

Research Article

The Relationship of the Old and New Testaments

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Abstract: This article examines the relationship between the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) through a qualitative approach with a literature review method. The study aims to identify theological continuities and discontinuities between the two parts of the Bible as well as outline how the narrative of God's salvation develops from the OT to the NT. The analysis was conducted by examining various primary and secondary literature from theological scholars, biblical historians and commentators. The results show that despite differences in historical context and theological development, the OT and NT have an integral and complementary relationship, especially in terms of the fulfilment of prophecy, Messianic conception, and the unfolding of God's plan of salvation. The findings are expected to enrich the understanding of contemporary Christian theology and contribute to the dialogue between the OT and NT exegetical traditions.

Keywords: Continuity, Literature review, New Testament, Old Testament, Theological relationship

1. Introduction

The relationship between the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) is one of the main topics in Christian theological studies. This issue not only concerns the continuity of God's narrative of salvation, but also includes paradigm shifts, the fulfilment of prophecies, and the reinterpretation of religious symbols and rituals. The relationship between the OT and NT is an important framework for understanding God's overall plan in human history. As Alter (2011) and Wright (2003) point out, most scholars agree that the NT is not an entity separate from the OT, but rather the fulfilment of God's promises made since the beginning of creation.

In the context of historical and contemporary theology, a deep understanding of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament has significant implications for the development of Christian doctrine. The New Testament is often understood as a continuation of the Old Testament that has undergone a renewal of meaning in the light of the work of Jesus Christ. Bultmann (1972) states that the New Testament is a 'breakdown' of the narrative structure of the Old Testament into a new form of conveying truth that is more existential. Meanwhile, Blomberg (1992) emphasises that the theological continuity between the two covenants guarantees the integrity and consistency of God's message of salvation to His people.

This article aims to elaborate in more detail how the Old Testament and the New Testament are interrelated, both from a historiographical and theological perspective. Its main focus is to evaluate the main views that have been put forward by experts regarding this relationship. In understanding this, this study not only traces the narrative and doctrinal aspects but also delves into the hermeneutical dynamics that shape Christians' understanding of Scripture as a whole. Thus, this approach attempts to integrate a comprehensive historical

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and theological understanding in discussing the continuity of these two main parts of the Bible.

The main motivation for this study stems from the development of modern criticism of the biblical canon, where there is a tendency to separate the Old Testament and New Testament texts as separate units of study. While useful from certain methodological perspectives, this approach often overlooks the narrative coherence intended by the authors of the Scriptures. This separation risks diminishing our understanding of the progressive and integrated story of salvation in the Bible. Therefore, it is important to revisit a more comprehensive and integrative approach in order to gain a complete understanding of God's work of salvation.

Conversely, a more holistic expository approach shows that a full understanding of the message of salvation cannot be separated from the dialogue between the two covenants. Dunn (1998) and Johnson (2005) state that it is only through the interaction between the OT and NT that one can grasp the depth and completeness of God's purpose in salvation history. The NT consistently quotes and reinterprets OT texts to affirm the fulfilment of messianic promises and to confirm Jesus' identity as the centre of the narrative. This demonstrates a narrative and theological continuity that cannot be ignored.

Using a literature review method, this study collects various relevant theological literature and commentaries to present a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the OT and the NT. This research not only presents the views of classical theologians but also highlights the contributions of contemporary thought in interpreting the continuity and tension between the two parts of the Bible. It is hoped that the results of this study will enrich the theological understanding of Christians and provide a strong foundation for building faith rooted in the entire Bible as a unified and dynamic whole.

2. Proposed Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method to reveal the theological relationship between the Old and New Testaments. The research process began with the collection of relevant literature in the form of theological books, journal articles, biblical commentaries, and secondary sources recognised by academics. The literature reviewed was selected based on the criteria of relevance to the topic, the expositional methodology used, and its contribution to the understanding of the salvation narrative, so that only credible sources that have gone through the academic review process are used as references.

After the literature collection, a thematic analysis was conducted by identifying key themes such as the fulfilment of prophecy, narrative continuity, and theological transformation that occurred from the Old Testament to the New Testament. A hermeneutic approach was also applied to understand the historical, cultural and linguistic contexts of the biblical texts, so that the analyses were not only textual but also took into account the social and cultural backgrounds of the authors. Data and findings from various literatures are then synthesised to build a cohesive argument regarding the integral relationship between the two covenants, taking into account various theological and historical perspectives.

Using this literature review method, the research seeks to integrate various critical views and interpretations from scholars, resulting in an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of how the Old and New Testaments complement each other and form the overall narrative of salvation in the Christian theological tradition.

3. Results and Discussion

1. Narrative and Theological Continuity

One of the main findings in this study is the narrative continuity between the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). Many prophecies and promises found in the OT find their fulfilment in the NT. For example, the prophecy about the Messiah in Isaiah (Isaiah 53) is significantly interpreted in the NT as fulfilled through the life and work of Jesus Christ (Blomberg, 1992; Wright, 2003). This demonstrates that the NT does not merely introduce new concepts but also develops the promises already expressed in the OT (Bultmann, 1972).

This continuity is also evident in major themes such as justice, salvation, and God's covenant with His people, which are repeated in the NT with deeper dimensions. The concept of 'faith' that appears in the OT resonates in Paul's writings, which emphasise that salvation

is obtained through faith in Christ (Dunn, 1998; Johnson, 2005). This shows a close relationship between the theological messages of the two covenants.

Furthermore, many figures and events in the Old Testament are used as symbols or types of things that are later explained in more detail in the New Testament. For example, Adam as the prototypical figure of humanity is compared to Christ as the 'second Adam' in Paul's letters. This affirms that the narrative of salvation has a structured and unbroken progressive pattern.

This continuity does not mean that there is no development. Rather, this development shows how the Old Testament provides the foundation for the fuller revelation of truth in the New Testament. In this sense, the New Testament is not a replacement but a fulfilment and interpretation of the deepest meaning of the Old Testament.

Understanding this continuity is also important in the context of Bible study and teaching. The Church and theological institutions can emphasise the importance of reading the Bible as a single, unified narrative, not as two separate parts.

Thus, the narrative and theological continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament becomes an important foundation for understanding God's work of salvation in its entirety, as well as a basis for the formation of contemporary Christian doctrine and practice.

2. Fulfilment of Prophecy and Messianic Conception

Studies of prophetic texts in the Old Testament show that many elements were later interpreted messianically in the New Testament. Messianic interpretations of prophecies in the books of Isaiah and Psalms, for example, became an important basis for the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah (Keener, 2009). Research by Kostenberger (2004) shows that the relationship between prophecy and its fulfilment is not merely textual similarity but also includes theological and existential aspects that connect the two covenants.

Many Old Testament prophecies are taken and quoted directly by New Testament authors to show that the events in Jesus' life are the direct fulfilment of God's previous promises. This reveals a linear narrative designed to show that God's work of salvation was planned from the beginning.

However, there are also differences in the interpretation of prophecies between the historical context of the Old Testament and the revelation in the New Testament. While the Old Testament is often symbolic and multi-layered in meaning, the New Testament tends to emphasise the concrete fulfilment of prophecies through the historical events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (Alter, 2011; Witherington, 1998).

These differences indicate that while there is continuity, there is also a dynamic of interpretation that cannot be ignored. The New Testament authors creatively and theologically reinterpret Old Testament texts in light of the revelation they received in Christ.

The Messianic concept in the New Testament also expands the meaning of the concept of Messiah in the Old Testament. The Messiah is not merely a political liberator, but also the fulfilment of the promise of spiritual restoration and the reunification of the relationship between humanity and God.

Thus, the fulfilment of prophecy and the understanding of the Messiah are one of the strongest evidences of the theological connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament, while also serving as the foundation for Christology in church teaching.

3. Contextual Differences and Hermeneutic Approaches

Although there is theological continuity, the historical differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament cannot be ignored. The Old Testament was written against the historical background of the covenant between God and the Israelites, while the New Testament emerged in the context of the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, transcending certain ethnic and cultural boundaries (Morris, 2001; Exum, 2004).

These differences have a direct impact on hermeneutical approaches to interpreting the texts of the two covenants. The OT often uses symbolic and poetic language rich in Hebrew cultural nuances, while the NT is heavily influenced by the Hellenistic context and the need to explain the Gospel to non-Jewish communities.

Modern hermeneutical approaches emphasise the need to understand the cultural, linguistic, and historical context in which both covenants were written. This allows interpreters to maintain a balance between continuity and discontinuity, and to avoid reductionism that might overlook important differences between the OT and the NT (Friedman, 2003; Sanders, 2004).

In contemporary biblical theology, the contextual approach is an important tool for avoiding anachronistic readings. It also helps modern readers understand the message of the Bible in a way that is more relevant to the challenges of today.

Contextual hermeneutics also opens up space for intertextual readings, where the texts of the OT and NT are read in dialogue with one another, rather than in a dominant relationship. This provides an opportunity to enrich understanding and appreciate the complexity of divine revelation.

Therefore, recognition of contextual differences does not diminish the value of the Old Testament and the New Testament, but rather deepens our understanding of their relationship within the entire canon of Scripture.

4. Theological Implications and Practical Consequences

A deep understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments has broad implications for the development of Christian theology. By acknowledging narrative and theological continuity, the church can emphasise that the entire Bible is a unified whole that expresses God's plan of salvation.

This concept supports ecumenical efforts and interdenominational dialogue, as it highlights the common roots underlying the Christian faith (Yoder, 1994; Smith, 2015). Furthermore, it provides a strong foundation for the development of Christian doctrine that is consistent, historical, and relevant.

Recognition of the contextual differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament is also important to avoid narrow textual interpretations and lead to a more holistic approach to reading the Bible. This has an impact on the development of integrated theological curricula and pastoral practices.

In the context of church ministry, understanding the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament can enrich sermons and teaching, as it opens up broader historical and theological perspectives to the congregation. This encourages a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the Bible.

This integrative approach also serves as a foundation for the development of Christian ethics, where the principles of the OT and NT are not opposed but understood as a progression of divine values in human life.

Thus, the theological implications and practical consequences of the relationship between the OT and NT become an important part of the dynamic and contextual life of the church.

5. Challenges and Criticisms in the Study of the Relationship between the OT and NT

Although many researchers support the continuity between the OT and NT, there are also a number of criticisms and challenges. One of the main criticisms is the tendency to read the NT anachronistically in relation to the OT, thereby ignoring the new context that emerged in the spread of the Gospel (Bultmann, 1972).

Another criticism concerns the risk of overly dogmatic interpretations, which can eliminate the diversity of meanings in the biblical text. This often occurs when one interpretation is considered the only truth without considering the historical and cultural context of the text.

Some scholars argue that the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament should be understood as a dialogue between the Jewish and Christian traditions, each with its own method of interpretation (Dunn, 1998; Witherington, 1998).

An intertextual approach that is sensitive to cultural and historical differences is considered more adequate to address this challenge. It allows for a more diverse understanding and appreciation of the richness of sacred texts.

Another challenge is how to integrate the results of this research into the practical life of the congregation without sacrificing theological complexity. This requires a wise and structured educational approach.

Overall, this study shows that despite contextual and methodological differences, the integration of the Old and New Testaments remains a fundamental necessity for understanding the narrative of salvation in its entirety.

6. Conclusion: Toward a Unified Understanding of Scripture

This study affirms the importance of a comprehensive approach in understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Narrative and theological continuity are the main pillars that support an understanding of the entire story of salvation as revealed in Scripture.

The fulfilment of prophecy in the New Testament shows the close connection between God's promises in the past and their realisation in Jesus Christ. This not only strengthens the faith of Christians but also provides assurance of God's faithful character.

Awareness of the historical and cultural differences between the two covenants requires a careful and open hermeneutical approach. This prevents superficial or biased readings.

The theological implications of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments have a direct impact on teaching, ministry, and the development of comprehensive Christian thought. Therefore, the church and theological educational institutions must continue to encourage in-depth cross-testamentary studies.

Criticism and challenges that arise should be seen as opportunities to enrich understanding rather than as grounds for conflict. In this way, the reading of the Bible becomes dialogical and contextual.

Finally, an integrative approach to the Old and New Testaments forms the foundation for a strong, historical, and relevant Christian faith that not only shapes theology but also strengthens the spiritual life of believers in every generation.

4. Conclusions

From the results of the literature review that has been conducted, it can be concluded that the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is integral and inseparable. The OT provides a narrative and prophetic basis that finds its fulfilment in the NT, especially through the figure of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Despite differences in historical contexts and methods of interpretation, the theological continuity between the two covenants still underpins a unified and consistent message of salvation.

The theological implications of this relationship are vast, ranging from an understanding of God's saving work to practical applications in ecclesiastical teaching and practice. Therefore, the integration of the OT and NT should be the cornerstone in the development of a theology that is not only rooted in tradition but also relevant to the challenges of contemporary times. Furthermore, further research is needed to explore in depth certain aspects that are still debated among scholars, such as the dynamics of prophecy interpretation and the transformation of religious rites between the two testaments.

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