



God's Truth: The Foundation of Existence in the Old Testament and Implications for the Church's Mission

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ABSTRACT

This article talks about the truth of God as the foundation of the existence of Judaism. The article aims to reveal the Jewish understanding of the truth of God that underlies the existence and continuity of Christianity. The study uses a descriptive qualitative method through literary analysis. The primary data for the study are texts from the Old Testament related to the truth of God and their connections in various texts of the New Testament. The selected texts are then analyzed using Dilthey's hermeneutic circle and Gadamer's horizon fusion techniques. The results of the analysis show that the understanding of the truth of God in Judaism is centered on God's faithfulness to the covenant, but due to Israel's acute violation, the concept of truth shifted towards God's never-ending love and faithfulness. This understanding has a dimension of continuity in the New Testament and implications for the mission of the Church. This research helps readers gain an in-depth understanding that enriches evangelical theological research, helping to deepen understanding of God's character, nature, and plan in human salvation history. Through in-depth research, the church can also discover continuity between the Old and New Testaments to better understand how God's message and mission.

Keywords: Tsedaqah, the truth of Allah, Existence, the truth of God, the mission of the church

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INTRODUCTION

The Israelites in the Old Testament believed that the one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) had perfect righteousness. God is true and always will be true (Oliver, 2019). Old Testament texts often contrast God's righteousness with Israel's unrighteousness. Israel, in self-righteousness, relied on God's truth to obtain salvation. Difficult situations, such as exile, war, famine, pestilence, and so on, were the times when Israel relied on God's truth the most. God's truth can be said to be the foundation for Israel's existence (Siswanto, 2017). This belief underlies King David's proclamation that his heart can be only calm close to God. God is praised as a rock, a stronghold, and an unshakable refuge in Psalm 62.

The Old Testament provides the theological foundation for the understanding of God's truth in the Christian tradition. The study of God's truth in the Old Testament helps the church understand the character, nature, and actions of God (Emina, 2023). This is important because it shows salvation given by God to His people. The study of God's truth in the Old Testament allows the church to understand God's character as revealed through His actions in Israel's history (Emina, 2023).

God is faithful, just, merciful, and powerful. Understanding God's truth in the Old Testament has direct implications for the mission of the church today. This can influence how the church presents the gospel message, fights for social justice, and serves others. For example, understanding God's merciful character can encourage the church to express God's love for people in need. The study of God's truth in the Old Testament also has relevance for the spiritual depth of individuals and congregations (Patricia, 2021). As Christians study Israel's history, they can see God's care for his people. Understanding God's truth in the Old Testament can be used as an apologetic basis for defending the Christian faith. The church can offer solid explanations for questions about the truth of the Christian faith and the existence of God (Osei-Bonsu, 2011).

The Old Testament is a historical document that records God's interactions with the Israelites. The first logical argument is that God's truth is reflected in these historical records. If we accept the existence of the Old Testament as a valid historical record, then the implication is that God was actively involved in human history (Torrance, 1966). The Old Testament provides a theological foundation that is consistent with the teachings of the New Testament. The second logical argument is that the theological continuity between the Old and New Testaments confirms the truth of the Bible's teachings as a whole. This shows that the same God revealed in the Old Testament also speaks in the New Testament, strengthening belief in His existence and truth. The logical implication of understanding God's truth in the Old Testament for the mission of the church is that the church has a responsibility to spread God's teachings as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Given that the Old Testament provides an important theological foundation for an understanding of the mission of the church, the task of the church is to spread the message of God's character (Whitley, 2010). This, in return, can help lead Christians to

greater spiritual depth. By understanding God's character as revealed in salvation history, individuals can deepen their relationship with God, strengthen their faith, and enrich their spiritual experience. Through these logical arguments, we can see how understanding God's truth in the context of the Old Testament has significant implications for the mission of the church and the theological understanding of Christians as a whole. Many Christians may have a limited understanding of God's truth revealed in the Old Testament. In-depth research in this matter can fill this gap by bringing new light to the nature, character, and plan of God revealed in human salvation history (Niemandt & Lee, 2015).

There is a gap between the understanding of God in the Old Testament and the New Testament (Isaak, 2019). Research that focuses on the foundation of the existence of the Old Testament can help establish theological continuity between the two covenants, thereby strengthening understanding of the unity of God's message in salvation history. Although many Christians understand the general teachings of the Old Testament, there is sometimes a gap in applying those principles to everyday life and the mission of the church (Isaak, 2019). Research that explores the practical implications of God's truth in the Old Testament can help address this gap by providing concrete guidance for Christians in applying those teachings in daily life and the mission of the church. Not all Christians may fully understand the connection between God's truth in the Old Testament and the mission of the church. Research that explores the implications of Old Testament foundations for the mission of the church can help address this gap by providing a deeper understanding of the close relationship between theological foundations and the practical task of the church in the world. In facing challenges and sceptical questions about the Christian faith, sometimes Christians may not have enough understanding to provide adequate answers (Dadosky, 2013). A study of God's truth in the Old Testament can help fill this gap by providing a solid foundation for a rational and convincing defence of the Christian faith. Thus, research into God's truth in the context of the Old Testament and its implications for the mission of the church can help address various knowledge gaps that may exist in Christians' theological and practical understanding. This can provide a stronger foundation for the Christian faith and strengthen the mission of the church in the world (Huijgen, 2017).

An investigation into Judaism's understanding of God's truth, referring to the pattern of the Dilthey hermeneutic circle, begins with an investigation of the use of related terms in the Old Testament books. The term describes the author's understanding of an object (Forster, 2019). The term represents the elements of the concept contained (Damanik & Ndonga, 2022). An investigation into the use of related terms in the Old Testament can reveal elements of truth thinking in Judaism. This article aims to reveal the Jewish understanding of God's truth that underlies the existence and continuity of Christianity. The question that arises is what is meant by God's righteousness. What's the truth? Why did Israel praise and rely on God's truth? What does God's truth have to do with the existence of Judaism? What does God's truth have to do with the faith and

mission of the church? This paper wants to examine the concept of God's truth that underlies the existence of Judaism. The research departs from two basic questions: 1) What is Israel's understanding of God's truth? 2) What is the relationship between God's truth and the existence of Judaism? 3) What are the implications for the faith and mission of the Church?

METHOD

The research utilizes qualitative methodology. Data collection is conducted through a literature study of Old Testament texts related to the truth of God. The collected texts are then analyzed using the hermeneutic circle technique by Dilthey. Dilthey, like the romantic hermeneutics, emphasizes truth in the meaning attributed by the author (Damanik & Ndonga, 2022). The hermeneutic circle represents the circular process of understanding between the parts and the whole (Friesen, 2020). The textual parts are components of the whole text, and the whole text is part of the author and the world and era that produced it (James & Komnenich, 2021). The initial step in analysis using Dilthey's hermeneutic circle technique is to prepare yourself by gathering information about the historical, social, and cultural context in which the text was created. After understanding the general context, analysis begins by using intuition to gain an initial understanding of the text which involves reading comprehension. The next step is to analyze the text in depth such as examining the narrative structure, use of language, and emerging themes. This analysis helps in understanding the content and message to be conveyed. Dilthey emphasized the importance of understanding the historical context in which the text or work of art was created. Therefore, this step involves searching for additional information about the time period, socio-political circumstances, and important events. After conducting further analysis of the text, the researcher checked the initial intuition again to gain a more comprehensive understanding. The final step is to draw conclusions based on the analysis that has been carried out. This involves summarizing the understanding of the text or literature used. Therefore, understanding every statement about the truth of God in the Old Testament should consider the entire book, the author's mindset, and the world and era that produced the text (Ndonga, Siagian, & Ginting, 2021). Building upon this framework, the author investigates various documents, particularly those presented through expert commentaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Departing from Term

An investigation into Judaism's understanding of God's truth, referring to the pattern of the Dilthey hermeneutic circle, begins with an investigation of the use of related terms in the Old Testament books. The term describes the author's understanding of an

object (Forster, 2019). The term represents the elements of the concept contained (Damanik & Ndonga, 2022). An investigation into the use of related terms in the Old Testament can reveal elements of truth thinking in Judaism. The first part of this paper presents terms related to God's righteousness in the Old Testament. This step is taken as a door to the ontology of understanding God's truth in the world of Judaism. The text features three terms in the Bible that predominately describe an understanding of God's truth: *dikaiousune Theou*, *Aletheia*, and *tsedeg*.

Dikaiousune Theou

The term "the truth of God" in the Indonesian Bible Society (LAI) is a translation of the Greek phrase *dikaiousune Theou* in the Greek Bible, the Septuagint. An understanding of the idea of God's truth, thus requires a deep understanding of the *dikaiousune Theou* terminology in the Greek vocabulary. The word family *dikaiousune*, in Greek usage, is rooted in the root word *dike* or *dik*. The word *dike* has the meaning of "base," "rule" or "custom" (Blomberg, 2018). The basic word *dike* contains the meaning of the rules contained in natural law and other laws that apply in community partnerships (Verbrugge, 2017). The term *dikaiousune* can be understood as obedience or compliance with applicable laws. The word *dike* can also be an adjective, *dikaious*, which means conduct or action according to custom or law; or a verb, *dikaioo*, which means to justify or declare someone right because of his actions that are fair or in accordance with legal requirements (Seifrid, 2016).

Xavier Leon-Defour translates the word *dikaiousune* as justice (Dadosky, 2013). This translation may be based on the use of the word *dikaiousune*, which always emphasises the conformity between law and action. The most common use of this word, "family, occurs in the world of court. In this context, *dikaiousune* is the justice of the judge because decisions are in accordance with applicable rules (Seifrid, 2016). The adjective *dikaious* is usually applied to judges who always decide cases fairly, and the verb *dikaioo* is used for legal justification for those who should be right because they do not violate the law. The New Testament uses the verb *dikaioo* more than the noun *dikaiousune* (Beetham, 2021). Research by experts has found that of the 39 times the word *dikaioo* is found in the New Testament books, most of it is found in Paul's writings (Kirk, 2017).

The word *Theou*, in many usages, has the same meaning as the word El, the name of Semitic origin applied to each type of god (Beale et al., 2014). The name El is also applied to the self-name of the one god, who is considered the unity of all powers and was believed and passed down by the fathers of the Israelites (Genesis 14:18–22). The name El, in the Israelite faith, was later translated by Arab Christians as the word Allah", which is believed to originate from God's statements to Abraham and Moses (Rosendal, 2013). God, when appearing to Abraham, revealed Himself by the name El (plural: *Ellohim*). "I am God Almighty" (Genesis 17:2). The same statement was also made to

Moses (Exodus 3:6). El, based on these two incidents, became the personal name of the God of the faith of Israel (Teodorescu, 2019).

Aletheia

The word truth in the new translation of the Bible by the Indonesian Bible Society and the Indonesian Biblical Society is actually not only used to translate the word *dikaiosune*. *Aletheia* is a Greek word that literally means "truth" or "accuracy". In philosophical and theological understanding, *Aletheia* refers to the concept of deep and universal truth. This term has complex meanings and is often studied in various contexts, including philosophy, theology, and science (Van Aarde, 2017). In the context of ancient Greek philosophy, *Aletheia* is often distinguished from *doxa*, which means relative opinion or view. *Aletheia*, on the other hand, refers to objective and universal truth, which can be discovered through observation, reasoning, and deep introspection. New Translation (TB) also uses the word truth to translate the Greek word *Aletheia*, which is found in many of Paul's letters and other New Testament books (Irons, 2015). The word *Aletheia* comes from the root *lanthano*, which means "hidden for", and the prefix *a*, which means "not" (Kirk, 2017). *Aletheia* can be interpreted as a revealed reality, a person who can be known. The word *Aletheia* is also often connected to reality and spirit. The word *Aletheia*, in usage, is often equated with the Hebrew word *emet*, which means a person or something to be proud of (Wright, 2013). The word *Aletheia* in the Septuagint is also used to translate the word *emet*. Paul, in his pastoral letters, uses the word *Aletheia* a lot to advise the congregation (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:9; 2:1). In a theological context, *Aletheia* is often used to refer to divine truth or spiritual truth expressed in religious teachings. In the Christian tradition, for example, *Aletheia* is often associated with the concept of Jesus Christ as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6), as well as the divine truth revealed in the word of God (Van Aarde, 2017). *Aletheia* can also refer to the process of uncovering or uncovering hidden or forgotten truths. In Martin Heidegger's thought, for example, *Aletheia* refers to the process of freeing truths hidden in the human mind from "forgetting" or "forgetting about existence" (*Seinvergesenheit*) (Bosman, 2014). It emphasizes the importance of introspection and deep thought to achieve a better understanding of the truth. Therefore, the word *Aletheia* can be concluded as a truth from reality that is revealed and connected to the reality and spirit revealed in the holy books that we use. Overall, *Aletheia* is a complex and profound concept in ancient Greek thought, theology, and modern philosophy. It refers to objective truth, the revelation of hidden truths, as well as divine teachings or principles expressed in religion (Oliver, 2019).

Tsedeq

The Greek word group "*dikaiosune*" in the Septuagint is used to translate the Hebrew word "*tsedeq*" (Łanoszka, 2014). This usage can serve as a guide in expressing

the concept of God's truth in the Old Testament. We can explore the idea of God's truth in the Old Testament by examining the usage of the word "*tsedeq*."

The word group "*tsedeq*" indeed carries a close meaning to the word group "*dikaioisune*" (Rosendal, 2013). The Hebrew word "*tsedeq*," derived from the root word "*tsdq*," means the standards or laws that govern society. "*Tsedeq*" can signify the righteousness of an action based on its conformity to the law. Sometimes, "*tsedeq*" is understood as justice (Rosendal, 2013). A righteous action is one that is just and in accordance with the standards or laws. Such actions are called "*tsedaqah*," and individuals who act justly are called "*tsediq*" (Dumbrell, 2013). Based on this understanding, "*tsedeq*" is applied to Jacob's compliance with the conditions of the covenant with his uncle Laban (Genesis 30:33). "*Tsedaqah*" can also be attributed to the righteous decisions made by kings and judges (Deuteronomy 16:18-20). Jacob, kings, and judges, due to their justice, are referred to as "*tsediq*" or individuals with a just or righteous character (Estman, 2010). Therefore, "*tsedeq*" can be interpreted as "the true" or "the genuine" (Judges 5:11). True prosperity, rightful victory, the right path, correct guidance, fair price, and everything by its standards can be called "*tsedaqah*" (Isaiah 41:2; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:9; 2:1) (Van Aarde, 2017).

The term "*tsedeq*," in the Israelite tradition, is frequently used in social life (Monkemeier, 2020). Judah referred to Tamar as a righteous person, while acknowledging his guilt for not giving Tamar to Shelah (Genesis 38:26). Saul also admitted his wrongdoing in his attempt to kill David, whereas David was declared righteous for not harming Saul (1 Samuel 24:18). These texts emphasize the understanding of "*tsedeq*" as what should be or what is true. Judah and Saul are identified as the guilty parties because they did not act as they should have, whereas Tamar and David are considered righteous for their rightful actions (Dadosky, 2013). Similarly, the term "*tsedeq*" is used in a moral context. Those who are generous, compassionate (Psalm 37:21, 25-26), honest, and brave enough to bear suffering are called "*tsediq*" (Proverbs 11:8-10) (Oliver, 2019). "*Tsediq*" is also used for individuals who lead a life of purity, who do not commit evil against others, and who provide attention, protection, and assistance to the poor, widows, and orphans (Job 31:16-19; 37:21, 25-26; Numbers 24:13; Proverbs 29:7; Daniel 4:27; 112:9). In this context, "*tsediq*" is contrasted with the words "*rasya*" and "*rasyayim*" (wicked), which are used to describe bloodshedders, lazy individuals, and drunkards (Ademiluka, 2017).

The term "*tsedeq*," in this sense, closely relates to the Hebrew word "*emet*." "*Emet*" means true or authentic truth. This truth is based on a reliable quality of life (Deuteronomy 17:4; 1 Kings 10:6). "*Emet*" is also used to refer to the truth of God's commandments and obedience to Him (Psalm 119:151). The Septuagint translates this word as the Greek word "*Aletheia*" (Whitley, 2010). The use of the word "*tsedeq*" in the Old Testament encompasses various meanings and contexts. However, all these meanings

and contexts refer to the basic understanding of "*tsedeq*" as faithfulness to the standards or what should be or what is true.

The Reconstruction of the Concept of God's Truth

The truth of God resides within the relationship between God and Israel

The texts of the Old Testament demonstrate that the primary focus of using the word "*tsedeq*" (righteousness) is within the context of the relationship between Israel and God. In this context, "*tsedeqah*" (righteousness) is attributed to God, the monotheistic deity of Israel. This righteousness is considered to belong to God. The righteousness of God in this context has two fundamental meanings.

Firstly, it refers to the justice and judgment of God

Israel believes that God is righteous and always right (Psalm 51:6; Psalm 14:1-3; Psalm 53:2-4). The righteousness of God is not simply based on His inherent righteousness or in relation to a law, but rather on His relationship with His people. In this relationship, God acts as the judge for Israel. "For the Lord is our judge" (Isaiah 33:22a). God is also believed to be the judge over all nations (Psalm 110:6) and the whole earth (Psalm 82:8). The righteousness of God as a judge lies in His fair judgments (Vine, 2015). The Lord always makes decisions in accordance with His established decrees (Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 8:3; Zephaniah 3:5; Psalm 9:5-9; Psalm 89:14). Israel always refers to God as a judge who is capable of making accurate judgments (Judges 11:17; Psalm 94:2), and thus He always decides every matter justly. God saves the righteous and punishes the wicked. Those who feel they have been treated unjustly, with this belief, invite the Lord to settle the matter they are facing. "Vindicate me, Lord my God, according to your righteousness, and do not let them gloat over me" (Psalm 35:24). The Lord is relied upon as a judge because His hand is full of justice (Psalm 48:11), and His decisions are based on justice (Psalm 9:9; Psalm 48:11; Psalm 96:13; Psalm 98:9). Therefore, the justice of the Lord is witnessed by all creation. "The heavens proclaim his righteousness" (Psalm 50:6).

Some texts of the Old Testament portray the justice of the Lord as His act of salvation (Mayasari & Duta, 2021). Deborah's song praising the righteousness of God (Judges 5:11) signifies God's action of delivering Israel from its enemies. Samuel also sees the justice of the Lord as an act of salvation. Deborah reminds Israel of the Lord's saving acts, delivering them from Egypt and their threatening enemies as they entered the promised land (1 Samuel 12:7). The awareness of the Lord's saving justice is more prominent in the lives of ordinary people. This is evident in the psalms that exalt the righteousness of the Lord in His saving actions. "Rescue me because of your righteousness" (Psalm 31:2). The justice of the Lord, for the psalmist, is seen in His saving actions. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does" (Psalm 145:17; Psalm 119:137). Based on this

understanding, the word "*tsedaqah*" can also be translated as "salvation," "justice," and "righteousness." This justice of God underlies Israel's belief in the righteousness of God (Winston, 2019). Israel believes that when judged, God is on the side of what is right and always right, while they themselves are on the side of what is wrong.

"The Lord is the righteous one, and my people and I are the guilty ones" (Exodus 9:27). "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Deuteronomy 32:2). "You are just in all that has happened to us because you have acted faithfully" (Nehemiah 9:33). "The Lord is good and upright" (Psalm 25:8). "You are always righteous, Lord" (Jeremiah 12:1). "The Lord is righteous" (Lamentations 1:18). "Lord, you are righteous" (Daniel 9:7). In Scripture, the nation of Israel is often seen as a vessel for the preservation and promulgation of divine truth, as well as evidence of God's promises and faithfulness to them. This concept involves the understanding that God chose the Israelites to be intermediaries for salvation for mankind and gave them moral commandments and rituals of worship that they must follow. God views justice and righteousness in all his actions towards the Israelites and humanity in general. This means that when God gives punishment or blessing to the Israelites, it is always based on His justice (Dadosky, 2013). The nation of Israel was considered the guardian of divine truth, expressed in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Book of Psalms. It was hoped that the truth conveyed through the Israelites would guide and guide humanity. Although the Israelites were chosen by God, they were also expected to live according to the moral and ethical standards He established. God's justice is revealed in the way God treats the Israelites according to their obedience or violation of His commands. Throughout the history of the Israelites, there were moments where they experienced punishment for their sins; but there were also moments where God extended His mercy and love to them. It represents God's balanced justice and grace. Thus, the relationship between God's justice and Israel's righteousness reflects the complex interaction between God's attributes, Israel's history, and His established moral commands (Langmead, 2014).

Apocalyptic traditions and the writings of Qumran also demonstrate the belief in God's eschatological judgment (Winston, 2019). These traditions and writings show the belief that the definitive statement of God's righteousness will occur in the future when entering the new world. God, at that time, as the judge of the universe, will determine the fate of every one according to His justice. God will vindicate the chosen ones and punish the enemies (Isaiah 45:21-25; Isaiah 49:6-7; Isaiah 51:4-5; Psalm 96:10-13). Isaiah sees God's judgment as a definitive time when the fate of every individual, whether "righteous" or "unrighteous," will be declared (Moberly, 2021) The entire journey of human life is preparation for that definitive "moment." The moment of judgment also becomes a time of restoration, the recovery of the universe. Those who are justified in the eschatological

judgment will live in a new world filled with an abundance of milk and honey (Deuteronomy 29:6).

This belief was quite strong during the early New Testament era (Van Aarde, 2017). It underlies the rejection of Jesus' teachings regarding the current eschatological judgment (Matthew 9:6). The eschatological judgment, for the Jewish community, fully resides in the power of God (Clay, 2018). Any form of anticipatory judgment is thus considered blasphemy against God (Luke 7:48-50). The eschatological faith of Israel affirms that the aspect of justification is a matter hidden with God, and certainty can only be obtained when judgment occurs (Moberly, 2021).

Second, God's faithfulness to the covenant

Israel has a unique relationship with God, depicted in the covenant relationship. The covenant signifies Israel as a chosen nation (Duncan et al., 2020). The depiction of the covenant can be found in Genesis 12:2-3 and 17:1-14. This relationship begins with the covenant between God and Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation (Dumbrell, 2013). The essence of the covenant is that Yahweh becomes the God of Israel, and Israel becomes the chosen people of God (Genesis 17:8). The covenant between the two parties is indeed a gracious one but still binds both parties with certain rights and obligations (Duncan et al., 2020). The rights of one party become the obligations of the other, and vice versa. On one hand, God is obligated to create, bless, bestow seasons, fertility, offspring, accompany the leaders, protect, grant victory in war, and so on. All of these become the rights of Israel to receive. On the other hand, Israel is obligated to honor, give thanks, and glorify God and to live blamelessly before God, which is God's right to accept (Psalm 67, 97, 11; 145, 147; Isaiah 41, 45-46, 48; 51:1-13; 54; 61-62).

The law of the covenant is affirmed and concretized in the Sinai Covenant (Exodus 19-24). The Sinai Covenant reaffirms the essential aspects of this covenant, such as the purpose and content of the covenant, and further concretizes it in the Torah (Kirk, 2017). This position indicates that the Torah is a continuation and development of the covenant between God and Abraham.

The covenant relationship requires each party to uphold the relationship with strict adherence to all the laws of the covenant. The continuity of the covenant, as it is a gracious one, does not depend on the fulfillment of the law, but its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the faithfulness of the parties in fulfilling the laws of the covenant (Duncan et al., 2020). The righteousness of each party, in this context, is determined by faithfulness in fulfilling the laws of the covenant. The writings of the Old Testament often depict God as the righteous party, while Israel is seen as unrighteous (Duncan et al., 2020). Israel believes that God is always righteous because of His faithfulness to the covenant. God always fulfils the laws of the covenant. "You have kept your promise because you are righteous" (Nehemiah 9:8). "The Lord your God is indeed God, the faithful God who

keeps his covenant" (Deuteronomy 7:9). "The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does" (Psalm 145:13). "Your faithfulness surrounds you" (Psalm 89:9). The portrayal of God's faithfulness is often accompanied by memories of God's blessings and grace bestowed on Israel. This is intended to ensure that Israel remains faithful and turns away from the wrong path (Deuteronomy 7:1, 9:1-6, Nehemiah 9:6-37).

Awareness of God's faithfulness is always accompanied by an awareness of Israel's unfaithfulness (Psalm 51:41, 65:1-5, 143; Daniel 9:13-19; Nehemiah 9:33). The psalmists affirm that Israel is a nation unfaithful to the covenant (Psalm 38:37). The psalmist boldly states, "From heaven, the Lord looks down and sees all mankind; no one is righteous, not even one" (Psalm 14:2). Israel has become a nation of harlots (Isaiah 1:21) and unfaithful (Jeremiah 5:11-12, 9:2).

This reality brings Israel to the realization that righteousness belongs only to God (Duncan et al., 2020). What about Israel's unfaithfulness? Prophet Jeremiah states that Israel's unfaithfulness actually highlights God's faithfulness. The Lord is always righteous, even becoming the dwelling place of righteousness (Jeremiah 31:23). His love and faithfulness are limitless (Jeremiah 36:6). The book of Lamentations also affirms, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:23). This verse emphasizes that God's grace or grace is unlimited. Even though humans are often unfaithful or sinful, God remains faithful in giving them His grace. This shows the greatness of God who bestows His blessings regardless of human shortcomings or sins and God gives His new love every morning. This emphasizes that His love and grace are always fresh and new every day. Although yesterday may have been full of mistakes and failures, each day humans are given a new opportunity to experience God's love anew and start anew. This verse gives people hope that even though they may experience difficulties or failures, God's love and grace are always available to them every day (Whitley, 2010). It teaches the importance of having faith and hope in a faithful God, even in difficult situations and awareness of God's unending faithful love and grace can provide comfort and courage to humans in facing life's challenges. They can rely on a faithful God in every situation, because His new love every morning gives them new strength to face the days ahead. The psalmist sings again of God's unfailing faithfulness. God remains faithful from generation to generation, forever (Psalm 107:1, 119:10). God always remembers and fulfills His promises (Psalm 100:8).

This awareness brings about the development of the concept of God's righteousness. God's righteousness is no longer limited to the fulfillment of the covenant law but extends to His forgiving and saving actions toward His people (Horton, 2009). The same awareness dominated Israel's time in exile. For Israel at that time, God's righteousness meant God's salvific actions (Isaiah 45:21). Israel eagerly awaited the

righteousness of the Lord that would save them from exile (Isaiah 59:9). The soteriological aspect has since filled the concept of God's righteousness (Bosman, 2014).

The soteriological aspect brings a shift in the initial understanding of Israel's righteousness. Israel's righteousness is no longer about faithfulness to the covenant but about God's forgiving and saving actions. Israel's righteousness is synonymous with God's action of forgiving transgressions, delivering them from the grip of enemies, and restoring them to a covenant relationship with Himself (Isaiah 46:12-13, 51:5-6). The path of righteousness for Israel is not about fulfilling the covenant law but being justified by God (McComiskey, 2019). Righteousness is a justification or grace from God (Isaiah 54:17, 45:25) rooted in His love and faithfulness (Isaiah 62:1-2). The shift in the concept of righteousness allows room for faith. Faith becomes a new requirement in righteousness. Justification by God requires acceptance through faith. The people of Israel must persevere in faith to obtain God's justification (Viktorahadi, 2019). Persevering in faith means relying on God's faithfulness. This belief underlies the statement of the Prophet Habakkuk that only God is the source of salvation, "the righteous will live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).

Continuity in the New Testament

The concept of God's Righteousness in the Old Testament, although not fully, is largely continued in the books of the New Testament. The central theme of the entire New Testament writings is God's righteousness fulfilled in the Gospel (Verbrugge, 2017). The Gospel referred to in the New Testament books is the death and resurrection of Jesus (Fanning, 2009). According to the New Testament writers, the death and resurrection of Jesus are the culmination of the realization of God's righteousness, both in His role as a covenant partner and as a just judge (Emina, 2023).

The clearest depiction of God's righteousness in the Gospel is conveyed by Paul in his letter to the church in Rome. "For in it (the Gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith" (Romans 1:17). According to Paul, the death and resurrection of Jesus represent the fullness of God's righteousness as a judge and covenant partner (Huijgen, 2017). In the death of Jesus, God has judged and punished humanity for their transgressions. In the same event, God, out of His faithful love, has also saved humanity from the punishment of death (Patricia, 2021).

Paul, like the Old Testament, also sees the justice of God's judgment as the gateway to the eschatological life. Due to their transgressions, humans cannot pass through the door of God's justice. However, in the death of Jesus, God has provided a way out of the impasse towards the coming age. The soteriological death of Jesus, therefore, grants every individual access to God (Romans 5:2) (Oliver, 2019). Therefore, the concept of truth in the Old Testament is significantly related to the concept of truth in

the New Testament. We can interpret God's truth from the concepts of existing scriptures and can interpret it in life.

The Faithfulness of God as the Foundation of Jewish Existence

The belief in God's faithfulness for justification is the foundation of Israel's existence. The perfect love and faithfulness of God have overcome the transgressions and weaknesses of Israel. Instead of responding to transgressions with punishment, God forgives and saves. God's faithfulness is endless. This belief underlies the existence of Israel, enabling them to stand firm, hold their heads high, face their enemies, endure difficult times, and look towards the future.

Existence, as explained by many philosophers, is the truest form of being (Damanik & Ndonga, 2020). Existence is a complete state of being. In psychology, existence is interpreted as "the truth of life" or "the fullness of life" (Tripathi, 2018). Abraham Maslow stated that the fullness of life is realized through self-actualization (Kaufman, 2021). In this context, the understanding of existence is more deeply philosophical, although it has similarities to psychological understanding. Existence in philosophical understanding emphasizes individual being rather than emotional aspects (Siswanto, 2017).

The term existence cannot be equated with the "eternal life" bestowed upon, although this aspect is widely discussed in the Bible. Existence is indeed related to salvation, shalom, as far as it is understood as present, self-integrity. However, existence cannot be understood as eternal life. Eternal life remains a mystery of God. Jesus himself affirmed that the issue of who sits at his right and left hand is God's prerogative (Mark 10:40). Existence is related to the present, not the eschaton or the end times, although the aspect of "later" always colors the struggle for existence.

Israel places God (*Ellohim*) as the foundation for their identity, sustainability, courage to face enemies, and look towards the future. The depiction of the covenant relationship shows the willingness to perpetuate God as the foundation of existence (Duncan et al., 2020). The same willingness is seen in the relational patterns between the Father and the Son (Psalms), the King and the Servant, the Husband and the Wife (Hosea), sporadically depicted in various texts of the Old Testament. Powerlessness, including acute violations of the covenant, caused this nation to rely solely on God (Moberly, 2021).

Conditional relationships depicted in the covenant cannot be the foundation of Israel's existence either. Such relationships require Israel to fulfill the covenant laws. The books of the Old Testament depict various failures of the nation to fulfill the covenant laws, causing them to lose their foundation of existence. Israel's powerlessness and acute transgressions led them to discover another aspect of God's absoluteness as a foundation for existence – not only is God faithful to the covenant, but He also has boundless love (Colson, 2018). In this aspect, Israel finds the unconditional strength of God to underpin their existence. The foundation of Israel, with its reliance on the perfection of God's

faithful love, depicts Israel's awareness of limitations as well as the willingness to perpetuate its foundation of existence.

This belief underlies Isaiah's call to King Ahaz, who was fearful facing the siege of enemies (Isaiah 7:14). According to Isaiah, God must be the sole foundation of Israel's existence; therefore, Ahaz and the entire nation must rely on Him. The same belief underlies the prophecy in Deutero-Isaiah that, due to God's faithful love, He will bring Israel back to Jerusalem (Isaiah 40-55); and David's song, "My soul finds rest in God alone" (Psalm 62:5); "The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation" (Psalm 18:2). Similar calls are made by the prophets of Israel. Israel must repent and rely on the Lord, especially during difficult times (Isaiah 55:6-7). Therefore, existence is no longer a self-achievement but a grace. Existence as a grace only requires acceptance through faith. The path to existence is through faith. The prophet Habakkuk affirms that "the righteous will live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4). Existence in faith does not mean that faith is the foundation of existence. Existence still relies on God. Faith means relying on God's endless faithful love. Faith indicates that existence is futuristic. Those who rely on God continually strive to fulfil God's will.

Reflection - Implications for Faith and Church Mission

Church Mission - Bringing Forth God's Faithful Love

The Church continues the faith of Israel. The Church's existence is based on the endless love and faithfulness of God. This faithfulness has been fully realized in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Estman, 2010). This is the Gospel, the good news of God. This belief underlies Paul's statement of God's righteousness in the Gospel (Romans 1:16-17). The Church is called to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Romans 6:4) in its existence (Shelton, 1923).

The Church is also called to proclaim the Gospel as the path of existence. The essence of the Church's mission is to proclaim the Gospel as the best way to attain existence. God has made Jesus the firstborn in fulfilling existence through the Gospel. Jesus has become the sacrament of God's faithful love so that through Him, humans find the entrance to full existence (Romans 5:2). Proclaiming existence in the Gospel means being an instrument of God's love for others (Ndona, Siagian, & Habeahan, 2021). The mission of the Church should focus on the presence of God's faithful love so that through the Church, everyone finds the path to existence in the Gospel (Łanoszka, 2014).

Developing Dialogue in Plurireligious Society

Various studies have found that the placement of divinity, especially the highest divinity as the foundation of existence, exists in many ethnic groups. Ndona et al. (2020),

in his research on archaic societies, found this pattern in many archaic tribes. According to Ndonga (2019), archaic societies always place divinity as the basis of existence, and everything profane could only have meaning if it received intervention from the "sacred". The same pattern exists in all religions and religious communities. The essence of religion is to place God as the foundation of existence. Religion orients its followers to find existence in transcendence (Ginting et al., 2022). At this point, all religions and religious communities have similarities.

This reality should serve as a foundation for developing openness and building healthy dialogue among religious communities. The basic principle of all religiosity is to provide alternative paths of existence in transcendence. Therefore, openness and dialogue will strengthen, inspire, and enrich each other with various forms of expression. This principle of openness and dialogue helps humans to respect each other and can be used as a basis for minimizing conflict in society.

CONCLUSION

Five important points can be emphasized about the truth of God as the foundation of Jewish existence. First, the existence of Judaism rests on the truth of God. The truth of God, initially understood as faithfulness to the covenant, was the foundation of Israel's existence. Yet their continued existence was precarious because of their sin. Second, awareness of these limitations leads Israel to another dimension of God's truth, namely the perfection of God's faithful love. God not only fulfills the covenant law but also possesses endless faithful love. God's love and faithfulness are expressed through forgiveness and salvation. Third, the Church, as the successor of Israel's faith, also embarks on existence in God's faithful love. God's faithful love, for the Church, has been fully expressed in the death and resurrection of Jesus, making it the Gospel of salvation for the Church. The Church is called to embark on existence in the Gospel. Fourth, the Church is also called to proclaim the Gospel as the path of existence. The mission of the Church should focus on the presence of God's faithful love for others. With an awareness that all forms of religiosity share a fundamental similarity, the Church, in its existence transcending in transcendence, must lead the way in openness and dialogue among religious communities.

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