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Miscellanea

P. E. Kretzmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Miscellanea

The Chronology of the Two Covenants

(Gal. 3:17 cp. with Ex. 12:40)

Is there a discrepancy between the two passages given above? And are they out of harmony with the statements found in Gen. 15:13 and Acts 7:6? The following facts will assist in solving the difficulty which seems to be connected with the chronology of the two covenants, that made with Abraham and that made with Moses.

It is, of course, generally known, and can easily be demonstrated, that the chronology which was taken into the margin of the Authorized Version, as worked out by Bishop Ussher of Armagh (1581—1656) is not reliable in many of its statements; above all, it cannot be placed on a par with the inspired account of the Bible text itself. If any one wishes to operate with the Ussher list, he must do so with great care.

In the second place, we must keep in mind the fact that, while the Bible frequently mentions years in connection with important events, we do not often find the point of departure and the point of arrival (the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*) fixed in such a way that we know precisely in what year before or after Christ a certain event occurred. Although Luke, for example, is quite exact in fixing the time of certain happenings (e. g., Luke 2:1, 2; Acts 18:2), scholars are not yet fully agreed as to the chronology of either the life of Jesus or that of St. Paul. In other words: Frequently we know exactly, or almost so, how many years elapsed between two given events, but we do not have the *dates* of the *terminus a quo* or the *terminus ad quem* and therefore find it rather difficult to assign definite dates to important events from the Scripture account itself. If secular history provides us with a date or a point of departure which is beyond a reasonable doubt, the matter is considerably simplified, but it still does not yet give us the *absolute* truth which we have in the inspired account. For example, as pertaining to the date of our Savior's birth: Luke 2:1 and Luke 3:23 give us a starting-point for our calculations; but then we must consult Matt. 2:1 and John 2:20 in order to get reasonably close to the exact date. After that we consult secular history and archeology in order to find out just when census edicts were issued and what factors may have expedited or hindered the census referred to by Luke. The same difficulties present themselves in the Old Testament, and possibly in an even greater degree, because the available secular sources are often less reliable than those of a later date.

In the third place, we occasionally are obliged to struggle with the difficulty of sources. There can be no doubt of the correctness of the transmitted text of the Old Testament in all the points pertaining to our salvation, for there the quotations in the New Testament as well as the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, known as the Septuagint, give us ample corroboration. But in one respect we find occasional puzzles, namely, in that pertaining to numbers. Quite frequently the

Septuagint has other figures pertaining to certain events than the present Hebrew text, and we are at a loss to determine whether the translators of this unique document had a more accurate text of the Hebrew before them or whether they, like many copyists who labored through the centuries, inadvertently made an error in transcribing numbers (or figures) found in the copies before them. Whenever, therefore, we are dealing with figures, and especially with dates, we try to find verification or corroboration in the New Testament or in some other reliable source. In this manner it has been possible to come very close to the text as originally written down by the inspired authors, and the science of hermeneutics, especially as handled by Lutheran and other conservative scholars, has proved its value.

Now let us proceed to the specific difficulty confronting us, as stated in the first paragraph above. We may say at once that we are not greatly concerned about the round numbers given for the sojourn of the children of Israel in Egypt, Gen. 15:13 and Acts 7:6, for in either case the purpose is evidently only that of fixing a period of time in a general way. But in Gal. 3:16,17 the apostle writes: "Now to Abraham *and his seed* were the promises made. . . . And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was *four hundred and thirty years after*, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." And in Ex. 12:40,41 we are told: "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was *four hundred and thirty years*. And it came to pass at the end of the *four hundred and thirty years*, even the selfsame day it came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." There can be no doubt in either case that the text intends the *four hundred and thirty years* to embrace the *stay of the children of Israel in Egypt*. Hence the changes in the Septuagint text and in some of the New Testament manuscripts, in an effort to shorten this time, are not acceptable. This is evident from much corroborative material contained in other Scripture-passages, as when 1 Chron. 7:20-27 gives nine, or even ten generations between Ephraim and Joshua, the generations at that time being reckoned, as we see from the Book of Numbers, at approximately forty years.

In order to get at the root of the difficulty, we might look at a few other facts. For example, it seems that Abraham received the first Messianic promise when he was 75 years old, Gen. 12:3,4. But the words of promise specifically using the word "Seed" were not given until the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac, which must have occurred some 35 years later, or when Isaac was some ten years old. Which date are we to regard as the date of the covenant? It is clear, furthermore, that the Messianic promise, even before the sojourn in Egypt, was transmitted in approximately the same form to Isaac and Jacob. Does it not seem evident that St. Paul had just this fact in mind when he wrote: "Now, to Abraham *and his seed* were the promises made"?

Let us next take up a chronological tag which has been regarded as the key passage for the fixing of Old Testament history, namely, 1 Kings 6:1, where we read: "Now, it came to pass in the *four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of*

Egypt . . . , that he began to build the house of the Lord." As nearly as can be determined on the basis of history and archeology, the date when Solomon began the building of the Temple at Jerusalem was about the year 1000 B. C. (somewhere between 1010 and 960). Suppose we take the date 960 and work backward. The 480 years of this text plus the 430 years of Ex. 12:40 would bring us back to 1870, as the date of Jacob's coming to Egypt. Jacob was 130 years old when he came to Egypt, Gen. 47:9, and he had been born to Isaac when the latter was 60 years old, Gen. 25:26, or approximately 50 years after the "sacrifice" of Isaac by Abraham, which brought about the promise of the covenant referring to the "Seed," Gen. 22:18. This would make the date of this blessing about 2050 B. C.

Let us pause here a moment to see what noted scholars say concerning the approximate dates of Abraham and of his contemporary Amraphel, or Hammurabi. Clay (*Light on the Old Testament*, 130) places Hammurabi at 2100 B. C.; Price (*The Monuments and the Old Testament*, 54) gives the dates from 2123 to 2081; Adams (in *Review and Expositor*) places Abram's migration in 2092 B. C., but does not place it in relation to Hammurabi's reign; Langdon (quoted in Marston, *New Bible Evidence*, 95) thinks that Hammurabi's dates are between 2067 and 2024 B. C. In the same connection Marston calculates, in connection with other chronological figures, that Abram came into Canaan in 2085 B. C. and that Isaac was born in 2060 B. C. This agrees exactly with the computation made in the paragraph above.

All of which tends to show that the 430 years spoken of by Paul in Gal. 3:17 f. cannot possibly be figured from the first covenant of God with Abram in approximately 2085 B. C., nor even from that of 2050 B. C. Let us, therefore, for a moment digress in order to find what eminent scholars say with reference to our difficulty. The noted commentator Carl Friedrich Keil remarks on Ex. 12:40 f.: "The sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt had lasted 430 years. This figure is not to be placed under suspicion in a critical way, nor are the 430 years, according to the cue of the Septuagint, . . . to be reduced to 215 years, by an arbitrary insertion. This chronological reference, whose originality is placed beyond question by Onkelos, the Syriac Version, the Vulgate, the Sahidic and the Venetian Greek, not only harmonizes with the prophecy of Gen. 15:13, where in prophetic speech the round number 400 is mentioned, but may also be harmonized without trouble with the various genealogical lists. . . . This last genealogy (1 Chron. 7:20 ff.) shows in the plainest manner the impossibility of the opinion originating from the Alexandrian Version, namely, that the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt had lasted only 215 years, since ten generations, each figured at 40 years, will agree with 430, but definitely not with 215 years."

A very fine discussion of the difficulty is given by Hovey, in *The American Commentary on the New Testament*, pp. 45 f., on Gal. 3:17. He writes:

"Though the bearing of this verse on Paul's argument is very clear, objection has been made to it as containing an erroneous statement. For the words 'which came four hundred and thirty years after' are said to imply that the whole period, from the first [?] giving of the

promise to Abraham to the giving of the Law, was only four hundred and thirty years; while Ex. 12:40, 41, where, and where only, the same period is mentioned, shows that the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. Compare the language of Stephen in Acts 7:6 and Hackett's note on the same. The sojourn in Egypt is there spoken of as four hundred years. But, according to the best computation, two hundred and fifteen years elapsed between the time when the promise was first given [namely, when Abram left Chaldea] and the time when Jacob and his sons went down into Egypt at the invitation of Joseph; so that [if that were true] the Law came more than six hundred years after the promise. What shall be said of this discrepancy? This, in the first place, that Paul's reasoning is not affected in the slightest degree by the length of the period. The Law was given long after the promise—whether four hundred and thirty years or six hundred and forty-five years, more or less, is of no consequence. It was enough for him to refer to the period in such terms as would bring it distinctly before the minds of his readers. He is not fixing a point of chronology, but recalling a well-known period. Accordingly—1. Paul may have followed the Septuagint, which contains an addition to the Hebrew text of Ex. 12:40, making it read, 'in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan,' and may have done this because the Greek version was sufficiently accurate for his purpose and was generally used by the Galatians. His object was not to teach them Biblical chronology, but to remind them of the fact that the Law was given long after the promise and could not be supposed to destroy or change the latter. 2. He may have followed the Hebrew text, making the *close*, instead of the beginning of the patriarchal age, the starting-point in his reckoning; for the promise was repeated to Isaac and Jacob and was therefore contemporaneous with the whole patriarchal period. With this would agree the plural 'promises' in verse 16, if this plural relates to a repetition of essentially the same promise, which is certainly probable. . . . In no case can the truthfulness of Paul's language be impeached."

If we once more examine the text in Galatians, in connection with this last argument, we find that the text indeed supports the contention exactly. It reads: "But to Abraham were spoken the promises and to his seed." If we both here and in the next clause understand "seed" of the Savior (which it certainly is at the end of the verse), then the explanation of the *Popular Commentary* will give the full comfort of the promise along Messianic lines. If the word "seed" in the first part of the sentence is to be understood of offspring or descendants, we have the explanation that the Messianic promise, as given to Abraham in the first place, was repeated in the case of Isaac and Jacob. Thus we have the whole period of the Messianic prophecy in Canaan included in verse 16. In other words, the reference to the covenant is not to any specific announcement to Abraham alone but to the promise as given to the patriarchs.

Now verse 17 follows, in the transcription of the *Popular Commentary*: "Some four hundred and thirty years later, Ex. 12:40, counting from the journey of Jacob into Egypt to the exodus of the children

of Israel, the Law was given by God from Mount Sinai." That is: Between the time of the covenant promises to Abraham (Isaac, and Jacob), taken as a unit fact, and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, we have the 430 years of the Egyptian sojourn. P. E. KRETZMANN

"The Blood of God"

Some Lutheran professors do not want the *genus idiomaticum* treated in dogmatics, and some Lutheran pastors do not want to use the phrase "God died" in their sermons. Then let the *Reformed periodical Bibliotheca Sacra* do it. It says in the 1941 January-March number, page 28: "That the Redeemer must be able to redeem is a truth which, when contemplated in the antitype, involves facts and forces within God which man cannot fathom. The fact that, when acting under the guidance of infinite wisdom and when possessed of infinite resources, the blood of God (Acts 20:28) was shed in redemption indicates to the fullest degree that no other redemption would avail. Christ's death being alone the answer to man's lost estate, the kinsman Redeemer, or *Goel*, was able to pay the price; He being the God-man could shed the 'precious blood,' which because of the unity of His being was in a very actual sense the blood of God.—This phrase, the 'blood of God' (Acts 20:28), is startling, and to it objection is made by many. The acceptance of it depends upon the extent to which the union of two natures in the person of Christ is received. It is evident that God cannot die, nor has He, apart from this union, blood to shed. It is equally sure that the perfect humanity which Christ secured by incarnation was capable of shedding blood unto death. If the blood of Christ which was shed unto death was only human, then any suitable human sacrifice might have been employed. The union of Christ's two natures is so complete that His blood becomes the blood of God. To that fact alone is its efficacy to be traced." E.

What Must Be the Church's Duty with Respect to Conscientious Objectors?

In the *Watchman-Examiner* (Baptist) of May 22 a debate is placed before the readers on the subject mentioned in the above caption. One writer takes the view that Baptists should support "their conscientious objectors." Another writer, Dr. John Bunyan Smith of San Diego, Calif., opposes this view. What the latter writes seems to us to be so sensible and in keeping with the principles of freedom of conscience and of separation of Church and State, which our Lutheran Church has always stood for, that it deserves being reproduced in this journal.

"*The Convention Should Not Support Conscientious Objectors.* Respect for conscience is a holy Christian tradition. Men and women of enlightened conscience have been the leaders of new enterprises for God ever since the first proclamation of the Gospel of Christ to this world. As Christians we still look to conscientious leadership for corporate progress. A smallness of the number of conscientious objectors to military service and to war ought in no sense lead to their depreciation. We should constantly seek the preservation of the dignity and the free-

dom of conscience. The corporate body of Christ must be kept so free that the voice of conscience may freely speak and be respectfully heard. The Christian conscience must never become subservient to the political control of the State. For this reason we as Baptists insist strongly on the separation of Church and State. Every struggle which seeks to preserve the integrity and freedom of the Christian conscience is worth all the sacrifice we might make on its behalf. This principle involves the life and death of our idealisms. It involves not only our relationship to Church and State, but also to our commission from our Lord in the bringing of His redemptive Gospel to the world.

"This fundamental principle of the freedom of conscience among us is established. Disagreement will arise from the application of the principle rather than from its fact. Is the voice of conscience always the voice of God? Often confusion and misunderstanding have arisen from such predication. Will the perfect voice of God tell some to do one thing which may be horribly antichristian and tell others who claim to be equally led by God to do the opposite thing?

"As an instance in point we cite the conscientious objector to military service over against the conscientious non-objector. We discover Christians of equally high devotion in both camps. Is God, then, the Author of this division and confusion? Is it not possible that conscience may be the victim of false teaching? Is it not possible that the conscience of a highly educated Christian might be ignorant? Is not conscience capable of being flattered by oratorical effusions? Cannot a Christian conscience become seared and wounded by disillusionment?

"All these arguments clearly indicate that clarification is needed in the matter of the *application* of the principle rather than that of the freedom of conscience itself. In recent years, conscience seems to have been very much submerged. Maybe the God of Light will use this occasion for a reemphasis on the doctrine of conscience.

"It cannot be denied that Christian people are becoming pleased or irritated to learn that a special group of conscience-led people should be accorded privileged treatment by the State and some unique recognition by the churches as instanced in the treatment of conscientious objectors to military service.

"In this day, when the tendency is toward centralized government, it is quite an achievement to get the State to recognize the status of conscience within its citizenry in relation to military service.

"As to the Church, if the situation demands a restudy of the whole area of conscience, this, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, could be extremely beneficial, for we must admit that there are large numbers of church-members who appear to have little or no conscientious conviction about many issues in the realm of morals and personal conduct. Could it be that our gracious God is using this agitation with reference to conscientious objectors to bring about a revival in the Christian's obligations to conscience? If so, such a revival would render incalculable service to all concerned.

"The outstanding point of issue as it appears to those who have studied the situation is that conscientious objectors and those who defend

their cause have sought to surround the conscientious objector with protective care and to provide for him comforts and amenities that maintain him in his position. This, it is declared, sustains him not from the viewpoint of his conscience, by which the Christian must be willing to live or die, but by extraneous privileges and comforts which are not allotted to all in military service. The conscientious non-objector, on the other hand, seeks no privileges but is prepared on behalf of his country to 'sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish,' in the stand which he has taken at the call of his country.

"On the other hand, the promoters of the cause of the conscientious objectors declare that their charges are liable to maltreatment and to be forced to offend against their conscience by command of the State unless some agency is established to prevent such treatment. It is beyond question that in the last World War many men suffered indignities and maltreatments which were both unchristian and inhuman. This should never happen again.

"We see, however, little hope of reconciling the proponents and opponents of this case among the churches. In the day of war, feelings run high and become intense. Convictions are overworked and animosities rise. Parents whose sons die in military service may look askance on other parents whose sons have sought and found protection from the threatening bitterness which is on the horizon. We must preserve the dignity and sanctity of conscience. Can this be done by the establishment of a status of special privilege for a particular type of conscience? We are anxious that conscience, even in such an evil hour, shall not be afraid, shall not be ashamed before God or man, shall not be ignorant or disillusioned, shall not cringe before the challenge of life or death. Such men and women are our hope. Can conscience have much influence while it enjoys special protection? Does conscience not receive its best opportunity and achieve its highest goal when it pays willingly, without fear or favor, whatever price is necessary? Can conscience conscientiously accept such privilege and protection?

"There are those who wish to use denominational funds on behalf of conscientious objectors to military service. Would not such an application of denominational funds be a divisive and dangerous policy? Individually we are free to give our money to this or any other cause, but it will be a dangerous procedure to allocate our corporate moneys to this cause. Denominational funds are derived from all groups within our ranks holding diverse opinions on this subject, and it will react unfavorably and open another channel of criticism for our missionary agencies to use our general funds to foster a particular type of conscientious belief and conduct which is opposed by the great majority and only sympathized with by a small portion of our people.

"This proposal for such use of denominational funds should be immediately thrown into the discard. Let us not open another channel of discord to burden those whose task it now is to secure sufficient funds to carry our missionary enterprises. Let us shelve this issue during this time of strain and stress and bequeath it to our children for final adjudication."

A.

Facing the Summer Slump

It is disgraceful how Christianity takes a holiday when summer comes around. True, it is a time when assemblies, conferences, and religious camp-meetings are held, but only a small fraction of the total number of Christian migrants ever find their way to them. Attendance at these events can in no way whatever explain the wholesale closing of churches in some areas and the reduction to one service a week in many others.

In what is the best season of the year for local church promotional activities there is a vast let-down. The weather is good; the sun is shining; there is plenty of fresh air; more people are on the streets; neighborliness is less free of strain; and yet the churches ignore the chance. They would rather wait for the time of the year when snow, ice, rain, and fog drive people indoors and make them want to stay there. It does not seem to make sense.

It has become the habit in a great many places to begin curtailing church activities in May. By June the Sunday stampede away from the house of God is in full stride. We acknowledge that the summer months are vacation months, but it would be fictitious to declare that the whole church is simultaneously on a vacation. There are always plenty of people who are not taking a holiday. These are given the impression that summer is a time when their Christianity need not be put to work. It is as though the church interpreted the Great Commission to read, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature — *but not in summer.*"

We believe the summer period one of the best seasons in the year for genuine evangelistic effort and local church service to the community. In many urban districts open-air services are possible, in which large numbers of neglected people may have the Gospel explained and witnessed to them. A portable organ, a speaker's stand, American and church flags, hymn sheets, and about a dozen earnest, courageous church people who are not ashamed of Jesus are all that is necessary to lay the foundation of one of the most popular enterprises in any community. Try it. You will find that unchurched people are frequently full of appreciation of a local church that makes such an admirable use of the summer opportunity. Many will follow the little procession from the street corner or open space to the church auditorium and, if personal workers are encouraged to make the attempt, many may be won for Christ.

Furthermore, why should so many children be neglected at the time of year when they are most free? It was the sight of children playing on the streets that led Dr. Robert G. Boville, when he was secretary of the New York Baptist City Mission Society, to promote the daily vacation Bible-school movement, challenging the churches to open their doors during the week days of the summer to permit children to learn the Bible and useful craft work. There are more children on the streets today in summer than ever. And yet churches remain closed — cold stone monuments of Christian faith, zeal, and love which has died out

there—or in some cases, to be fair, gone on vacation. What would Christ say of such churches?

From June to September, the tempo of local church-work, instead of letting down, could be speeded up to great advantage. Many Sunday-schools would find it possible to increase their activities, extending them more into the week. Instead of its being a period of disintegration, summer could be employed to foster activities that draw the various elements of the church together in service, social activities, evangelism, personal work, and training groups meeting under different conditions to those prevailing at other times of the year.

Do not accept it as inevitable that the church must close down in summer. Make the services even more attractive. Proceed as though you expect people to come to church and as though you expect the church to go to the people. Do some things differently, but *do them*. In the best sense, accommodate your church-life to the season, remembering that, though God takes no vacation, He creates a delightful summer. There will be no summer slump if you go at it like this. And if there is no summer slump, there will be no fall drag to get the church going again.

(*Watchman-Examiner*)

The Filth of the Modern Realistic Novel

Some of the strongest warnings of Scripture concern the ethics of the Sixth Commandment, and warnings against unchastity in thought, word, and deed are found in every part of Holy Writ. The Lord, who Himself created sex and the sex desire, clearly wanted to impress upon every person who has been reborn by the power of the Spirit in the Word that the control of this strong tendency is of paramount importance in the life of every Christian. And so far as the Second Commandment is concerned, God's prohibitions of the abuse of His name and His denunciations of all blasphemous speech are well known to every catechumen in our circles.

For these reasons every Lutheran educator is bound to be most deeply concerned about the modern so-called realistic novel, especially as it may influence the young people of our congregations. Certain literary critics, even in Lutheran circles, are apparently carried away by the artistry displayed by an increasing number of modern authors. Besides, men and women of this class, like certain high-school teachers, have been made indifferent and callous toward the portrayal of every kind of sinful and shameful act, so that they are no longer offended by the vicious tendencies displayed by modern writers, not only in America and England, but also in Germany and elsewhere.

But there is danger connected with this attitude. We may grant that a partial degree of immunity has been produced in the case of adults who are acquainted with the facts of life and even know its seamy side. But when modern realistic novels are placed in the hands of adolescents, who are in the very midst of their sex development and are bothered with an imagination run riot, then the evil effects of such books are bound to show. We merely mention, in passing, that there is such a thing as breeding and culture and that, as a recent writer puts it,

"defecation, copulation, and similar subjects" are not paraded before the eyes of the world. Most modern houses have a very complete system of plumbing, but we do not place this into the reception-room or the library or the living-room.

Perhaps it will help us in our evaluation of modern trends in short story and novel writing if we just list the chief objections which every Christian educator is bound to raise against recent best sellers:

Cakes and Ale, in Woolcott's "Second Reader": A shameless portrayal of the life of an adulteress, the mistress of a series of lovers.

Gone with the Wind: Glorifies a woman who in her married state lusts after her original sweetheart, a married man.

Grapes of Wrath: "The most grotesque, most brusque, most filthy book in the English language today. After reading the book, one is ready to throw it into the fire."

Joseph in Egypt: A detailed, nauseating description of the lust which Potiphar's wife felt for Joseph, with certain delineations that are positively revolting in character.

The Nazarene: A hopeless jumble of Biblical and apocryphal accounts concerning Jesus, worse even than the picture "The King of Kings," with whole paragraphs of descriptions which are unfit for consumption.

Children of God: Conversations full of blasphemy of the vilest type and descriptions of the most intimate relationships between men and women.

Native Son: Descriptions of bestial lusts and scenes of rape and murder.

Nebraska Coast: A plethora of blasphemy, with descriptions of scenes which are certainly unfit for the reading of high-school boys and girls.

Without My Cloak: Long descriptions of an adulterous relationship between a young man of wealth and a girl of lower station.

Christ in Concrete: Long sections, with paragraphs almost incoherent, abounding in blasphemy of the vilest character.

For Whom the Bell Tolls: Detailed and glamorous description of fornication and attendant evils, with revolting pen-pictures of individual incidents and a wealth of blasphemy.

We have merely indicated the nature of the filth and do not care to expatiate upon the details. The Scripture says: "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret," Eph. 5:12.

We may well imagine what effect such books will have upon the imagination of callow youth, with blasphemy and filthy talk and the glamor of illicit sex life as the most prominent features of the books. Pastors and parents have a definite duty to perform, in warning the young people against such sewage.

P. E. K.

