

Indeed, the formation of an Adventist lifestyle is everybody's business in the Church. Considering the enormous problems—and the enormous potential of partnership—we as a people really have no other options to consider, do we?

Endnotes

1 Dudley, Roger L., and Gillespie, V. Bailey. "Split Personalities," *Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance*. (Riverside, CA: La Sierra University Press, 1992), pp. 294-5.

2 Scarbrough, Charles D. *To God Be The Glory*. (A composite paraphrase drawn from a 1983 unpublished manuscript. Scripture references include: Isa 53:6; Matt 27:46; Rom 5:10,19; II Cor 5:21; Heb 2:9. E. G. White citations include: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 51, 62; *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, pp. 20, 34, 344, 366-368, 374, 396, 397.)

3 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

4 Dudley and Gillespie, *Valuegenesis*, pp. 294-95.

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THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLICAL SABBATH AND THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD: A METHODOLOGICAL TEST CASE

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The origin of the sabbath is a fascinating topic for those who consider the Bible as the primary norm for their system of faith. There is renewed interest in the sabbath on the part of persons who either accept the biblical view that the sabbath is the seventh day of the week, rooted in creation,¹ that is, Saturday,² or those who suggest that the sabbath may be kept on any day of the week, preferably on Sunday,³ or must be kept on Sunday as the Roman Catholic Church has officially "decreed."⁴

The purpose of this study is (1) to review the biblical presentation of the origin of the sabbath, its antiquity, divine origin, and resultant suprahuman authority, all of which are rooted in the sabbath's beginning in creation, (2) to show how biblical sabbath origins are replaced by a radical redating of relevant biblical texts in the books of Genesis and Exodus and a radical reinterpretation of ancient prophetic sabbath texts, (3) to present and analyze new claims in the search for sabbath origins by scholars using the historical-critical method in Scripture study, and (4) to reveal the implications of the historical-critical method for the faith of the believer by means of the impact of historical criticism upon the interpretation of biblical sabbath origins.

The Biblical Presentation of Sabbath Origins

For the purpose of stating the biblical presentation of sabbath origins this study will restrict its attention to the first three passages in the Bible that refer to the sabbath. These passages under consideration are Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 16:22-30; and Exodus 20:8-11. Historically these passages have been considered in the period of the last two thousand years to be the oldest biblical references regarding the sabbath.

1. *Creation and the Sabbath (Gen 2:1-3)*. It is universally recognized that the first reference to the sabbath, although without the usage of the word "sabbath" itself, appears in Genesis 2:2-3:

And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation (NRSV).

The creation sabbath is here depicted at the conclusion of creation week. This is of pivotal significance for the understanding of the origin of the sabbath.

The linkage of the verb "rest" (Hebrew *shabat*) with the noun "sabbath" (Hebrew *shabbat*) has been recognized time and again. In this passage the verb "rest" appears in connection with the threefold usage of the expression "seventh day" of creation week on which God Himself rested from His creative activity.

According to this Scripture passage the sabbath originated at creation. G. H. Waterman, a Sunday-keeping scholar, observes, "The Hebrews did not claim to be the creators of this unique institution [of the sabbath]. They affirmed that God himself was the creator. The record of its origin which they preserved for us is in the Bible. The divine origin of the sabbath is described in the opening chs. of Genesis."⁵ We can conclude that the sabbath is presented here as of divine, suprahuman origin.

Recently, J. C. McCann, Jr., affirms that the OT "focuses upon Israel's theological conviction that the sabbath originated with God at creation (Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:8-11; 31:17), that its observance was commanded by God at Sinai (Exod 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15) . . ."⁶ In a widely used non-conservative, contemporary Bible dictionary it has been stated that "an etiological origin of the Sabbath is

supplied in Gen 2:1-3, which speaks of God ceasing from the work of creation on the seventh day, blessing the day, and declaring it holy."⁷

It should not escape our attention that the last two scholarly opinions speak respectively of "Israel's theological conviction" and of an "etiological origin" of the sabbath. Both quotations restate what the biblical text of Genesis 2:1-3 claims. However, they qualify it as being "theological" on the one hand and "etiological" on the other. In both cases there is a restriction regarding the factual quality and accuracy of the report in Genesis 2:1-3. We will observe below why these restrictions have been made and what systems of thought are at work in these caveats.

It can be stated without any shadow of a doubt in harmony with the descriptions of the data contained in Genesis 2:1-3, which these scholars summarize, that the biblical presentation of this passage reveals that the sabbath originates from God Himself as the grand climax of creation week. Thus, the sabbath is of suprahuman origin and vested with "suprahuman authority."⁸ By means of the divine cessation of activity on the seventh day the sabbath possesses a transcendent nature which invites observance on the part of the one who wishes to identify with the Creator, claiming Him to be his/her Lord.

Why is it important that the sabbath is a divine and not a human invention and institution? Why is it significant that it is presented in Scripture, in Genesis 2:1-3, as deriving from God Himself as the climax of creation week? Although many appropriate and pertinent answers can be and should be given, I shall restrict myself to the following seven implications:

(1) Since the origin of the sabbath is rooted and grounded in God and not in man, it follows that God has control over the sabbath. If the sabbath derives from God, then only God can change its time and meaning, if any change is/were ever called for.

(2) Since the sabbath originated with God at creation, long before there were any Hebrews, or Jews, in existence, the sabbath cannot be properly said to be originally a Hebrew (Jewish) day of worship and celebration. Thus, the sabbath is not a day of rest and worship restricted to a particular people, a particular time, or a particular place.

(3) Since the sabbath has a creation origin, it is a creation order, a creation memorial, and a creation model. Anyone who interferes with this order, memorial, and model interferes with an institution of God's creation order and not with one of man.

(4) Since the origin of the sabbath is linked with creation, any one who changes, removes, alters, or abolishes that sabbath engages in an alteration, abolishment, removal, or change of a divine creation institution. Such interference means to engage in an undoing of what the deity had accomplished at the end of creation. Such interference is an act of human hybris.

(5) Because the sabbath was first celebrated by God at the end of six days of divine creative activity, God himself provides the example of sabbath observance for humankind to emulate. The rhythm of six days of activity and rest on the "seventh day" is a divine order rooted in God's own creation sequence. The one who follows this divine sequence in the observation of the weekly seventh-day sabbath is linked with the divine Pattern and thus manifests loyalty to God publically.

(6) The text reveals that the divine Exemplar "hallowed," "sanctified," and made the sabbath "holy." Humans do not make a day holy by keeping it or resting on it. The sabbath is made "holy," "sanctified" and "hallowed" by an act of God.

(7) As the sabbath originated in creation and is linked to the universality of creation, so the universality of the seventh-day sabbath for all human beings is rooted in the universality of creation.

The sabbath day is the Creator's gift to humankind. Thus, the sabbath is the "Lord's day" on which human's acknowledge God as their Creator and Lord. As stated elsewhere, "The sequence of 'six working-days' and a 'seventh [sabbath] rest-day' indicates universally that every human being is to engage in an *imitatio Dei*, 'imitation of God,' by resting on the 'seventh day.' 'Man' (*adam*), made in the *imago Dei*, 'image of God,' (Gen 1:26-28) is invited to follow the Exemplar in an *imitatio Dei*, participating in God's rest by enjoying the divine gift of freedom from the labors of human existence and thus acknowledging God as his Creator."⁹ The Creator provides with each weekly seventh-day sabbath freedom to

rest, opportunity to commune with God, and time to reflect about the Maker of heaven and earth and His work of creation.

2. *The Manna Experience and the Sabbath (Exod 16:22-30)*. The second major passage on sabbath origins is Exodus 16¹⁰ which reveals "that through a miraculous rhythm in the provision of the manna Israel was both shown the keeping of the sabbath rest on each seventh day and was obliged to keep this divine ordinance."¹¹

The unexpected appearance of the sabbath in Exodus 16 serves several major purposes which we may summarize as follows:

(1) The sabbath was taught in the wilderness of Sin to a redeemed, liberated Israel that had gone through the exodus experience. This happened before the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai (Exod 20)¹² and long after the Noachian flood, which shows that the rhythmic cycle of six days of work and the seventh day of rest had not been lost in the deluge experience from the ante- to the post-diluvian world.

(2) The existence of the sabbath prior to the manna experience, is assumed in the text of Exodus 16.¹³ The sabbath is presented and treated as something that was known.

(3) The noun "sabbath" (Hebrew *shabbat*) appears in this passage unannounced for the first time in the Bible (Exod 16:25, 26). It is something already known.

(4) The "sixth day" is presented as a day of preparation for the sabbath (vss. 5, 22, 29). A double portion of manna was to be collected on the sixth day.

(5) The sabbath is clearly identified with the "seventh day" (vs. 26). The designation "seventh day" is a direct and explicit linkage with the creation sabbath. The words "seventh day" appear first in Genesis 2:1-3.

(6) The sabbath is called "holy" (vs. 23, Hebrew *qodesh*). This is another direct and explicit linkage to the creation sabbath of Genesis 2:3 where the sabbath is declared to be "holy" (or "hallowed," etc. as English renderings present it).

(7) The sabbath is designated to be a "sabbath feast" (Exod 16:23, Hebrew *shabbaton*). The sabbath is not a fast but a feast. The festive nature of the sabbath comes to expression from the beginning.

(8) The sabbath is a day of "rest" (vss. 23, 29, 30). This is once more a link to the creation sabbath on which God Himself "rested."

(9) A divine commandment enjoins the keeping of the sabbath (vs. 28). This reveals that the sabbath as a commandment is older than its inclusion in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue given later on Mt. Sinai.

These major points reveal that the sabbath's connections with the creation sabbath are rich and multifarious. They make clear at this stage that the sabbath contains religious ("holy"), humanitarian ("rest"), and festive ("sabbath feast") emphases. The sabbath is also set within the context of a people who have been set free from bondage and slavery to be faithful to the redeeming God whose "commandment" must not be refused (vs. 28). Evidently, the sabbath serves to test the faithfulness and obedience which manifest themselves in the believer's lifestyle. These essential insights reveal that "Exodus 16 contains key notions regarding the origin, purpose, function, and meaning of the Sabbath."¹⁴

3. *The Decalogue and the Sabbath (Exod 20:8-11)*. The third sabbath passage of the Bible reveals the sabbath to be an integral part of the giving of the Decalogue on Mt. Sinai (Exod 20:8-11).

The introductory words of the fourth commandment, "Remember the sabbath day . . ." (vs. 8), suggest that the sabbath was previously known.¹⁵ Moreover, the sabbath commandment is repeated in a farewell sermon by Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 5:12-15.¹⁶

The centrality of the fourth commandment within the Ten Commandments is recognized by many students of the Decalogue,¹⁷ not only because of its length, being by far the longest of the Ten Commandments, consisting of fifty-five Hebrew words, but also because of its position within the Ten Commandments.

The sabbath commandment's centrality in the Decalogue serves as "the connecting link between those commandments having to do with the duties toward God and those having to do with duties toward man."¹⁸ The content of the sabbath commandment reveals this twofold connection.

The fourth commandment emphasizes the origin of the sabbath both implicitly and explicitly. There is the twofold emphasis on the fact that the sabbath is "holy" (Exod 20:8, 11). The first

emphasis comes at the beginning with the words "to keep it holy" (vs. 8). The focus is on sabbath holiness. This theme reappears at the end of the sabbath commandment (vs. 11, "he made it holy"). The reference to sabbath holiness at the beginning and the end is a so-called *inclusio*,¹⁹ pointing back to Genesis 2:3 where the same Hebrew verb (*qadash*) is used. In the latter passage it is rendered into English either as "he sanctified it," "he hallowed it," or "he made it holy."

The reason for humans to keep the sabbath "holy" rests in the fact that God Himself made it "holy" (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11). Creation sabbath holiness and fourth commandment sabbath holiness reveal an inseparable connection with creation and with the very nature of God. God Himself is holy and has invested something of His own nature in the seventh-day sabbath.

Another connection with the creation sabbath is in the opening of the fourth commandment. The word "remember" (Hebrew *zakôr*) calls for both the human action of thinking and the resultant doing.²⁰ It is remembering with commemoration²¹ in which thinking issues in worshiping.

The call to "remember" reveals that the sabbath "is not introduced for the first time on Sinai, it is already there. . . . However, it is not introduced for the first time even in the wilderness of Sin, where the manna is found. Here, too, it is proclaimed as something which is already in existence."²² Obviously Israelites did not invent the sabbath. They brought it with them²³ and Abraham, who received it from his forefathers, "bequeathed to his descendants the conception of the seventh day as a divine rest day. . . ."²⁴ We cannot underestimate the power of oral and written communication by which the greatest events and institutions were transmitted from parent to child for successive generations.

One of the two motivations²⁵ for keeping the sabbath according to the fourth commandment are the words, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exod 20:11, NKJV). This wording consists of a significant repetition on the part of the divine Speaker of words recorded previously in Genesis 2:2-3. The reason for keeping the sabbath is the fact that (1) God "rested" after his

creation, (2) God made everything in "six days," and (3) God "blessed" (cf. Gen 2:2) and "hallowed" (vs. 3) the sabbath. To keep the sabbath holy means then to (1) follow the divine Exemplar's pattern, (2) acknowledge him as Creator, (3) participate in His rest, (4) accept God's gift of the sabbath, and (5) reveal one's loyalty to the One who is Creator-Redeemer (cf. Deut 5:14c-15a). Sabbath commemoration includes all of these essentials.

In short, the fourth commandment provides the reaffirmation, from the very mouth of God, that the sabbath had its origin in Him and by Him and through Him at creation, linking together the creation activity and rest of God with the exodus-redemption-salvation experience of God's people, making the latter a part of the remembrance (Deut 5:14-15).²⁶ The exodus experience was an act of creation as well, the creation of a new people. Thus, both the creation of the world and the creation of God's people are commemorated in keeping the sabbath.

The fourth commandment, being part of the Decalogue, puts the sabbath into the framework of God's covenant with his people. God's true Israel will always keep God's seventh-day sabbath as they will keep all of God's commandments, because the latter "are essentially 'categorical imperatives' of universal validity, above time and independent of circumstances."²⁷ Therefore, the sabbath is God's eternal sign of his covenant with His people. "It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed" (Exod 31:17, NRSV). These sabbath passages make it evident that the sabbath was not instituted at Sinai. At Sinai the sabbath was incorporated into the covenant which God made with His people. Its origin cannot be singularly connected with Moses or the Israelites, or for that matter with the Sinai covenant. Ancient Israel inherits the sabbath as of suprahuman, divine creation origin which carries with it a suprahuman character, inviting and commanding observance from all who acknowledge God as Creator-Lord.

The sabbath commandment of the Decalogue does not institute the sabbath but points in various and unmistakable ways to its origin in divine creation. The creation origin of the sabbath

cannot be underestimated. The creation origin of the sabbath is its quintessence.

The Biblical Origin of the Sabbath Replaced in Historical-Critical Study of the Bible

The investigation of this section of our study will indicate how the explicit and definitive creation origin of the sabbath as presented in the Bible has been rejected in historical criticism.²⁸ The biblical materials in which the origin of the sabbath is described and defined in its creation origin has been dated very late.²⁹ Thus, the biblical and revelational authority for the sabbath has been replaced. It is made into a Jewish day of rest of very late beginnings which no longer has any binding force on other people. It is made into a day that developed through tradition and the tradition-shaping process. In order to understand why and for what reasons this reinterpretation and reconstruction has taken place, we must have a clear understanding of the workings of the historical-critical method and the inextricable presuppositions that shape its procedures.

1. *Beginnings of the Historical-Critical Method.*³⁰ The historical-critical method,³¹ often termed "biblical criticism" when applied to the Bible, is linked to the age of the Enlightenment³² and the philosophy of rationalism which had its hey day in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.³³ This method experienced unprecedented support in so-called scientific research in the university, liberal colleges, seminaries and divinity schools in Europe, Great Britain and the United States at about the turn of this century. It remains in many ways the major method of Scripture study today in many institutions of higher learning.

2. *Presuppositions of the Historical-Critical Method.* There are a number of major presuppositions of the historical-critical method which shape its workings and processes. Without these presuppositions the historical-critical method is not the method it purports to be. These presuppositions cannot be separated from the method without a radical redefinition of the method itself and its constituent procedures.

a. *The Bible as a Mere Historical Document.* One of the major turning points in the age of the Enlightenment was the view that

the Bible no longer has inspired and canonical status.³⁴ In this new way of looking at the Bible it has no special, divine authority. It became axiomatic that the Bible "should be read as a historical document."³⁵ This meant that the Bible of both the Old and the New Testaments is the same as any other ancient collection of books and should be studied with the same methods and procedures as any other literary documents from the past.

b. The Bible is not Divinely Inspired. The Bible is not to be viewed as inspired in the sense that it contains the very words of God and truth in propositional form. If it is to be perceived as inspired, that inspiration is redefined as of human origin like the inspiration of any author or writer from the past or present who has some kind of great insight.³⁶ It is no more nor any less inspired than the works of Shakespeare, or any other human poet or author.

c. The Supernatural Replaced by the Natural. Another key presupposition of this historical-critical method is to understand the Bible in a "natural" way. The Bible has no "supernatural" origin. Its content is no longer perceived to be of divine origin.³⁷

This reinterpretation and understanding of the Bible, as shaped and formed by natural forces, was a radical departure from the Christian church's rightful emphasis on the inspiration of Scripture held for centuries.

d. The Principle of Analogy. The reign of naturalism, replacing long held supernaturalism, is mandated by the basic principle of analogy essential for the historical-critical method. The principle of analogy is one of three foundation stones of the historical-critical method, the other two consisting of the principles of correlation and criticism.³⁸

The principle of analogy holds that the past can be understood only on the basis of the present. The present holds the key to the past because of the assumption that "there is a fundamental homogeneity of all historical events"³⁹ which makes knowledge of the present the key for understanding the past.

e. The Principle of Correlation. Another principle without which the historical-critical method is unable to function is the principle of correlation which holds that everything in history is interrelated in a historical context. A. Van Harvey, a highly respected historical-critical scholar who describes the workings of

the historical-critical method, points out that the principle of correlation insists that "no event or text could be understood unless it is seen in terms of its historical context. This meant . . . (1) that no critical historian could make use of supernatural intervention as a principle of historical explanation because this shattered the continuity of the cause nexus [of immanent causes and effects], and (2) no event could be regarded as a final revelation of the absolute spirit, since every manifestation of truth and value was relative and historically conditioned."⁴⁰ In plain language, all historical events have to be explained without any activity of God in history. The principle of correlation correlates all events on the level of natural causes. Divine activity is ruled out in the processes of history.

f. The Principle of Criticism. Edgar Krentz, a well-known defender of the historical-critical method defines the principle of criticism for us, stating that it consists of "methodological doubt, which implies that history only achieves probability."⁴¹ Peter Stuhlmacher also notes that the principle of criticism consists "of systematic skepticism which the historian applies to all historical traditions."⁴² The relativity of human judgment is based on skepticism. Modern man can never have any final assurance of anything because all human judgments are based to a greater or lesser degree on probabilities only.⁴³

g. The "Closed Continuum" of Reality. The corollary of this way of viewing reality meant that the Bible was replaced as providing the standard of reality. The vertical, divine-human dimension where God communicates with human beings and provides revealed information was replaced with a horizontal-only dimension. Things depicted as of supernatural, transcendent origin were reinterpreted, redefined, and reconstructed on the basis of immanent, human cause and effect relationships.

Divine causality is not conceived to be active in history. Rudolf Bultmann, one of the most important historical-critical New Testament scholars of this century, has classically defined the new "closed continuum." He stated honestly that "the historical method includes the presupposition that history is a unity in the sense of a closed continuum of effects in which individual events are connected by the succession of cause and effect."⁴⁴ The histori-

cal-critical method is thus built on a "presupposition" which defines historical research on the basis of this "closed continuum."

The discerning reader will immediately ask, what about miracles? What about events that happened only once? What about so-called singularities, again events that are non-repeatable? These and other problems have been raised by those who have reacted against the historical-critical method.⁴⁵

h. The Denial of Miracles. Since the historical-critical method works on the basis of a "closed continuum" of natural causes and effects, that is, with mere immanent causes and effects of economics, social structures, political powers, and human passions, ideas and ideals,⁴⁶ it is not able to account for or recognize miracles caused by divine or other supernatural powers.⁴⁷

Bultmann affirms, "This closedness means that the continuum of historical happenings cannot be rent by the interference of supernatural, transcendent powers and that therefore there is no 'miracle' in this sense of the word."⁴⁸ This means not only that there can be no miracles. While Bultmann acknowledges a different picture in the Old Testament, he notes that "while . . . the Old Testament narrative speaks of an interference by God in history, historical science cannot demonstrate such an act of God, . . ."⁴⁹ He also makes it clear that the event or happening which the Bible describes as an act of God in history is understood, translated and interpreted by the historical-critical method as a natural event caused by "immanent historical causes."⁵⁰ "Immanent" here means human or natural and not divine causes. What is said to be God's working in history is reinterpreted as caused by human or natural forces! The biblical reports of divine causality are made into human-originated causality. This is a radical change and reinterpretation of the Bible's own testimony. What the Bible assigns to be caused by God is said to be caused by man or nature. It is evident that the historical-critical method is a reinterpretation method.

Frank Moore Cross, world-renowned Harvard University professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages, insists that "history in the modern context means a description and interpretation of human events arrived at by a specific scientific method. Among the stipulations of this method is agreement to eschew discussion of ultimate causation or meaning, . . . You don't speak of divine acts

or victories in writing history. . . Attribution of events to miracles is disallowed on methodological grounds [in the historical-critical method]."⁵¹ In this framework of modernism the "historian *qua* historian must put distance between himself and religious affirmations of Yahweh's divine direction of history."⁵²

Professor Cross makes the Bible's claim for divine causality unacceptable to the modern historian. Evidently the historical-critical way of looking at the Bible means a radical departure from the plain biblical testimony of the miraculous or the divine. This can be accomplished only by a determined reconstruction, reinterpretation and redefinition of what the Bible actually says regarding events in history and their causes.⁵³ Thus, the Bible is longer heard for what it says on its own terms. It must be understood to say something that is in harmony with what the modern historian and his method allows to take place. What is supernatural is made into something that is natural.⁵⁴

The same sentiments are expressed by Hershel Shanks, famous editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, a widely read popular journal of biblical archaeology, who writes in a recent book, "Most modern [historical-critical] biblical scholars do not accept the Bible as literally true. So what you have to do is to treat it almost like an archaeological tell, and excavate it, as it were, and analyze it to see whether what it says is historically accurate by modern historians' standards, by modern historiography."⁵⁵ The conclusion drawn from historical-critical analysis, that is, modern historiography, is that "the Scriptures do not contain a historical account of Israel's origin and early history, . . ."⁵⁶ Or, the Bible is not literally true. In this view, there was no exodus from Egypt as the Bible depicts it, there were no ten plagues afflicted upon the Egyptians, the wilderness wandering of the Israelites never took place, and so on. Ancient Israel developed in some other way, a natural way, and at that hundreds of years later than the Bible describes it. In other words, the Bible is not literally true.

The "closed continuum" of reality perceived by the historical-critical method is still foundational for "modern historiography."⁵⁷ It continues to have far-reaching implications. Such implications are not only related to historical facts, they also change the teachings and doctrines of the Bible. The historical-critical method chan-

ges biblical faith into a modern faith system based on human suppositions.

One such implication is that the biblical picture of the origin of the sabbath in creation cannot be supported by historical criticism. Creation is not an event of a natural cause and effect continuum and thus there must be another origin of the sabbath, one in harmony with modern historiography. The sabbath, in this view, could not originate before Israel came into existence and is actually a very late institution. How does modern historical-critical scholarship understand and present the origin and development of the sabbath?

3. The Sabbath in Historical Criticism. The earliest search for another origin for many institutions mentioned in the Bible, including the sabbath, was based on what is known as source criticism, a constituent part and the first procedure of the historical-critical method. This procedure was followed by form criticism and tradition criticism.

a. The Emergence of Source Criticism. It may be helpful for the uninitiated to describe briefly major developments of source criticism.

Source criticism is "the oldest of all the critical 'methods' of biblical study,"⁵⁸ going back two hundred years to the beginnings of the historical-critical method. "By the end of the first decade of the 20th century, compositional theory was dominated by the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis of source criticism, which understood the formation of the Pentateuch in terms of four chronologically successive parallel strands [or sources] of tradition."⁵⁹ Source criticism posits the existence of written sources where the Bible usually describes matters in rather different terms. Often the Bible states that "God said" or "the Lord spoke" or that something happened by divine initiative and direction. Since this is divine causation, the historical-critic has to posit another way of suggesting an origin. Source criticism, as the historical-critic calls this approach, provides a new and different view.

For example, the alleged oldest source used in writing the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, was the Yahwist (designated by the siglum "J") which is dated by many to the 10th century BC, the time of David-Solomon,⁶⁰ by others into the exilic-postexilic

period,⁶¹ and by a few it is now even declared to be nonexistent.⁶² The alleged second oldest source is the so-called Elohist (designated by the siglum "E") which is dated by many to the 9th century, the period of Elijah and Elisha,⁶³ and by a number of recent critical scholars it is also declared to be nonexistent. The alleged third oldest source is the so-called Deuteronomist (designated by the siglum "D") which is the book of Deuteronomy, dated to the 7th century BC, in any case not later than 622 BC.⁶⁴ Then there is finally the fourth and latest source. It is the so-called Priestly source (designated by the siglum "P") and dated to either postexilic (Persian),⁶⁵ exilic or more recently late preexilic times.⁶⁶ The "P" source is in many ways perceived to be the most extensive and the most sophisticated source to which the most sublime and advance ideas of the Pentateuch are assigned.

b. The Sabbath in Source Criticism. The first text which contains the creation sabbath is Genesis 2:1-3 as we have seen above. It is part of the creation narrative of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. This first section of the book of Genesis is ascribed to the "P" source, the latest of the four alleged historical-critical sources of the Pentateuch. Thus, the earliest and oldest passage of the creation sabbath is assigned by historical-critical scholars to material that is said to derive from the exilic or postexilic times in the five Books of Moses.⁶⁷ This means that Genesis 2:1-3 cannot be used at all for the origin of the sabbath. Since it allegedly comes from such a late time of Jewish understanding it is worthless in the mind of the historical-critical scholar for any understanding of the beginning of the sabbath. It is nothing more than a retrojection of priests writing of the sabbath into an early period. It is an invention on the part of later priests and has no historical value at all. It is said to be theology and not history. Thus, this oldest text is dismissed as unhistorical.

The same "P" source is said to contain the sabbath connected with the manna in Exodus 16:22-30.⁶⁸ As a matter of fact every passage about the sabbath in the five Books of Moses is assigned to this late source. This means that the five books of Moses do not provide any information of early sabbath origins whatsoever.

Using this method the conclusion is reached that the institution of the sabbath was a late development in the faith of Israel,

having, therefore, no universal application. It does not derive from God at creation. The sabbath creation origin is simply an etiology,⁶⁹ a later answer to the question concerning the origin of the sabbath. The etiological interpretation, or any other for that matter whether it is theological, mythical, parabolic, poetic or the like, denies to Genesis 2:1-3 any factual information regarding the origin of the sabbath as deriving from God's own rest at creation.

Historical-critical research has its own presuppositions, as we have seen above. It has concluded on its own terms that all things must have an immanent, natural origin. Thus, the creation origin of the sabbath cannot be accepted from a historical-critical point of view as a factual and historical event. With this understanding historical-critical scholars turned to investigate the origin of the sabbath as deriving from somewhere in the ancient world other than from God at the end of creation week.

c. The Sabbath in Form Criticism and Tradition Criticism. What happens to the fourth commandment of the Decalogue in form criticism, a method of study "that identifies and classifies the smaller compositional units of biblical texts, and seeks to discover the social setting within which units. . . were originally used"?⁷⁰ Did not God speak with His own voice on Mt. Sinai? Did not God write the moral law, the Ten Commandments, with His own finger upon the two tablets of stone? Yes, this is the plain, consistent and unambiguous testimony of the Bible which attributes the Decalogue directly to God (Exod 20:1).

The historical-critical scholar, as we have seen above, cannot accept supernatural causes as historically valid. Thus, the modern historian and critical scholar is forced by his own methodology of historiography to deny the plain and unambiguous biblical presentation.

Contemporary historical-critical scholarship has developed a "wide consensus that the present form of the Ten Commandments is the result of a long historical development, whose individual steps cannot be identified with certainty. The complex process of development was related to the institutional life of Israel, its sense of identity, its social structures, its teaching, and its worship."⁷¹ The Ten Commandments do not derive from God or from the times of

Moses and the wilderness experience as the Pentateuch declares, but from postexilic times, roughly 1,000 years later.⁷²

As the historical critic has an explanation for the emergence of the Decalogue so he has an explanation for the development of the sabbath commandment in the Decalogue.⁷³ The historical critic will use "form criticism" and "tradition criticism," developed in the twentieth century, to suggest that there was a long "process in which oral or written materials were passed down from one generation to another, acquiring their final form with the assistance and contributions of many individuals and groups along the way."⁷⁴ After these long processes of development, change, and growth over many centuries, there is finally a "P" (Priestly) redaction of the sabbath commandment.⁷⁵

By means of such form-critical and traditio-historical reconstructions with very complex and lengthy processes of development, growth, change, and reshaping, the sabbath commandment⁷⁶ finally emerges in postexilic times⁷⁷ in the form in which we find it in the Decalogue at present.⁷⁸ Historical-critical scholars agree that the earliest form of the sabbath commandment was short and claim that there was growth from something short to something long. This is the alleged principle of growth from short-to-long. Thus, it is claimed that the sabbath commandment was at first something like, "Remember to keep the Sabbath day,"⁷⁹ and "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,"⁸⁰ to "You shall keep the Sabbath day and you shall not do any work in it,"⁸¹ "Six days shalt thou labour and the seventh day shalt thou rest, Thou shalt do no work on the sabbath,"⁸² and "You shall not do any work on the sabbath and the new moon day,"⁸³ or the like. Historical-critical scholars cannot agree on its exact wording or when the reconstructed original sabbath commandment of the alleged "Primitive Decalogue" arose.⁸⁴

Such scholars reject as unacceptable the biblical claim regarding the sabbath as spoken and written by God Himself on Mt. Sinai. Biblical claims are unhistorical and untrue because the historical-critical scholar works with a definition of history based on a "closed continuum" of natural causes and effects. Thus, a vastly different origin of the sabbath is called for by historical-critical scholars.

d. Alleged Historical-Critical Origins of the Sabbath. The historical-critical quest for the origin of the sabbath began one hundred and ten years ago in the year 1883 and a variety of theories have been developed since. We will refer to some of the most widely circulated theories in order to show how the historical-critical method works.

(1) *Theories of Babylonian Sabbath Origins.* In 1883 W. Lotz argued for a Babylonian origin of the sabbath, claiming that the Hebrew word *shabbat* and the Akkadian term *shab/pattu(m)* mean approximately the same thing, i.e., "day of rest."⁸⁵ He believed he had found the natural origin of the sabbath based on the custom of an ancient pagan people.

However, the Hebrew term *shabbat* and the Akkadian term *shab/pattu(m)* are unrelated etymologically as comparative Semitics has clearly indicated,⁸⁶ even though there are still a few people who continue to link the two words in both meaning and etymology. The Akkadian term *shab/pattu(m)* never means "sabbath" or "day of rest." It never has the meaning of "seventh day." Rather it refers to the 15th day of the month which is the day of the full moon.

A second theory for the Babylonian origin of the sabbath claims that the sabbath was originally a monthly full-moon day.⁸⁷ Gnana Robinson has recently revived this theory. He is a firm believer that the origin of the sabbath is connected with the moon, claiming that the sequence of "new moon--sabbath" in preexilic sabbath texts (Amos 8:4-7; Hos 2:9-13; Isa 1:10-14; 2 Kgs 4:22-23) reveals that the sabbath after the monthly "new moon" is the monthly "full moon" day. In these texts, he claims, the sabbath is not a weekly seventh day, but the monthly "full moon" day. He attempts to prove this by the sequence of *arhum-shapattu*, "new moon-full moon," in some Babylonian texts to which he appeals. In his view, which is gaining some support among contemporary historical-critical scholars, the seventh day and the sabbath were originally separate. At first there was a monthly sabbath, the "full moon" day, as preexilic texts from the eighth century BC (Amos 8:4-7; Hos 2:9-13; Isa 1:10-14) supposedly indicate. Later, in exilic and postexilic times, the seventh day and the sabbath were joined. This joining of the two days was a complex process and did not reach

its final completion until postexilic times when the alleged monthly sabbath turned into the weekly seventh-day sabbath.

Robinson's reconstruction makes the weekly seventh-day sabbath evidently a very late development in Old Testament thought.⁸⁸ In this case the seventh-day sabbath is nothing more than a Jewish institution, a development of Jewish thought, and thus holds authority only for Jews. This method supports the claim that the seventh-day sabbath is not a universal day of rest for all true Bible believers.

Robinson's theory has flaws so basic that it is rendered unacceptable, even for the historical-critical scholar who is acquainted with the facts of the matter. Let us consider several major points:

(a) A reinvestigation of all known Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts do not support the claimed two-word sequence of *arhum-shapattu*, "1st [new moon] and 15th [full moon] day" which supposedly follows the two-word sequence of "new moon-sabbath" of the biblical texts which he cites. The sequence of these Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts is really a three-word sequence, *arhum-sebutu-shapattu*, meaning "1st (new moon), 7th, and 15th (full moon) days." Such a sequence is never found in the Bible. For reasons that Robinson does not state he leaves out the second member of the sequence, *sebutu* "seventh day," in his discussions of the sequence in Babylonian texts. This omission is serious. It distorts the context, meaning and purpose of the sequence in these non-biblical texts. The OT itself has no parallel to this sequence in Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts. This Babylonian sequence is unrelated in its thematic context and its three-word schema to the sequence of the sabbath texts of the eighth century prophets.

(b) The 8th century BC text of Hos 2:11 (compare Amos 8:5; Isa 1:13) manifests the sequence "feasts-new moons-sabbaths," three festal celebrations. An investigation of the three underlying Hebrew words reveals that these celebrations are in the order of *increasing frequency*. First appears the least frequent celebration of "feasts," that is, the annual feasts which are celebrated only once each year. The monthly "new moon" celebrations are mentioned next. They are celebrated once each month, or twelve times each year. Finally, the "sabbaths" are mentioned. They are celebrated fifty-two times each year, that is once a week, and are thereby the

most frequent yearly celebrations. Thus the sequence of Hos 2:11 consists of "yearly (feasts), [next] monthly (new moon), and [finally] weekly (sabbath)" celebrations. The sequence is of an *increasing frequency*.⁸⁹ This sequence is also found in the OT in reversed order.⁹⁰ The sequence of a one time (yearly "feast"), twelve times (monthly "new moon" days) and fifty-two times (weekly "sabbaths") sequence is known only in the OT. There are neither Babylonian texts nor texts from any ancient Near Eastern culture that have such a sequence of celebrations stretched out over the whole year. The Bible is unique in this sequence and in the feasts mentioned.

(c) In later OT texts the "new moon-sabbath" sequence reappears without the yearly feasts but in each instance the "sabbath" is unmistakably the weekly seventh-day sabbath.⁹¹ (d) The contextual settings of the Babylonian (and Sumerian) texts are so different as compared to the biblical ones that they cannot at all be related to each other on contextual grounds.⁹²

There are also other less influential Babylonian hypotheses.⁹³ They do not have much scholarly support at present and do not need to concern us in this study.

(2) *Theory of Kenite Sabbath Origins.* According to the Kenite hypothesis Moses is said to have adopted the seventh-day sabbath in the Sinai region from metal-working nomads known as Kenites. Supporters of this hypothesis claim that the nomadic Kenites knew a Saturn-day which Moses took over as a seventh-day sabbath.⁹⁴

Since there is no documentary support for a Saturn-day or Saturn worship among the Kenites (see the only texts mentioning Kenites in the OT: Josh 15:57; Judg 1:16; 5:24-27; 1 Sam 15:6; 27:10; 30:29 1 Chron 2:55), this hypothesis does not command any supporters at present.

(3) *Theory of Ugaritic Sabbath Origins.* The ancient Canaanite city of Ugarit was discovered in 1929. In Ugaritic texts of the so-called Danel cycle there are divisions of "seven years" and in the Keret legend a sequence of "seven days" is known. It has been hypothesized that "seven days" developed into a seven day week and that the origin of the seven day week was carried over into Israelite practice.⁹⁵ In addition it has also been supposed that there was a universal "seven" structure from which the seventh-day

sabbath derived⁹⁶ and was attached to the end of the seven day week.

It has to be admitted, however, that there is no evidence for the sabbath to be directly or indirectly connected with any of these structures. It is a pure guess that the "seven" structure leads to a seventh-day and that this day was the seventh day of the week. Ugaritic sabbath origins suggest that one guess leads to another to get to the sabbath. This hypothesis does not command many followers either.

(4) *Theory of Sociological Sabbath Origins.* It has been suggested that the seventh-day sabbath evolved from sociological contexts, out of "special days" or "rest days" of primitive agriculturalists.⁹⁷

More prominent in recent times is the suggestion that market days, which were held at regular intervals, gave rise to the seventh-day sabbath.⁹⁸ It is correct that there were various market days at regular intervals in the past as there are today. However, there is no evidence to this day for a seventh-day market day cycle. Even if one could be found, it is difficult to perceive how a day on which buying and selling was the focus would or could become a seventh-day sabbath of rest on which buying and selling is prohibited as the OT makes clear.

It was stated two decades ago that "the origins of the sabbath and its traditions has not yet been found, and the [historical-critical] search still goes on."⁹⁹ This assessment of the situation has not changed.

The search for the origin of the sabbath outside of the OT has proven to be unsuccessful. Therefore, historical-critical scholars have placed greater emphasis on theological and sociological implications of the seventh-day sabbath.¹⁰⁰

Conclusions and Implications

1. *Limitations of Historical Biblical Criticism.* It is evident that the historical-critical method by its own definition, presuppositions, and procedures is unable to account for biblical revelation and its claims. It treats the Bible as a collection of purely human-originated documents which must be studied in the same way as any other ancient documents and with the same methods.

The Bible, however, makes claims regarding God's work in history and through the processes of history which are unique. One author has stated this succinctly in the following way, "In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."¹⁰¹

It appears that no compromise is possible between so-called modern "scientific historiography" as manifested in and practiced by the historical-critical method, and the picture of history revealed and presented in the Word of God, the Bible. Either the biblical picture of how God has worked and is working is correct or it is not correct. It has been shown above that to the very time of the writing of this article the assumption of the modern historian working within the framework of historical biblical criticism, using the historical-critical method, is that the picture of history presented in the Bible is not literally true. We have seen above that the historical-critical method continues to work with what it calls a "closed continuum" of immanent causes and effects that deny unique and one-time events in history. It is a method which by its own presuppositions and procedures denies a key part of reality as manifested in the Bible, reinterpreting it as being something else. It understands history only "from below," from the human side, denying the divine dimensions which permeate all of it and transform it into something new, different and unique.¹⁰² It cannot account for miracles, uniqueness, singularities, and it has to reinterpret them in "natural" ways.¹⁰³ Thus, it changes the very essence of reality, destroying biblical realism.

We have seen what this means for the origin, authority and meaning of the biblical seventh-day sabbath. According to the historical-critical method the sabbath cannot originate from God in creation, because the very presuppositions and workings of the historical-critical method do not allow for this to be a reality. The historical-critical method not only reconstructs sabbath origins,

making the sabbath a human invention of late times, it assigns its origin to late Jewish religion, limiting its validity to this particular people. The sabbath is thus robbed of its universal nature as a day valid for all people at all times and in all circumstances.

2. *Jesus Christ and Sabbath Origins.* Jesus Christ rescued the sabbath from such restrictions by affirming, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NASB). The universality of the sabbath for humankind everywhere in every place is reaffirmed by Jesus Christ. He also reaffirms the divine origin of the sabbath at the time of creation.¹⁰⁴

3. *The Proper Method for the Study of the Bible.* For Bible-believing Christians there is a method for the study of Scripture which does not deny essentials of biblical revelation and reality. It is a method that takes the claims of revelation of Scripture into account. It is a method informed and oriented by the revelation of God embodied in the Bible. It cannot be limited by anthropocentricity,¹⁰⁵ any sort of mere human orientation "from below," and what principles, presuppositions and workings from that orientation "from below" will or will not allow.

4. *Sabbath, Creation and New Creation-Resurrection.* In the end the issue for the Christian is not just creation and sabbath origins at creation. The issue revolves around another key reality, divine creation as manifested in resurrection. The New Testament appeals to eyewitnesses as a proof for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Many eyewitnesses saw Jesus alive after he was crucified (1 Cor 15:5-8). The apostle Paul appeals to them as proof that Jesus was bodily raised. This one-time, unique event is denied by historical-critical scholarship.¹⁰⁶ Yet the testimony of the eyewitnesses are irrefutable. "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. . . . But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ [will be raised]" (1 Cor 15:14, 16, 23, NRSV). The resurrection of Jesus in the past, as the resurrection of believers in the future, are activities of creating and re-creating new life.

The sabbath is a perpetual reminder of three divine activities of creation. It is the divine activity of creation at the beginning of

the world. It is the divine activity of creation of a new spiritual life in those who follow God in the present. Finally, it is the future divine activity of creation in resurrecting those who belong to God and the creation of a new home for them. The sabbath which comes from creation will continue to exist into the new creation (Isa 66:23) and be part of the celebrative experience of the resurrected saints in the "new heavens and the new earth." In that eternal state the sabbath will continue to be a reminder of God's marvelous creative power. Then all redeemed humankind will worship the Lord (vss. 22-23) as Creator and Redeemer.

Let us return once more to the true origin of the sabbath. The biblical report of the creation origin of the sabbath is as unmistakable, clear, and irrefutable as the resurrection of Jesus. The question is, how will we relate to the reports of God's revelation in Scripture and will we incorporate these true realities into our thinking, our faith and our life? As they worship the Creator on His appointed seventh-day sabbath, Bible-believing Christians are eager to recognize God's purpose and design, affirming his creation in the past, his creative power in present redemption, and his new creation in the future. Although this worship on His day takes place in time and space, it even now transcends time and space, lifting us into the very presence of our Creator.

Endnotes

¹ This is not the place to study the development of the seventh-day sabbath in the medieval, Reformation and post-Reformation church. The sabbath was rediscovered during the early years of the Reformation in the sixteenth century by such Anabaptist leaders as Oswald Glait and Andreas Fischer (see Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 5 [1967]: 101-121; 6 [1968]: 19-28) both of whom died as martyrs for their faith. The Reformer Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt (ca. 1477-1541) wrote in 1524 a booklet "On the Sabbath and Decreed Holidays" in which he claimed that the sabbath has not been changed to Sunday. He also emphasizes an "inner, mystical Sabbath" because externally all days are the same. Due to this emphasis he cannot be considered to be a restorer of the seventh-day sabbath as a day of rest and worship binding for Christians. The seventh-day sabbath also played a role among the Puritans, and Seventh-day Baptist who began to keep the sabbath in 1631. See Richard Müller, *Adventisten - Sabbath - Reformation* "Studia Theologica Ludensia" (Lund: GWK Gleerup, 1979); Brian W. Ball, *The English Connection* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1981), pp. 138-58.

² Among those who believe that the Bible maintains a seventh-day emphasis for the sabbath are Seventh-Day Adventists, Seventh-day Baptists, Church of God (Seventh-day), and other smaller Sabbatarian Christian groups. Historically the various Jewish communities have, of course, also emphasized the seventh-day sabbath.

³ See here particularly D. A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982); Werner Grimm, *Der Ruhetag. Sinngehalte einer fast vergessenen Gottesgabe* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990). The view of "one day in seven" will fulfill the sabbath commandment instead of the "seventh day" is held by the majority of Christians in one form or another.

⁴ There are recent papal statements that reaffirm the position that the Roman Catholic Church has decreed that the Sabbath should be kept on Sunday. Pope John XXIII (1958-63) stated in the encyclical entitled, *Mater et Magistra* (pronounced on May 15, 1961) the following: "The Catholic Church has decreed for many centuries that Christians observe this day of rest [the Sabbath day] on Sunday, and that they be present on the same day at the Eucharistic Sacrifice [i.e., the Mass]. . . ." Cited in Anne Freemantle, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals in Their Historical Context: The Teaching of the Popes from Peter to John XIII* (New York: Mentor-Omega Books, 1963), p. 384.

⁵ G. H. Waterman, "Sabbath," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 5:183.

⁶ J. C. McCann, Jr., "Sabbath," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:249.

⁷ David A. Glatt and Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Sabbath," *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, ed. Paul Achtemeier (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 888.

⁸ Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 109.

⁹ Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbath," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:581.

¹⁰ For various historical-critical opinions on this passage, see N.-E. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath. A Traditio-Historical Investigation* "SBL Dissertation Series 7" (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1972), pp. 67-69, 129-30; J. H. Meesters, *Op zoek naar de oorsprong van de sabbath* "Studia Semitica Neerlandica 7" (Assen: Van Gorkum, 1966), pp. 115-18; N. Negretti, *Il Settimo Giorno* "Analecta Biblica 55" (Rome: Pontifical Press, 1973), pp. 173-224.

¹¹ Martin Noth, *Exodus. A Commentary* "Old Testament Library" (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 132.

¹² Ernst Jenni, *Die theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebots im Alten Testament* (Zollikon-Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1956), p. 20.

¹³ Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* "Old Testament Library" (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), p. 290.

¹⁴ Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc., 1982), p. 27.

¹⁵ Waterman, "Sabbath," 5:184; Childs, p. 416.

¹⁶ See my explanations of these differences, which are not as significant as some have attempted to make them, in "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," pp. 28-33, and "Sabbath," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:851-52.

¹⁷ See M. Weinfeld, "The Decalogue: Its Significance, Uniqueness, and Place in Israel's Tradition," *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, eds. E. B. Firmage, B. G. Weiss and J. W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 17.

¹⁸ Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," p. 27.

¹⁹ An "inclusio" is a literary device that frames a given passage.

²⁰ In the Hebrew text this is an infinitive absolute in the Qal stem which functions as a strong imperative. See Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 593, where it is pointed out that "the infinitive absolute as a word of command . . . [is used] predominantly in divine and/or prophetic commands."

²¹ W. Schottroff, "Gedenken" im Alten Orient und Alten Testament "Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum AT und NT, 15" (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1964), pp. 117-25.

22 Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 80.

23 W. W. Cannon, "The Weekly Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 49 (1931): 325.

24 M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch. Its Composition and Authorship* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 152.

25 The first motivation for keeping the sabbath in both Exod 20:10a and Deut 5:14a is the identical phrase "but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God." See Hasel, "Sabbath," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:851.

26 From time to time it has been suggested that the sabbath commandment in Deut 5:12-15 is the original version, particularly because it is said to belong to the so-called "P" document which is traditionally dated later than the so-called "D" source (so recently again F.-L. Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog: Seine späte Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen* "Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 45" [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982]) but this view has been rejected with good reasons time and again (see already, Karl Budde, *Biblische Urgeschichte* [Giessen: Ricker, 1883], pp. 493-94, and more recently C. Levin, "Der Dekalog am Sinai," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 [1985]: 165-91; Weinfeld, p. 5 n. 4)

27 Weinfeld, p. 15.

28 See the summary as presented by Rainer Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit. Teil 2: Vom Exil bis zu den Makkabäern* "Grundrisse zum Alten Testament 8/2" (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 423-426.

29 There are scholars who argue that the seventh-day sabbath was the creation of post-exilic times: A. Lemaire, "Le Sabbat à l'époque royale Israélite," *Revue Biblique* 80 (1973): 181-185; C. Levin, *Der Sturz der Königin Atalja* "Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 105" (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1982), pp. 41-42. Other historical-critical scholars suggest that this happened in exilic times: Hossfeld, pp. 247ff.; G. Robinson (see below n. 67); Albertz, p. 424.

30 The historical-critical method is the major method in vogue still among critical, progressive, liberal scholars. For a recent defense, see Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975). The number of dissenting voices regarding the adequacy of the historical-critical method increases among those who have moved to structuralism, post-structuralism, reader-response criticism, audience criticism, rhetorical criticism, literary approaches, and so on. For surveys and summaries, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics. The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 31-140, 313-556; Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991).

31 This method has also been called "historico-critical method," "critical-historical method," and simply "historical method." Regardless of which designation is used it refers by and large to the same method of modern liberal scholarship.

32 An excellent reprint of major actors on the English scene is presented by John Drury, *Critics of the Bible, 1724-1873* "Cambridge English Prose Texts" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

33 See the authoritative and widely cited study of Klaus Scholder, *Ursprünge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert. Ein Beitrag zur historisch-kritischen Theologie* (München: Christian Kaiser, 1966). Concise overviews in English are provided by Kendrick Grobel, "Biblical Criticism," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 1:407-13; S. J. de Vries, "Biblical Criticism, History of," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:413-18; D. P. Fuller, "Interpretation, History of," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 2:863-74.

34 One of the first major attacks on the Bible by historical critics concerned its inspiration and canonicity as the following famous study indicates: Johann Salomo Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Kanons. Vier Teile [Treatise on the Free Investigation of the Canon]* (Halle, 1771-75). On the "neologist" Semler and his lasting influence in biblical study, see Werner Georg Kümmel, *The New Testament: The History of the*

Investigations of its Problems (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), pp. 62-69; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (2nd ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969), pp. 103-13.

35 Bernard C. Lategan, "Hermeneutics," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:151.

36 One recent statement from a widely read biblical critic, James Barr, is symptomatic of this trend. James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 120: "My account of the formation of the biblical tradition is an account of a human work. It is man's statement of his beliefs, the events he has experienced, the stories he has been told, and so on. . . . It is man who developed the biblical tradition and man who decided when it might be suitably fixed and made canonical" (italics his).

37 Robert Morgan with John Barton, *Biblical Interpretation* "Oxford Bible Series" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

38 See also Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind. The Renewal of God-Language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), pp. 48-63. The principle of criticism is to be applied in order to determine (1) what the author of the document that is studied meant, (2) whether the author meant what he/she wrote, and (3) whether his/her belief was justified on the basis of modern, rational norms.

39 Ernst Troeltsch, "Über historische und dogmatische Methode in der Theologie," *Gesammelte Schriften* 2 (Tübingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 2:732.

40 Van A. Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 29-30.

41 Krentz, p. 55.

42 Stuhlmacher, p. 45.

43 Van Harvey, p. 14.

44 R. Bultmann, "Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions possible?" *Existence and Faith*, ed. S. Ogden (Cleveland/New York: Meridian Books, 1965), p. 291.

45 Among incisive critiques by former practitioners of historical criticism are the ones by Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation. Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress 1973); Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der Historisch-Kritischen Methode* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1973), Engl. transl. *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974); Eta Linnemann, *Wissenschaft oder Meinung? Anfragen und Alternativen* (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler Verlag, 1986), Engl. transl. *Historical Criticism of the Bible. Methodology or Ideology?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1990); Thomas C. Oden, *After Modernity . . . What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), pp. 103-50.

Incisive critiques by others include Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), a book that analyzes the origin, development and current usage of the method and provides reactions to the method from practitioners from within the method and those from without. An alternative method that is faithful to the claims of Scripture is provided. Recently the volume by Royce Gordon Gruenler, *Meaning and Understanding. The Philosophical Framework of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991) provides a helpful analysis of the critical philosophical systems that have influenced biblical interpretation. Vern S. Poythress, *Science and Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988) has numerous insightful criticisms of the historical-critical method.

46 Bultmann, p. 292.

47 See below n. 103.

48 Bultmann, p. 292.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Frank Moore Cross, "The Development of Israelite Religion," *Bible Review* 8/5 (October 1992):29, 50.

52 Ibid., p. 50.

53 Moderate reactions to the historical-critical method have come from members of this school of interpretation themselves, see Peter Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, transl. by R. A. Harrisville (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977) and Walter Wink (see above n. 43) whose first chapter begins with the incisive sentence, "Historical criticism is bankrupt" (p. 1).

54 We should notice that one historical-critical scholar, Peter Stuhlmacher, has addressed the difficulties the historical-critical method has caused for faith. He has suggested, therefore, that the historical-critical method be enlarged with a fourth principle, that of "consent," which is to be added to the three principles of analogy, correlation and criticism. By "consent" (German "Einverständnis") Stuhlmacher means a "willingness to open oneself anew to the claims of tradition, the presence and transcendence" (so Peter Stuhlmacher, *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975], p. 121). This means that the critical scholar should allow for these claims to have been in existence as realities. This affirmation of tradition, presence, and transcendence on a theological or theoretical level, however, does not change the historical-critical procedures because, if it would, it would nullify the verifiability of critical research (pp. 122-27). See also Stuhlmacher's decisive remarks in *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik "Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament"* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), pp. 216-20.

55 Hershel Shanks in Hershel Shanks, William G. Dever, Baruch Halpern and P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *The Rise of Ancient Israel* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992), p. 25.

56 Robert B. Coote, *Early Israel. A New Horizon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), p. 141.

57 Aside from the flood of articles on this subject the following books are noteworthy for their historical-critical reconstructions: Gösta Ahlström, *Who Were the Israelites?* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986); Robert Coote and Keith Whitelam, *The Emergence of Early Israel* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1987); Niels Peter Lemche, *Early Israel. Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (SVT, 38; Leiden: Brill, 1985); idem, *Ancient Israel. A New History of Israelite Society* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987); idem, *Biblical Archaeology and the History of Israel's Origin* (forthcoming).

58 John Barton, "Source Criticism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:164.

59 Thomas L. Thompson, "Israelite Historiography," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:208.

60 Albert de Pury, "Yahwist ('J') Source," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:1015.

61 *Ibid.*, 6:1017.

62 *Ibid.*, 6:1017-18.

63 Alan W. Jenks, "Elohist," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:482.

64 Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:174.

65 B. A. Levine, "Priestly Writers," *Interpreter's Bible Dictionary, Supplement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 685.

66 Jacob Milgrom, "Priestly 'P' Source," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:458-59.

67 Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift* "Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament" (2nd ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner Verlag, 1976), pp. 154-59; Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath* "Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie" (Frankfurt/New York: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 225-27; Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*, pp. 63-67.

68 Robinson, pp. 227-30; Andreasen, pp. 67-69.

69 J. F. Priest, "Etiology," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Supplement* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), p. 293.

70 John Barton, "Form Criticism," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:838.

71 Raymond F. Collins, "Ten Commandments," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:383. Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 53: "Here [in the Decalogue] the effects of centuries of reflection and revision . . . are seen."

72 *Ibid.*, 6:384.

73 See J. J. Stamm and M. E. Andrew, *The Ten Commandments in Recent Research* (Napierville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1967); Moshe Greenberg, "The Decalogue as Reflected in Modern Research," *The Decalogue throughout the Generations*, ed. B. Z. Segal (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1985); F.-L. Hossfeld (see above n. 26); B. Lang, "Neues über den Dekalog," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 164 (1984): 58-65; and J. Vincent, "Neuere Aspekte der Dekalogforschung," *Biblische Notizen* 32 (1986): 83-104. These studies provide insights into recent approaches of historical-critical research of the Decalogue.

74 Douglas A. Knight, "Tradition History," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:633-34.

75 A. Lemaire, "Le décalogue: Essai d'histoire de la rédaction," *De la Torah au Messie* ed. M. Carrez (Paris, 1981), pp. 159-95.

76 Weinfeld, p. 12.

77 Robinson, pp. 143-54, describes this in some detail. See also Albertz, p. 426 n. 49.

78 Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), pp. 44-51.

79 Moshe Weinfeld, "The Decalogue in Israel's Tradition," *Religion and Law: Biblical-Judaic and Islamic Perspectives*, ed. E. B. Firmage, B. G. Weiss, and J. W. Welch (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 13.

80 Walther Beyerlin, *Herkunft und Geschichte der ältesten Sinaitraditionen* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961), p. 12.

81 Johannes Botterweck, "Der Sabbat im Alten Testament," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 134 (1954): 154.

82 Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition*, p. 49.

83 Ernst Sellin, *Geschichte des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes* (2nd ed.: Leipzig, 1935), pp. 183-84.

84 Robinson, pp. 147-48.

85 W. Lotz, *Questiones de Historia Sabbati* (Leipzig, 1883).

86 Hasel, "Sabbath," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 5:850.

87 This was first suggested by Johannes Meinhold, *Sabbath und Woche im Alten Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1905).

88 So Robinson, pp. 51-65, 155-92. See now also Albertz, pp. 425-426.

89 So also Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* "The Anchor Bible, vol. 24" (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980), p. 250; Douglas Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* "Word Biblical Commentary" (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), p. 51; Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea* "Hermeneia" (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), p. 38: "Sabbath" stands next to the 'new moon,' as in Am 8:5; Is 1:13; 2 Kgs 4:23, but it can hardly be understood as the day of the full moon. Instead, in descending order, it is listed as the most frequent, weekly celebrated (Ex 20:8ff.) festival, and is listed last before various other, not especially important festivals."

90 Ezek 46:1,3, 9; 1 Chron 23:31; 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; cf. Ezra 3:5.

91 Ezek 45:17; 46:1; Neh 10:33; cf. 1 Chron 23:31; 3 Chron 2:4.

92 Two independent studies reached identical conclusions on these points, see Gerhard F. Hasel, "New Moon and Sabbath" in Eighth Century Israelite Prophetic Writings (Isa 1:13; Hos 2:13; Amos 8:5), in "Wünschet Jerusalem Frieden." *Collected Communications to the XIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament*, eds. M. Augustin and K.-D. Schunck (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 37-64, and Ernst Kutach, "Der Sabbat—Ursprünglich Vollmondstag?" in *Kleine Schriften zum Alten Testa-*

ment. *Zum 65. Geburtstag herausgegeben*, eds. L. Schmidt und K. Eberlein (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1986), pp. 71-77.

93 See Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*, pp. 7-9; Robinson, pp. 30-32.

94 A more recent supporter of this hypothesis is H. H. Rowley, "Moses and the Decalogue," *Men of God* (London, 1963), pp. 1-36.

95 Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel. A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), p. 87.

96 Recently still Negretti, pp. 33-45.

97 So a long time ago H. Webster, *Rest Days. A Study in Early Law and Morality* (New York, 1916), pp. 188-92, 101-23.

98 Ernst Jenni, *Die theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebots im Alten Testament* (Zollikon-Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1956), pp. 7-16.

99 Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*, p. 273.

100 N.-E. A. Andreasen, "'Festival and Freedom.' A Study of an Old Testament Theme," *Interpretation* 28 (1974):281-97; idem, "Recent Study of the Old Testament Sabbath," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 86 (1974):453-69.

101 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1903), p. 173.

102 Very insightful are the remarks on this limitation by Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Basic Questions in Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 1:38-50; Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments*, pp. 30-32; idem, *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie*, pp. 128-65.

103 See the insightful analysis of miracles during the last two hundred years in Colin Brown, *Miracles and the Critical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984).

104 S. Westerholm, "Sabbath," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel B. Green et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), p. 717.

105 Pannenberg, 1:39-47.

106 Gary R. Habermas and G. N. Flew, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987); Norman L. Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989).

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PRESUPPOSITIONS: THE KEY TO THE FORMULATION OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

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Introduction

Over the years, there have been and are some Seventh-day Adventists who would like to adopt a modified form of historical-criticism, claiming that it can be used without accepting its presuppositions.¹ But, one wonders whether or not this is possible?²

It has been said by some that our most important characteristic is not what we think *about* but what we think *with*.³ Consciously or unconsciously, everyone, including Christians, operate with certain assumptions.⁴ Neither conservatives nor liberals, theologians or exegetes can claim to be free from them.⁵ Because one's assumptions about truth and ultimate reality affect the way that a person thinks and acts, one must reckon seriously with their own contexts when interpreting the text of the NT.⁶

This raises the question of the relationship between presuppositions, interpretational method, and the formulation of doctrine. Does the method chosen to interpret Scripture when constructing a system of biblical teaching affect the final shape of that system? If so, should a person select one interpretational method over another when attempting to build their belief system?

The purpose of this paper is to examine briefly the issue of presuppositions, interpretational method, and their effect on the