enlightenment critics. And then we shall try to define historical criticism in the light of those presuppositions.

71) Philip E. Hughes, "The Problem of Historical Relativity," Scripture and Truth (eds. D.A. Carson & J. D. Woodbridge ; Grand Rapids : Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), p.179~180.

## 2.1 The Presuppositions of Historical Criticism

### 2.1.1 The Autonomy of Critical Reason

The Enlightenment, as has already been shown above, attributed definitive power to human reason ; human reason was set up as the final criterion and chief source of knowledge.

English deism then progressed to the concept that human reason is the touchstone and yardstick for whatever truth may be found in Scripture. This meant that human critical reason had triumphed over biblical revelation, and that the absolute authority of the Bible was diminished. In other words, "the priority of reason over scriptural revelation is here fully realized at the expense of the authority of the Bible."<sup>72)</sup> English deist thus treated the Bible with freedom when it did not accord with their own critical reason.

As the true spokesman of German rationalism, Kant defined the Enlightenment as "the freedom to make public use of critical reason at every point," and then he believed this freedom alone can bring about enlightenment among men.<sup>73)</sup> Finally, the Age of Reason could freely revolt against all forms of authority. All binding authorities (religious, social, and political) had to fall before the autonomous reason. So Kant could compel theologians to confront "the alternative either of supporting critical reason against the authority of the church and of church theology or of rejection critical reason as unbelief and as incompetent in regard to divine revelation."<sup>74)</sup> He wanted to place revelation (religion) within the limits of reason alone and then to evaluate it critically, using reason with sincerity and outspokenness. By advocating the free use of critical reason in matters of religion, Kant made modern men to believe in the end what they wanted to believe. That is to say, in the name of reason man set himself up as Lord over the Word of God

In the designation "the historical-critical method", "critical" has specific reference to the autonomy of human reason. As a matter of fact, since the Enlightenment the supremacy of critical reason has played a determination role as the starting-point of historical-critical investigation and also has become "the motor and the accelerator" of historical criticism. The Enlightenment critics thus redeemed human reason from the fall into sin and then gave to it a critical function to judge revelation. However, according to Gerhard Maier, critique is not the appropriate answer to revelation :

72) G. F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, p.27.

73) L. W. Beck, "Immanuel Kant ; On History," *The Library of Liberal Arts* (New York : Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p.5.

74) Charles Davis, "The Theological Career of Historical Criticism of the Bible," *Cross Currents*, 32/3, (Fall, 1982), p.276.

"For the correlative or counterpart to revelation is not critique but obedience; it is not correction...but it is a let-me-be-corrected."<sup>75)</sup>

The Enlightenment era had already come to an end. Nevertheless modern critical theologians, like the Enlightenment critics, commonly postulate the autonomy of critical reason, and widely deny the debilitating effects of sin upon the human intellect. The critical reason of modern man, as a basic presupposition of historical criticism, still continues to exercise a substantial impact on the contemporary hermeneutical procedure.

### 2.1.2. The Relativistic Nature of History

History, in a more common usage as the record of events rather than the events themselves,<sup>76)</sup> is always written from some specific perspective. This means that the historical account itself is not a mere assemblage of brute facts, but an interpreted report which is always perspectival and written from within a particular horizon. Accordingly, we do not have the so-called "presuppositionless," "objective," "neutral" account of historical events. An uninterpreted historical report is not even conceivable.<sup>77)</sup>

But the scientific objectivity of the historical-critical method has been wrongly identified with the ideal of a presuppositionless history, with the naive imperative to let the facts speak for themselves.<sup>78)</sup> This overlooked the fact that the interpretation of the historical data is determined by a particular view of history.

As a matter of fact, the historical-critical method has stemmed from modern historical thinking. Since the Enlightenment history has also become an object to be mastered by human critical reason, like every other area of knowledge. When modern man tried to objectify and classify historical events in relationship to himself, history was actually regarded as an object which in its basic structure science of history revealed to man nothing more than the boundless and subjective variability of the human itself. Furthermore, everything which has developed in the course of history has never possessed as such objective and absolute validity.<sup>79)</sup> Thus the Enlightenment view of history relativized all historical events and also carried historical investigation by virtue of the human reason that proceeds from within, from the subjective. Thenceforth, relativistic skepticism and human subjectivity

75) G. Maier, *op.cit.*, p.23.

76) H. E. Barnes, *op.cit.*, p.205.

77) T. Longman, III., "The Literary Approach to the Study of the Old Testament: Promise and Pitfalls," *JETS*, 28/4(Dec. 1985) p.395.

78) Charles Davis, *op.cit.*, p.271.

79) Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, vol.1. (trans. L. Guder; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), p.330.

have characterized and dominated all subsequent historical investigation.

Since Lessing a peculiar strain of progression, which proceeds from a mere possibility toward its full actualization, has been incorporated in the view of history. This idea of constant growth in history has been consistently strengthened by later philosophical thoughts. In the end history was regarded as the category of relativization which comprehends everything.<sup>80)</sup> Under the relativizing force of history, everything is time-bound and therefore there is nothing that is timeless true. The Christian faith and tradition are also not exempt from the relativity and uncertainty of all historical events.

Since it was assumed that the Bible were to be taken just like any other human book, the historical events in the Bible could not be exempt from the ordinary process of historical enquiry. Accordingly, the factuality and authenticity of the biblical records were to come under the relentless scrutiny of autonomous historical consciousness, and all biblical narratives were to be interpreted and their truth assessed in accordance with historical criticism. This methodological application of historical criticism to the biblical texts gave rise to a special set of problems. Especially, the historical-critical method has run into great difficulties as regards the account of biblical miracles. According to the principle of analogy which assumed the uniformity of nature's law (Hume), historical criticism has a priori ruled out all miraculous facts in the Bible. According to the principle of correlation between historical processes, the historian asserts that any interference of divine power can not happen within the continuity of the causal nexus of events. It is no wonder that when the historian himself is seen in his freedom as the creator of his history he cannot but exclude the direct intervention of God in history.

Furthermore, by means of the critical principles of historical criticism all the biblical texts and doctrines were conditioned historically, or explained rationally, and thus relativized. As a result, all the historical content of faith was cut back to the measure of an essentially secular history. By doing this, modern historical critics believed that they could provide a solid foundation for Christian faith. But they had after all subjected the validity of Christian faith to the relativistic judgment of the historian. On the other hand, historical criticism has forced theologians to free the content of their faith from any historical assertions, by patronizing the biblical texts as documents of little historical value. Though this process was materialized in the twentieth-century dialectical theology, we could already see this case in Lessing. Lessing tried to isolate faith from the relativizing force of history and transferred it to human subjectivity. By following Lessing's attempt, many modern critics

80) *Ibid.*, p.331.



too, in trying to separate faith from history, fled modern critics too, in trying to separate faith from history, fled to the safe shelter of existential individualism.

To recapitulate : on the one hand modern critics reduce the historical content of Christian faith to the relative level of secular history, and on the other hand they liberate the content of faith from the relativity of history and posit it in the area of human existence. It is interesting, suffused as it is with irony, to note that these two contrastive pursuits among historical critics were determined in terms of the same relativistic view of history. What this means is that the relativizing force of history has consistently dominated all the successive formations of different theological strata. That is to say, historical criticism has been inviting the church to engulf itself in the quagmire of relativism by uncovering and representing the historical relativity of all religious truth and record.

### 2.1.3 The Bible as a Human Book

As an immediate and necessary consequence of the two above-mentioned presuppositions Enlightenment theologians viewed the Bible as a strictly human book which must be criticized like other human books. In other words, in order to bring the Bible under the control of critical reason the Enlightenment critics had to reduce it to a compilation of literary and historical traditions exhibiting the human shortcomings. At the same time, their denial of the direct involvement of God in human history came to preclude any unique work of the Spirit in the production of Scripture, i.e., divine inspiration. Semler regarded the Bible as a erroneous book which is little different from and no more holy than any other, and surely not to be equated directly with the Word of God. Thus Semler declared :

Holy Scripture and Word of God are clearly to be distinguished, for we know the difference...To Holy Scripture belong Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, etc., but not all these books that are called holy belong to the Word of God.<sup>81)</sup>

By accepting this assumption of Semler, many Enlightenment critics insisted that the one who regards the Bible to be the very Word of God is guilty of bibliolatry. From the outset, modern theologians commonly assumed that the bibliolatry. From the outset, modern theologians commonly assumed that the Bible is not at all identical with the Word of God ; it merely contains the Word of God(the canon in the canon). This persistent conviction within the framework of the Enlightenment circles is rooted in the assumption that the Scriptures are just literary compositions, which partake of the shortcomings of their human

81) D. J. Semler, as quoted in G. Hasel, *The New Testament Theology*, 1978, p.27.

authors like human books and are to be treated by the same standards of analysis as all literature. Therefore, the presence of errors is a necessary methodological presupposition. As a matter of fact, the attempt to separate the Word of God from Scripture, or to judge what is authentic and what is not, inescapably leads to the obligation of finding "the canon in the canon."<sup>82)</sup>

However, the Bible itself contains no key with which to distinguish with absolute certainty between the Word of God and Scripture, and along with that, between Christ and Scripture. In fact, "none of them(historical critics) was able to delimit or even to discover a convincing canon in the canon."<sup>83)</sup> It is still a unfinished task of historical criticism to establish the canon in the canon. As Maier observed, the general acceptance of "Semler's basic concept that the Bible must be treated like any other book has plunged modern theology into an endless chain of perplexities and inner contradictions."<sup>84)</sup>

### 2.2 The Definition of Historical Criticism

The term "historical criticism"(the historical-critical method) has often been regarded as a method that is so well understood that it needs no definition. We can easily see that many scholars writing on historical criticism plunge into discussion without any proper definition of it. They seem to assume that "historical criticism" is an intelligible term, like a clearly identified entity. However, that is not the case. By discussing it only with their own vague conceptions, they are actually creating an undesirable confusion("a night battle") in contemporary hermeneutical debate ; they even come to remove any common ground for mutual interaction and scholarly debate. As definition plays a crucial role in every field of scientific inquiry, so the definition of historical criticism too is highly important for the proper discussion of the historical-critical method.

The method has of course been so differently practised that it may be questionable even to speak about "the" historical-critical method. There has in fact been a variety of tools(techniques) in historical criticism.<sup>85)</sup> However, to define the historical-critical method

82) G. Maier, *The End of the Historical Critical Method*, p.16.

83) *Ibid*, p.40.

84) *Ibid*, p.11.

85) See Martin Hengel, *Acts and History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia : Fortress Press, 1980), p.129 ; "Historische Methoden und Theologische Auslegung des Neuen Testaments," *KuD*, 19(1973), p.85 ; Robert W. Lyon, "Evangelicals and Critical Historical Method," *Interpreting God's Word for Today : An Inquiry into Hermeneutics from a Biblical Theological Perspective* (eds. W. McCown & J. E. Massey ; Indiana, Anderson : Warner Press, Inc. 1982), pp.137,



we can't simply represent or identify it as a necessary collection of the "techniques" for interpreting past events.<sup>86)</sup> Some scholars represent the list and explanation of its techniques as if the techniques constitute the characteristic nature of historical criticism. But "this 'techniques' approach does not get to the heart of the matter and tends toward a pragmatic short-circuiting of meaning."<sup>87)</sup> For "the question of the critical historical method is far from being a formal, technical problem of methodology: it is a question which, from the historical and factual point of view, touches on the deepest foundations and the most difficult interconnections of theological thinking and of the church situation."<sup>88)</sup> If we are looking for the definition of a scientific method, we should ask what its characteristic nature is, which has been maintained through its whole historical context. In this respect, we can properly identify and define what historical criticism is. There are, as we have articulated above, consistent assumptions which have been persistently integrating the various methods (techniques) in the framework of the Enlightenment critics. As a matter of fact, the historical-critical method implies a particular set of philosophical presuppositions conditioned by the Enlightenment spirit, which is operative in doing historical research; i. e. the free use of critical human reason in matters of religion, the rationalistic or relativistic view of history, and the basic approach to biblical interpretation, according to which the Bible as a human book is not at all identical with the Word of God. Furthermore, the characteristic nature and position of historical criticism could be clearly established in terms of its origin and development, and its results. In other words, we can determine the original, commonly accepted meaning of historical criticism which has become more and more clearly defined and generally applied in the modern history of theology.

The nature of the historical-critical method is implied in its designation, viz., "historical-critical." The words "historical" and "critical" do not necessarily have negative connotations

141. By speaking of "historical-critical method" (without the definite article "the"), the critics attempt to differentiate the method itself from the destructive applications and results of historical criticism in the nineteenth century. In fact, for them, the historical-critical method as a neutral tool can be simply transformed with different presuppositions.

86) Cf. Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, p.54: "Here the 'historical-critical method' simply represents a necessary collection of the 'tools' for opening up past events: that is, it is not a single, clearly defined procedure, but rather a mixture of sometimes very different methods of working."

87) K. E. Marquart, "Incompatibility between Historical-Critical Theology and the Confessions," *Studies in Lutheran Hermeneutics* (ed. J. Reumann; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p.314.

88) G. Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (trans. J. W. Leitch; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), p.22.

themselves in biblical exegesis. If we don't consider the historical aspect as absolute, we can fully, without doubt, accept the necessity of having a historical approach to Scripture. For the Word of God has been given to us through the Bible as a historical document (although not exclusive), that is, through historical events and historical personages. So Maier believes that "a determined use of a purely historical method would not have sparked a revolution in theological thought in the field of exegesis."<sup>89)</sup> Rather, such a purely historical research can enhance and deepen our understanding of the Bible.

Furthermore if the "criticism" does not imply a rationalistic process of sifting, the true from the false by arbitrary judgements, it also need not always be negative or destructive. It can be used with a fairly positive meaning as in the case of "textual criticism." When Warfield defined "criticism" as "the mode of procedure by which we assure ourselves that it is what it claims to be", he meant that we must apply "the most searching critical inquiry" about the unique claims of the Bible in order to "see whether these things are so",<sup>90)</sup> just like the Bereans who, with all readiness of mind to hear God's Word, searched the Bible daily to see if what Paul said was in fact true (Acts 17: 11): Warfield thought that the existence of truth demand criticism for its vindication, in the sense of seeking to see the Bible exactly as it is. In this sense, Warfield believed, true criticism will enhance the inherent value of biblical truths and give us the true assurance of God's Word. "The critical examination of the text of Scripture," thus for him, was even "an obvious duty" and "its results must be eminently beneficial."<sup>91)</sup>

In the designation "the Historical-Critical Method", however, the two operative words ("historical-critical") have carried their own distinctive overtones which had been attributed to the liberal critical tools in the long history of modern theology. Here "historical" denotes above all the modern historical thinking which has stemmed from the Enlightenment. As we have already seen above, with the rise of historical thinking, history has become the category of a relativization which includes everything. The modern historians thought that the historical method with its principles of analogy and correlation is the only true key to the explanation and understanding of the past (all historical events). The historical method used in critical biblical research is then essentially the same one which was used by the

89) G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, p.13.

90) B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield (II)* (ed. John E. Meeter; Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1973), pp.595~596.

91) A. A. Hodge & B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p.39; cf. *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield (II)*, p.596: "everyone of us exercises

modern historians.<sup>92)</sup> The Bible as a human book is also to be subjected to the ordinary process of historical enquiry, in order to test the historical accuracy of what purports to be historical narrative and explain what really happened.<sup>93)</sup> As a result, the authenticity of all historical records in the Bible were to come under the relentless scrutiny of autonomous historical consciousness. Thus the word "historical" reflects not the simple historical interest about the Bible the autonomous historical consciousness of the Enlightenment.<sup>94)</sup>

The word "critical" was said "to carry overtones also of Cartesian skepticism, which employed doubt as a methodological principle and assertedly took nothing for granted, a mood systematically extended by the Enlightenment to all realms of inquiry."<sup>95)</sup> As a matter of fact, the term "critical" has specific reference to the autonomy of critical human reason which is elevated to a judge over scriptural revelation. Since the Enlightenment, this claim of critical reason has played the role of starting-point and being the motive force of historical-critical investigation. "It is therefore of decisive significance," says Maier, "to recognize that the initial and constantly expanding revolution was associated with the word 'critical'."<sup>96)</sup> At this point, Warfield too didn't hesitate to warn against the danger of asserting the autonomy of human reason in critical studies. Warfield noted the inability of the human mind and the misery of humanity as a consequence of sin.<sup>97)</sup> In pointing out that the axiom "*humanum est errare*" refers to a common human tendency in critical studies, Warfield argued, a crisis has arisen "from the ineradicable tendency of man to confound the right of criticism with the rightness of his own criticism."<sup>98)</sup> Warfield thus made the clear distinction that "there is criticism and criticism,"<sup>99)</sup> viz., "true criticism"

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all the faculties God has given him and exhausts all the tests at his command to assure himself of the facts."

92) E. Krentz, op.cit., p.48.

93) I. H. Marshall, "Historical Criticism," New Testament Interpretation, p.126.

94) Cf. G. Ebeling, op.cit., pp.42~43 : "historical criticism is more than lively historical interest... with subjecting the tradition to critical examination on the basis of new principles of thought. The critical historical method first arose out of the intellectual revolution of modern times."

95) C. F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol.4 (Waco : Word, 1979), p.386.

96) G. Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, P. 13.

97) B. B. Warfield, *Christology and Criticism* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1929), pp.339, 341.

98) B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*(II), p.596.

99) B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield* (II), p.597 : *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia : The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing company, 1970), p.171.

and "modern negative criticism."<sup>100)</sup> From the standpoint of true criticism, Warfield declined to qualify modern negative criticism by means of "the honorable title of criticism."<sup>101)</sup> While Warfield recognized the right of true criticism, he denied the validity of the critical methods and conclusions of modern negative criticism strongly.<sup>102)</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

Historical criticism (the historical-critical method) refers to those critical assumptions of historical reasoning which have originated from the Enlightenment spirit viz., that modern historical thinking is the true key to an understanding of man and his world, and that all realities, historical and natural, are accessible to autonomous human reason and critical investigation. Narrowly defined, with the critical assumptions as mentioned above, historical criticism deals with the philological, historical, and literary questions regarding the biblical text : date, place, authorship, sources, and intention, etc.<sup>103)</sup> So defined, historical criticism and literary criticism are not separable at all, as evidenced by the use of the hyphenated term : "historical-literary criticism." In fact, historical in so far as it is the interpretation of the texts which come to us from a past age and culture. More generally defined, historical criticism is synonymous with the whole body of distinguishable but interrelated methodologies in biblical criticism, even though, strictly speaking, it might be distinguished from the methods which claim not to be historical in approach (e. g. structuralism). In other words, historical criticism is a broad umbrella sheltering such submethods as literary criticism, form criticism (*formgeschichte*), redaction criticism (*redaktionsgeschichte*), and content criticism (*sachkritik*). Though its particular techniques (methodologies) come and go, the critical assumptions of historical criticism have been consistently developed and intensified through nineteenth and twentieth-century theology.

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100) B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, pp.429~430 : According to Warfield, true criticism means an investigation with three essential characteristics, "(1) a fearless, honest mental abandonment, apart from presuppositions, to the facts of the case, (2) a most careful, complete and unprejudiced collection and examination of the facts, and (3) the most cautious care in founding inferences upon them." Warfield asserted that modern biblical criticism is not only the absence of these characteristics but also violates every canon of genuine criticism.

101) B. B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*(II), p.430.

102) B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p.171.

103) R. N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, (Atlanta : John Knox Press, 1978) pp.26~27, 28.