

RELATIONSHIP OF OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT (article taken from NEW DICTIONARY OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY, published by IVP)

The Nature of the Problem

'Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb. 1:1–2, NRSV). Thus the biblical author poses the question of the relationship of the Testaments: how does the word of Christ relate to that of the prophets, and in broader terms, is the NT continuous or discontinuous with the OT? The history of biblical theology as a modern discipline, not to mention the history of its antecedents, shows that the question of the relationship between the two Testaments is of enduring importance and concern. H. G. Reventlow, in *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, p. 11, sees it as one of the key problems in 20th-century biblical theology, and quotes N. H. Ridderbos as saying, 'The relationship between Old and New Testaments: that is just about the whole story; the whole of theology is involved in that.' The problem is manifested in a number of theoretical and practical ways: the use of the OT by Jesus and by the authors of the NT; the history of the Christian interpretation of the OT, and its effects on Christian doctrine; and the application of the OT to the Christian life, are but a few examples.

Biblical theology as a discipline presupposes that the Bible, notwithstanding its great diversity, has some kind of perceptible unity. However, the modern pursuit of a biblical theology has (almost inadvertently) created a problem. The overwhelming majority of biblical theologies written in the last century and a half have been theologies of either the OT or the NT. Some would argue that this is simply due to the necessary specialization demanded by the sheer volume of biblical literature. Whatever the reason, the result has been a tendency to treat the two Testaments as if they were independent of each other. This is more true in OT theologies than in NT, since the latter have to take into account the conviction common to all the NT authors that their message has its roots in the OT. All the books of the NT, with the possible exception of 2 John and 3 John, contain direct references and allusions to the OT, presupposing some continuity between the Testaments.

A number of OT theologians have attempted to address the problem in a theoretical way. For example, G. von Rad includes a lengthy section at the end of volume 2 of his *Old Testament Theology* (ET, Edinburgh, 1965, pp. 319–429), dealing with the OT and the NT. It gives a detailed exposition of a typological understanding of the unity of the Bible. Th. C. Vriezen, in his volume, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (ET, Oxford, 1958), devotes the first two chapters to his view of the OT as Christian Scripture, but it is not altogether obvious how this presupposition has affected his treatment of the OT itself. W. Eichrodt, in the opening chapter of his *Theology of the Old Testament* (ET, London, 1961, p. 27), states that OT religion must be seen as completed in Christ, but in the two volumes of this work there is little that displays an overt application of this principle. G. A. F. Knight wrote *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (London, 1957), and stated that his purpose was to 'seek to discover what the Old Testament has to say to the twentieth century in the light of the Christian revelation as a whole' (p. 10). Despite the title, one of the crucial issues concerning the continuity between the Testaments, that of Israel and the church, is relegated to a short appendix.

Some see the OT as providing authentic revelation and theology independently of the NT. For Christian writers this means that the OT reveals God as truly as does the New. But resistance to a Christological, and thus to a NT-based, interpretation of the OT can be seen in more extreme approaches to the diversity within it. Postmodernist trends not only follow modernism in denying transcendence, but refuse to allow any concept of a metanarrative, a comprehensive story and picture of reality in a word from God, which can unite the two Testaments into one meaningful canon of revelation. The notion that there is no transcendent

NT New Testament

OT Old Testament

ET English translation

authority or objective truth challenges the very basis upon which biblical theology has been built from biblical times.

So there is something of a continuum of approaches to the relationship of the Testaments which broadly follows a historical line of development. This continuum is also contemporary, in view of the ongoing existence of orthodox, historic Christianity which finds itself in substantial conflict with both modernism and postmodernism. First, attempts were made to understand the essential unity of the Bible by starting from the epicentre of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The early Christological interpretations of the OT were driven partly by the apologetic need to counter Judaism by asserting that the OT belonged to the church, and partly by the need to understand the OT presuppositions underlying apostolic doctrine. Early Christian apologetics also needed to counter Gnosticism by showing the unity of the Testaments, and at the same time to refute the Judaizers in the church by stressing the distinctions between the Testaments. Medieval Catholicism and Reformation Protestantism were both heirs of the Christological approach.

Secondly, with the Enlightenment and the advent of humanistic presuppositions in biblical and historical studies, the theological ties between OT and NT were loosened. The Bible was no longer regarded as a divinely inspired revelation of the mind of God, but as a purely human book which recorded certain ideas about God and his activity. Theological studies gave way to the study of the history of religion, and the religion of Israel was regarded as a matter for historical investigation almost without reference to the religion of Jesus and the early church. Thus, it was the philosophical influences of the Enlightenment, rather than practical issues, which led in the 19th and 20th centuries to the development of the parallel disciplines of OT theology and NT theology. Many OT theologies were produced from within the framework of certain Christian assumptions about the relationship of the Testaments, but with the clear aim of understanding what the OT was saying in its own right.

Thirdly, the postmodern age of religious pluralism encourages not so much the rejection of any connection between the Testaments, but rather a sense of either the freedom or the need to pursue the significance of the OT quite independently of its claimed or possible relationship to the NT. However, the task of writing OT theologies continues to be undertaken by those who also have some allegiance to the NT. It is remarkable that Jewish writers show little interest in writing theologies of the Hebrew Scriptures, which reinforces the conviction that the very nature of the Christian gospel as seen in the context of NT theology, however that is understood, provides the major impetus for pursuing an OT theology.

Unity and Diversity in the History of Interpretation

Simply put, the question is that of how two different Testaments can fit together to form one Bible with a unified message. It is generally recognized that the relationship of the two Testaments is one aspect of the unity and diversity, or continuity and discontinuity, within the canon of Scripture. This is one form of a philosophical and theological issue which underlies all attempts to understand reality: the relationship of the one to the many, of unity to plurality. This issue must be faced in every area of life, including the social and political sphere (how do the many individuals relate to the one state?), and human relationships and sexuality. In metaphysics and religion, the question is that of how the individual relates to the whole of reality. Some eastern religions aspire to have the individual lose all identity and eventually become absorbed into an undifferentiated divine unity. Christianity, on the other hand, has always maintained the distinction between God and the created order, even while also maintaining that human beings are made in the image of God.

While the natural tendency is to solve these problems by allowing either unity or diversity to dominate (an either–or solution), the Christian gospel suggests a distinctively Christian perspective embracing both unity and diversity (a both–and solution). The relationship of the Testaments is thus, from a Christian point of view, organically related to the Christological question of the relationship of the divine and human natures of Jesus. Long before the theologians of the early church had established formal ways of talking about the incarnation of Jesus as the God-human, the same basic issue was surfacing (in a different form) in their

handling of Scripture. The relationship of the one and the many is integral to the theology of the OT.

The apostolic understanding of Jesus pointed to the mystery of the one person who was both fully God and fully human. It required a 'both-and', rather than an 'either-or' approach. Later the church formalized this perspective in the doctrine of the incarnation, and particularly in the formula of the Council of Chalcedon in AD 451. The doctrine of the Trinity is the epitome of 'both-and' formulation. God is conceived as both one and many (three). The early heresies about God tried to define his being in ways that compromised either the unity of the three Persons or their distinctiveness. Gnostic Christology opposed spirit and matter in a docetic view of Jesus as a divine spirit who had only the appearance of humanity. Similarly Marcion found his 'spiritual' ideas incompatible with the earthiness of the Bible's historical events, especially those in the OT, and removed the OT, and parts of the NT, from his canon of Scripture. Amongst more orthodox Christians the legacy of Hellenistic Gnosticism was seen in the recourse to allegory as a means of relating the OT to the NT. Whereas Marcion had removed the OT, the allegorists thought it contained a kind of judaistic overlay which hid from view the true spiritual meaning drawn from the NT and, later, from ecclesiastical dogma. While Marcion completely separated the Old from the New, the allegorists used a Hellenistic sleight of hand which effectively removed all differences and fused the two. Both solutions reflect an 'either-or' approach. The concern of these Alexandrine interpreters, such as Clement and Origen, for the literal or historical understanding of Scripture cannot be ignored, but their allegorical emphasis takes them away from the perspective of 'both-and'.

Running parallel with allegory, although developing later, was the historical approach of the interpreters of Antioch. Here there was a greater sense of the unity of the Testaments alongside that of the distinctions between them. Typology as a method of relating the Testaments was given great impetus, and it underlined both the unity and the diversity between them. Typology as a method of relating the Testaments has a variety of forms, but their essential feature is the recognition of parallel or repeated historical patterns. Rather than simply reading NT teaching or ecclesiastical dogma back into OT events, typology sees certain OT events as in some sense corresponding to later, significant gospel events.

Medieval interpretation maintained the struggle to understand the relationship without abandoning the historical meaning of the OT, but allegory prevailed as the major way of identifying the Christian meaning of the OT. This was a docetic approach in that it effectively disregarded the earthly and human nature of OT history and looked only for spiritual and eternal truths. It not only had ramifications for the relationship of the Testaments, but also de-historicized the gospel event. The medieval emphasis on the working of sacramental grace in the present life of the believer raised the question, which puzzled even the great Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas, of how the OT believer could be saved in the absence of the church and its sacraments of grace. For Augustine the OT contained edifying material, which could be taken in its literal sense, and unedifying material which had to be allegorized. But by the later Middle Ages the distinction between edifying and unedifying was virtually coterminous with the distinction between the two Testaments.

Broadly speaking, one of the gains of the Reformation was the recovery of a more consistently Christological understanding of the relationship between the Testaments. This involved the understanding not only that the OT Scriptures truly testified to Jesus (John 5:39), but also that this unity existed in tension with the real diversity within and between the Testaments. It also meant that the unity-distinction formula of Chalcedon could be applied to the Word inscripturate in the same way as to the Word incarnate. This formula has multiple, in fact endless, applications. It addresses the nature of Scripture as both divine and human, and constantly reminds us that the Old-New relationship is only one aspect of the question of the one and the many: what does it mean for the Bible to be one yet to consist of two Testaments? It also addresses the questions of unity and diversity within and between the various corpora of the Bible, especially that of the progressive nature of revelation. But while the unity that exists between the Word incarnate and the word inscripturate is important for our understanding of

the nature of the authority of the Bible, we must never overlook the very significant differences. The Bible is not divine in the way Jesus is. Biblical authority is derived from the authority of its divine author and from its content as God's word about Christ. The book is not inherently divine and bibliolatry has never been an acceptable option for Christians.

Luther's recovery of a more historical approach to the OT went hand in hand with his recovery of the historical and objective nature of the gospel. Justification by faith and the concept of an alien righteousness through faith made it possible for the believer in the 16th (or 20th) century to relate to the historic Christ who in turn related to God's acts in OT history. Christians could once again conceive of the word of God in the OT as a Christian word without resorting to allegory. Luther saw the question of the two Testaments as that of the relationship between law and grace. He went a long way towards removing the absolute divide between the Old and the New because he recognized that there was law and promise (**i.e.* gospel) in both Testaments. However, he continued to stress the predominance of law in the Old and of grace in the New. This rather negative understanding of the OT characterizes the Lutheran hermeneutic of law and grace, and helps to explain the negative assessment of the OT by the modern Lutheran theologian, Rudolf Bultmann.

John Calvin significantly places his discussion of the relationship of the Testaments in the wider context of the revelation of the Redeemer (**Institutes*, II). Book Two of the *Institutes* is entitled 'The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel'. In this section, Calvin first deals with the effects of the fall of the human race into sin and the need for divine grace. Chapter 7 is headed, 'The Law was Given not to Restrain the Folk of the Old Covenant under Itself, but to Foster Hope of Salvation in Christ until His Coming'. In this claim Calvin includes both the moral and the ceremonial law. The law was the means of revealing Christ to Israel even though it did so only as by a shadow. Calvin points to the essential unity of the Testaments while in no way ignoring the differences. Two chapters (**Institutes*, II, 10 and 11) are devoted to the similarity of the OT and the NT, and to the differences between them respectively. It is here that Calvin expounds his influential view of the unity of the covenants, although he never arrives at the position of the 17th-century covenant theologians. There is however, something of this emphasis on unity in the thinking of the modern Reformed theologian, Karl Barth.

Unity and Diversity in Recent Biblical Theology

The relationship of the Testaments, then, is one aspect of the unity and diversity of Scripture and overlaps with the NT use of the Old. Against the background of the history of the Christian interpretation of the OT, which is essentially the question of the relationship of the Testaments, we can look at some of the more recent attempts to formulate this relationship. In our attempt to categorize the various approaches suggested by modern biblical theologians we recognize that their different emphases are just that: emphases and not mutually exclusive perspectives.

The dimensions of Scripture

The literary dimensions of the Bible include the language and genre of the various parts. Obvious distinctions exist between the OT corpus of Hebrew writings (including portions in Aramaic) and the NT writings which are all in Koine Greek. The existence of the Septuagint, a Greek Targum of the OT, does not eliminate the distinctions since this clearly has Hebrew sources. It does, however, reduce the differences by adapting the OT to the same linguistic milieu as the NT. Furthermore, while the NT introduces new literary genres not found in the Old, such as gospels and epistles, it also includes wisdom forms, historical narratives, prophecy and apocalyptic, which it shares with the Old.

The historical dimension, which is contained in the literary, shows both continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments. The undisputed continuity lies in the cultural and religious history of the ancient Near East, and in the fact that the central figure of the NT and his first adherents were members of the ancient race that is the focus of the OT. The fact that the movement which develops out of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth very quickly begins to include people of other races is seen in the NT to be continuous with the OT expectations concerning the nations of the world. Judaism, however, did not accept that the

Jesus-movement was in fact continuous with the hope of Israel in the way it claimed. At best, Judaism allowed that Christianity was another sect started by messianic Jews.

The theological dimensions of the Bible are inseparable from the literary and historical dimensions. The NT writers constantly make connections between their message and that of the OT. They understand Christianity to be continuous with the OT, but the nature of the continuity can be defined only in relation to its discontinuity. Orthodox Christianity has always maintained that the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Yahweh of the OT. The theological unity of the Testaments is asserted in the claim that the Bible as a whole contains the one word of the one God concerning his one way of salvation. Some kind of theological discontinuity between the Testaments is not thereby ruled out.

The canonical and theological status of Old and New Testaments

1. *The problem of the canon.* The subject of the canon of Scripture is dealt with elsewhere. It will suffice here to mention the conclusions reached by Roger Beckwith in *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids, 1985), chapter 2, that Jesus and the primitive Christian church did not dissent from their Jewish contemporaries over which books constituted the authoritative canon of the Hebrew Scriptures. That being the case, and given the eventual acceptance of a body of literature as a NT canon, the question arises of how these two corpora were first perceived as comprising one canon of Christian Scripture. This is the historical question of the canon. The biblical-theological question concerns the internal theological evidence for the canonical status of the two Testaments.

2. *The OT has priority over the NT.* D. L. Baker (**Two Testaments, One Bible*, chapter 5) and Reventlow (**Problems of Biblical Theology*, pp. 54–64) have drawn attention to the view of some scholars that the OT is prior or superior to the NT. The scholars named are not Jewish theologians who reject altogether the authority of Jesus and the NT; rather, they are theologians who acknowledge the importance of the NT and claim adherence to the Christian faith. The best example of this position is provided in A. A. van Ruler, *The Christian Church and the Old Testament* (ET, Grand Rapids, 1966). He adopts a salvation-history approach which sees the OT not only as the antecedent to the New but also as maintaining its own integrity, especially in setting forth the message of the kingdom of God. In a sense the gospel fulfils the promises of the OT, but at the same time it regresses from the fullness of the OT message. Thus the OT is apparently *the* canon of Scripture, and the NT is 'explanatory glossary' (p. 94). The distinction is not merely semantic, since van Ruler believes that important elements of the central theme of the kingdom of God are absent from the NT. In this, as Baker points out (p. 131), he oversimplifies in seeing the OT view of the kingdom as earthly and the message of the New as spiritual. Van Ruler's view that Jesus came as an emergency measure seems to ignore the NT's conviction that he was central to God's plan from the start. A similar position to van Ruler's is that of the Dutch theologian, K. H. Miskotte (**When the Gods Are Silent* [ET, London, 1967]).

3. *The NT has priority over the OT.* The most extreme example of this position is, of course, the rejection of the OT by such as Marcion. Marcionite tendencies in more recent times are seen in the *deutsche Christen* and the Nazis whose anti-Semitism was expressed in the rejection of the Jewish Scriptures (Baker, p. 49). There is also an incipient form of Marcionism which appears by default in the church and in individual Christian piety. Preachers and people alike find the OT problematic and its consequent neglect results in a 'canon within the canon' heavily weighted in favour of the NT. In theory, people maintain that the whole Bible is equally the word of God, but in practice, the difficulties of dealing consistently with the OT can lead to its eclipse if not to some intuitive, Christianizing approach.

There are, however, carefully considered and closely argued theological positions which place the OT on a lower level than the NT. An extreme developmental position was taken by Adolph von Harnack, who concluded that the early church was right to reject Marcionism, the Reformation was unable to avoid keeping the OT, but the modern retention of it 'results from paralysis of religion and the Church' (quoted in Baker, p. 49). The Lutheran dialectic of law and gospel failed to eradicate the medieval practice of imposing a hermeneutical divide between

the Testaments. Rudolf Bultmann's existential approach led him to emphasize this hermeneutical gap to the point where he asserted that the significance of the OT was negative, not in the Marcionite or Nazi sense, but existentially. The OT is the presupposition of the NT. In his essay 'The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith', in B. W. Anderson, *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, Bultmann rejects the old liberal notion of the development of religion as the basis for understanding the relationship of the Testaments. This view regards the OT as outmoded in the light of the purer NT religion. Bultmann preferred to ask how the OT presents human existence. He concluded that it reveals the demand of God (though this is not its only concern). It is necessary to understand that demand (*i.e. to understand the Law) in order to grasp NT teaching on the grace given in the gospel. So Bultmann emphasizes the discontinuity of the Testaments: 'True, the Old Testament, in so far as it is Law, need not address us as direct Word of God and as a matter of fact does not do it. It speaks to a particular people who stand in a particular ethnic history which is not ours' (p. 17).

There is little doubt that Bultmann's position points to an important discontinuity between the Testaments. Carl Michalson (in Anderson, *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, ch. 3) sees Bultmann's view as standing against Marcionism because it allows the OT to remain as it is. By contrast, traditional appropriations of the OT as Christian Scripture are a form of Marcionism because they exegetically absorb the Old into the New. But this argument ignores the question of how Jesus, the apostles, and the writers of the NT took over the OT.

4. *Both Testaments have equal status as Christian Scripture.* David Baker (*Two Testaments*, ch. 4) gives a number of examples of this position, but concentrates on that of Wilhelm Vischer, whose views have provoked rather strident criticisms. In his unfinished work, *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ I: The Pentateuch* (ET, London, 1949), he assesses the complementarity of the Testaments thus: 'The Old Testament tells us *what* the Christ is; the New, *who* he is' (p. 7). Or again, 'In their preaching of Jesus the Messiah the apostles in no way desire to declare anything else than that which is written in the Old Testament' (p. 11). The continuity between the Testaments is emphasized in Vischer's essay 'Everywhere the Scripture is about Christ Alone' (Anderson, *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, ch. 5): 'The New Testament asserts that God's deed in Jesus Christ is not merely one but rather THE decisive event for the history of Israel' (p. 97). In view of this, the question should probably not be that of the status of each Testament, for this is an elusive concept. Even if both Testaments are equally Christian Scripture, their relationship is still open to dispute. Vischer's approach gives priority in the interpretation of Scripture to the word about Christ in which the OT is fulfilled. Furthermore, the status of the OT as Christian Scripture is utterly dependent on its fulfilment in the NT.

Whether Vischer is guilty of extravagant use of typology or, as some would suggest, of allegorizing, is not the issue. He has pointed to the fact that Christians appropriate the OT as Christian Scripture and that the NT itself provides the grounds for doing so. To give both Testaments equal canonical and theological status is not at all to suggest that they function in exactly the same way. Vischer uses a basic model of promise and fulfilment which makes the person and work of Jesus Christ theologically central and pre-eminent. In this he adopts one of the thematic polarities which characterize attempts to assess the relationship of the Testaments.

Thematic polarities between the Testaments

A number of thematic approaches have been proposed which highlight the nature of the problem of defining the continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments. None can be seen as a total solution or as exclusive of all other proposals. Each involves a polarity which cannot be resolved by demolishing one or other pole. Once again the Christological and trinitarian analogies are helpful in warning against facile 'either-or' solutions. But merely to propose that the 'both-and' tension be maintained is not to solve the problem.

1. *Salvation-history and eschatological consummation.* The essence of salvation-history is the recognition that the books of the Bible, while not being uniformly historical in form, all relate to an overarching history in which God acts to bring salvation to his people. Beginning at the creation event the storyline moves through the entry of sin to the history of Israel as the chosen people. This history leads eventually to Jesus Christ and finally to the consummation and the new creation. The OT, then, is the first part of this story. The tension in this polarity lies in the fact that biblical salvation-history comes to an end. History is goal- or end-oriented. It finds its true meaning in the nature of the end defined by the coming of Christ.

Oscar Cullmann, in *Salvation in History* (ET, London, 1965) sees salvation-history as focusing on Jesus, and includes in it the eschatological tension. It could certainly be argued that salvation-history, as a Christian approach to the appropriation of the OT, is found in the words of Peter (Acts 2:16–36), Stephen (Acts 7:2–56) and Paul (Acts 13:16–41). Each has a sense of the continuity between the salvific, historical events of the OT and Jesus of Nazareth, so that Jesus is claimed to be the crowning saving act of God. In 19th-century scholarship the name of J. C. K. von Hofmann is linked with the idea of salvation-history. It was seen as one implication of the Reformation's retrieval of the historical sense of the OT, but also as a rejection of the Enlightenment and the reduction of biblical theology to the history of religious ideas. It established one of the central tenets of much 20th-century biblical theology: the idea that God has acted in history, and consequently, that history is revelation.

Not all salvation-history approaches have such a strong sense of continuity. G. von Rad stresses discontinuity within the OT: there is a gap between what can be said to have happened and what Israel came to confess. The OT consists of a developed tradition of saving history and the record of Israel's response to that saving history. The processes of reinterpretation which took place in the OT continue in the NT's appropriation of the OT. This approach raises important questions about the historicity of salvation-history. In what sense has God acted in history if the events which are said to evidence this action cannot be taken as historical?

The polarity of salvation-history and eschatology is examined by Cullmann (*Salvation in History*, pp. 28–64). Implicit in the whole notion of God's acting in history is the goal towards which such history moves. History, to be saving history, must involve eschatology. But eschatology is the end of history as well as its goal. The continuity of the Testaments is usually conceived in terms of some kind of eschatological resolution in and through Jesus Christ. The question of how the kingdom of God comes is discussed elsewhere. We note here the connection between the resolution of the process of salvation-history and the nature of Christian existence between the two comings of Christ.

2. *Type and antitype.* The salvation-history approach is closely related to the revived interest in typology as a way of understanding the inner theological structures of the Bible. The connection was recognized by von Hofmann in his *Biblische Hermeneutik* (Noerdlingen, 1880; ET, *Interpreting the Bible* [Minneapolis, 1959], p. 135). The history recorded in the OT is the history of salvation as it proceeds towards its full realization. Hence the events recorded therein are to be interpreted teleologically, *i.e.* as aiming at their final goal, and thus as being of the same nature as the goal, though also shaped by their particular place in history. The typological principles applied by von Hofmann thus included the unity of salvation-history and the interpretation of individual events as part of the whole history (p. 145).

In broad terms, typology rests upon the recognition that the way God spoke and acted in the OT was a preparation for and anticipation of the definitive word and act of God in Christ. The nature of the anticipation can be variously understood. One view is that God acts in the NT in ways patterned by his actions in the OT. Thus his leading of people out of their captivity to sin and death shows some similarities to his leading of Israel out of captivity in Egypt. Another view is that the OT type predicts a fulfilling antitype to come. Typology is not the same as predictive prophecy, but nor is it simply the recognition of coincidences. In the purpose of God, he provides a preparatory shadow of the real saving events. The relationship between the type and the fulfilling antitype is such that grasping the shadow in the OT by faith, believing the

promises of God, was the means by which the people of the OT grasped the salvation which is in Christ. Thus, von Rad is able to acknowledge on the basis of typology that 'One must therefore ... really speak of a witness of the Old Testament to Christ.' (See 'The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament', in Westermann, *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, p. 39.) The concepts of type and antitype express the organic relationship between the events of the OT and those of the NT: the former pattern and foreshadow their fulfilment in the latter. The heart of the antitype in the NT is the person and work of Jesus Christ, and especially the resurrection. Thus, both Peter and Paul can assert that Old Testament prophecy about Israel and its king is fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:29–36; 13:30–33).

3. *Promise and fulfilment.* Salvation-history and typology are connected also with the thematic polarity of promise-fulfilment. There are many variations on this theme, but essentially it goes beyond the fulfilment of promise or prophecy within OT history, and extends it to a definitive fulfilment in the NT. One implication of this is that the OT is incomplete with respect to the working out of God's purposes and thus cannot be fully understood apart from its fulfilment in the NT. The two Testaments are interdependent in that the New is needed to complete the Old, but also needs the Old to show what it is that is being fulfilled.

4. *Sensus literalis and sensus plenior.* A variation on the notion of typology, first propounded by Roman Catholic scholars, is the idea of a literal sense of the OT and a fuller sense (*sensus plenior*) which is mainly worked out in the NT. The *sensus plenior* of an OT text, or indeed of the whole OT, cannot be found by exegesis of the texts themselves. Exegesis aims at understanding what was intended by the author, the *sensus literalis*. But there is a deeper meaning in the mind of the divine author which emerges in further revelation, usually the NT. This approach embraces typology but also addresses the question of how a text may have more than one meaning. While typology focuses upon historical events which foreshadow later events, *sensus plenior* focuses on the use of words. Types are generally believed to find their antitypes in the NT. For some Roman Catholic scholars, the fuller sense can be found either in the NT or in ecclesiastical dogma. Most frequently, however, *sensus plenior* is a means of giving expression to the unity and distinction between the Testaments.

5. *Old covenant and new covenant.* Most covenant or federal theologians are heirs of the Calvinist Reformation. Their emphasis on the continuity of the Testaments contrasts with the Lutheran emphasis on discontinuity. The Westminster Confession provides a classic expression of their view. It speaks of one covenant which 'was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel: under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come' (chapter VII, section V).

Some modern biblical theologians have seen the idea of the covenant as a unifying principle or centre of biblical theology. The first covenant is with Noah (although Westminster theology conceives of a covenant of works with Adam; *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter VII). The covenant is then given to Abraham, to Israel at Sinai, and then to the Davidic royal line. The prophets conceive of a new covenant which will rectify the failures of Israel to be faithful to the original covenant. The NT declares that the new covenant is established in Jesus, who is the representative head of a new Israel, and who by his resurrection demonstrates his acceptance by the Father.

6. *Law and gospel.* The emphasis on discontinuity fostered by the law–gospel polarity has been mentioned above. It could be said to extend back to Paul and his apparent ambivalence about the law, and to the different ways in which the word 'law' is used in the NT. An extreme form of discontinuity is found in earlier expressions of dispensationalism, in which the dispensation of law is completely separated from the dispensation of grace. The present age of the gospel is regarded as a parenthesis unseen by OT prophecy. This view presupposes an extremely literal view of prophetic fulfilment and finds continuity in what is yet to happen by way of fulfilment, rather than in what has already happened in Christ.

7. *Israel and the church.* Is the church the new Israel, and if so, in what sense? Some see continuity, in that the church virtually takes over all the roles of Israel as the saved people of

God. Others, for example dispensationalists, see discontinuity, in that they expect the future fulfilment of the hopes of Israel to involve national restoration and salvation. A third view takes the OT ideas of the ingathering of the Gentiles to the restored Israel as being worked out in the gospel, which is to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16); the church consists of restored or spiritual Israel (Christian Jews), plus converted Gentiles, who are privileged to share in Israel's blessings.

A Way Forward?

From a literary point of view, the relationship of the two Testaments involves the history of the Bible as canon. This in turn raises some internal historical questions relating to the biblical proclamation of the unity of the people of God and the work of God for their salvation. The NT's use of the OT is one important consideration. These literary and historical concerns point to the internal structures of biblical theology, which reveal something of the unity and diversity of the biblical message. Finally, the centrality of Jesus Christ to the NT's expression of its continuity with the OT points to the dogmatic formulations of the person and work of Christ. Christology demands that the whole question be addressed in the light of the revealed model of unity-distinction, and biblical theology provides the instrumental means for describing the nature of both the unity and the distinctions between the two Testaments. The heart of the issue lies in the fact that the historical Jesus who is at the centre of the NT's message is absent from the events of the OT. Yet he claims that the OT witnesses to him. Understanding the relationship of the two Testaments involves understanding that the God who has revealed himself finally in Jesus has also revealed himself in the OT in a way that foreshadows both the structure and content of the Christian gospel.

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