

**DEVELOPING A THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP FOR TODAY:
A CASE STUDY OF LEVITICUS 17: 11**

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Introduction

Worship is a human response to the perceived presence of the divine, a presence which transcends normal human activity and is holy¹. Worship in the Bible moves back and forth between personal and corporate experience. It brings man into an intimate relationship with God. God created man ultimately for the purpose of worshipping Him. This call to worship establishes worship as a universal priority and the number one responsibility of every believer. This was clearly noted in A. W Tozer's statement, 'we are here to be worshipers first and workers second'². The purpose of this paper is to define worship, identify the elements of worship in the context of Leviticus 17: 11, their significance and how these elements can be used to develop the theology of worship in contemporary times.

A. What is worship?

Rob Harbison defined worship as a sacred spiritual exercise that links man with God through the expression of an adoring heart. He added that, it proclaims our dependence on God³. In Kevin J. Conner's view, the word 'worship' means 'to bow down, to stoop very low or to prostrate oneself'⁴. Conner's view is similar to the meaning of the Hebrew word for worship 'Shachah'⁵. According to Ralph Mahoney, worship is an expression of love and adoration to God. It can be expressed only with the giving of one's whole heart and life to Him⁶.

¹ Marvin E. Tate, *Worship*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

² A. W. Tozer, in *Worship by the Book*, Don Carson, (ed.), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), p. 151

³ Rob Harbison, *worshiping God*, Textbook - 525B3, (Lecture notes, Master of Divinity programme, Trinity Graduate School of Apologetics and Theology, India, 2008), pp. 6 - 7

⁴ Kevin J. Conner, *The Tabernacle of David*, (Poland: Oregon Bible Temple Conner Publications, 1992), p.106

⁵ The Strongest Strong's Exhaustive concordance of the Bible James strong, John R. Kohnberger III and James A. Swanson, (eds.), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), p.1572

⁶ Ralph Mahoney, *Worship*, Shepherd's Staff, New Believer's Training Manual, 7th Edition (India: World Map and Rekka Printers Pvt. Ltd, 2002), p.33

Larmer Boschman argued that worship is not music and musicological skills in and of themselves are not worship skills. Musical instruments on the other hand are not only for worship but can however be dedicated to God to be used as part of worship. This implies that worship is not mechanical or inanimate but rather a matter of the heart not a style of music⁷. In Rick Warren's book titled 'Purpose Driven Life' he noted that every part of a church service is an act of worship. These include, Praying, Scripture reading, singing, confession, listening to sermon, taking notes, giving offering, baptism, communion, ushering and etc⁸.

Having defined worship, there are however several words in the Greek which in other words means 'worship'. For example, '*prokneuo*' meaning paying homage, to kiss toward, or to bow down (1 Corinthians 14:25), '*sebazomai*', meaning to render religious honor (Romans 1:25), and '*sebomai*' meaning to revere or adore (Acts 16:14). Hebrews 12:28 tells us that we must *serve* God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. The Greek word '*latreuo*' translated 'serve' is a form of the word worship and is used in the New Testament in the contexts of service and worship. Another form of the word worship is the Greek word '*therapeuo*' from which we get the English word therapy and which is most often translated 'heal' in reference to the healing of others. This word is seen in every case of Jesus' healings⁹.

To sum up, worship is therefore the expression of our gratitude and appreciation to God. It is a means to acknowledge His authority as creator of the universe as well as the savior of our souls. For this and many other reasons, worship, is of the highest priority for the believer as well as the corporate church.

⁷ Lamar Boschman, *Praises and Worship: The Priority, Purpose and Portrayal of Worship*, (Lecture notes, International School of Ministry: The International Curriculum, Trimester 1. Good Shepherd Ministry International, USA, 2006), p. 87

⁸ Rick Warren, *Purpose Driven Life*, (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002), p. 65

⁹ What is a biblical theology of worship? <http://www.gotquestions.org/theology-of-worship.html> [Accessed 2nd August, 2011]

B. Elements of worship in the context of Leviticus 17: 11 and their significance

After the Israelites arrived safely at the foot of Mount Sinai, and the Tabernacle had been completed, God showed them a new way of life with clear instructions on how sinful people can relate to a Holy God. Animal sacrifice became the means instituted by God to facilitate communion between Himself and worshipers. In the offering of sacrifice, worshipers gave themselves to God and the shedding of the blood of the sacrificial animal became a vital power of life (Leviticus 17:11). God honors this act and gives life back to the worshiper who is dead in sin and could not have fellowship with God.

The institution and the purpose of this blood sacrifice in expiation for life and to reestablish fellowship with God is found in the statement, 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life that effect expiation' (Leviticus 17:11)

In light of the above text, the elements for worship are God, man, blood and altar. Though the sacrifice on the altar is the sole duty of the Priest, The four named elements shall be considered since the Priest was not mentioned in the context of the text. At this point the significance of each of the named elements shall be treated as well as how they relate to worship.

God

Theology is all about God and His message. The basic definition of theology which was taken from two Greek words, *theos*, meaning God, and *logos*, meaning word, speech, expression, and discourse, supports this fact. In this view, it is therefore impossible for one to come and explain God without experiencing or having no knowledge about God.

Though the Bible does not contain a formal definition of the word ‘God’, yet God being and attributes are seen throughout the Bible. Since the knowledge of God is infinitely unsearchable with human understanding, the reality of God is always much greater than what human minds can understand or express.

God is the personal creator worthy of human worship. He is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being. He is the only holy, righteous, justice and merciful God. He is the creator and sustainer of life. No person, object, or idea can be compared to God. He is so holy that sinful men cannot come into His presence and have fellowship with Him until their sinful situation is dealt with.

In English translations, He is Lord in two ways. LORD spelled with small caps represents the Hebrew ‘*Yahweh*’, the personal name of God, by which He introduced Himself to Moses (Exodus 3:15; 6:3). Lord with lowercase letters represents the Hebrew ‘*adonai*’ and the Greek ‘*kurios*’. This refers to the master, the boss, the owner, the person with authority over another. As Lord, God is a sovereign Ruler over all the earth; He is the Creator and Judge of all persons. Thus the Hebrew identifies God as ‘the Lord God (Yahweh), the God of Israel’ (Exodus 34:23). He is ‘Lord of lords’ (Deuteronomy. 10:17)¹⁰.

‘The LORD is righteous; ...He will do no unrighteousness’ (Zephaniah 3:5). ‘He is the Rock; His works are perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He’ (Deuteronomy. 32:4). When the Bible speaks of God’s ethical perfection and justice, it does not refer to a standard or realm of ideals outside of God but to God’s very being itself. ‘God is light and in Him is no darkness at all’ (1 John. 1:5). God can only do what is right. Because of His nature, He can only do what is just.

¹⁰ John W. Eddins, Jr. and J. Terry Young, *God*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

God is holy. His holiness demands a perfect holiness in people. To the Israelite He said: ‘you shall be holy; for I am holy’ (Leviticus 11:44). He hates sin and cannot dwell with sinners (Habakkuk 1:13). He does not take pleasure in wickedness (Psalm 5:4-5)¹¹. God is so infinitely holy that every sin that an individual commits merits death: physical, spiritual and eternal. God had warned Adam that the day he disobeyed Him, he would certainly die (Genesis 2:17). His intrinsic holiness set up a separation between Him and all sinners¹².

In order to deal with sin and reestablish fellowship with man, God instituted animal sacrifice as the means of expiation for sins in the Old Testament. Paul argued that it was necessary that Christ should be offered as an atoning sacrifice for sin, in order that God might be just while justifying the sinner (Romans 3:25-26). The important thing was that the justice of God should be maintained. In this regard, man can be reconciled with God and also have access to life.

Man

Made in God’s image, man was created to have a close relationship with Him; and when fellowship is broken, man becomes incomplete and needs restoration. Communion with the living God is the essence of worship.

Man was created different from animal in terms of his moral conscience, self acknowledgement, and capacity for a spiritual communion with his creator. All human beings in this view have two aspects, a bodily and a spiritual (body and soul, or body and mind, or body

¹¹ Brain M. Schwertley, *The atonement of Jesus Christ*, Text book - 127A1, (Lecture notes, Master of Divinity programme, Trinity Graduate School of Apologetics and Theology, India, 2008), p 15

¹² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1983), p. 802.

and spirit) and so the capacity to relate fully both to the created order and their Creator. This capacity has seriously been restricted, misdirected and abused because of sin¹³.

Barnes' notes on the Bible states that in the Scripture, there are three words relating to the constitution of man. These are (a) 'life' as opposed to death (Deuteronomy 30:15); (b) the 'soul' as distinguished from the body; (Genesis 2:7); (c) the 'spirit' as opposed to the flesh (Romans 8:6), and as distinguished from the life of the flesh. The spirit is the highest element in man that holds communion with God¹⁴.

This communion with God was destroyed by the sin of Adam and Eve. As the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, the human race was also affected by sin. As a result, human nature became weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (Romans 5: 12 – 14) Accordingly, the entire human race is born in a state of separation from God (Romans 3: 23; 6:23). Man was under the curse of the law and is in need of restoration and reconciliation with God (Galatians 3:10 – 14, Ephesians 2:3 – 5). Apostle Paul noted that the unbeliever is dead in sin, he is without Christ (life), a stranger from the covenant promises of God, has no hope, and is without God (Ephesians 2: 1, 14).

The Blood

Prior to the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross, God ordained certain rituals, that were expression of worship, and among these rituals was animal sacrifice. This began from the fall of man in the Garden (Genesis 3: 21), continuing through the family offerings (Genesis 4: 4; 8: 20; 22: 1-14) and to the Tabernacle worship. The blood was to serve as a means for man to

¹³ The New International Dictionary of the Bible, Pictorial Edition, J.D. Douglass and Merrill C. Tenney, (eds.), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), pp. 617 - 618

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes on the Bible, <http://barnes.biblecommenter.com/leviticus/17.htm> [Accessed 31 July, 2011]

access life. The shedding of animal blood in this context illustrated the future salvation work of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

Blood has great significance in the Bible. Its meanings involve profound aspects of human life and God's desire to transform human existence. Blood and 'life' or 'living being' is closely associated. The Life Application Study Bible commentary on Leviticus 17: 11, states that the blood represents the sinner's life, infected by sin and headed to death¹⁶. According to Jacob Milgrom, the life of animal was appointed and accepted by God as a substitute for the sinner's life, in reference to the life of Christ, which was to be given for the life of the world; but as this life is in the blood, and as the blood is the grand principle of vitality, the blood is therefore to be poured out upon the altar to make atonement for the life of the souls of men¹⁷. This act gave the blood of Christ its inconceivable value. When it was shed on the cross, the sinless God-man gave His life. The reason is because, 'It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sins' (Hebrews 10:4)¹⁸ In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews. 9:22)

According to Robert Thieme, in the Old Testament shadow of worship, the blood of animals was used to represent redemption that men will receive through the saving work of Christ on the cross (Hebrew 9: 18 – 22)¹⁹. The ultimate purpose of Christ's sacrifice is expiation for the lives of mankind. Jesus Christ offered Himself on the cross as a sacrifice to remove the

¹⁵ Robert B. Thieme Jr., *The Blood of Christ*, 5th Edition (Houston Texas: R.B. Thieme Jr. Bible Ministries, 1989), pp. 7 - 8

¹⁶ The Life Application Study Bible, New Living Translation (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996), p.228

¹⁷ Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible, Lev 17 – 22, A New Translation with Introduction and commentary*, (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 2000), pp.1469 - 1479

¹⁸ Scofield Reference Notes, <http://sco.biblecommenter.com/leviticus/17.htm> [Accessed 5th August, 2011]

¹⁹ Robert B. Thieme, Jr. *Slave Market of Sin*, 3rd Edition (Houston Texas: R.B. Thieme Jr. Bible Ministries, 1994), Appendix B

guilt of our sins. It is by expiation that propitiation, reconciliation and ransom takes place²⁰. In this regard Hebrews 4: 16, states, ‘Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need’. It is the blood that makes us holy in order to appear before the presence of God in purity and with boldness to worship.

The Altar

An altar is a structure used in worship as a place for presenting sacrifices to God. The Hebrew word that is most frequently used in the Old Testament for altar is ‘*Mizbeach*’. It is formed from the verb for ‘slaughter’ and literally means ‘a slaughter place or a place of sacrifice’²¹ the Greek word ‘*Thusiasterion*’²² which is also commonly used in the New Testament also means the same. Altars were used primarily as places of sacrifice, especially animal sacrifice²³. Beyond this function, altars were also places that represented God's presence where the worshipper interacted with God.

The New International Dictionary of the Bible: Pictorial Edition mentioned that Moses’ Altar of burning incense in the Tabernacle (Exodus 30: 1 – 4) was located before the veil that separated the ‘Holy Place’ from the ‘Most Holy Place’, midway between the walls (Exodus 30: 6; 40: 5). Because of its special location, it was referred to as ‘the altar before the Lord’ (Leviticus 16: 12)²⁴. John Saliba, argued that in Christianity, the altar is a symbol of Jesus’ sacrificial death and the shedding of His blood for the salvation of mankind. He further stated that, by the Middle Ages (5th to 15th century), the Christian altar had become a richly decorated

²⁰ R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p. 181

²¹ The New International Dictionary of the Bible, Pictorial Edition, J.D. Douglass and Merrill C. Tenney, (eds.), p.36

²² *Altar*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altar> [Accessed 11th August, 2011]

²³ Joel F. Drinkard, Jr., *Altar*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

²⁴ The New International Dictionary of the Bible, Pictorial Edition, J.D. Douglass and Merrill C. Tenney, (eds.), p.37

throne on which lay the consecrated host (bread and wine or the Holy Communion) for the purpose of worship. The altar in this view became the focal point of unity, reverence, prayer, and worship²⁵.

C. Development of the theology of worship for today in the light of Leviticus 17: 11

The word theology came from two Greek words, *theos* (God) and *logos* meaning word, speech, expression, discourse and etc. According to Stone and Duke, theology is the reflection on God. It is through this reflection that we better know and understand God, as well as how we should relate to Him (God). This comes as a result of our hunger for God and the knowledge of God. Theological reflection gets us deeper into the things we confess. Through theology one is able to learn about God, His nature, His will, and how they apply to mankind. They further stated that theology is typically expanded to embrace the totality of things having to do with religious life. This includes God, His word (Scripture) and everything associated with faith, Church and ministry²⁶.

Apart from God being the central point for theological reflection, one cannot also do theology without the Scripture. This fact is clearly noted in Joshua 1: 8, ‘Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful’. In addition to the statement in Joshua, 2 Timothy 2: 16 – 17, also provided the argument, ‘All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work’.

²⁵ Saliba, John A. *Altar*, Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

²⁶ Stone, W. Howard and Duke, O. James, *How to Think Theologically*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p.3

The scripture in this regard becomes the guiding principle for doing Christian theologies. In support of this, the German theologian Gerhard Ebeing stated that the collection of the writings which Christians call the Holy Bible is an integral element in the life of the church, and Christian theology as well. The text of the Bible is the means through which a believer seeks to hear a message from God²⁷.

Since theology cannot be done in a vacuum, Pobee argued that, ‘Every theology is contextual, therefore, there is no neutral theology’²⁸. Like every understanding, theological reflection begins by necessity of where we stand²⁹. We set from where we are, continuing along the path of faith consciously seeking greater understanding³⁰.

For the purpose of this paper, the context for the development of the theology of worship is the statement ‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have assigned it to you for making expiation for your lives upon the altar; it is the blood, as life that effect expiation’ (Leviticus 17: 11) In this context, the significance of the elements of worship (God, man, blood and altar) as noted previously, would be considered in the light of the New Testament theology of the true worship as stated by Jesus Christ, Liturgy, Hymns, scripture reading and interpretation, the partaking of the Holy Communion, and the individual involvement. In area of individual involvement, some of the things to be considered would be how one can live a lifestyle of worship and how to deal with sin when it occurs in a believer’s life.

²⁷ Stone, W. Howard and Duke, O. James, *How to Think Theologically*, p.44

²⁸ J.S. Pobee, *Theology, Contextual*, in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, (Geneva: WCC., 1991), p.985

²⁹ Stone, W. Howard and Duke, O. James, *How to Think Theologically*, p.38

³⁰ Stone, W. Howard and Duke, O. James, *How to Think Theologically*, pp.40 - 41

Worship should not be restricted to a particular place or time

Jesus made a very contrasting statement between the Old Testament styles of worship which was rigid adherence to calendars and places in His encounter with the Samaritan woman. This was very evident in the following statement,

‘Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem’. Jesus declared, ‘Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth’. (John 4: 20 – 24)

In view of the above statement, it would be very difficult for one to discuss or develop the theology of worship without making reference to it. This statement brought out a clear picture of how the New Testament style of worship is supposed to be.

Worship in the Bible appears in varied forms and types. Times and places are among the major factors. Worship, especially of the corporate type, normally takes place according to some sort of schedule and/or calendar. There were times and seasons established in the Old Testament for worship, even though God is present with His people at anytime. The sharpened awareness of His divine presence may result from intensive exercises of worship during special times and at special places. These occasions and places were also the contexts for religious education and the development and enjoyment of fellowship among the worshipers. In the Old Testament, there

was the divine command that ‘Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God,’ and ‘Three times in the year you shall hold a festival for me’ (Exodus 23:17,14).

The New Testament Christians have received a rich heritage of worship from Judaism, but the new dynamics of their experience with Christ brought about major changes. The festivals of Passover and Pentecost were retained but in different forms. The Lord's Supper, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus are all closely related to the Passover celebration (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:17, 26 - 28).

Worship in the Biblical context is multifaceted and complex. Unlike in the Old Testament, the New Testament Christians have moved away from rigid adherence to calendars and places, although they are still important in Christian practice. The most basic pattern is found in the promise of Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:20, ‘for where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there among them.’ The heart of Christian worship is the power of Christ's presence in a gathered community of disciples (John 14:12-14; Acts 2:43-47; 4:9-12, 32-37; 1 Corinthians 5:3-4; Revelation 2:1). The presence of Christ in the New Testament style of worship is especially manifest in the breaking of the bread at the Lord's Supper (Luke 24:28-32, 35). In spite of this, the presence is not limited to the Lord's Supper and may occur wherever and whenever ‘two or three people are gathered’ in His name. This also in other words means that the true worship can only come from those who have been sanctified by the blood of the lamb (Christ Jesus) and for that matter born of the spirit (John 3: 6). The regenerated spirit of the believer can therefore worship the Father (the Spirit Being).

In this regard, worship in contemporary times can take place anywhere so far as the purposed for the gathering is in the name of Jesus Christ and also to please Him. This however

should not lead to worshipping in the odd hours of the day. To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven (Eccl 3: 1)

Worship must have a Liturgy

Having agreed with the fact that worship can take place whenever and wherever believers are gathered in the name of Jesus; this however, does not mean that worship should be disorderly. In order to establish worship in orderly manner, God told Moses, how the priests should conduct or lead worship in the Old Testament and this became the norm wherever and whenever the children of Israel met to worship God. This orderliness of God in things related to worship was also manifested when He instructed Moses to build Him a Tabernacle. He was exact and specific on what Moses should do ((Exodus 25-40). God also gave instructions on how sacrifices and the service in the Tabernacle should be handled. This order of service is what is called in contemporary times 'Liturgy'.

The word Liturgy is derived from the Greek word, '*leitourgia*' which originally means a public duty, a service to the state undertaken by a citizen. Christian's use of the word 'liturgy' means the public official service of the Church, which corresponds to the official service of the Temple in the Old Law³¹. It is in other words a body of rites prescribed for formal public worship. Although the term is sometimes applied to Jewish worship, it is especially associated with the prayers and ceremonies used in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist.³²

According to Charles Price, the liturgy normally consists of two parts. The first, the 'service of the word', consists of Scripture readings, a sermon, and prayers. The second part of the service, the 'service of the Upper Room', consists typically of an offering of bread and wine

³¹ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09306a.htm> [Accessed 11th August, 2011]

³² '*Liturgy*', Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

together with the congregation's monetary gifts, the central Eucharistic prayer (a prayer of consecration), the distribution of the consecrated elements to worshipers; and a final blessing and dismissal. This particular part of the service has its roots in the ancient traditional table prayers said at Jewish meals³³.

Due to the orderly character of God, He established order in people's relation to Him especially in the area of worship in the Old Testament. Likewise, worship in contemporary times especially corporate worship should be done in an orderly manner. Apostle Paul made this known to the Corinthian Church in the statement, 'For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints'... 'Let all things be done decently and in order' (1Corinthian 14: 33, 40). For this and other reasons, in developing the theology of worship for today, the development of a liturgy cannot be left out. This is therefore to establish the fact that worship must be done in a well defined order.

Worship must involve hymns and songs of adoration

In developing a theology of worship for today, hymns are also one of the essential things to consider. It is one of the means to invoke the presence of God in the midst of His people (2 Chronicles 5: 13 – 15). The Psalmist states that the Lord Inhabits in the praises of Israel (Psalm 22: 3). The Hebrew word used for 'praises' in this context is '*Tahillah*' which means hymn.

The word *hymn* was derived from the Greek word '*hymnos*' which means a song of praise. It is a lyric poem, reverently and devotionally conceived, which is designed to be sung and which expresses the worshipper's attitude toward God³⁴. They are songs that express a congregation's praise of God's greatness and majesty. It usually includes a call to the

³³ Price, Charles P. '*Eucharist*', Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

³⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn> [Accessed 17th August, 2011]

congregation to join in praise (Psalm 33:1-3), a list of reasons to praise God (Psalm 33:4-19), and a concluding call to praise or statement of trust (Psalm 33:20-22)³⁵. It is noted that the song book of ancient Israel as well as the early church, the book of Psalms is filled with exclamations of praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what he has done³⁶.

Though there are several scenes and Bible passages where the Israelites sang and praised God, the connection between the blood on the altar for expiation for lives as stated in Leviticus 17: 11 and the use of hymns in congregational worship is clearly noted in 2 Chronicles 29:22 - 23; 27-29. The following is what the passage states,

‘So they killed the bullocks, and *the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar*: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering *before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them....* ‘And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the *song of the LORD* began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. And the entire congregation worshipped, and *the singers sang*, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped’.

Linking this to the New Testament, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn at the end of the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) which established the doctrine of the partaking of the Holy Communion. Most Bible students think they sang part of Psalms 115-118, hymns known as the

³⁵ J. William Thompson, *hymn*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

³⁶ Jack Reese, Worship Essays #1, <http://bible.ovc.edu/young/resources/worship1-1.htm> [Accessed 17th August, 2011]

'*Hallel*', which traditionally were sung after supper on the night of Passover³⁷. This was also manifested in the early church wherever they met for worship both at the personal and congregational level (Acts 2: 42; 46 – 47, Acts 16: 25). In the Epistles, Apostle Paul mentioned the use of hymns in both Romans 15: 9, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3: 16.

In reference to the above mentioned Scripture verses, the singing of hymns and songs of adoration has an important role to play in contemporary worship as it was in both the Old and New Testament. The singing of hymns to the Lord can be both in private and congregational worship. Having said this, it should be noted that this act should be done in reverence and in a total commitment to God. God is not just looking for songs but rather songs that are sang as a result of love for Him and a heart that is totally commitment to Him.

Worship should contain Scripture reading and interpretation

In the history of the church, the divine character of Scripture has been the great presupposition for the whole of Christian preaching and theology. Scripture is the record of God speaking and revealing Himself to His people. The Bible was written for 'instruction' and 'encouragement' (Romans 15:4), to lead to saving faith (2 Timothy 3:15), to guide people toward godliness (2 Timothy 3:16b), and to equip believers for good works (2 Timothy 3:17). The purpose of Scripture is to place men and women in a right standing before God and to enable believers to seek God's glory in all of life's activities and efforts. It is above all a book of redemptive history.

In the Old Testament system of worship, the priests were not only there for offering sacrifices on the altar but also for the purpose of instructing God's covenanted people His word so that they may know the will and the purposes of God concerning them (Deuteronomy 31:9-

³⁷ J. William Thompson, *hymn*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

12)³⁸. This practice went on even till the time of Jesus Christ. In the gospel of Luke, it is recorded that Jesus Christ did attend to the reading of Scripture in the synagogue as His custom was (Luke 2: 42 – 47; 4: 16 – 17)

The early church also did the same as the custom was. According to the Acts of the Apostles, ‘they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer’ (Acts 2:42). 1Timothy 4: 13, also attests to the role of Scripture in worship when it stated, ‘until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching’.

In the light of the above arguments, the reading and teaching of the word of God ‘Scripture’ in worship is very essential. The reason is because the text of the Bible is the means through which a believer seeks to hear a message from God³⁹. It is also a means to access life. This was noted when Jesus said, ‘...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life’ (John 6: 63). It also helps the believer (worshiper) to keep away from sin (Psalm 119: 101, 1Timothy 4: 15 - 16). In developing the theology of worship, Scripture reading and teaching must become one of the essential ingredients.

Worship should include the partaking of the Holy Communion

God mentioned in Leviticus 17: 11 that He has assigned the blood upon the altar for making expiation for the life of mankind and this became the norm through which one can access life. However, the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross came to fulfill the prior instituted ritual of animal sacrifice on the altar for expiation for life. This Old Testament ritual was therefore replaced with the sacrament of the Holy Communion.

³⁸ R. Laird Harris, *Priest*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

³⁹ Stone, W. Howard and Duke, O. James, *How to Think Theologically*, p.44

In Jesus' meeting with the disciples in the Upper Room to commemorate the Passover feast which was a shadow of His death on the cross for the redemption of mankind and expiation for sin. He instituted the 'Lord's Supper' (Luke 22: 7 -20), this subsequently became part of the worship service of the early Church and was called 'breaking of bread' (Acts 2: 42, 46)

Communion is Paul's term used in describing the nature of the Lord's Supper. Paul used the Greek term '*koinonia*' to express the basic meaning of the Christian faith, a sharing in the life and death of Christ which radically creates a relationship of Christ and the believer and of the believers with one another in a partnership or unity⁴⁰. It is a memorial celebrated by the early church to signify Jesus' sacrificial death for the sins of mankind as the paschal Lamb of atonement.

In like manner, animal sacrifices were designed to communicate the doctrine of salvation to the Jews of the Old Testament and to provide a means of worship by which they could express their love and relationship with God. The death of Christ on the cross fulfilled this Old Testament ritual of animal sacrifice which could not take away sin completely (Hebrews 10: 4) and the doctrine of the 'Holy Communion' which was then called 'Passover feast' was established to create the awareness in believers on the blood of Christ Jesus that was shed for the salvation of mankind. In view of this, the partaking of the Holy Communion became not only the time of worship but also an opportunity to check one's knowledge about God and spiritual growth.⁴¹ According to Rob Harbison, the Lord's Supper is a wonderful channel for worship. In its observation, we remember the Lord's death and seek communion with Him⁴².

⁴⁰ *Communion*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

⁴¹ Robert B. Thieme Jr., *The Blood of Christ*, 5th Edition (Houston Texas: R.B. Thieme Jr. Bible Ministries 1989), pp. 35 - 38

⁴² Rob Harbison, *worshipping God*, Textbook - 525B3, (Lecture notes, Master of Divinity programme, Trinity Graduate School of Apologetics and Theology, India, 2008), p. 33

Traditionally, Jesus' command to His disciples at the Last Supper to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Him constitutes the institution of the Eucharist. This specific command occurs in two New Testament accounts of the Last Supper, Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. Christ's life blood was poured out unto death in order to expiate sin and give life to His people. The importance of Christ's sacrificial death is set forth repeatedly throughout history the institution of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:28).

According to Charles Price, the development of the 'Eucharistic doctrine', centers on two ideas: presence and sacrifice. That is the presence of Jesus Christ with believers and the remembrance of His sacrificial death on the cross to atone for the sins of men and in return, we might have fellowship with God⁴³. With this in mind, the worshiper observes the Holy Communion with reverence and appreciation of the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ on the cross for expiation of sin.

Worship must be a life style

As stated previously on the reverence that should be given to the Holy Communion whenever people come to partake of it, it should also be noted that worship and reverence to God is a lifestyle. Christians are prone to think that worship is something that can only occur in a meeting house among Christians. But worship is a broader concept than that. Those acts of worship believers participate in during the assembly of the saints are really an overflow of a worshipping life which is a life of sacrifice and service to God. This was clearly noted in Apostle Paul's statement, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your

⁴³ Price, Charles P. 'Eucharist', Microsoft® Student 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service' (Romans 12:1). The word 'service' used in this verse in the Greek is '*latreia*' which means 'worship'

Worship is not just a specific set of actions in which we publicly engage in but also a series of actions that overflow from a dedicated heart, and a worshipping life (James 5:13; Philippians 4:6-7; Hebrews 13:15). That is not to say that one can just be content to worship God by the way he or she lives, without worshipping with the saints. That very attitude does not show the worshipping heart that one claimed to have.

Worship as a lifestyle involves every part and action of one's life. For this reason, Apostle Paul wrote, 'whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God'. (1Corinthians 10:31) Suzanne Pillans, noted in her book titled 'Dare to enter His presence' that we need to worship God with the offering of ourselves to God as well as our everyday lives. She further stated that worship to God is not only what we pour out of ourselves to His throne, but the very lives we live out for others upon the earth⁴⁴.

In offering one's life as a sacrifice to God, God expects a broken spirit. The Psalmist wrote, 'You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.' (Psalm 51: 16 – 17) Jesus Christ, on the other hand also said that loving God with all our heart, with all our understanding (soul) and with all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices'. (Mark 12: 33). In the above Scripture verses, it is clearly shown that burnt offerings and sacrifices are not what God is looking for from His worshippers but rather a loving broken spirit and a total commitment of our

⁴⁴ Suzanne Pillans, '*Dare to enter His presence*', (London: New Wine Press, 2003), p. 113

lives to God as a living sacrifice. Worship should therefore not be seen as only a congregational thing but rather all that one's life is about.

D. Dealing with Sin

The presence of the sin nature in the soul man guarantees that the believer will have a problem with personal sin for the rest of his life on earth. This personal sin causes a deep disturbance in the believer's personal relationship with the Lord. Sin is one of the things that separate man from God. Any violation of standard of God is defined as sin. Deuteronomy 6:24-25 is a statement of this principle from the perspective that a person who keeps the law is righteous. The implication is that the person who does not keep the law is not righteous, that is, sinful. 1 John 1: 8 states that 'If we say we have not sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' For this reason, it is very important for believers to deal with sin whenever they fall into it. The following are some of the ways sin can be dealt with in order to reestablish fellowship with God.

Acknowledgement of what Jesus Christ has done

Having acknowledged the fact of the presence of the old sin nature in man can cause believers to sin, many believers are always under the guilt and condemnation of sin and as a result some feel reluctant to have fellowship with God. In developing the theology of worship for today, it would be wise to include what Scripture has said about what one should do when sin occurs in his or her life and what Jesus Christ has done for believers in this area. In this regard, John wrote, '.....And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world'. (1 John 2:1-2) Having this kind of knowledge would encourage believers to be ready to

make amends with God by coming before Him with a broken heart to confess their sins and ask for forgiveness.

Confession of sin

The acknowledgement of what Jesus Christ has done for mankind in the area of sin is not enough when one wants to deal with sin. The believer must move from just acknowledgement to remorse for sin and confession of sin in order to reestablish fellowship with God in our daily lives.

The word ‘confession’ in the New Testament is taken from the Greek word ‘*homologeō*’ which means to cite, to name, to acknowledge, to classify in the same manner, to agree with, to say the same thing ⁴⁵. It is an acknowledgement of God's rulership in one's life and agreement with His judgment. It is also a method of dealing with the disharmony caused by sins between God and man. According to Johnson Philips, ‘confession is strictly a grace provision in which God makes a promise and carries out the function of cleansing’⁴⁶.

Confession is a significant element in the worship of God in both Old and New Testaments. Numerous Old Testament passages stress the importance of confession of sin within the experience of worship. Leviticus speaks of ritual acts involving admission of sin, the sin offering (Leviticus 5:5-6:7) and the scapegoat that represents the removal of sin (Leviticus 16:20-22). Furthermore, confession can be the act of an individual on behalf a group of people (Nehemiah 1:6; Daniel 9:20) or the collective response of the worshiping congregation (Leviticus 26: 40 – 42, Ezra 10:1; Nehemiah 9:2-3). Frequently, it is presented as the individual

⁴⁵ The New International Dictionary of the Bible, Pictorial Edition, J.D. Douglass and Merrill C. Tenney, (eds.), p.230

⁴⁶ Johnson Philips, *Sin: A Doctrinal Perspective*, Textbook - 123A, (Lecture notes, Master of Divinity, Trinity Graduate School of Apologetics and Theology, India, 2008), p. 16

acknowledgment of sin by the penitent sinner and confessing it (Psalm 32:5; Proverbs 28:13; Psalm 40 and 51)⁴⁷.

Likewise, in the New Testament confession of sin is an aspect of both individual and corporate worship. Christians are reminded that God faithfully forgives the sins of those who confess them (1 John 1:9). James admonished his readers not only to pray for one another but also to confess their sins to one another (James 5: 16, 1John 5:16), probably within the context of congregational worship or one on one relationship with matured believers who can help the person through proper Biblical counseling and encouragement.

God requires not only confession of sin but also repentance. That is turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God. In a more general sense, repentance means a change of mind or a feeling of remorse or regret for past conduct. True repentance is a 'godly sorrow' for sin, an act of turning around and going in the opposite direction⁴⁸. This type of repentance leads to a fundamental change in a person's relationship to God. This would therefore cause the believer to come boldly to the throne of grace to worship (Hebrews 4: 16)

Conclusion

God is the central object for worship and cannot worship Himself and one of His reasons for creating man is to worship Him. This relationship of worship went on until man disobeyed God. The advent of sin, led to separation of man from God which in other words is also known as 'spiritual death'.

⁴⁷ Naymond Keathley, *Confession*, Holman Bible Dictionary for Window version 1.0g, (Parsons Technology, 1994)

⁴⁸ The New International Dictionary of the Bible, Pictorial Edition, J.D. Douglass and Merrill C. Tenney, (eds.), p. 853

In order to deal with this sinful situation and to reestablish fellowship with man, God instituted blood sacrifice on the altar which became the means through which man could access life. The altar also on the other hand became the meeting place between the holy God and man. The blood in this context symbolizes 'life'. God made this provision for restoration through the offering of blood on the altar and also to serve as the expiation for the life of the one that offered it. However, this blood sacrifices could not totally take away sin. In the New Testament, the blood of Jesus Christ shed on the cross came to fulfill the prior instituted blood sacrifices. This therefore became the means through which the sinful man can access life and have fellowship with God.

In the development of the theology of worship for today, it has been argued that worship of God can only be done by only those who are sanctified by the blood of Jesus Christ and it is no longer restricted to specific places and times as it was in the Old Testament. In spite of this non restricted schedule and places for worship in the New Testament, worship must be in an orderly manner and must be in conformity with Scripture. Since Scripture is one of the means through which God speaks to His people, Scripture also has a wonderful role to play in worship.

The blood on the other hand has been symbolically replaced with the partaking of Holy Communion by worshipers. This is therefore to serve as a remembrance for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus' blood that was shed for the justification and salvation of mankind.

Finally, worship should not only be seen as the above mentioned public acts but also a personal lifestyle offered to God as a living sacrifice. This however does make man immune to sin so far as we still have the sinful nature dwelling in us. Should it be that one falls into sin; the person should quickly confess it with a broken heart in order to reestablish fellowship with God. True worship and oneness with God begin as we confess our sin and accept Christ as the only

One who can redeem us from sin and help us approach God. The ultimate purpose of God for creating man is worship. This therefore should be the priority of anyone that has been sanctified by the blood of the Lamb.

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