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## When does the New Testament Economy Begin?

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not entirely a caricature of what is happening in exegetical works and discourses. If growth in exegesis means in our case that we constantly become more careful and desirous of humbly reiterating the saving truths contained in the Book of Life, then one essential factor in making us Lutheran exegetes will have been developed, and God's blessings will not be tardy in coming. W. ARNDT

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### Brief Paragraphs on the Question When does the New Testament Economy Begin?

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Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 3:5, 6; 8:6-13; 12:24), set aside the Old Covenant by means of His work of redemption during the thirty-three years of His humiliation (Gal. 4:4, 5). In this period He fulfilled the Moral Law by keeping it (Rom. 5:19; 10:4), and by His suffering He freed us from its curse (Gal. 3:13). In this time He also substituted the reality of His atonement for the shadow of the Ceremonial Law and thus made the observance of its ordinances unnecessary (Col. 2:16, 17).

The work of redemption was the foundation on which the change from the Old to the New Testament was based. The death of Christ marked the completion of this foundation (John 17:4; 19:30; Heb. 10:4). His death by crucifixion was also the summit of His atoning work (Phil. 2:8). Therefore His death is most closely related to the establishment of the New Testament. "This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you," Jesus says at the institution of the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:20). Heb. 9:16, 17: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." (Cf. entire chapter.)

The displacement of the old economy by the new nevertheless was not an instantaneous happening. The divine revelations of the abrogation of the whole Covenant and of the individual elements which make up the complex aggregate of the Covenant came at various times. Furthermore, the Covenant was to be eternal. It was difficult, therefore, for a people in whom this Covenant had been inbred to understand that part of it could be set aside, that an act which once was a sin of disobedience punishable by death might by divine direction become a good work. It was also difficult to find the clear line of demarcation between the ceremonial and the moral laws and then to maintain liberty, in the face of great opposition, in regard to the Ceremonial Law. Doubt in regard to the will of God and fear of sinning (e. g., Acts

10:14) lingered in the hearts of God's people and rendered the adoption of the change in practise a gradual one.

The institution of the new economy is predicted in the Old Testament, particularly in Jeremiah (chap. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:13) and in Ezekiel (chap. 16:59-62). Something of the newness of the New Testament appears to men at the birth of the "Messenger of the Covenant," Mal. 3:1. Zacharias welcomes Jesus as the "Day-spring from on high," Luke 1:78. The angel proclaims His birth as an event of the greatest importance, Luke 2:10. But the Old Covenant is not set aside when Jesus is born of Mary, for He is circumcised on the eighth day. Even John the Baptist, thirty years later, the last and greatest figure of the Old Testament, is still confined within the period of prophecy and expectation, Matt. 11:11-14; Luke 16:16. John represents the last stage of preparation for, but not the beginning of, the New Testament. He stands at the gate and holds it open to the new King. But John does not enter in. He is not baptized (Matt. 3:14), although he suggests his baptism for a moment. For John himself circumcision had been the Sacrament by which he became one of God's people.

The baptism of Jesus is one of the distinct moves in the transition from the old to the new. It belongs to the Old Testament inasmuch as it is performed by John; to the New, because it introduces the foremost Sacrament of the New Testament and because it marks the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus, in which Moses, the morning star, and the shadows of the Sinaitic Covenant begin to give way to the rising sun. With Christ "the acceptable year of the Lord" has come, Luke 4:17-21; Is. 61:1. He brings a new revelation, John 1:17; 7:15; Matt. 5:11, 27; Luke 10:23, 24; 2 Cor. 3:14-16; Heb. 9:8; 1 Pet. 1:10-13. His non-ascetic ways of living (eating and drinking, staying in the well-to-do home of Mary and Martha) suggest a new order, Matt. 9:14-17; 11:19; Mark 2:18-22. His state of humiliation is dotted with authoritative acts that announce a new divine policy toward mankind. But he uses the term "New Testament" for the first time on the eve of His crucifixion.

After the resurrection the apostles by divine authority declare that the new economy *has* begun, and the young Christian Church is taught, amidst intense struggles, to adopt in teaching and in practise the new charter of Gospel liberties.

The Old Covenant was laid aside largely by way of individual elements. For clarity, each element peculiar to the Old Testament needs to be singled out and subjected to the two questions: When did God expressly set it aside? At what time did His people become emancipated from it?

### Legalism

The promise of life on condition of obedience and the threat of God's curse for disobedience were prominent in the Old Testament (*e. g.*, Gen. 2:12-19; 5:1,3; 6:18; 9:12,15,16; etc.) for the purpose of "Suendenfoerderung." The Law was to light up with a brilliance peculiar to the Old Testament the dark and filthy room of human nature and to reveal its sinfulness and cursedness. That at the same time remission of sins was proclaimed not as something brought about by human works but as a free gift of God is of course true and must not be overlooked.

This temporary, educational emphasis of the Law was to cease in the days of the New Dispensation according to Jer. 31. Jesus liberally dispenses the grace of the New Covenant, Matt. 9:2; John 1:17; 3:15-18, 28-30; Luke 9:55. And many seem to have enjoyed His offer of freedom from the Law during the time of His humiliation, Mark 12:37; Luke 16:16; John 4:42. Paul thoroughly set forth the doctrine that faith makes the obedience of Christ ours (Rom. 3:21, 22; 5:19), that the children of God of the New Testament are "dead to the Law" (Rom. 7:4, 6) and enjoy the liberty of the sons of God (Gal. 4:1-7, 21-31).

But the adoption of the evangelical spirit in practise has had an endless history. We think of the Galatians or of the Judaizers everywhere in apostolic days, who clung to the legal ways of the Old Testament. We think of the ethical preachers of today, whose emphasis on the compulsion of the Law at the expense of the free Gospel motivation stamps them as out of date by two thousand years (they would be modern) and makes them dwellers among the dreary ruins of a by-gone dispensation.

### The Ceremonial Law in General

There are indications of the obsolescence of the Ceremonial Law in the public ministry of Jesus. And deep understanding might perhaps have recognized the fact from the beginning. For one thing, when Jesus taught the Moral Law in general, He quite significantly omitted the ceremonial, Matt. 5-7.

Still Jesus lived, generally speaking, as a Jew and bowed to Jewish ordinances. He paid the Temple tax in ostensible fashion, Matt. 17:24-27. He told the multitude and His disciples to observe everything the scribes and Pharisees taught, Matt. 23:2, 3.

The gravest charge against the apostles in Acts was that they were altering the Law of Moses, and it was met by protestations of loyalty to the Mosaic Law on the part of the apostles. The charge undoubtedly was grounded on their abrogation of the Ceremonial Law. The Council at Jerusalem recognized the abrogation of the Ceremonial Law, Acts 6:14; 21:21, 25. But it was likewise

in Jerusalem, a number of years afterwards, that Paul was induced to perform an Old Testament sacrifice, Acts 21 and 24.

The Ceremonial Law had come from God. The retention of portions of it in certain circles of the New Testament Church was not wrong in itself, Rom. 14:20 ff. Otherwise Paul would have identified himself with something wrong.

Nor was the observance of the Ceremonial Law in the New Testament necessarily harmful to the faith. For charity could even demand its observance, Gal. 5:13.

Therefore the Old Testament ceremonies disappeared gradually within a few decades, as gradually as people became educated to the facts 1. that the Ceremonial Law in New Testament times was an unnecessary yoke and a hindrance, like an overcoat worn in July (Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1); and 2. that its observance in the New Testament would be an abnormal development, likely to lead to the gross error of considering such an observance essential to salvation and the neglect of it a wrong. Thus it would become a means of spreading self-righteousness (Gal. 2:16 ff.), another gospel (Gal. 1:8; 5:2-6; 2 Cor. 11:4). Hagar and Ishmael may be tolerated as long as Ishmael does not claim to be equal or superior to Isaac. But when Isaac is mocked, Ishmael is cast out into the desert, Gen. 21:10.

### **Circumcision**

Jesus uses the term for "circumcise" only once (John 7:22, 23), and there without any implication that might be of value here. With the exception of the statements of the circumcision of John (Luke 1:59) and that of Jesus (Luke 2:21), circumcision is in no other place referred to in the gospels.

In Acts 10 and 11:18 circumcision is omitted as unnecessary for the Christianizing of Gentiles. In Acts 15:9 there is declared to be no difference between circumcised and uncircumcised Christians, and in v. 28 circumcision is not considered a necessity.

In Acts 16:3 Paul circumcises Timothy to remove obstacles to the Gospel. He is charged according to Gal. 5:11 with preaching circumcision. If a Gospel principle is to be sacrificed, if a wrong conclusion may be drawn, he refuses to circumcise, as in the case of Titus, Gal. 2:3. In 1 Cor. 7:18, 19 he ordains that in his churches no one be circumcised.

### **The Temple**

The Temple is for Jesus at twelve the house of His Father, Luke 2:49. Later He taught daily in the Temple (Luke 19:47), performed miracles in it (Matt. 21:14, 15), and drove out the money-changers from it (Matt. 21:12, 13).

On the other hand, Jesus claimed to be greater than the

Temple, Matt. 12:6. He prophesied of the time when people would not worship in Jerusalem but in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-23) and foretold the destruction of the Temple (Matt. 24:2; Mark 13:2). The rending of the veil at His death indicated that the direct access through Christ was to replace the use of the Temple as a meeting-place for God and man, Heb. 9:7-12; 10:19, 20. When in 70 A. D. the Temple was destroyed, its use naturally ceased to be an issue.

### The Sacrifices

In Matt. 5:23, 24; 8:4 Jesus commands Mosaic purification sacrifices of blood. He Himself observed the Passover to the very last, at the institution of the Lord's Supper, Matt. 26:26-28. In 1 Cor. (placed chronologically right after Acts 19:12) 5:7 Paul calls Christ our Passover. The next mention of the performance of offerings after that of Maundy Thursday is after Paul's return from his third missionary journey, Acts 21:20 ff.; 24:17, 18. In order to counteract the report that Paul is an enemy of the Temple, the elders at Jerusalem urge him to go to the Temple with four Nazirites, to spend money in worship, and to bring a purification sacrifice, which consisted of a he-lamb for a burnt offering, a ewe lamb for a sin-offering, and a ram for a peace-offering, along with other offerings, Num. 6:13-20. And Paul becomes a Jew to the Jews, 1 Cor. 9:20, and submits. Otherwise there is very little mention of offerings except figuratively. Heb. (written before the year 70) 7:12-28 makes a clear statement of the change of the priesthood.

### The Sabbath

Nowhere in the New Testament is the Sabbath commanded.

There are six instances in which Jesus acts contrary to the rules of the scribes concerning the observance of the Sabbath-day: Matt. 12:1-9; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-6. — Matt. 12:10-13; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:7-10. — Luke 13:11-16. — Luke 14:1-6. — John 5:1-18 (with John 5:10 cp. Jer. 17:21, 22); 7:22-24. — John 9:13-17.

There is an incident, in the Codex Bezae only, after Luke 6:5, the account of which may be true even if not inspired. It reads: "On the same day He saw a man working on the Sabbath and said to him, Man, if thou knowest what thou doest, blessed art thou; but if thou knowest not, thou art accursed and a transgressor of the Law." Cf. Rom. 14:14.

The Apostles in Acts continued daily in the Temple, Acts 2:46. There is no mention of resting on a day. The institution of Sunday showed freedom, Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10. The Sabbath law is expressly declared invalid in Gal. 4:10, 11 and in Col. 2:16, 17. But Jesus predicts the observance of the Sabbath-day among the Jews for as late as the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, Matt. 24:20.

### Unclean Meats

What the attitude of the Jews toward swine was can be seen from Matt. 7:6 and Luke 15:13, 15. The teaching of Jesus is given in Mark 7:18, 19: "And He saith unto them, . . . Do ye not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart but into the belly and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?" Luther connects "purging" (καθαρίζων) with "draught." Meyer follows him. But the *International Critical Commentary* says: "R. V.: 'This He said making all things clean.' The participle agrees with the subject of λέγει, He says (v. 18); that is, the result of this statement of Jesus was to abrogate the distinction between clean and unclean in articles of food. . . . With the masculine it is possible to connect it with ἀφεδρῶνα, but the anacoluthon involved is rather large-sized and improbable, as only a single word separates the noun from its unruly adjunct. The only probable connection is with the subject of λέγει (v. 18)." Wohlenberg joins the participle with λέγει. Kretzmann calls it the abrogation. Mark here declares that Jesus even at this time abrogated the distinction of clean and unclean meats. But not until Acts 10 was Peter, whom Mark seems to follow, aware of the cleansing. His outpouring of strong negatives μηδαμῶς, οὐδέποτε, πᾶν — shows he had not grasped the meaning which he later found in the statement of Jesus and which, some thirty-plus years later, was written down by Mark.

Other statements showing that the old distinctions no longer had to be observed are found Rom. 14 and Col. 2:16.

To avoid giving offense and causing others to eat against their conscience, it was declared to be better at times to abstain from the "cleansed" meats, Acts 15:29; Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 10:25.

W. F. BECK

### Jes. 53 und die „Decke über dem Alten Testament“

Eine der bedeutungsvollsten Aussagen, die wir in sämtlichen paulinischen Briefen finden, ist im 2. Korintherbrief, Kap. 3, 14–16, enthalten: „Sondern ihre Sinne sind verstockt; denn bis auf den heutigen Tag bleibt dieselbige Decke unaufgedeckt über dem Alten Testament, wenn sie es lesen, welche in Christo aufhört. Aber bis auf den heutigen Tag, wenn Moses gelesen wird, hängt die Decke vor ihrem Herzen. Wenn es aber sich befehret zu dem Herrn, so würde die Decke abgetan.“ Während also die Schriften Moses besonders genannt werden, so gilt doch nach dieser Aussage im allgemeinen, daß die Decke vor den Augen der Juden hängt, einerlei welche messianische Weissagung in Betracht kommt. Und das Wort des Apostels findet seine Anwendung in gleichem Maße auf