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The Significance of Blood Sacrifice in the Old Testament

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Abstract

Sacrifice does not appear to be foreign to Israel, because the surrounding nations practiced it. Undoubtedly, therefore, blood sacrifice in the Old Testament could be traced to Babylonian, Canaanite or Ancient Nomadic rituals and fellowship meals according to the New Concise Bible Dictionary. Undue reference made to Old Testament Blood Sacrifice, has become a contemporary basis for some clandestine activities in our society. The purpose of blood sacrifice in the Old Testament is, therefore, paramount. Studies of this nature find the Historical, Theological, Descriptive and Exegetical approach integral to its end product. It is noteworthy at this juncture to observe that some of the Old Testament sacrifices were non-bloody; but, the scope of this study is majorly on the Bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament. Moreover, the symbolic nature and significance of blood sacrifice in the Old Testament is the major stress area of the study. Consequently, it should be on record, that the use or misuse of blood sacrifice, outside the basic Old Testament prescription, by any mortal should, therefore, not only be kept on hold or at abeyance, but also be outrightly abrogated. This is because it borders on the character and prerogative of God who instituted it.

Introduction

The concept of sacrifice involves the death of a victim for the maintenance of a relationship between man and anything considered sacred. In conveying the above, Gabriel O. Abe (2004:2) reiterates that such sacrifice connotes the surrender to the divine, and could be with blood or without blood, of a person, an animal, bird, food or anything. Tracing the origin of sacrifice, Abe (2004) further said: "The religious significance of the sacrificial cultures in Israel gave her a distinguished, peculiar and unique concept of sacrifice quite deeper than those of the early nations of the ancient world" (p. 19).

From the earliest times, God had insisted on blood sacrifice as the ground upon which He was to be approached. As God's revelatory act and the corresponding relationship developed, the Levitical sacrifices had to be systematized and made an integral part of the Hebrew religion. Blood-related sacrifice to the Jew, therefore, was an ultimate demand from God resulting in a unique relationship. Walter Elwell (1988:366) confirms that in the cultic sacrifices of Israel, blood stood for death, and depending on the context, might also stand for judgement, sacrifice, substitution, or redemption. Life with God was made possible by blood in the sacrifice. Thus, the Hebrew word, OLAH is that which ascends either to the altar or in smoke from the altar. Herein is the ancient belief that animal sacrifice actually nourishes the gods, and so it is borne in mind that an offering of sacrifice promoted peaceful relationship with deity. Also, a quick survey of the patriarchs reveal their nomadic character, as pilgrims and sojourners dwelling in tents, Hebrews 11:9. Thus, while the heathen nations sought to deify the powers of nature, the patriarchs believed in a personal God who transcends nature and who is, therefore, Omnipotent and Holy. Explaining the religious life and worship of the patriarchs, MacLean (1952, p. 75) says that their history also proves the existence of offering covenant sacrifices, and celebrating covenant feasts Genesis 15:9-18; 2:32; the erection of memorial pillars and the consecration of them by pouring upon them oil and wine Genesis 28:18, which is the rite of circumcision as in Genesis 17:10-14, and the paying of tithes in Genesis 14:20.

Moreover, an outstanding feature of Biblical sacrifices was that none be offered outside the gates of the tabernacle of the congregation. To offer sacrifices on high places, or spots selected by the caprices of the worshipper was expressly forbidden (Leviticus 17:4, Deuteronomy 12:13, 14), as have been earlier mentioned. There are two main classifications of sacrifice: one of which is unbloody sacrifices having to do with first fruits and tithes; meat and drink offerings and incense; while the second, Blood sacrifice, is the focus of succeeding paragraphs.

Blood in Old Testament Sacrifices

Blood sacrifices are those in which the life of a victim was taken and its blood poured upon the altar. It is to be observed, MacLean (1952:135) stresses, that these

were limited to the herd, the flock, and all clean birds. Blood sacrifice formed an integral part of Israelite worship, a practice that meant the death of the victim with an aim of restoring and/or maintaining right relationship with God. The originality of this type of sacrifice in Israel may not be unconnected with God's revelatory act, apart from its natural dependence and thankfulness to God. Walter Eichrodt (1961:38) conveyed this thought in blood related sacrifice when he said with this God, men knew exactly where they stand: and an atmosphere of trust and security is created, in which they find both the strength for a willing surrender to the will of God and joyful courage to grapple with the problems of life.

The main purpose of blood sacrifice could range from offering a gift, having communion, making propitiation, cleansing, averting evils or failures to providing nourishment for Yahweh, on the one hand, and as it affects man. On the other hand, and as it affects God, in obeying the Sovereign God who cares about our welfare. Old Testament blood sacrifice is, therefore, of utmost significance because all wild and unclean animals were prohibited from the exercise. The offerer identifies himself with the victim, as it were, showing a sign of surrender, dedication and substitution before it is slain and the blood sprinkled for atonement of the offerer's sin. Maclean (1952, p. 137) argues that uniformly it was required of the offerer, to bring his victim to the altar, to place his hand upon it, and to slay it; of the priest, to receive the blood in a vessel, and sprinkle it upon the altar. And so, chief among the blood sacrifices were the burnt offering; the peace offering; the sin or trespass offering and the personal or Group offering. The personal or group blood sacrifice is very conspicuous in the book of Genesis. For instance, an animal lost its life in the dressing up of Adam and Eve by God, after their fall, using animal skin (Genesis 3:11). Another instance of bloody sacrifice was that of Abel, who offered a substitute having blood rather than offering the first fruit of the earth. Trumbull (1975, p. 21) reiterated that the Lord had respect unto Abel and his offering, but not unto Cain and to his offering for it had no representation of any kind. This proves, again, that life is in the blood and that a spilled blood is "life destroyed". There is a singular reason here, set forth in the grievances to the fountain of life-God Himself, in the following dictum, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground, and now cursed art thou from the earth, which had opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand (Genesis 4 :10, 11). Blood shedding at this point, other than for sacrifice unto God, was therefore unacceptable and therefore sanctionable.

Secondly, the important role of blood was unique in the animal sacrifice offered by Noah after the flood, that it motivated God to re-echo His Sovereign and ultimate stance about man's supposed relationship to life-God Himself being the author of life. The Holy writ unequivocally states that "Every moving thing that Liveth shall be food for you; as the green herbs, have I given you all things. But flesh with life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. And surely your blood of your lives

will I require... and at the hand of man; even at the hand of every man's brother, will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man (Genesis 9:3-6). This is an adequate and authentic fiat from our awesome God mandating all legal systems, the world over, to administer capital punishment appropriately. There can be no other faultless criteria of judgement for the purposeful crime of man-slaughter than is already enshrined in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, Blood sacrifice in the Old Testament has been, and should be seen as, the core of the Hebrew understanding of their, relationship to God. Furthermore, the catch-word for the Old Testament theology could be "God's relationship with Israel based on Blood".

Blood Sacrifice in the Levitical Order

The Levitical order is another bloody section in the History of Israel, and the entire Old Testament. This is due to the fact that sacrifices express a variety of ideas, among which the concept of atonement cannot be downplayed. Undoubtedly, Biblical sacrifice shall have no degree of efficacy, except that God had instituted it as the means of effecting man's atonement. The Book of Leviticus portrays God's provision for man's need, because blood sacrifice is the basis for Levitical worship. In fact, of all the sacrifices only the meat offering is a bloodless sacrifice, since it involves fine flour. Besides, the Tabernacle (Exodus 25: 40 and Hebrew 8:5), was the place where God manifested His glory in judgement and grace-the dwelling of the Almighty among His people on the basis of expiatory offering. The judgement seat was known as the mercy seat because of blood that was poured on it, as a place of propitiation and appeasement. Analytically, the book of Leviticus could be divided into two: the first part having to do with the means of approach to God (Chapter 1 – 6), and the second part dwelling on the continuance of communion/fellowship with God (Chapters 17-26). And so the first aspect is sacrificially blood – dominated laws of blood-covenant sacrifices, while the second part is the sustenance of union made possible by the blood sacrifice. Indicating God's stance as regards the maintenance of His initiated blood-tie, Charles Pfeiffer (1957:57) expresses the fact that "Although God will chasten His rebellious people, He does not utterly cast them off. When they repent of their sin, God remembers His covenant blood sacrifices with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Levitical order is significant because of the constant use of blood sacrifices or sacrificial blood. Bonar (1966, p. 16) buttressed it when he said the priest brings forward the blood ... it is the sacrifice brought before God... in its utter helplessness and in all its filthiness and laid down before the Holy one.

The Levitical blood sacrifices prove that there was no need trifling with a Holy God, and so every single sin has to be atoned for by the sacrificial blood. Strict sanctions were imposed upon any violator who eats and / or drinks blood of either man or beast, Leviticus 7:26-27. Bonar (1966, p.140) gives the rationale because the blood was set apart ... it represents life poured out as an atonement. How often were weary

Israelites thus by the sight of blood, set apart! For it was seen to lead them to Him who was to come and pour out His soul unto death. The Levitical blood sacrifice was, therefore, seen to be the sustaining effect of the relationship between God and the Israelites.

It is worth saying, hence, that the Levites, Priest and the High Priest became the officiants of the Old Testament Blood sacrifices that prefigured Christ. It is, therefore, needful to x-ray the Blood covenant of the Old Testament and its significance.

Blood Covenants in Old Testament

In the Old Testament concept, the relationship between God and his people was conceived of as a covenant. Furthermore, God promised to establish a unique relationship with Noah (Genesis 6:18), and subsequent generations. Walter Kaiser Jr., confirming this relationship, ran through the Old Testament with the theme of promise - a term synonymous with covenant. **Ipsa Facto**, the acts of God in the History of Israel was tailored around blood-relationship. Payne (1962:97) advocates that the necessity of a death for the ultimate effectuation of a testament is shown by the atoning blood that was shed in the accompanying blood sacrifices (Genesis 15:9, 10). The unique place of blood in Old Testament covenants cannot be downplayed.

Moreover, of all the covenants in the Old Testament – the Edenic (Gen. 3:15). Noahic (Gen. 9:9). Abrahamic (Gen. 15:18). Mosaic (Ex. 19:5, 8). Levitical (Num. 25:12, 13) and Davidic (2nd Sam. 7:13), the Abrahamic covenant is most outstanding in its typical character of portraying God's anti-type in a clear picturesque. Thus, for our concerns, the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are worthy of mention.

Abrahamic Blood Covenant

As has been observed in previous paragraphs, blood-brotherhood relationships are of a stronger tie than any other in existence. Trumbull (1975:216) confirms that blood-covenant relationship is prominent in the scripture. For three consecutive times, that level of relationship existed between God and Abraham: Abraham was called "the friend of God" in James 2:23; secondly it is written "But thou Israel, art my servant The seed of Abraham my friend" in Isaiah 41:8; also is recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:7- Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham, thy friend for ever. The friendship entailed in these acts was not peripheral, but hinged on the blood covenant relationship.

It is worthy of note that the Hebrew word used to designate Abraham's friendship is Ohebh, meaning "a loving one"- a term very synonymous with blood covenant, than the Hebrew word rea, meaning a "companion" or "neighbour"- preferred against Moses only in an instance. God's relationship with Abraham was indeed that of a covenant of blood friendship. The basis of this blood-friendship with

Abraham is found in the call to separation from his kindred to a closer walk with God in Genesis 12:1-3, and to this effect a blood covenant was reached between God and Abraham in the bloody ceremony that ensued in Genesis 15:8, 18. Dryness (1989, p. 177) caught the picture in the following words; “nothing could ensure certainty of this promise more than this solemn ceremony sealed by God’s oath”. The physical blessing of God is inadvertently at variance with the blood-relationship of God. This was made evident in the scriptures, where Ishmael (Abraham’s bond-son) was blessed but naturally excluded from the blood covenant relationship, Genesis 17:20.

A critical analysis of the circumcision of every male child from Abraham could infer God’s insignia on blood covenant. This stood as Abraham’s response to God’s blood Oath. It was very unique in the sense that it became the seal, on Abraham’s part, of the blood covenant friendship. Trumbull (1975:218) cites an illustration with Jewish background when he said: when a Jewish child is circumcised, it is commonly said of him that he is caused to enter into the covenant of Abraham. The blood covenant is clearly seen in the rite of circumcision. Otherwise, the account of Moses faced by death would have been obscure but for the unravelling of this mystery of blood covenant. How could Moses (Exodus 4:20-26) have borne the message of death to the uncircumcised first-born sons of the land of Egypt, but for Zipporah (Moses’ wife) who intuitively did the right thing at the appropriate time. Here Trumbull’s (1975, p. 223) paraphrase is quite in place; it is as Zipporah had said, we are newly covenanted to each other, and to God, we should have been covenanted to slaughter (or death) by blood. Blood is significantly deployed by the giver of life; cementing, as it were, the temporal life of man with God’s eternal existence.

In essence, the covenant was to pass through the seed of Abraham unto all the families of the earth. In addition, absolute surrender has been proved to be a mark of devotedness to divinity; and so Abraham would like to be an exception in this regard. Trumbull (1975:224) further remarks that the world over, men who pledged their devotedness to their gods were ready to surrender to their gods that which they held as dearest and most precious—even to the extent of their life, and that which was dearer than life. Hence, in Genesis 22, Isaac, was demanded, as the only beloved son of Abraham. The oriental world valued the lives of their only sons as more precious than their father’s and would prefer dying themselves as to secure their sons’ lives. It was upon this backdrop, and perhaps the promise of indebtedness in the covenant relationship, that Abraham was asked to offer his son.

It was, as it were, another call from God on Abraham to give, or simply put, to show the evidence of his undivided loyalty to the covenant friendship. To this call Abraham obeyed and it was as, Trumbull (1975:229) says, willingness that was accepted for deed. This, then, authenticated the agreement of the apostle James in his statement; was not Abraham our father justified, when he had offered Isaac? Seest thou how faith was made perfect. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for

righteousness (James 2:21-23). Blood was, therefore, involved in the covenant that was manifested in Abraham's circumcision, and in the slaying of the sacrificial lamb provided in place of Isaac's offer. It was nothing more or less than a verifying blood covenant between the giver of this life principle and the descendants of Abraham, and ultimately mankind.

Mosaic Blood Covenant

The deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian bondage could rightly be tagged "the remembrance of God's blood – tie" with Abraham. Isaac and Jacob, Exodus 2:24. It was, in essence, meant for Israel to be holy and separated from other nations, inasmuch as their God was holy. Furthermore, a review of the Mosaic blood covenant gives a seemingly befitting working definition for our purpose. According to the theory, the function of blood is not only to expiate, but moreover to effect a sacramental union of the parties in the blood of a common life. Gerhados Vos (1948:124) objected to this theory by saying while the idea is attractive there are scarcely points of contacts in the Old Testament for such a conception of **berith**. The **berith** lies not in the sphere of mystical life; it belongs to the sphere of conscious assurance. Admittedly, it is this assurance that appeals to the undivided loyalty on the part of the Israelites – the blood united people. The religious and social life of Israel was, therefore, based on the continuity of God's covenant. So Israel was expected to respond positively in obedience to this blood covenant (Exodus 19:4-5 and Deuteronomy 26:16-19). Going through the prophetic history of Israel, William Dryness (1979:20) remarks that this covenant challenge to Israel is a recurrent theme through the books of kings... In these books their continued existence as a nation is made to rest on their covenant obligation.

In the same vein, it is pertinent to note that God's covenant ideals are in a continuum, because there exists a correlation between the covenant features of Abraham, and that given or renewed at Sinai under the Mosaic tutelage. Kaiser Jnr. (1978) draws the parallelism.

... the indications of a divine epiphany and the aspect of awe and dread that surrounded Abraham's reception of the covenant in Gen. 15:17, similarly greeted Israel when the covenant was delivered from Sinai in Ex. 19:18. The smoke, fire pot, and flaming torch of Genesis 15, were matched by the smoke, kiln and fire of Exodus 19 (p. 60).

The **Sinaitic** experience, therefore, under the leadership of Moses, was not unconnected with the significance of blood which, of course, is the issue at stake. This was because half of the sacrificial blood was offered to God, being poured at the altar of the mercy seat, while the other half was sprinkled upon the people Exodus 24:6, 8, and 11.

Another point to remember is that, the law of Sinai was cast within the premise of the covenant of grace already made to Abraham and his descendants after him

forever. This is because God's initiative of covenant relation far more exceeds man's positive or negative response. Consequently, all Mosaic rituals that ensued from Sinai had more sacredness attached to the blood, and death penalty imposed upon the eater of any kind of blood, Lev. 17:14. Trumbull (1975:242), elucidates that blood—even the blood of beasts, thus made sacred, as a holy symbol, must never be counted as a common thing; but it must be held, ever reverently, as a token of that life which is the sinner's need, and which is God's grandest gift and God's highest prerogative. The caption for every subsequent generation, therefore, should be "BLOOD-GOD'S GRANDEST GIFT AND HIGHEST PREROGATIVE". In each of these sacrifices, therefore, there was communion and union with God. Hence even the blood of animals, used for food, are poured out to the ground unto the Lord and covered or buried. It could be recalled that in the sacrifices involving blood in the Old Testament, the blood symbolically represented life. It is the life (blood) of the victim that is the source of the atonement, which, of course, brings the hope of the sinner's union with a holy God. Thus, the blood of the victim had the chiefest value than death. Trumbull (1975:247) warns that the aim of all Mosaic sacrifices was, a restored communion with God; and the hope, which runs through them all is of a divine human inter-union through blood. These sacrifices, thus, bring to union and communion, the two persons that have been aliens to each other; beginning from the sin offering (Self-surrender); and to the peace offering in which a meal is shared by the sinner and God. This symbolic tie occasioned by blood was not meant to be altered for any reason.

Conversely, the primitive rites have to do with both parties partaking blood which becomes common to the two humans-sharing, as it were, the nature of their god. Thus, there is an avowed incompleteness and expectancy in the symbols of Old Testament blood rituals, which, of course, form a major part of the prophets' Kerygma. Trumbull (1975, p. 257) in a closing remarks to the Old Testament Blood covenant notes that when this has come to pass, the true seed of Abraham, circumcised in the heart, shall be in the covenant of blood friendship with God as recorded in Galatians 3:7-9 and Romans 2:26-29. The Mosaic or Sinaitic blood covenant, therefore, was indeed a shadow of good things to come, Colossians 2:17. It was, indeed, a progressive revelation of God's ultimate plan for mankind, though not fully grasped by national Israel as at then. In Exodus 12, we read about the Passover blood ritual. Here God instructs the children of Israel through His servant Moses, saying inter alia

...they shall take them every man a lamb... your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year... the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it... for I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute

judgement: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you; when I smite the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:3-13 KJV).

This very act of sacrificing a lamb without blemish and of striking the door posts with the blood, and the blood being a sign to protect the children of Israel from attack by the Angel of death, speaks figuratively of the death of the “Sinless lamb of God”- Jesus Christ and how his shed blood atones for the sins of the whole world.

Blood in the Dispensations

The significant place of blood is further enhanced by the commencement and consummation of dispensations. There are seven dispensations delineating periods or ages within which God related to mankind in specific ways. Biblical records show that these dispensations also ended with Blood-events, emphasizing fundamentally the Biblical application of blood.

The very first dispensation spanned from the Creation of Adam to the time of the fall of man and the subsequent eviction from the Garden Eden. Dickson’s Biblical chronology (1970:158) reveals that it was hundreds of years proceeding the end of Akkadian power. That would be years before 2200B.C. Our concern here is that this dispensation of innocence came to an end with the very first shedding of blood, Genesis 3:21, Hebrews 9:22. The premier ancestral adornment of man was coats of skin from the animal whose blood, as it were, proactively covered the sin of fallen Adam and Eve.

Secondly, the conscience of man having been sensitized and acquainted with guilt and innocence; God at this period related to humanity by man’s conscience and so was named accordingly. The time from of this dispensation of conscience was from the fall of man to Noah (Genesis 3-8), another hundreds of years – (2200-1950 B.C). According to Dickson’s (1970:158) dating, this will coincide approximately with the destruction of Ur. This dispensation ended in the first catastrophic Tsunami of the deluge. As if that was not sufficient, Blood-covenant (Gen. 8:20-22) was observed between God and Noah to mark the end of the period of conscience, as well as launch the third dispensation.

The third dispensation covered the period between Noah and Abraham from Genesis 9-12 commonly called the dispensation of Human Government. It was about 1800B.C. Dickson (1970:157), says, when Abraham arrived in Canaan. The period was characterized by rebellion and organized crime epitomized in the monument of the Tower of Babel. This dispensation came to an end with destruction of the first collapse of a high rise building the-Multi-storeytower, no doubt burying lives under the rubbles

in conjunction with the bloody sacrifice resulting in the Abrahamic covenant Genesis 15.

The next dispensation of promise was from 1800 B.C. to 1280 B.C. when Israel left Egypt, Dickson (1970:158) says. It could be observed that every dispensation ended with one untold natural disaster or another; which is quickly followed by a new covenant for the survivor(s) of the previous dispensation. The promise known as Abrahamic covenant ended with the display of God's sovereignty in the destruction of Egypt's best military might. This event was consummated in the Passover at Egypt. It covers the period between from Genesis 16 Exodus 12 and encapsulates another bloody event coupled with the death the first borns of the land of Egypt.

The succeeding dispensation of law under Moses took off from Mount Sinai with its accompanying tabernacle sacrifice and culminated with the close of the Old Testament Canon. Dickson (1970:158) opines the period to begin from 1280 B.C. to 186 B.C. including the inter-testament period. From Exodus 20 to Matthew 2, the dispensation of law ended with the greatest blood sacrifice in the history of mankind and which was to be surpassed by none other-the Death of Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God.

Since the two final dispensations of grace and Millennium are yet to be consummated, and beyond our scope, they cannot be historical but factual based on Biblical prophecy.

Symbolism of Old Testament Blood Sacrifice

As mentioned earlier, from the Old Testament perspective, the place of blood cannot be down played for any reason. From the sacrifices to the covenants of individuals and the nation of Israel, blood was pivotal to their relationship with God. The caution attached to Blood –as life principle endears it with the sanctity it deserves and claims. As it were, blood is seen as God's insignia in cementing relationships, agreements, regimes, divine instructions and judgemental adjudication. Blood furthermore, carried the authenticity given to it by the creator, to the extent that it had a voice crying out to its source-God, for a just recompense of the one that violated its rule not to be spilled and/or eaten. Blood seen as life principle, no doubt, must have ordained from God in whose image man was created Genesis 1-2; and did not flow in man until God breathed into the nostrils of man – then man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). Blood, therefore, continues to retain the place which it occupies, and was given, by God. Any attempt to relegate it to the background met with God's utmost severity, because God had, and still have, the final say to the usage of blood. Nabofa in his Blood symbolism narrated the fact that Blood plays a very important role in sacrificial rites, oath-taking, the practice of magic and medicine and in initiation rites mostly because of its sacredness. And if one may ask, who gave sacredness to Blood?

The answer will not be farfetched from the Old Testament concept of its being the seat of soul-personality from God.

Conclusion

The significance of Blood sacrifice in the Old Testament could, therefore, be seen in its union with God, from whom man distanced himself due to disobedience to set norms. This union eventually culminates in substitution, for the fact that punishment for sin cannot be averted. The concept of substitution has to do with taking the place of the actual culprit. In citing Moraldi, Gabriel Abe (2004:26) said that the offerer is substituting his life with the victim in order to undertake his deserved punishment as a result of his sins or wrong doing committed with Israel... the blood sacrifice was obligatory in cleansing. Blood is life (Lev. 17:11, 14) and to shed blood, a victim must be killed in place of the sacrificer.

Equally important is the fact that Blood sacrifice resulted in union or relationship as in a covenant between two persons. Blood covenant, as it were, sustained such relationship. Abe (2004:110) maintained that though, the Israelites did not receive communion sacrifice as eating with Yahweh mystically, yet they believed that the ceremonial eating of the victim sacrificed strengthened the covenant relationship between them and Yahweh.

Also significant is the issue of propitiation or coverage entailed in the Blood sacrifice of the Old Testament. This is the concept underlying the appeasement to the anger and wrath of God. As it were the holiness of God was satisfied temporarily by the coverage of the blood sacrifices over the sins of Israel.

Thus, the theological terms of reparation, and expiation could be used as synonyms averting impending wrath of God and ensuring God's fulfilment of His covenant promises on Israel in particular, and mankind, in general.

The Patriarchal, Pre-exilic and Post-exilic Blood Sacrifices were all significant, in that they expiated the sins of Israel and sustained fellowship between Israel and God. Based on the foregoing, the following contributions are pertinent.

Recommendations

- Blood as agency of peace and reconciliation between God and man should not be used otherwise.
- Blood as life principle should not be spilled, shed or taken by man violently.
- The sanctity of Blood should be observed as in the Human Right policies of nations.
- Cultic activities involving spilling of blood should be policed and stopped forthwith.

- The Old Testament Blood sacrifice foreshadowing a best and final sacrifice should not be repeated or observed in retrospect, because it is basically typological in nature and essence.
- The United Nations, World Health Organisations (WHO), Human Rights Organisations and other organisations, directly or otherwise, having anything to do with blood (human or animal) should prosecute any inappropriate use of Blood, because it is a direct affront on the absolute prerogative of God Almighty.
- The Religious, Health and Education Sectors of every nation should, as a matter of urgency, establish Institutions that will correctly teach and inform humanity on the sanctity of Blood.

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