

**SACRIFICE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ASANTE
TRADITION:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

Dennis Ampofo- Nimako (BTh)

KNUST

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Kwame Nkrumah

University of Science and Technology in partial Fulfillment of the

Requirement for the Degree of

Master of Philosophy (Religious Studies)

Faculty of Social Sciences

College of Art and Social Sciences

Department of Religious Studies

AUGUST 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that apart from the sources specially acknowledged in this thesis, this work constitutes the results of my research in the subject and it has not been submitted in part or whole to any Seminary or College for the award of any academic degree.

Dennis Ampofo-Nimako (Rev)



31-08-2012

Student's Name

Signature

Date

KNUST

20137987

PG456041

Student's No.


Examination No.

Certified by:
Very Rev. Frimpong Wiafe
Supervisor


Signature

15/04/2013
Date

Certified by:
Rev. J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaotor
Head of Department


Signature

15/04/13
Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am because you are, together we are a people. *Wonsom! Wonsom!! ene nnipa, na baako wen aduro a egu, saa nso na tikro nko agyina.* The idioms in the mother tongue (Asante) above can be summed up as “people matter.” The success and completion of this project can be attributed to the support and encouragement of many in both tangible and intangible terms.

I am grateful to the Religious Department of KNUST for the platform they offered for not only me but especially I to enhance my studies thus far. The lecturers deserve special mention for their constructive and sometimes what students saw as “over elaborate” scrutiny of the text as well as capable fellow students whose critique and the dread of it compels one to go the extra mile.

Samuel Atta Badu, the Librarian at the Ghana Baptist University College, School of Theology, and Ministry and Pas. Justice Asumin Dabo cannot go unmentioned for putting at my disposal every resourceful book without reservation and helping type the script respectively.

Mrs Evelyn Adjei, Pas Steve Mustapha, Mrs Elizabeth Amankwa thanks for the type-setting of the work as well as printing portions of this work costlessly.

My parish colleagues who relieved me of a lot of duties thus creating the space to think and concentrate on the task set before me deserve tons of gratitude. Rev. Faibil, Deacons

Okyere, Duah, Owusu, Alex I say ayekoo!

To my family, Dada, Mama, Danny, Sarfo, Vivian, Capito and General, I do not know how much to thank you for the sacrifices as I embarked on this Sacrifice project to know my own people well.

I am profoundly grateful to *Nananom* both in the palaces I visited for interviews and in the shrines for first hand information. It was insightful and exciting how you all opened up to me some at very short notice. *Me da mo ase paa, Nyankopon ntre moahyee mu.*
(Thanks. God enlarge your coast, amen)



Abstract

Sacrifice is the ingredient that creates a lasting bridge in the deity-human intercourse, the sum total of what is given as a means of thanksgiving, devotion and a propitiation leading to reconciliation and the aversion of disaster. What is offered or sacrificed defines the extent to which one reveres and venerates the spirit-being(s) to whom one pays obeisance.

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The understanding of sacrifice is the main focus of this study. This is approached first and foremost by undertaking a scrutiny of sacrifice from the Old Testament perspective where documents and records on sacrifice abound. In addition sacrifice as pertains in the Akan cosmology is analyzed paving the way for comparison.

The study is basically in three parts. The first section concerns Sacrifice and Offering in the Old Testament. The bulk of the analysis here focused mainly on Leviticus Chapters 1-7. It looks at how a worshipper identifies with a sacrificial victim, meticulously chosen – one without defect or blemish and presented to YHWH as a substitute of the offerer. The offering of the victim either by slaughter and burning or release kicks starts an invisible bargain that works to endear the presenter before YHWH, who in turn is placated to work on behalf of His subjects.

The second section explores the views of the Asante on Sacrifice, the sacred places, the choice of animals and other objects for Sacrifice and the role Sacrifice plays in their

religious life. To the Asante there seem to be no dichotomy between religious life and the mundane. The two are grossly interwoven to the extent that they are said to be incurably religious if not 'superstitious'. From the cradle to the grave sacrifice permeates all aspects of life to ensure an unbroken rapport between the visible and invisible worlds and to be certain that life is adequately guided and guarded by *Nananom*, *abosom* and *Onyankopon*.

The third section fosters a side by side analysis of the two worldviews and religio-cultural settings that reveals similarities and differences worth noting to help inform Christian dialogue now and in the future as new religious opportunities emerge.



This exercise is dedicated to my trio mentors

Rev. Dr. Robert Owusu Agyarko

Very Rev. Frimpong Wiafe

Rev. Samuel Kyei Prempeh

Me da mo ase, mo nkruanhye ne yekodru honhom

Thanks for your encouragement to keep on keeping on.

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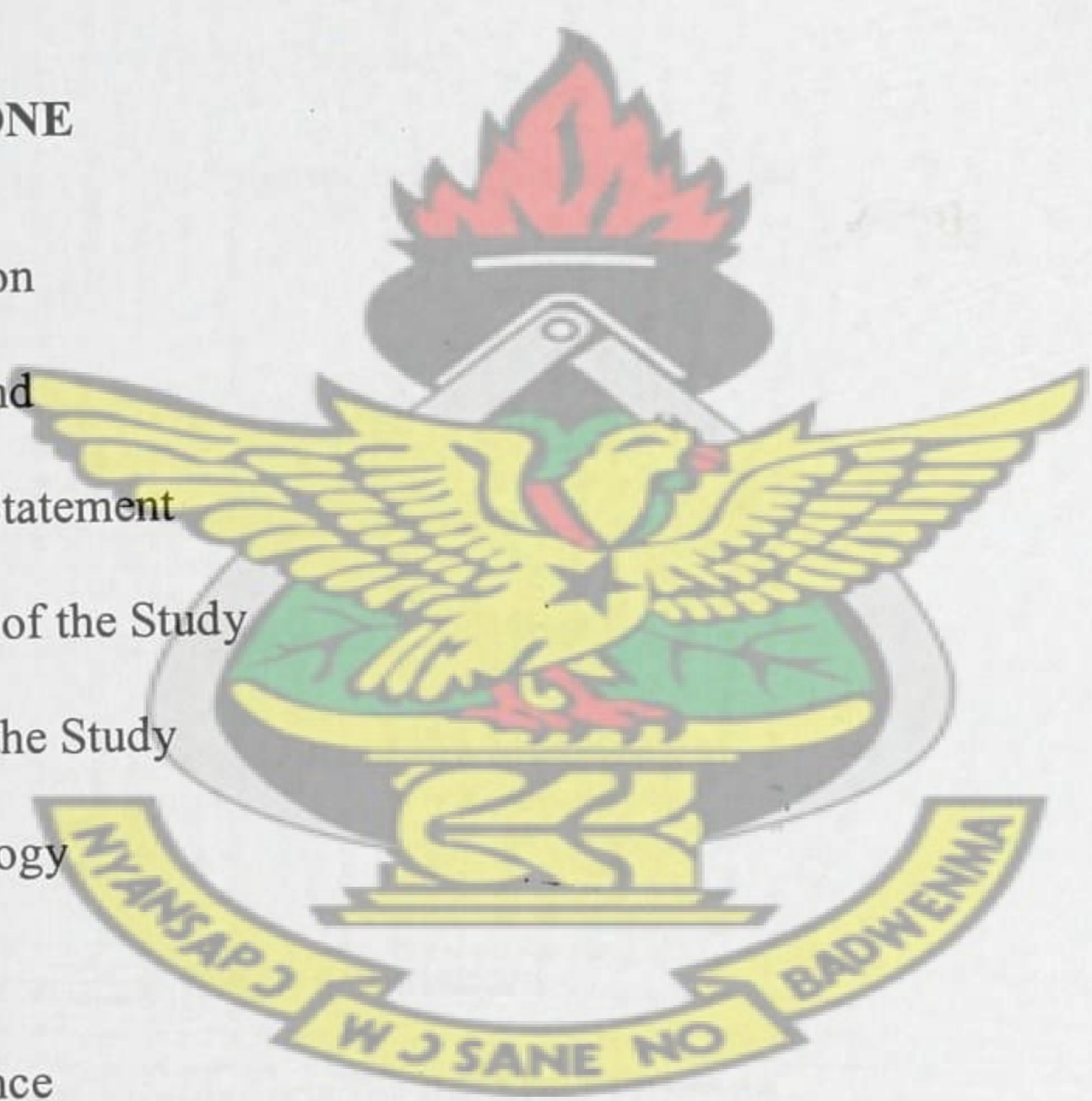
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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

Daly (1978: v) writes “The idea and practice of sacrifice is important in many religions around the world. In most religions where it is found, the practice of sacrifice stands at the center of a dynamic process in which the divine and the human come into contact.”

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The dynamic art of Worship is replete with sacrifice in its entirety – from the soul of the persons involved to the substances being offered. The Old Testament and Akan Traditions are two worldviews that place emphasis on rituals most of which are intertwined with sacrifices. The African, it has been said, is intrinsically religious (Idowu, 1973), no wonder most of their activities are preceded by sacrifices or offerings. For instance most traditional Africans would not as much as taste a morsel of food, sip a cup of drink without first dropping a portion to the floor nor reap the annual harvest without an official sacrifice of the first fruit to the deity to whom they pay allegiance.

This assertion is generally true of all human races and cultures. Humankind is created for worship and their souls find no rest until they come into fellowship with an object deserving of their devotion. The validity and authenticity of the substance notwithstanding require moments of meditation, obeisance, and devotion spiced with invaluable sacrifices which give adherents inner fulfillment. Although religion expressed

through sacrifice is a general human experience, the people of the Old Testament and Asante have practices that are worth parallel investigation.

1.1 Background

In my growing days, it was a common observation to see the organization of sacrifices on numerous and diverse occasions in the house, in the clans by the "*Abusuapanin*" (family head) and in the Asante Kingdom at large. By the expansion of my horizon by age and travel, it was later established to be a phenomenon akin to almost all cultures and the Akan in particular.

With my association with Christianity, and a careful acquaintance with the Old Testament practices in later years, it was striking, the importance attached to sacrifices in the ancient liturgy of the Hebrews. The influence of these dual traditions on me, gives me the impetus to carefully examine the ingredients in these sacrificial cultures.

1.2 Statement of Problem

With the emergence and interference of Christian missionaries on the Asante landscape, most, if not all traditional and religious practices of the latter were deemed fetish, heretic and abominable. In spite of these derogatory labels and remarks, the beliefs, practices, rituals and sacrifices of the Asante Traditional Religion seem to gain much more patronage. On a cursory look at the Old Testament, one could see some practices and acts of sacrifices that seem closer in appearance to that of the Asante religious rites. Do these

practices and sacrifices seemingly look alike only in appearance or in essence as well? It could be recalled with alarm during my Bachelor studies in the Ghana Baptist University College when one Theological student stated on his evaluation sheet of African Traditional Religion course that the study of its practice was “demonic” and not worthy of study in a Seminary. It is also obvious that the *modus operandi* of some Charismatic and African Independent Churches (AICs) during “counseling and direction” (*akwan kyere*) sessions border on rituals and sacrifices that seem to have semblances to sacrificial practices in both the Old Testament and Akan Traditional Religion. Events in both the Old Testament and Akan Tradition are preceded, interwoven, or completed with sacrifice. Is it not worth finding out the underlying reason for the importance attached to sacrifice in both traditions? How can the ideas and beliefs in sacrifice enrich Asante Christianity and to what extent does sacrifice impact the supernatural to intervene in the affairs of the community and individuals?

1.3 Objectives

- To investigate the recipients (YHWH and Onyame) of both sacrifices.
- To seek for redemptive analogies in both traditions to foster enculturation and to improve cross-cultural communication skills.
- To explore the religious ideas and values of Asante sacrificial systems and their implication for understanding Biblical concepts of sacrifice.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This work covered emphasis and analysis of sacrifice based mainly within the Pentateuch, with Leviticus 1-7 as the focal point of reference. Limited places within the Old Testament that concern sacrifice and are of relevance to this work were used. On the other hand the sacrificial practices of the Akan – specifically Asante in Ashanti Region of Ghana were closely looked at to help in a comparative study.

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1.5 Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study was mainly comparative analysis. An attempt was made to compare Asante ritual sacrifices to that of the Hebrews as a means to establish the notion that some of the concepts and ideas behind Hebrew sacrifices are not strange to the Asante of Ghana. This helped in identifying redemptive analogies and typologies upon which to make a smooth transition from the known to the unknown. The known for instance reveals that the traditional Asante is conversant with the use of animal sacrifice for appeasement in the event of “*mmusuo*” (abomination) on the land, while the unknown pertains to the sacrifice of the Christ, *the Lamb of God* (a symbolic animal) as a propitiation for the Adamic “*mmusuo*”. A proper analysis and understanding of sacrifice could serve as a basis to adequately elucidate the gospel and especially the blood sacrifice of the Messiah, *the Lamb of God* into a comprehensible whole.

It is often claimed by certain ethnic groupings in West Africa to have migrated or originated from Israel; this comparative work however, does not suggest in any way a direct cultural lineage but only a scrutiny of the theology, religion and cultural settings of the two worldviews. In offering a balance, Dickson (1974:23-32) pointed out that such Hebrewism of West Africa was out of place since there were more dissimilarities in the language structures than similarities. He affirmed however that at a religio-cultural level, there were similarities but these bore different significance. The significance, he added, was far more important than surface similitude to which the comparative method could be used.

Both primary and secondary sources were used in the buildup of this work. Writings of people in this area of study served as valuable deposit that was invested into this project. This included considerable literature review from books, journals, articles, magazines, recent thesis or dissertations in this field. Inputs from "one on one" interviews as well as focus group interviews were carried out. Due to proximity advantage to Akan communities there was participant observation of some of their ceremonies where sacrifices were inevitable. Gadgets like recorders, cameras, books and other storage devices for recording live voices were used to capture a festival scene(s), record facts et cetera. Furthermore, five (5) shrines were visited for phenomenological observation of sacrificial proceedings, and five (5) chiefs interviewed for sacrificial details.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The completion of this work will offer a cross- cultural tool to aid in effective ministry of the gospel to the Akan. In addition, it will help offer meaning to the practice of sacrifice which is an inevitable process in human – deity relationship. It will also refresh the knowledge and reiterate to the contemporary society the integral role of sacrifice in the Biblical times and in Asante which will help enrich Christian faith and Asante religious dialogue. Furthermore, this piece will add up to the literature base of libraries in the country and serve as a resource for gospel-culture interaction.

1.7 Problems Envisaged

In so far as practices in the Old Testament are many millennia away -- culturally, geographically and religiously divergent from the Akan milieu, parallelism and etymological challenges cannot be gainsaid. It is in this light that Isaacs (1964:87-98) questions the theoretical basis for comparing African thought and life with that of the Old Testament, since Africa and ancient Judah and Israel do not belong to the same cultural area. Once more comparison of concepts may create a limitation; a particular action may have had a different meaning in Judah and Israel than it may have among Asante traditions.

The difficulty of getting unadulterated information on the essence of some of the sacrificial practices in present day cannot be overemphasized due to the influence of 'Abrahamic' religions on our culture. In a system where even some of our traditional priests claim allegiance to some Christian denominations, one cannot eliminate the reality

of some respondents and sources narrating accounts with their other religious lenses on. In other words syncretism or split level allegiance hindered a phenomenological, unbiased presentation of facts and data to a fair extent.

1.8 Literature Review

Tull (1982) asserts that

Modern men and women have difficulty seeing the significance of sacrifices as it was practiced in Bible times. Today we are so far away from the Old Testament sacrificial system and from sacrificial ideas ... that quite frequently we not only are puzzled by sacrificial rites and meanings, but may also be repulsed by them.... For two reasons, however, we must consider the meanings of sacrifice: Sacrificial rites and ideas are indelibly fixed in the primary documents of the Judeo-Christian faith - those which comprise the Bible and there are spiritual values in these rites and ideas, values without which our faith would be generally impoverished.

There is (are) meaning(s) or reason(s) for the observance of various worship rituals in every culture. There is or might be a reason for every act of faith which must be comprehended by adherents to highlight the values within these rites and ideas. In our globalized and superficial world of hurry the meticulous nature of ritual sacrifices are overlooked by many and the few that patronize it shroud it in shuddering mystery, there however, need to be a wholistic engagement with the practices and beliefs that serve as the cradle of our faith.

Young (1975:22) posits that the practice of sacrifices seems to have been universal in the ancient world. Although animal sacrifice was common in most ancient societies, sacrifice did not simply mean slaughter of animals. "It covered all forms of offering to the gods,

like the first fruits of the harvest, wine, honey, flour and so on, though slain animals were usually regarded as richer and better offerings... (since) meat was a luxury item in those days."

Ukpong (1983:200) adds that animal sacrifice though regarded by some to be the most valuable, does not out-weigh other forms of sacrifices offered with a reverent obedience. Sacrifice is seen primarily as "a means of establishing contact with the invisible world, and when offered to God, it means entry into the divine presence." Religious adherents offer sacrifices for various reasons but basically all are aimed at drawing the attention of the deity to intervene in the affairs of humankind.

Sacrifice is an integral component of worship. According to Mbiti (1970:178), if worship is defined as "man's act or acts of turning to God, then sacrifice constitutes one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples." People everywhere are religiously inclined although at varying degrees and they approach God through the making of sacrifices and offerings. Mbiti (1975:57) again adds that by this practice, material or physical things are given to God and other spiritual beings. This act marks the point where the visible and the invisible worlds meet and show man's intentions to project himself into the invisible world." By sacrifice humankind seek not only to project themselves into the invisible but desire to draw the transcendent into communion and fellowship.

Due to the notion that animal sacrifice is worthwhile than other sacrifices there seem to be a distinction between sacrifice and offering being raised in some circles of thinking.

Even though the words 'sacrifice' and 'offering' are used synonymously by many theologians, Mbiti (1970:178), sees them differently. He asserts that the word,

"Sacrifices", is used where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, or part of it, to God, supernatural beings, spirits, or the departed. "Offerings", is used to refer to all the other cases in which animals are not killed, and in which items like foodstuffs, utensils etc. are used for presenting to God or other recipients.

For Mbiti (1975:59), the main difference between sacrifice and offering is the use of blood. "Sacrifices involved the shedding of the blood of human beings, animals, or birds; offerings do not involve blood, but concern the giving of all other things." Mbiti's distinction for me is over stretching the argument in that, items with or without blood when given in worship is an offer, it is the act that is offering. The term 'Offering' is rather the root practice but since the offering given works on behalf of or takes the place of another, be it the 'offerer' or the community, it is deemed as sacrifice because instead of the original victim suffering it is the animal or item that takes its place that is why it is described sacrificed. What is brought to the deity be it an animal with blood or other bloodless items is an offering for sacrifice or sacrifice for offering, the dichotomy therefore seem belaboured. An offering can be sacrificed to the deity by slaughter, burning, waving, giving etc.

Van Baal (1976:161) reiterates that these terms are closely related in an article entitled "Offering, Sacrifice and Gift". "I call an offering any act of presenting something to a supernatural being, a sacrifice an offering accompanied by the ritual killing of the object of the offering." He finds that the general characteristic that sacrifice and offering have in common is that of being gifts.

According to Young (1975:22), several types of sacrifices were offered on various occasions, the most common being *votive offering*. "A city, community or individual made a kind of bargain with the gods.... They would vow to a particular god or goddess some gift or sacrifice, to be provided in the future if the god solved their present problem or satisfied their immediate greed."

Closely related to the votive offering was the *petitionary sacrifice*, which was also common in the ancient societies. "A man petitions the gods on the basis of how many sacrifices he has offered or will offer in return for the answer to his prayers. The gods are obligated to help men by their acceptance of these sacrifices." (Ibid)

Many people in the ancient world understood sacrifice as a means of buying off the anger of a god. They offered sacrifices of placation or propitiation because the gods sometimes got angry, and their anger had to be appeased.

Sacrifices, however, were not only meant for appeasement and propitiation but for appreciation and thanksgiving as well. During the great city festival held in honour of the gods, animals were slaughtered in sacrifice and were shared among the worshippers in a large communion feast with the gods. All feasted together, and the worshippers praised the greatness of the god, and thanked him for his protection and support. These were sacrifices of worship and thanksgiving. The offering of the first fruits at harvest time also expressed thanksgiving and appreciation to the gods for their provision of the harvest.

There were other sacrifices in which the worshippers did not share. The "holocaust" was burnt whole or, sometimes buried in the ground. Occasionally, these sacrifices were "offered to evil spirits, to ghost, to the spirits of the dead and the object of the offering

was to keep them away, to avert their influence which caused disease, old age, death, and other evils.”(ibid)

Though there was no single concept of sacrifice in the ancient world, and no single understanding of what it accomplished, Yerkes (1952: 2) in his book Sacrifices in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism, attempts to summarize the major characteristics of sacrifices in ancient societies.

The concept of sacrifice in the ancient world was generally seen as wholly religious and used solely as a cultic act. Sacrifices were as large as possible and always offered to a god, thus indicating a recognition of superiority. They were always performed with joy and came to be identified with thanksgiving. The emphasis was on giving and action. ‘Deprivation, while a necessary fact as with all giving, was never a constituent factor of the sacrifice.’ In animal sacrifices, the death of the animal was wholly incidental and never with any inherent or significant meaning. The death of the sacrificial victim was a fact but never a factor in sacrifice. ‘The animal had to be killed for the purpose, as any animal has to be killed before it can be eaten.

In examining the concept of sacrifice in the religions of the ancient world which formed the milieu of early Judaism, one might be tempted to assume *a priori* that Hebrew and pagan sacrifices had an identical meaning. However, Stott (1986: 135), believes that while “they may well have had a common origin in God’s revelation to our earliest ancestors, ... the Israelites (despite their backslidings) preserved the substance of God’s original purpose, whereas pagan(sic) sacrifices were degenerate corruptions of it.” Stott’s comments are couched in Western flavor and must be placed in a proper cultural perspective. In as much as I concede that there may be other intermediaries in the thought pattern of Africans in their mode of worship it is in consonance with their mode of communication where a superior, especially a king will not be addressed directly but

through a linguist which connotes no corruption. If sacrifice implies communication—communication with God or with other spirit-beings who intercede for human beings next to God as posited by Tuore and Konate, then it can only be done as pertains in the worldview and culture of the ‘pagans.’

YHWH, the covenant God, not only made possible the provision of sacrificial worship in the Old Testament, but was also the recipient of it. The concept of sacrifice is a revelation given by God to all cultures, and in spite of the seeming deviation by other cultures the Supreme Being, the creator of all things is the one that sacrifices are ultimately directed to, be it in the Old and New Testaments or in other cultures like the Asante.

Taylor (1959:49) notes that “Sacrifice as an idea and an institution is deeply rooted in Old Testament thought and has profoundly influenced the development of Christian beliefs and practices.” An understanding of the meaning of sacrifice in the Old Testament is essential to the interpretation of the concepts of sacrifice in the New Testament. Stott (1986:134) notes that sacrificial vocabulary and idiom are widely used in New Testament teaching to interpret Christ’s death, “but the background of thought is still the Old Testament sacrificial system.” Taylor (1959:49), writing in Jesus and His Sacrifice, says, terms like ‘blood’, ‘covenant’, ‘atonement’, and ‘expiation’, which appear repeatedly in the New Testament and in later doctrinal discussions, are all related to sacrificial conceptions, and need to be examined against the background of Old Testament religion and worship.”

However, there are difficulties in attempting to interpret the meaning of sacrifice in the Old Testament. Culpepper observes that:

Despite the abundance of the references to sacrifices and the minuteness of the description of the ritual of sacrifice ... the Old Testament itself makes no attempt to give a rationale for sacrifice. Thus an attempt to explain what sacrifice meant to the Hebrews involves the necessity of drawing inferences from what are at best only hints in the Old Testament material. (1966:24)

In furtherance to the above, Ringgren (1962:13) posits that though sacrifice formed the main act of worship among the Jews details pertaining to it are not available. There is no theory, theological interpretation or justification for the practice of sacrifices. Reason being that the priestly editors of the *Pentateuch* felt the sacrifices were self-evident and needed no explanations. In addition Adu- Gyamfi (2007:105) hints that due to the various exposures of the Jews under pre and post-exilic conditions the sacrificial practice did not remain constant through the centuries. For instance, during Eli's priesthood, the priest took their portion of the sacrificial meat while it was still cooking. Later on the partition was to be received in a raw state as stipulated by the Law. As cited in (Lev. 7:34) the priest were to be given the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering whereas in (Deut 18:3), the priest was entitled to the shoulder, the two cheeks and the stomach.

Despite the difficulties involved, an attempt must be made to recover the meaning of the Old Testament concepts of sacrifice because these concepts form the foundation for an understanding of the concepts of sacrifice in the New Testament and is likely to offer leads into sacrifices of African religions.

YHWH, the covenant God, not only made possible the provision of sacrificial worship in the Old Testament, but he was also the recipient of Old Testament sacrifices.

In proving the graciousness of God, Ringgren (1962:39) was emphatic that "Whatever the origin of these sacrifices may be, in the Old Testament laws they are not regarded primarily as a meritorious performance by man. Rather they are a God-given institution to provide for man's right relationship to God, and for his redemption from the evil forces that threaten his normal existence. Thus, sacrifice is seen as a divine institution to permit man to approach God and to enjoy fellowship with Him."

Hogan (1963:57), in the book Christ's Redemptive Sacrifice, writes that "Sacrifice can be described as a rite in which man gives something to God as an earnest of his internal dedication of himself to God. . . . Sacrifice originates in man's knowledge of God's dominion over him, subjection to God, and . . . proffering of a gift to God."

To Brunner (1947:476), sacrifice means direct surrender to God because "all life belongs to God, and is to be consecrated to him directly . . . [and] personally." After specifying that sacrifice is a "public act", Hogan (1963:58) concludes that "Sacrifice is a public acknowledgement of God's supremacy and at the same time a public testimony to man's sorrow for sin, a petition to God for pardon, and an act of satisfaction."

While sacrifices in the Old Testament are without contention believed to be directed to YHWH, there are divergent views as to the recipient(s) of sacrifices in African Religion

and for that matter the Asante. Der, (1980:172) contends that many anthropologists believe that "in sacrifices, whether communal or personal, it is the ancestors who are invoked, and who are called upon to accept the sacrificial offering" but emphasizes the point that the Supreme Being, not the ancestors, was the ultimate receiver of sacrifice, he continues:

Sacrifices were also made on some occasions to other lower spirits, for example, the spirit of the earth... and beings who were thought to inhabit the bushes, hills and trees.... But it must be emphasized that sacrifices to the ancestors or to any of these spirits beings were at the same time sacrifice to God since the latter were invoked as the ultimate receiver of the sacrifices.(ibid)

In African Religions, sacrifices are made doubtlessly to the Supreme Being (*Onyankopon*). Since the divinities and ancestral spirits are regarded as agents of the Supreme Being, it may be assumed that all sacrifices are ultimately made to God through His appointed agents. An observation of the pantheon of the spirits reveals African graduation from lesser spirits to the ultimate Supreme Being, *Onyankopon*, to whom all prayer rituals are directed. Mbiti (1970:190) believes that unless it is otherwise indicated, God is the recipient of sacrifices and offerings.

Although many different objects are used in the Old Testament rites of sacrifice, generally, these may be classified, as Yerkes has done, into two main categories: animal rites and vegetable rites. The sacrifices of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:3-7) illustrate these two kinds of sacrifices, although the rejection of Cain's sacrifice, (that of the fruits of the soil), must not be seen as repudiation by God, of all sacrifices which do not include sacrificial animal. The rejection of Cain's sacrifice according to some school of thought

was because he brought his objects from the cursed ground and also had no blood to atone for their fallen nature. It must however be overlooked in that the sheep presented by Abel were fattened by the vegetation which incidentally grew and had their nourishment from the "cursed ground". Such proponents lose sight of the condition of the heart and the preparation that both lads spent on their offerings. While Abel was meticulous, careful and selective of what he was to offer, Cain was reckless and chose at random, not mindful of the dignity of the recipient. Sacrifices must be well thought of, gifts without blemish, with or without blood.

While Yerkes (1969:74), designate two categories of objects of sacrifice in the Old Testament, Parrinder singles out three basic types of objects in African religious sacrifices—vegetable, alcohol and animal. The power of alcohol shows power beyond water ("*adee a yede nsa ye no yede nsuo ye a enye yie*" – to wit water cannot be a replacement for alcohol). Alcohol is thought to be surpassed only by blood.

Sacrifices in the Old Testament were offered on various occasions and for a variety of reasons. Stott (1986:135) notes that sacrifices "were associated, for example, with penitence and with celebration, with national need, covenant renewal, family festivity, and personal consecration." Many elements have been noted in the Old Testament sacrificial system, however, the three most common ideas connected with the theory and meaning of Old Testament sacrifice, in general, are sacrifice: (1) as a gift to God, or (2) as a means or expression of communion with God, or (3) as a means of atonement.

Although I will use this classification (Gift Sacrifices, Communion Sacrifices, and Atonement Sacrifices) in discussing Old Testament concepts of sacrifice, these will be regarded as “aspects of sacrifice rather than absolutely distinct rites”. As von Rad (1962:65) suggests, “Whenever sacrifice was offered, several motives were involved.” In the words of McKenzie (1965:54) the practice of sacrifice in the Old Testament has been described as “too complicated for reduction to a single radical element.”

Gray (1925:2) contends that “If any idea is basic or central in ancient Israel’s practice of sacrifice as presented in the Old Testament, it is the *gift* idea. The idea of gift was consciously associated with sacrifice and gifts, whether sacrifices or not, could be and ought to be made by man to God.”

A gift is the transference of something from one person to another; it involves deprivation on the one side, gain on the other. The devotion of man to God expressed by his readiness to part with what he valued at God’s command is the perfectly clear moral of the story of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac. It has already been noted that gift sacrifices were offered in the ancient world; however, the motives for gift sacrifices offered in the Old Testament seemed different from those offered in ancient gentile traditions. Young (1975:32) says, “For pagans (sic), the gifts were often bribes; to the Jews they were offerings of praise and thanksgiving.” Moments of sacrifice became opportunities to acknowledge God’s goodness, and sacrifices were regarded as ordained by God to remind his people of his mercy and salvation. If YHWH is *Onyankopon* and they are one and the same, then if

YHWH cannot be bribed, can *Onyankopon* be bribed as asserted by Young? Gift sacrifices or gift offerings are conceived of as a gift to a deity. Tylor maintained that “sacrifice was in its origin a gift offered to supernatural beings either to secure favour or to avert their wrath.

Eichrodt (1975:141) believes that the most primitive conception of presenting gift offering was for the purpose of providing nourishment and strength to the deity. In addition Oesterley (1937:19) thinks that sacrificial gifts were offered because of the belief that “supernatural beings have human appetites and wants. If these wants were not supplied by their worshippers, all sort of evil might befall them. This conception is upheld by many cultures even in recent times, for accounts of deities venting their anger on their subjects to the extent of inflicting calamities and even death on the custodians for neglect and starvation abound.

Oesterley believes that wine libations were also offered to give nourishment and vigor to YHWH (Numbers 28:7-8) *“The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb. Pour out the drink offering to the Lord at the sanctuary. Prepare the second lamb at twilight, along with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering that you prepare in the morning. This is an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord.”*

In support of his view, he cites 1 Samuel 7:5, 6. In these verses, it says that Samuel and all the people of Israel ‘drew water and poured it out before the LORD.’ “The primary

motive seems to have been to encourage YHWH to respond favorably to Samuel's petition that the Israelites might be freed from the Philistines.

However, the purpose of providing a source of strength and refreshment for the deity may also be evident."(Ibid). Pious worshippers in the Old Testament also presented gift offerings to God as an expression of faithfulness and loyalty. Another very ancient class of sacrifices in which the idea of gifts is presented was that of tribute paid regularly to the deity. The most prominent example of this was the first fruits offerings. The motive may have been to obtain God's blessings on all of one's property or to acknowledge that God was the real owner of all things; however, both the gift and homage ideas of sacrifice tend to dominate.

Kidner (1982:132) says the grains offering (Leviticus 2; 6:14-18) was seen as a gift offered to or shared with God. This offering combined "the honour due to God as guest and the tribute due to him as overlord."

1.9 Organization of the Study

The thesis has been structured into six chapters along the divisions below:

Chapter One deals with the general introductory information about the thesis.

Chapter Two delves into the details of Old Testament principles of sacrifice.

Chapter Three situates the work in the book of Leviticus and deals with atonement in Lev. 4:13-21

Chapter Four discusses the Akan concept of sacrifices based on field interviews and views from scholars.

Chapter Five will be effective comparison between the two chosen worldviews – the Old Testament and Akan practices.

Chapter Six concludes and suggests recommendations for careful study, evaluation and the way forward.



CHAPTER TWO

SACRIFICIAL RITUALS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Introduction

Sacrifice is a nearly universal phenomenon in religion, and similarities between sacrificial rituals are inevitable because of the limited possibilities of symbolism. Sacrifice and offering are activities and concepts endemic to the human race. The first act of worship outside the Garden of Eden was the presentation of offerings and sacrifices to YHWH (Gen. 4:1-4a). Noah's first act of worship after the great flood subsided was the presentation of "burnt offering on the altar" (Gen. 8:20). Before his call Abram was acquainted with sacrifice and offering. Soon after obeying the LORD's command he built an altar at the oak of Moreh (Gen. 12:6) where the LORD had revealed Himself. He built another altar between Bethel and Ai and called upon the name of YHWH (Gen. 12:8; 13:3f). Three months after the Israelites came out of Egypt, God called them together at Sinai, where He outlined the *Torah*, which included instructions for His worship by the presentation of sacrifices and offerings (Ex. 19- Num. 10:10).

For God's new people, as well as for the ancestors of Israel and primeval humankind, sacrifice and offering restored broken relationships between God and humankind and between men and women. The close relationship between this healing function of sacrifice and offering and the violent expulsion and the separation of human beings from their creator (Gen. 3:24) is emphasized by the writer's close placement of Gen. 3:22-24 and 4:1-4a. Radical rejection is demonstrated in the former that is 3:22-24, while some

kind of reconciliation and gesture of goodwill through sacrifice and offering is portrayed in 4:1-4a, indicating a major function and meaning of sacrifice for the author of Genesis. Sacrifice and offering are as old as religion; their essence must pre-occupy us much more than their origins. As Thompson (1963:249) has noted "It is with the rites of Israel as they appear in the Old Testament, rather than with their origin, or the original meaning of their terms that the study of Old Testament sacrifice must chiefly deal".

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2.1. Terminology

The terms for sacrifices and offerings are numerous. One term for an offering in general is the Hebrew word *qorban* ("thing brought", Lev. 2:1). The general term for the offering is *ælâ* from *ala*, "go up". Related terms are *kalil*, whole burnt offering, and *tamid*, daily burnt offering, while *selem* or *zebah selamim* represent the general term for the peace offering. Subcategories of the peace offering include thank offering, *zebah hattoda*, the freewill offering, *zebah nedaba*; the votive offering, *zebah neder*; the heave offering, *teruma* and the wave offering, *tenupa*.

The general term for a sacrifice (animal offering) is *zebah* and that of sin offering is *hatta*, while that of guilt offering is *asam*. *Minha* is the meal offering and *nesek* is the drink offering. The fire offering or offering by fire is *isseh*, and the ordination or consecration offering is *millu'im*.

Several words are used to describe the presentation of the various offerings. The ones found most often are the hiphil of *bo*, "bring", the hiphil of *nagas* "present, bring near"

the hiphil of *qarab*, “bring near”, *asa*; “make” the hiphil of *kum* “prepare”, the hiphil of *ala*, (cause to go up, take up”); the hiphil of *qatar*, “send up in vapour”; *zabah*, *sahat*, *tabah*, “slaughter” (*zabah* is used only for sacrificial slaying).

In addition to words listed above, several other key words appear in the text dealing with sacrifice and offering. Among the most important terms are *kipper* (piel of *kapar*) “make atonement”; *rasa*, “please, be pleasing”; and *re(a)h niho(a)h*, pleasing odor. In Leviticus the verb *kipper* often describes the purpose and result of sacrifices and offerings. In fact, all the major sacrifices (burnt, cereal, *peace*, sin, guilt) are specifically said to atone (*kipper*, Ex. 29 33). Rendtorff (1967:250) has pointed out although there is a close relationship between the blood rites of sacrifice and *kipper*, “atonement,” it is true that the same can be posited, although less clearly, for other aspects and materials of the sacrificial ritual: laying on of hands, meal, oil, and incense. All parts of the sacrificial ritual had to go according to the prescribed ritual. If not, the Lord was not pleased and the priest could not “make atonement” (Lev. 1:4; 5:13)

The meaning of *kipper* itself has been a subject of debate. It may mean simply “to cover,” “to wipe away”, “to ransom by substitution” (cf. the Hebrew noun *koper*). The last meaning seems to suit the biblical context best. The LXX used *hilaskomai* (sometimes *exilaskomai*), which translates as “atone,” “expiate,” or “propitiate.” This issue of expiation and propitiation and as to which word best suit the act of atonement is an unending one which the scope of this work does not permit me to engage. Whatever meaning is understood, it appears that *the entire ritual* had to be pleasing to YHWH

before atonement could occur. All of it together resulted in *kipper* for the offer by the priest and forgiveness (*salah*) by YHWH.

All kinds of offerings were recognized as a “sweet/pleasant aroma” to the Lord (Lev.1:9,13,17; 2:2,9,12; 3:5,16; 4:31; cf Gen.8:21; etc). The exact significance of this term is uncertain, but it seems to refer to the ritual surrounding the sacrifice as well as the material offered. Daly (1978:70) asserts the form, the content, and the attitude of the person involved in the sacrificial process were satisfactory when the offering was “a pleasing odor” to the Lord. The idea of feeding YHWH is not an aspect of Israel’s worship. The term rather courts the idea of approval and acceptance par excellence before God.

The words *rason* and *rasa*, “please, be pleasing, be acceptable,” are often found in the sacrificial sections of Leviticus and elsewhere (eg. Lev. 1:4, “and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.”) According to Rendtorff, (1967: 250) a sacrifice not cared for properly is *lo yeraseh*, “it shall not be acceptable” (eg. Lev.7:18; 19:7). The sacrificial process as a whole was to be pleasing and acceptable to God (cf. Lev. 22; Ps. 19:14).

The term *isseh*, “by fire,” was rich in meaning to the sacrificial cult. It could represent God’s presence, but it could also represent divine chastisement, a theophany, or simply the approved means of sanctifying or purifying something to be given to the LORD.

The word *samak* signifies the laying on of hands by the offerer. Daly (1978:100), however contends, nowhere in the Old Testament is the significance or meaning explained. The act seems to symbolize some kind of relationship established between the offerer and his sacrifice. The act seems to be a necessary prelude to the Lord's acceptance of the offerer and his sacrifice (Lev 1:4). The victim is then accepted to make atonement for the sacrificer. The laying on of hands meant the transfer of the sin of the offerer on to the sacrificial animals. But it must be noted that the scapegoat (Lev 16:20-22) is not a sacrificial animal.

2.2. Nature, Origin, Background.

Nature.

As noted under section 1.8, page 12, the descriptive and prescriptive texts dealing with sacrifice and offering in the Old Testament nowhere define the meaning of the rituals involved. The authors seem to assume that the various readers for which the different texts were originally intended knew why they were to do a certain thing a certain way. It is doubtful that the meaning of Old Testament sacrifice and offering can ever be fully recovered, or even if the earliest people involved in the cult grasped it. The esoteric instructions of the cult were intended only for the priests. But the broad meaning of some of those instructions does seem accessible.

Various theories have been propounded to try to deal with some of the key issues. The first considers the sacrifice to be the food of the god(s) (Judg 6:19-24; Gen 8:20; etc.).

But the Old Testament seems rather to mock at such an idea (Ps 50:13), and such passages as Gen 8:20 stress the fact that God accepts the offering as pleasing to Him.

The second theory was championed by Smith (1927). He held that through the participation of the god and his worshipers, communion was established between/among those sacrificing. His proof from the Old Testament is not convincing. He was swayed by the anthropological theories of his day which held that "when a totemic group ate the totem object after which it was named, communion was established with the totem god". Smith applied this frame-work to the Old Testament. Thompson (1963:6), however, agreed that the communion theory (fellowship theory) does not sufficiently treat the solemnity involved in the early sacrifices of the Israelites and non-Israelites found in the Old Testament.

The third concept of sacrifice delineates it as a gift to the deity (Gray (1971)). Undoubtedly this is a part of the total meaning of sacrifice in Israel, but only a part. Some of the terms indicate that what was brought was a gift (e.g. *qorban*, *mattan*). But Rowley (1967:112 f) was certainly correct when he asserted that no single theory accounts for or defines the total meaning and significance of Old Testament sacrifice and offering. Sacrifice is the expression made through a solemn act that every-thing belongs to God and the recognition of this right at the same time as the expression of a desire to approach the deity, this desire being the very base for religious feeling. Thereby understood, the act of sacrifice is the religious act par excellence.

Other attempts to describe or define the significance or meaning of sacrifice and offering have become more specific and nuanced. Hubert and Mauss (1964) listed seven definitions of sacrifice including those just noted. They also mentioned other ideas, such as Frazer's emphasis on magic and rejuvenation. To Hubert and Mauss sacrifice is "a religious act, which, through the consecration of a victim, modifies the condition of the moral person who accomplishes it or that of certain objects with which he is concerned";

Green's conclusion regarding the ritual of sacrifice as cited by Hubert and Mauss (1964) is helpful. "The many theories with their supporting arguments and counterarguments serve to bring out all too clearly the complexities of the ritual called sacrifice. This rite is a universal phenomenon, and, as such, rightly belongs to many departments of research. In order to uncover the inner significance of such a fundamental institution, all these rituals should be studied anthropologically, historically, sociologically and, if possible, psychologically, in terms of an attitude toward life and a conception of reality"

With respect to sacrifice and offering in the Old Testament, a canonical perspective, along with theological study, will be vital in order to determine all of the above among the ancient Israelites. Rowley (1967:113), using a sound marshaling of the Old Testament evidence, showed that in Israel the Old Testament teaches that "the ritual was believed to be effective only when it was the organ of the spirit." But as Thompson noted (1963:7-10), the sacrificial system in Israel operated for both the nation and the individual within the covenant. It received its effectiveness before God and His worshipers by virtue of that fact. God gave the covenant, which required sacrifices, but He also demanded that they be presented with clean hands and a pure heart; if the first could not be given, the second would suffice.

Origin.

In Daly's (1978:12) view, the canonical record of sacrifice and offering in the Old Testament follows the chronological framework implied or stated in the texts themselves. This textual framework was challenged by critical scholarship in the 19th century and even before. As a result the "critical history" of the cult is often set over against its canonical presentation. It is standard practice to treat the priestly (P) materials first, since these materials came last. Priestly additions and editorial activity to the earlier materials are further reason that "P" is treated first.

Various perspectives arose, however, to question seriously some of the original critical presuppositions used to evaluate the Old Testament materials. More recently, efforts have been directed at identifying the "kind of historiography" that the ancient writers employed in order to give us the theological history that is evident. Also, efforts to appreciate the literary genre of these materials within a canonical context have emphasized the theological-literary aspect of these texts. Some brief comments on these issues are offered below.

1. Early Theories.

Thompson (1963: 13) noted one of Wellhausen's major arguments for a reconstruction of the religion of Israel: "an evolution in Hebrew sacrifice, similar to that in the centralization of the place of worship, the growth of the festal calendar, the distinction of the priests and Levites, and the increase in the endowment of the clergy was to be traced. The association of sacrifice with a sense of sin was a late development. It followed that

sin offering, guilt offering and the Day of Atonement had no existence before the exile, and the Priestly Code, which gave evidence of a more sombre view, was to be dated late. Many recent lines of enquiry suggest the need of a re-examination of this position."

Central to scholars like Wellhausen, Smith (Religion of the Semites, 1927:76) was the claim that Israel's early worship involved joyous sacrificial celebrations and meals; there was no place for atoning sacrifices (Smith, 1927:360) except as incorporated in the sacrificial meal of communion with the deity. No atoning significance was attributed to the death of a sacrificial victim. Rather, the rise of expiatory rites was located at the fall of the united monarchy and later. At that time a sense of sin pressed itself upon the nation and the individual. This somewhat simplistic view of the origin and development of sacrifice and offering takes too lightly the fact that a universal sense of guilt and fear is depicted in Gen 1-11. That human situation suggests that universal sacrifice is the result of a universal sense of sin. Thompson, (1963:7); (Gen 3; 4; 6; 8; 12). According to Gen 3 the fact of sin is also a fact of the human condition.

2. Contemporary Critical Theories.

More recent critical scrutiny of some of the evolutionary types of theories about the origins of sacrifice has helped us grasp the need to take seriously the canonical "theory of sacrifice."

According to the Old Testament canon, sacrifice permeates all eras of humankind with the activity and attitude of solemn sacrifice before God.

Thompson (1963:12), proposed and sustained the thesis "that the fellowship theory of Wellhausen (1957) and Smith (1972:245) does not allow sufficiently for the element of solemnity [and hence a sense of guilt and sin] in the early cult. According to Rendtorff (1967:260) the sacrificial practices and theory of the pre-exilic era that are imbedded in those materials again and again show a remarkable agreement with the ideas of sacrifice and offering found in the priestly texts "P". Leviticus 1-7 is the primary source for the study of P's sacrificial system. Chapters 1-5 give basic instructions about the type of sacrifices to be offered. This portion concentrates on the person who brings the offering or sacrifice. Chapter 6 outlines the priestly regulations while Chapter 7 gives an overview of all the instructions in 1-5.

This source (P) does not exhaust the discourse on the sacrificial system. Marx (2003:103) asserts that Leviticus 1-7, however, does not indicate the circumstances in which all the various sacrifices are to be offered, the few that are described are only partially sketched in their details. Notwithstanding the limitations pointed out, looking at Leviticus 1-7 in its larger context – the types of materials offered to YHWH, the verbs used to express the act of sacrificing, and the stereotypical formulas expressing the expected results of sacrifice provide some clues about the underlying theology of sacrifice. After a study of the terms in the "P" materials, Rendtorff concluded that it is not justifiable to consider these kinds of terms and concepts in the priestly document as late without careful scrutiny of all relevant materials.

For him many of the key sacrificial terms in "P" go back far into the pre-exilic era. That much of the material in "P" is ancient has caused some scholars to reevaluate the date of

"P" (Kaufmann, et al. 1972). That the canonical writers used later terminology to depict the ancient sacrifices in the legal sections of the Pentateuch is to be expected.

It is simply inadequate on the basis of our current knowledge of the ancient Near East to think of a straight-line evolutionary approach to the understanding of sacrifice and offering that rejects a plausible canonical picture of the development of the cult. It does not seem to be merely a literary construct from the 7th-4th century B.C. This is especially true after allowance is made for the leveling of nomenclature and for the types of literary genre involved.

The canonical development of sacrifice and offering appears to have a greater degree of viability now than ever before. At any rate, the literary genre of the Pentateuch, its historiography, its canonical framework, and above all its theological nature must be understood better before a thorough reconstruction of Israel's sacrificial cult can be achieved. As it stands now, the canonical picture of Israel's sacrificial cult is vital to understanding the Old Testament's ethical-religious message about God, creation, salvation, and His people.

Background.

Since the turn of the 20th century various parallels between the cult and ritual of the Old Testament and other areas in the ancient Near East have been pointed out. Some have proven to be inaccurate; others have illuminated, illustrated, and confirmed certain aspects of the Old Testament sacrificial cult; and some have hindered our understanding of the Old Testament itself.

The land of Mesopotamia was the home of ancient Babylon. Among others, Harrison (1969:47) cited Winckler (1909) who generated the Pan-Babylonian school, which held that most of Israel's religious ideas had stemmed from ancient Mesopotamian influences. But the true heart of Israel's sacrificial system was to foster spiritual worship, praise, thanksgiving, communion, and, above all, atonement for sin, and these things seemed to be missing in the Mesopotamian sacrificial cult.

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For Mckenzie (1974:45), not enough is known about the sacrificial ritual of Mesopotamia and Canaan to permit us to determine what is original and what is derived in Israelite sacrifice. The particular blood rites that are central to Israelite sacrifice are not paralleled in Mesopotamian religion. Magic, rather than the will of the deity, pervades the pagan cults. In the Creation Epic (Frankfort, et al 1973:216-234) the dependence of the gods upon food and upon humankind to feed them by sacrifices and offerings is pathetically evident. This mainstay of the Mesopotamian cult is entirely lacking in the Old Testament. The entrails of the sacrificed animals in Mesopotamia were used for oracular determinations. By withholding his libations and food, the sufferer in the Dialogue of Pessimism hoped to make his god feel his dependence upon him.

To Levine (1974: 132) the "myth and ritual" movement found significant parallels between the Old Testament and ancient Mesopotamian sources, particularly substitution, placation, and purification. But the meaning of these terms was necessarily different in Israel because the concepts of sin, human nature, and God's nature were not the same. These ancient polytheists had no sense of sin comparable to that found in the Old

Testament. Sin in Mesopotamia was such that it could be dealt with through exorcism by the priest (*asīpu*), who pronounced an incantation. Sin and impurity were conceived of in a physical way and were dealt with by rites of expulsion. The Akkadian terms *šulmanu* and *kuppuru*, which are equivalent to Hebrew *šēlamīm* and *kipper* respectively, do not have the same significance among the Babylonians that they have in Israel. *Sulmanu* is not employed in a sacrificial sense, and *kuppuru* is a special rite carried out by the Babylonian exorcist. Levine (1974: 132) noted that the Akkadian *kaparu* (*kuppuru*) seems to mean to remove by "rubbing".

In short, Israelite and Babylonian sacrifice and worship do have some helpful resemblances, but the differences are decisive for defining Israel's own concept of the process of atonement. Parallels that are less likely to be of help in explaining the meaning of Israelite sacrifice come from Hittite materials (Jer. 34:18-20; Ezek 16:3,45) and Amorite texts that describe a peace ritual consummated by slaying a donkey (in the Hittite materials a dog is divided for the ritual).

Yerkes (1952: 56) maintains parallels between Israelite sacrifice and sacrifice in the Hellenic world serve to show the fact of the universal need for humankind to sacrifice, for whatever reasons, to the gods. It is unlikely that these materials will offer any significant insight into the unique Old Testament conception of sacrifice.

The conclusion which McKenzie (1974:45) suggests when all the texts are viewed is that "the Israelite sacrificial ritual was not systematized and that several diverse symbolic

actions from diverse sources have been incorporated into the ritual. No uniform theory of sacrifice can be imposed upon the Israelite ritual."

2.3. Sacrifice in the Pre-Mosaic Era

A. Primeval Sacrificial Instances

The uniformity of the sacrificial terminology indicates that the terms probably mean the same thing within the Pentateuch, although historical periods greatly separated in the chronology of the Pentateuch are understood. Probably the earlier accounts in Genesis-Exodus were modernized on the basis of the Mosaic nomenclature. The occurrence of sacrifices in other places of the Pentateuch can be annotated only briefly here. Cain and Abel brought *minhâ* offerings — Cain's was a cereal offering and Abel's was an offering from the flock with its fat portions (Gen 4:1-16). Normal sacrificial terminology is used. Abel brought from the firstlings of the flock in accordance with later Mosaic stipulations (Ex 13:11-16). Noah offered up an *ælå*.

The exact meaning of the offering in this context is not clear; it seems to have been given for thanks. Though neither propitiation nor expiation is mentioned, in the context of the Pentateuch these aspects are probably implied. Assigning only one "meaning" for the *ælå* in this setting is inadequate. Clean animals and birds alone are employed by Noah as victims.

B. Patriarchal Examples of Sacrifice

Altars were an important part of patriarchal religion, and undoubtedly the patriarchs offered sacrifices, but little is found in the extant patriarchal narratives to inform us about their nature. The motives the patriarchs had in giving sacrifices are not indicated, but it should be noted that all the Semites sacrificed. The building of the altars and the sacrifices by the patriarchs imply that for the biblical writer sacrifice and offering was a common approach to God among Israel's ancestors.

Other references to sacrifice can only be listed here with little comment Rendtorff, (1967: 27-73; Thompson, (1963: 49-78). In some of these references sacrifice is only probable, since it is not specifically described: Abraham builds altars at Shechem (Gen. 12:6), Beth-el (Gen. 12:8; 13:4), and Hebron (Gen. 13:18); he is involved in a covenant ceremony (Gen. 15:8-12, animals used here correspond to that of Levitical animals); Ex 12:21-28 describes the Passover; Ex 32:6 records sacrifices made to the molten calf (burnt and peace offerings). Gen 22:1-14 records Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac as a burnt offering, but instead a ram without blemish was sacrificed (v. 13) to the Lord; Gen 46: 1, Jacob sacrificed to the God of Isaac; Ex 18:12 records Jethro's sacrifices to Israel's God; Num 23:1-6,13-17,27-30 record sacrifices by Balaam and Barak to God (burnt offerings).

The references in Deuteronomy stress the common terminology and understanding of sacrifice found in the rest of the Pentateuch. Chapter 12 emphasizes the importance of sacrificing in the right place. Ex 24:3-8 is especially important because of the deposition

of the blood of the covenant that made the Mosaic laws of sacrifice and offering effective.

The specific procedures in Ex 24:3-8 are not prescribed in the Mosaic rituals, but peace and burnt offerings were presented (24:5). One half of the blood was thrown against the altar, while the other half was first stored in jars, while the covenant was read; then the blood was cast (*zaraq*) upon the people. Henceforth all the sacrificial instructions were binding upon the priesthood, the Levites, and the people.

2.4 Sacrifice and Offering During the Mosaic Era.

The instructions for sacrifice and offering in the Old Testament are found in the Pentateuch, mainly in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. Other important passages appear in Genesis and Deuteronomy.

A. Materials.

Some general prohibitions are listed in Lev 3:16; 7:22-27. They forbid the fat or blood of any sacrificial animal to be eaten. Fat was always burned on the altar. Wild animals could not be offered to the Lord, and the animal or other item had to belong to the person offering it (Lev 1:2). Except for minor (but important) stated exceptions, the animals offered had to be perfect, without blemishes (*mûm*, Lev 22:17-25). 'The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: 'If any of you — either an Israelite or an alien living in Israel — presents a gift for a burnt offering

to the Lord, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the Lord to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. Do not offer to the Lord the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as an offering made to the Lord by fire. You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep that is deformed or stunted, but it will not be accepted in fulfillment of a vow. You must not offer to the Lord an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not do this in your own land, and you must not accept such animals from the hand of a foreigner and offer them as the food of your God. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and have defects.” (NIV)

According to Harrison (1969:409), acceptable animals were unblemished oxen, sheep, and goats, not under eight days old and not normally older than three years (Lev 22:26-30). Reference to ancient Israelite ritual taxonomy stipulates that only clean animals could be offered. Certain vegetable or grain items were used regularly, but animals were the most prominent aspect of Israel's sacrificial system.

Animal offerings were used exclusively in the *ælâ*, including occasionally birds. Specifically mentioned are lambs, cattle, rams and goats. Animals from the flock or herd are approved of in Num 15:3. The *minµâ* offering was a vegetable offering, but the chief

material used in the offering was flour, although the cereal offering of jealousy in Num 5:15 requires "flour of barley".

The material offered in the sin offering is graded according to the person who sacrifices: if the anointed priest sins, he offers a young bull (Lev. 4:3); for the ruler who sins, a male goat (Lev. 4:23), for the whole congregation (Lev. 4:14) the stipulation is the same as for the priest; for a common person, a female goat (Lev. 4:28), or a female lamb (Lev. 4:32), is required. For the poor an offering of flour, birds, or turtle doves was permitted (Lev 5:7, 11). For the whole congregation on the Day of Atonement, he-goats were required (Lev 16).

The guilt offering (*ašam*) normally prescribed a ram for its offering (*ayil*). Some purification ceremonies required a male lamb(s) as the guilt offering (Lev 14:10, 12; Num 6:12). The prescription of a female lamb or goat from the flock in Lev 5:6 appears to be oriented more to the sin offering, along with the concessions noted above. By and large the references in other parts of the Pentateuch and in the other canonical writings reflect and confirm this picture. But it appears that greater flexibility may have been possible in certain circumstances (e.g., 1 Sam. 6:14.)

B1. Sacrificial Ritual Stipulations.

Certain precise rules were promulgated by the Mosaic legislation in the Pentateuch (Lev. 1-7) that carefully and meticulously regulated sacrificial ritual. Nothing was left to caprice or arbitrariness. The rites of the *œlâ* and *zēba-šēlamîm* offerings included the following items (Rendtorff, 1967: 89-111):

- (1) The presentation of the animal
- (2) The offerer laid hands on the head of the animal
- (3) The slaughtering of the animal at the entrance to the tabernacle/temple (Lev 1:3-5a, 11a; 3:2a)
- (4) The sprinkling/scattering /pouring of the blood of the sacrifice on the side or base of the altar in the outer court. (Lev 1:5b, 11b; 3:2b)
- (5) Miscellaneous preparations taken with the animal (Lev. 1:8-13; 3:3b-5, 9-11)
- (6) The complete burning of the animal
- (7) If it is not a whole burnt offering the breast of the victim was given to the priest (Lev. 7:34), and the right thigh designated to the presiding priest (7:32-33)

As Rendtorff noted, the ritual procedures are the same for these two sacrifices up to step five (1967: 89). The offerer brings his offering to the door of the tent of meeting (1:3;

3:2), where he lays his hands upon its head. Thereby he identifies himself with the offering.

After ritual cleansing the *œlâ* was entirely burned upon the altar while in the *zebah-šeramîm* sacrifice only the fat and kidneys were burned upon the altar to God. Fat was holy unto the Lord (Lev 3:16). The flesh of the peace offering that was not burned was eaten by the offerer and the priests before the Lord (7:11-36). The flesh of the thank offering had to be eaten on the first day, while the flesh of the votive or freewill offering could still be eaten on the second day (7:11-18). The breast of the peace offering went to Aaron and his sons along with the right thigh as contribution offerings (7:31-33). The rest of the sacrificial animal was eaten by the offerer, his family, and his relatives. A cereal offering would accompany the peace offering; the priest who threw the blood around received a cake of leavened bread from each offering (7:11-14).

In the case of the sin offering, the ritual is more completely described in Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30. The steps involve:

- (1) The presentation of the sacrificial animal or other materials at the door of the tent of meeting (4:4, 14, 24, 29, 33), or small birds to the priest if the offerer is poor (Lev 5:1-14).
- (2) The laying of the offerer's hands on the sacrificial animal (4:4).
- (3) The slaying of the sacrificial animal (4:4).

(4) The performance of the blood rite (4:5), in which the priest presented some of the blood at the tent of meeting, dipped his finger in the blood, and sprinkled it seven times in front of the veil before the Lord. Some blood was put on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense in the tent of meeting. The remaining blood was poured at the base of the altar of burnt offering. This altar was located at the door of the tent of meeting.

(5) Removal of the fat (4:8).

(6) The burning of the fat.

(7) The disposition of the rest of the items.

B2. Ritual Stipulations for the Meal Offering

(1) Fine flour mixed with oil and spiced with incense (Lev. 2:1)

(2) A handful of the mixture of fine flour with oil and incense were burnt on the altar (Lev. 2:2)

(3) The rest of the offering was given to the priests (2; 3, 10a)

C. Occasions of Sacrifice.

The sacrifices described above were offered according to the calendar of offerings given in Num 28-29. But many special rites and circumstances (e.g., Lev 12; 14:1-32)

demanded the use of these sacrifices. The most important occasions calling for various sacrifices or offerings of some kind were:

(1) The daily sacrifice (Num 28:3-8; Ex 29:38-42), in which a male lamb and a cereal offering with oil added were offered daily, morning and evening. It appears that this procedure could vary somewhat (cf. 1 Kings 18:29; 2 Kings 3:20; Ezek 46:13; etc.).

(2) The sabbath sacrifice doubled the daily sacrificial materials (Num 28:9, found only here in the Pentateuch).

(3) The offerings of the new moon (Num 28:11-15), which called for an *ælâ* of two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs, and one goat, and a specified cereal offering with oil added for each bull, ram, and lamb respectively. Drink offerings were included for each bull, lamb, and ram. A male goat was offered also for a sin offering in addition to the continual daily *ælâ*.

The following occasions indicate the major events that called for sacrifices and offerings in a manner similar to items 1-3 above:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Pass-over) (Ex 12:1-27; Lev 23:5-8; Num 28:16-25),

The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) (Ex 23:16; Lev 23:15-21; Num 28:26-31),

The Feast of First Fruits (Lev 23:9-14; Num 28:26; Deut 26:5-10),

The New Year (trumpets) sacrifices (Lev 23:23-25; Num 29:1-6),

The Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29-34; 23:26-32; Num 29:7-11).

2.5. Kinds of Offerings or Sacrifices

A closer look at our Leviticus 1-7 gives a clearer presentation of how P classifies sacrifice. Each sacrifice has its own uniqueness and significance. The broader lines of division are Leviticus Chapters 1-5 and 6-7. Adu –Gyamfi (2007:107) elaborates that this portion records the instruction of YHWH to the people through Moses (Lev 1: 2a), and declares what the ordinary citizenry are to offer or sacrifice to YHWH as well as the share that must go to the LORD from each sacrifice. On the other hand Moses is given directives for the priest (Lev. 6:2). This second section is concerned with the remainder of the sacrifice after YHWH has received His share. These sacrifices can broadly be classified as Fire Offerings and Sin Offerings.

A. The Fire Offerings

Leviticus 1-3 outlines three types of sacrifices termed Fire offerings. These are the burnt offering which is wholly for YHWH after the removal of the skin (Leviticus 1), the cereal offering shared between YHWH and the priests (Leviticus 2), and the peace or fellowship offering to be partaken by YHWH, the priests and the offerer (Leviticus 3).

I. The Burnt Offering

The *ælâ*, or burnt offering, is described in Lev 1; 6:8-13. The term seems to mean "that ~~which~~ goes up" (*ælâ*). In this case it goes up, literally "is vaporized"), by means of burning to YHWH. With the exception of the skin, the entire victim is burnt on the altar

(Deut. 33:10; 1 Sam. 7:9). The sacrificial animal was to be a male without blemish (Lev. 1:3) Depending on the economic status of the offerer, a bull (Lev. 1:3-5), a goat or sheep (Lev. 1:10) or a bird (Lev. 1:14) may be sacrificed. Its purpose is to be a pleasing odor before the Lord. Whatever animal or bird was used was entirely burned up, including its entrails and legs except the hide (Lev. 1:9), on the altar by the priest. The offering makes atonement for the offerer (Lev. 1: 4). The offerer presented the victim at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, laid a hand upon the head of the animal so that its acceptance in his place was symbolically assured and then slaughtered. The priests subsequently collect the blood and sprinkle it against the altar, arranged the meat on the altar and burnt it. (Lev. 4:7, 18; 9:9). In the case of a bird, its head was wrung at the altar and the blood allowed to flow down the side of the altar. The body was divided into two and burnt on the altar.

The active participation of God in the process is indicated by the throwing (*zarqû*) of the blood against the altar at the door of the tent of meeting (Lev. 1: 11). The complete consecration of the offerer and his gift is intended by this symbolical ritual.

The offering will be a pleasant odor before Yahweh when carried out correctly and the entire ritual is a process that makes the offerer and his sacrifice acceptable (v. 3, 4,) before God and pleasing to Him. The burnt offering according to Num. 15:1-16; 28:3-8 was accompanied by grain offering and oil as well as fermented wine. It seems that both expiation and propitiation are involved (Lev 1:3, 9, 13, 17). The altar for the burnt offering burned continually day and night with two public offerings a day, one in the morning and one in the evening (Exo 29:38-40; Num 28:2-8). This was a symbol of

God's character and constant presence among His people. The ashes of the burnt offering were allowed to accumulate all night. They were disposed of in a clean place outside the camp by the priest (Lev. 6:9-13) the next morning.

II. Cereal Offering.

The cereal offering (*minhâ*) that was presented to the Lord as an offering (*qorban*) is described in Lev 2; 6:14-18 (cf. the meal offering in Ezek 46:15). It was an offering from the harvest of the land, the only type of sacrifice that requires no shedding of blood. Its make up consists of fine flour, oil and incense. Every grain offering was to be spiced with salt (Lev. 2:13) may be as symbol of a preserving and everlasting covenant. No honey, yeast or leaven could be used in this offering by fire (Lev. 2:4, 5, 11). Yeast often connotes fermentation and corruption. It was burned in part on the altar. The part burned memorialized the worshiper before the Lord; the part that remained was eaten by the priests and, therefore, considered the "most holy part" of this offering by fire to the Lord. (Lev. 2:2, 9). Although no purpose is given for the cereal offering, it may have been celebrated by an agrarian society, demonstrating their gratitude to the deity out whose benevolence and providence they might have their bounty harvest. The bringing of representative portion of the grain which served as the staple food was another expression of devotion. This is supported by the "gift" which is used to designate this offering (Gen 4:3-4 and 1 Sam 2:17). Cereal offerings accompanied animal sacrifices, but mostly in the case of the *œlâ*.

III. Peace Offering

The sacrifice of "peace offerings" (*zebah šelamîm*) is recorded in Lev 3; 7:11-36. It was an offering by fire to the Lord. de Vaux(1964:31) agrees with Rowley (1967:52) that there are two features of this sacrifice. First, the sacrificial animal is immolated. Second, the sacrificial animal is shared between YHWH, the priest and the offerer, hence its reference as a communion offering or shared offering respectively. Although it was an animal – a bull, sheep, or goat just like the burnt offering, there was a slight variation here, the victim could be male or female, and moreover birds were not acceptable. It is a pleasing odor to the Lord as is the *œlâ* (Lev. 3:5). Certain parts of the animal were burned on the altar to the Lord, while the rest was consumed by the priests and the offerers in a common meal.

Gerleman, (1973:11) in describing the sacrifice writes, that the fat like the blood belonged to YHWH (Lev. 3:16-17; 7:23-25). Israel could eat neither blood nor fat in its sacrificial ceremonies before the Lord (Lev 1:5; 3:16). The real meaning and effect of their sacrifice and its attendant ritual is now uncertain. The meaning of the term *šelem* (pl. *šelamîm*) is debated. It appears, however, that the ritual implies that the joy of fellowship with one another before the Lord was the main thrust of the ceremony. "Paying back" to Him what was given by Him seems to be part of the meaning of the ritual also.

~~Three~~ subcategories, or three kinds, of this sacrifice are noted in Lev 7:11-36. First is the thanksgiving or praise offering (*zebah hattôdâ*) (Lev. 13-15) It called for a cereal offering

to accompany the animal sacrifice. Its purpose was to render an expression of thanks for deliverance or blessings granted. No previous promise or vow was involved in the thank offering. The flesh of the sacrifice was eaten that day. Second is the votive sacrifice (*zebah neder*) (Lev. 7:16) it was given in payment of a vow to the deity to solicit for help and the third is freewill offering (*zebah nedabâ*) (Lev. 7:16) which stemmed out of joy for any good tidings no matter the cause. The flesh for the latter two offerings was to be eaten on the day of sacrifice, but what remained could be eaten on the next day. *"Any meat of the sacrifice left over till the third day must be burned up. If any meat of the fellowship offering is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be credited to the one who offered it, for it is impure; the person who eats any of it will be held responsible."* (Lev. 7:17-18)

After the prescribed time had passed for consuming the sacrificial food, what was left over had to be burned upon the altar. No one could eat it; if any did eat it they were not accepted before the Lord. The votive offering was presented when a blessing or deliverance had been granted after a vow (*neder*) had been made concerning a petition.

The freewill offering was joyously and willingly presented to express a general thankfulness toward God. No specific deliverance or blessing had to be mentioned. Emphasis was thereby given to God's acceptance of the worshiper with a right attitude. The most satisfactory explanation for the distinction in the mode and duration of the consumption of the sacrificial food is that the thanksgiving offering was a response to

experienced acts of YHWH's goodness while the votive and free-will offerings were linked with the expectation of benefit and with supplicatory prayer.

Peace offerings were not just offered but on various solemn moments. They could be an expression of gratitude for a great victory or installation of a king (1 Sam. 11:14-15), before a war (1 Sam. 10:8; 13:9), at cultic festivals (Exo 23:6-8; 1 Kings 8:62-66) and at thanksgiving (Ps. 107:22). They were celebrated in the presence of YHWH.

The demonstration of communion as the sacrificial meal was eaten together underpinned the peace offering; it is perhaps the most prominent significance. The practice of eating or sharing meals together demonstrates unity of purpose among the people themselves and between the people and YHWH.

B. The Sin Offering

The second set of sacrifices is described in Leviticus 4-5. This demonstrates the transgression of a prohibitive commandment and the trespass against property. While the first set was optional for those who had had the cause to do it as the occasion required, the second set was compulsory. They were offered to placate YHWH's fury and to avert punishment. This sacrifice places emphasis on the function of blood and the use of the flesh of the sacrificial animal. The offerings under this section – Sin and Guilt offerings are very nearly the same, and in fact it is difficult to define the differences between these two offerings (Smith, 1972: 15). It is difficult even to identify the texts which deal with one or the other (cf. Lev 5:1-13 — sin or guilt offering?). Both types of offering were

made for similar types of sin. It is the view of some scholars that the sin offering was meant for unintentional sin while the guilt offering was meant for both intentional and unintentional acts that resulted in injuries that could be measured. Ringgren (1969:172) cautions that the present rendering of the law probably represents a later systematic and simplified code that have lost its original meaning now. Since the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, the precise definitions should not be a bother but should be viewed to be essentially the same as could be seen in Lev. 7:1-7. Below are the details of the two offerings:

I. Sin Offering

The sin offering is delineated in Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30. The essence of this offering was to cleanse a holy place or people (Lev. 6:16). The sin offering was "graded" somewhat according to who sinned. The anointed priest (4:3), and the whole congregation (vv. 13), required a bull for pacification and cleansing. A ruler (vv. 22 ff), provided a male goat and one of the common people (vv. 27) needed a female goat or a lamb to effect cleansing. The sin is specifically stated to be one committed unwittingly or unintentionally (v. 2). The fat was cut away from the inner vital organs, which were burned on the altar, while the rest of the bull was burned outside the camp in a ceremonially clean place. The procedure for the cleansing ritual had some variations as well depending on the "sinner". In the case of the sin by the priest or congregation, the anointed priest dipped his finger into the blood and sprinkled some of it seven times before YHWH, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. Some of it was put on the horns of

the altar of fragrant incense in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the bull's blood was poured out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting (Lev. 4:5-7, 17-18).

With regards to the other categories that sinned, there was no sprinkling of blood before the curtain of the sanctuary, rather the blood was fetched with the finger and put on the horns of the altar of sacrifice and the rest poured out at the base of the altar (Lev. 4:25,30,34). The fat was cut away from the inner vital organs and burnt on the altar, while the rest of the bull was burnt outside the camp in a ceremonially clean place. This was done in the case of the ordination of Aaron and his sons and in the case of the bull for the priest or the people (Lev. 6:20, 24-30; 8:14-17; Exo. 29:10-14) In the other cases, the officiating priest for the sin offering could eat the flesh of the victim in a holy place (sacred precincts).

The ritual, when properly carried out, resulted in atonement for the persons involved; forgiveness was granted to the worshiper (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 34). The sacrifice became a pleasing odor to the Lord (v. 31). In 5:1-5 various cases are cited that require the presentation of a sin offering. In all these situations it is constantly reiterated that atonement is made for the offerer and s/he is forgiven.

II. Guilt Offering

The guilt offering (*ašam*; "trespass-offering") is described in Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-7. It is different from the sin offering chiefly in the restitution requirement. The offerer has to

make good on any loss that he has made in the holy things of the Lord and pay an additional fifth of its cost to the priest (5:16). Damages against another person are also dealt with in 6:1-7), where the one-fifth restitution clause is also in effect. This offering also atones for the sacrificer and s/he is forgiven. The sin offering deals with sins against God that also threaten the community. The guilt offering deals more with sins that require restitution to God or man.

C. Consecration Offering

The consecration offering performed at the installation of the Aaronite priesthood is recorded in Ex 29:4-28; Lev 6:19-23 8-9; Num 8. The basic description is in Ex 29, supplemented by Lev 6:19-23. The prescriptive instructions of Ex 29 are carried out in the descriptive text of Lev 8. This offering was a special type of peace offering. The purpose of the consecration offering was to make it possible for the priests to serve before the Lord (Ex 29:1).

This whole process included a sin offering for the priests (Ex 19:14), a whole burnt offering (v. 18), and the ritual concerning the ordination ram proper (Ex 29:22-28, 34), to which a cereal offering was added (Ex 29:23; Lev 6:19-23) and was wholly burnt. The consecration/ordination process was carried out over a period of seven days (Ex 29:35-37). The cereal offering of Ex 29:23 was waved as a "wave offering" (*tenûpâ*; heave offering) before the Lord, as was the breast of the ordination ram (Ex 29:26-28). By this

process Aaron and his sons were rendered holy unto the Lord for service at the tabernacle.

In summary, many passages in the Pentateuch employ these sacrifices and offerings in various kinds of settings and for different reasons. The "mix" of sacrifices or offerings that were to be performed publicly, privately, and for all types of reasons is interesting to observe, but why a certain one of these basic sacrifices was used at a given time in a certain situation is often not clear to us today. Attempt has however been made to discuss the material used, the usual ritual procedures, the occasions for these sacrifices, and some key sacrificial terminologies above.

2.6. Reference to Sacrifice in the Rest of the Old Testament

I. Former Prophets

The following comments highlight most of the more significant occurrences of sacrifice in the Former Prophets. A Passover was held in Gilgal (Josh 5:10-12), burnt offerings and peace offerings were presented at the covenant ceremony at Shechem (Josh 8:30-35; 24), sacrifice was performed at Bochim (Judg 2:1-5), Jephthah offered his daughter as an *ælâ* (Judg 11:29-40), Gideon (Judg 6:11-32) and Manoah (13:15-23) offered cereal (*minhâ*) and burnt offerings (*ælâ*, a bull and a kid), the Philistines sacrificed (*zebah*, Judg 16:23), and, finally, the Israelites offered *ælô* and *šêlamîmin* at the Benjaminite war (Judg 20:26).

In the other books of the Former Prophets sacrifices and offerings continued to play an important part in Israel's life. In the days of Eli the priest, sacrifices were offered at

Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3; 2:13-17), sacrifices were also held in Beth-shemesh (cows as a burnt offering, 6:14), Mizpah (a lamb as a whole burnt offering, 7:9), Ramah (7:17; 9:11-24), Gilgal (burnt offerings, peace offerings, 10:8; 11:15; 13:9-13), and among families and clans (heifer, 16:2-5; 20:29). Sacrifice was certainly performed at Nob during Saul's reign (21:1-9). David held sacrifices at Jerusalem (burnt offerings, peace offerings, 2 Sam 6:17). David also set up a new cult center at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings there (24:24).

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At the dedication of Solomon's temple a great sacrificial ritual was performed (peace offerings of sheep and oxen, burnt offering, cereal offering, and fat pieces of the peace offerings, 1 Kings 8:5,62-66). The high places were in common use before the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 3:2), and Solomon held a great sacrifice there before he built the temple ("a thousand burnt offerings," 1 Kings 3:3-6). 1 Kings 3:3 indicates that sacrifice at the high places was a fault that plagued Solomon before he built the temple. Shrines for sacrifice in Dan and Bethel were constructed after the United Kingdom split (12:28). Elijah sacrificed to the Lord on a reconstructed high place (oblation, burnt offering of a bull, 1 Kings 18:23, and 33-40).

King Jehoshaphat of Judah repaired the temple, where evidently guilt offerings and sin offerings had continued (2 Kings 12:15). Ahaz had a new altar made, based on an altar he saw in Damascus, and he presented burnt, cereal, drink, and peace offerings upon it (16:10-16). Hezekiah abolished the high places (18:4) and sacrificed in Jerusalem (cf. v.

22). But Manasseh not only rebuilt the high places but also built altars to Baal and even sacrificed his son (21:1-9). Josiah removed all of Manasseh's abominations (23:4-25) and held a magnificent Passover according to the stipulations he read in the book of the covenant (vv. 21-23). Thus the *ælâ*, *zebah*, *minhâ*, are found in the Former Prophets ("Deuteronomistic History").

II. Writings.

The Psalms are sprinkled lightly with specific sacrificial terminology. The various references are:

- (1) Passages that present sacrifice as an approved way to worship God in a proper attitude (Psalms 20:4 Psalms 76:12).
- (2) Passages that depreciate sacrifices per se, usually emphasizing the fact that the victim/subject in the sacrificial ritual is not the object of God's desire or approval (Ps. 40:7-9).
- (3) Passages that condemn apostate sacrifices (Ps. 16:4; 106:28, 37).
- (4) Passages that compare and contrast spiritual sacrifices with material sacrifices, and approve of the former strongly over the latter (Psalms 50:8-14; 51:18; 69:32)
- (5) Passages that wholly point to and approve of spiritual sacrifices by the worshiper as the true pleasing sacrifice before the Lord (Psalms 4:6; 26:6; 107:22; 116:17; 119:108; 141:2).

Of course, the historical location of the above psalms is important, and many more psalms are dated earlier than used to be the case, but the overall message is very cogent and clear. The various terms for sacrifice are found in the above references.

The religious historiography of the Chronicler and the writer of Ezra-Nehemiah place a great emphasis upon the importance of the sacrificial cult in Israel's history. Much of it parallels material reported in 1 Samuel-2 Kings, not only because the Chronicler utilized those books as sources but also because his historiographical method called for that material. Only the most important items will be listed here because of space limitations. Rendtorff (1967: 67-73) in citing Thompson noted the peculiar interest of the writers: "The writer's interest in sacrifice is indicated by his introduction of sacrificial references [i.e. identifying the cultic significance]. Daly (1967: 28) affirms one of the chief emphases of the Chronicler's history was clearly the primacy of the temple and cult.

The references to sacrifice and offering found only in the Chronicler are as follows: 1 Chro. 6:49 where "to make atonement" is found; Hezekiah was a favorite of the Chronicler and his atonement offerings are emphasized (2 Chro. 29, esp. vv. 20-36) and his great Passover festival (v. 30); chapters 20-22 of 1 Chronicles record burnt offerings, drink offerings, sacrifices (*zabahim*), and a joyful celebration at the designation of Solomon as king by David; 23:18 records Joash's reestablishment of the Mosaic sacrificial system; 24:8-14 omits guilt and sin offering references found in Kings; 5:6

records Solomon's and the congregations sacrifices; 13:9-11 records Abijah's condemnation of Israel's sacrificial cult and approval of the sacrificial cult in Jerusalem.

Asa showed great faithfulness to sacrifice and offering (1 Kings 15:10,17-19). 2 Chron 26:16-19 records Uzziah's presumptuous offering; 13:14-17, Manasseh's "reform." The Passover of Josiah in 2 Chron 35 is a much fuller delineation of the same event in Kings. After a review of this evidence it is clear that for the Chronicler the sacrificial cult was a source of true worship and joy (Thompson, 1963: 231 f).

Whether the same author penned Ezra-Nehemiah that penned 1-2 Chronicles has long been debated, but the relevant passages for our purposes are as follows: Ezra 6:6-12,15-18,19-22; 10:19-22; Neh 10:28-39 (MT 29-40); 12:30-43. The passage in Ezra 3:1-6 records the reestablishment of the Levitical sacrificial system according to the Law of Moses.

The Feast of Tabernacles was held at that time and burnt and freewill offerings were presented. Ezra 8:35 records the presentation of sin offerings and burnt offerings. Thompson again concluded his survey of these offerings with the observation that the note of joy at the sacrificial events prevailed even in this late era of Israel, as it had in 1-2 Chronicles.

Rendtorff (1967:72 f). asserted that a major point to be observed, after his over-view of the Chronicler (1 Chronicles-Nehemiah), is that the *ælâ* dominates in the Chronicler's

sacrificial theology, while the other offerings recede. The other writings of the Old Testament do not include extensive references to sacrifice and offering. This is the case mostly because of the perspective of the materials themselves. Thompson (1963:88) listed twelve passages dealing with sacrifice found in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. Job 1:5 and 42:8 mention *ælô* that expiate for sin according to Job's explicit confession. Both sins of action and sins of attitude are in view. Prov 7:14-21 deals with the adulterous woman; 15:8; 21:3,27; and 27:27 stress the superiority of ethical conduct and attitude to sacrifice per se. Eccl. 5:1 and 9:2 indicate the ongoing function of the cult even in these texts, which deal mainly with the attitudes of the individual and the action based on attitudes. This explains the basically negative focus upon the concept of sacrifice and offering found in these materials.

2.7. Special Issues.

I. Meaning and Significance of Blood.

McCarthy (1969: 166-176) recalls how the issue of the significance of blood has always provoked interest and controversy. Nearly everyone agrees that the blood ritual in Israelite sacrifice is unique. There has been nothing found to date that parallels, in any significant way, the treatment of blood in Israel, neither in the ancient Near East nor elsewhere. For instance in the Graeco-Roman era, the blood was purposely soaked into the ground in sacrifice to the Olympian god but Israel handled blood in the most hygienic way.

de Vaux (1964:416, 453) commends the meticulous attention paid to the disposal of blood in various types of Old Testament sacrifices meaning that blood was at least part of the atonement process in all Israelite sacrifices; it was a unifying feature of the cult. The people were forbidden to eat the blood (Lev 17:10; Gen 9:4; Lev 3:17; 7:26; Deut 12:16, 23; 15:23), since life (*nepeš*) was in the blood, and life belonged to God alone.

The meaning, therefore, of Lev 17:11, 14 has been researched diligently. Verse 11 reads, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life [*bannepes*]"; and v. 14 a, "For the life of every creature is the blood of it." So atonement is made by the blood to the extent that "life" is in it or because "life" is in it.

Noordtzij (1982:177) advances two reasons why blood should not be eaten. The first is that life is in the blood. The idea behind this is that blood contains the life of the animal and since it is not acceptable to consume the life of an animal because it belongs solely to God, it is wrong to consume the blood of an animal. (Gen. 9:4; Deut. 12:23). The life of the creature is God's property and none can hold claim to it. Besides, there is similarity between human and animal lives. "An animal also has a *nepeš*" (Gen. 9:10; Lev. 1:10, 46; 24:18; Num. 31:28), it is responsible under the law (Gen. 9:5; Lev. 20:15-16; cf Exo. 21:28-32) and is party to God's covenant (Gen. 9:9-10; Lev. 26:6, 22; cf. Hos. 2:20). Blood found in the animal is valuable and therefore deserves to be treated with dignity.

The second reason for the prohibition of consuming blood was that it was not meant to be food for humankind but to be an element of atonement for the souls of people (11a). God, the owner of blood did not mean it to be eaten but has given it for atonement. Any other use of blood is forbidden. Blood is able to atone for the life of the offerer because of the life it contains. The life of the offerer is ransomed by means of the life of the animal, which is a payment to which the offended party, YHWH, has agreed.

Furthermore, the blood makes atonement because God has designated it to make atonement, by reason of the life (*nepeš*) which is in it, within the covenant community. Blood does not make atonement because of some magical quality in it. Robinson, (1976:135) adds that the divine will itself made the blood the means of expiation, consecrated in the service of the altar; it was the mysterious element that the ancients considered a vital force. The sacrificial victim, slaughtered in the course of a symbolic action prescribed by God (Lev 17:1); having entered the divine sphere, procures the blood of expiation appointed by God Himself. No magic is involved — God's will chooses and approves the prescribed sacrificial ritual.

II. Ritual Order of the Sacrifices.

The sacrifices and their rituals are enumerated in various ways in the Old Testament. Rainey (1970:485) and Levine (1974) have done detailed studies about the significance of the sequence of rituals. Lev 8-9, descriptive or narrative texts, give the order for the sacrifices as sin offering (*hatta*), burnt offering (*œlâ*), communion (*šêlamîm*).

But in Num 7:28, prescriptive administration texts, the order of the sacrificial list is burnt offering (with needed cereal and drink offerings), sin offering, and communion offering. A similar situation follows in the analogous logic of the order used in the ritual of the sacrifices. Lev 1:1-6:7 is didactic-descriptive in character and lists the sacrifices of "a pleasing odor," burnt offering, cereal offering, and the sacrifice of communion, then the expiatory sacrifices (sin and guilt offerings). This list is to help train sacerdotal personnel. The offerings are grouped in agreement with their logical/ conceptual association (Rainey, 1970: 486). Lev 6:1 7:38, of an administrative-descriptive character, arranges the sacrifices in a different way: burnt offering, cereal offering,

Other texts give the following order of the presentation of the offerings that reflects the procedural sequence of presenting sacrifices: expiatory sacrifice, burnt offering, communion sacrifice (Num 6:16). It appears that before entering into communion with the Lord, sin had to be dealt with, then the burnt offering indicated the total consecration of the offerer to the Lord, and finally, communion was possible. Levine (1974:105) differs by calling the burnt offering the first sacrifice proper even when preceded by a preliminary sin offering in certain cases.

III. Order of Development of the Sacrifices

Thompson (1963: 245) concluded that the *ælâ* was the most widely used and the most typical of the Israelite sacrifices. It arose and was used very early (contra Smith). Similarly, Rendtorff (1967; 232-241, 251 f) held that the *ælâ* played the most important

part in the Israelite cult. According to the Old Testament, it seems that the *minhâ*, *ašam*, *hatta*, and *šēlamîm* likely arose from the *ælâ*. Rendtorff lists the probable historical development of the offerings as *ælâ*, *šēlamîm*, *zēbah*, *minhâ*, *hatta*, *ašam*.

The Wellhausen School had preferred the *zēbah* as the typical Hebrew sacrifice. The nature of the *hatta* and the *ašam* probably accounts for their sparse occurrences in the Former Prophets. They are possibly mentioned only twice in the postexilic literature. The difference between these two sacrifices is minimal; it does however appear that the guilt offering dealt more with sins toward human beings, and the sin offering more with sins against God.

IV. Efficacy of the Old Testament Sacrifices

There seem to be some shortcomings of the Old Testament sacrificial system. It was not meant to be final; it had a limited range of effectiveness, operating only within the covenant. Only sins of ignorance or of human frailty were forgiven within this cultic system. No sacrifice could atone for deliberate, rebellious acts against God that were adamantly continued. Sins could be further analyzed into three classes:

- (1) High-handed sins for which there was no atonement.
- (2) "Ordinary" sins committed with at best some degree of consciousness; these were due to human weakness and atoned for by the sin.
- (3) Unintentional sins that were to be atoned for by the guilt offering.

These observations are helpful and true. But the appropriateness of the conclusions drawn from them is questionable. They do not circumscribe the total revelation of God in relationship to His people. It is true that no specific rite was available for one who committed adultery or sinned with a high hand. But God's fuller revelation of Himself in the Old Testament included His readiness to forgive all kinds of sins against Him, when a spirit of humility and repentance was present (Ps 51; Mic 6:8).

The purpose and efficacy of the Levitical system was misunderstood and abused, but the shedding of blood was continued into the New Covenant. In both covenants the ultimate requirement is a total sacrifice of one's self in humility before God's great work of objective atonement through the life that is in the sacrificial blood. Both a perfect blood sacrifice and a perfect sacrifice of love and allegiance to God were found in Christ, bringing an end to the forward look of the Levitical system.

2.8 Conclusion

Sacrifice(s) in the Old Testament constituted the soul and vitality of the people of Israel. It is one aspect of their religion and worship that ensured the presence and fellowship of YHWH. When improperly handled, it generated displeasure which often left in its trail grave consequences, even to the point of death as experienced by Nadab and Abihu when they offered "strange and authorized fire" (Lev. 9:22-10:7)

On the contrary acceptable sacrifice(s) created the avenue for individual or group of people to experience the extraordinary fellowship of YHWH, with its attendant promises and providence. It is important to note that everything came from God, the creator and

disposer of all things, and expressed this by offering part or all of sacrificial elements to Him. Most of YHWH's covenants with His people are provoked and sealed with sacrifices. In Gen. 8:20f, the Noahic covenant was as a result of the sweet savouring aroma of the burnt offering Noah and his family presented to YHWH. This phenomenon is worth scrutinizing to ensure that fellowship with YHWH in the present received the needed glorious presence of the LORD.

The discourse has also shown the multi-faceted purpose of sacrifices in Israel: it was a means of restoring broken relationship between humans on one hand and between humans and YHWH on the other; it placated YHWH's anger aroused by sin via the death of the sacrificial victim which symbolized the death of the sinner. The essence and value of blood has equally been highlighted, it is the life of the blood of the sacrificial animal that atoned for the life of offerer.

In the next chapter, I narrow the research unto the book of Leviticus as the main recorder of the detailed ritual of sacrifice that atones for the sins of the assembly of Israel and uses Lev. 4:13-20 as a test case for the atonement of the congregation's sin.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ESSENCE OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS AND LEVITICUS 4:13-21

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed sacrificial rituals through the various divisions of the Old Testament in the broad or general sense. Attempt was made to trace the nature and background of sacrifice in the Old Testament. We also refreshed ourselves with excerpts of instances of sacrifice in the primeval and patriarchal eras as well as in the prophets. Attention was given to the meaning and significance of blood, the ritual order and the order of development of sacrifices. The focus in this chapter is narrowed onto the introductory matters on the book of Leviticus and a deeper look at Leviticus 4: 13-21. The choice of this text is based on the assumption that it captures the significance of sacrifice as atonement for the entire assembly (*qahal* or *edah*), the community as a whole and not a limited scope like the sin of priest (vrs. 3-4), the sin of rulers (vrs. 22-23) and the sin of individuals (vrs. 27-28). The congregation is an inclusive representation of the society, as it is in the case of Asante as a people.

In the book of Leviticus the notion of reconciliation is used in a cultic context. Sacrifice and blood are the main means in the cult for reconciling man with God. This study investigates reconciliation in Leviticus in terms of concepts like sacrifice, purity, atonement, propitiation, expiation and substitution. This is done against the background of the book's contents, the ideas of its probable priestly authors and the ideology in these circles of the cult in Israel.

As the notion of reconciliation is used in a unique way in the book of Leviticus, this study aims at elucidating Leviticus' understanding of this process of reconciling man with God as exemplified in chapter 4:13-21. As sacrifice and blood are the main means of reconciliation here, we have to focus on these two terms. These are studied firstly against the background of the book's contents and finally, according to the book's specific perception of the notion of reconciliation in terms of atonement, sacrifice and blood.

3.2 The Literary Form of the Book of Leviticus

The book of Leviticus forms a thematically independent unit within the larger context of the Pentateuch. Exodus describes the construction of the tabernacle and its officials. Leviticus focuses on the living cult. Although Leviticus is sometimes called "The Priest's Manual", it is interesting that all the laws pertaining to the Levites are rather found in the book of Numbers. In Leviticus the role of the priests is mainly to instruct Israel how to avoid defilement and how to regularly cleanse the sanctuary. The cult and its rituals therefore take central stage in Leviticus. The book concentrates on the particular way in which the holy God can be worshipped by the people whom he elected to belong to him. The book is, however, not merely a collection of rituals. . Leviticus lies at the center of the Torah, perhaps holding the balances in check. It is important to understand the theological function of Leviticus within the larger Pentateuch.

The centrality of Leviticus stands out clear when Genesis and Deuteronomy are considered as the first division, then Exodus and Numbers are seen as the second division

and eventually, Leviticus form the third log. Both Genesis and Deuteronomy are closed by a blessing of the 12 tribes (Gen 49/Deuteronomy 33), followed by the death of the principal character who pronounced the blessing (Jacob and Moses) respectively. Gen 47:29 seems to flush with Deut 31:14, where both receive a hint of their approaching/impending death. The books of Exodus and Numbers on the other hand portray some similitude. Among them Exo 18:27 introduces Jethro who is seen as Hobab in Num. 10:29-32, in addition, the chronological notice in Num 10:11 corresponds with the notice in Exo19:1.

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Theologians have had one view or another over the structure of Leviticus for a long time now. Traditionally it has been divided into two segments – the Priestly code (chs. 1-16) and the Holiness code (chs. 17-27). Levine (2003:312) notes that Chapters 1-16 are concerned with the role of the priest in the dispensing of the sacrificial cult of worship and seeing to the cleansing acts of the community and individuals. Chapters 17-27 on the other hand deal with items and rituals required to maintain holiness as well as the directives to be observed by the people of Israel. Rendtorff (1996:29) adds that although this division seem to simplify the book, it seem vague and an over generalization in that it is not only the first division that handles cultic matters, chs 21-23 which falls within the second bracket treats cultic matters as well. Again of the sixteen chapters in the said first section only seven (1-7) basically touches on the layout of the cult. What is more, in the second segment chs. 17 and 18 do not address the issue, besides it is not only here that the holiness agenda is addressed, it can be found outside of here, for example in ch. 11. Above all ch 17 is not designated in any way as entry into a new section of the book.

There have been recent models of division occasioned as dissatisfaction with the traditional division arose. Scholars like Smith and Sun belong to this school of thought. Smith (1996: 17-32) is of the view that the alternation of laws and narratives should constitute the basic structure of Leviticus. On this basis he identifies a structure divided into seven parts. Three parts out of this is made up of narratives (chs. 8-10, 16 and 24), framed by four parts of laws (chs. 1-7, 11-15, 17- 23 and 25-27). The narratives are linked to the group of laws within which they are located and help in its conceptual definition. Instructions on sacrifices in Chs. 1-7 are concluded in chs. 8-9; ch.10 sets the stage for the central ideas of purity and holiness. The ch 16 deals with uncleanness and pollution and so characterizes the collection of laws in chs 11-15 and prepares the reader for important issues in chs. 17-27.

Sun (1990: 486) discusses the problem of the structure of the entire book of Leviticus. He asserts that the traditional division between chs. 1-7 and. 8-10, is in a way over-stated. In his view the purpose of 7: 37-38 was to introduce the description of the ordination of Aaron and his sons in ch 8. Leviticus 7:37-38, refer in addition to the different kinds of offerings introduced in Leviticus 1-7. From this, he concludes that Leviticus consists of two major divisions, chs. 1-10 and 11-27, with a lesser break at 7:38. Milgrom (1984:541) divides the book into five sections by positing that "the ethical element fuses with and even informs the ritual so that one may seek a moral basis behind each ritual act." Vice versa the ritual also has effect on the ethics of the community and their

interrelationship with each other. The sacral-ethical collections of ritual directives in the book are presented in the following units:

- The sacrificial system (chapters 1-7);
- The service of ordination at the sanctuary (8-10);
- The laws of impurity (11-16);
- The Holiness Code regulating conducts (17-26);
- Gifts for the sanctuary (27).

Comparison of the contents of Leviticus with the contents of the books of Exodus and Numbers indicates a long literary process of growth. Leviticus 8 seems to continue the discussion in Exodus 29 on the ceremony of how to anoint priests at the altar. Information on the religious festivals, like the Passover Festival in Exodus 11:9-12:20, 28, 40-51, and in the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26), indicates that older traditions were used in those books. Law codes referring to the ritual found in Leviticus 1-7, 11-16, 27 and Numbers 5:11-31, 15:37-41 probably come from a later stage of growth. Secondary restatements, of which most occur in Numbers, indicate a still younger stage. Numbers 5:1-10 reflects Leviticus 5 and 12-15. Numbers 9:1-14 mirrors the ancient material of Exodus 11-12. Numbers 15:1-36 seems to be a further development of Leviticus 1-7. Mythic narratives were probably added to Leviticus in a final phase.

Scholarly theories on the growth of the materials are traditionally linked to the activities of a group of priestly writers in Israel. In the exilic and post-exilic time they probably

collected traditions on the cult, to legitimize the events at the sanctuary in Jerusalem.

Their work is often indicated as "the Priestly source", or simply "P".

3.3 The Contents of Reconciliation in Leviticus

The contents of Leviticus derive in its entirety from Priestly sources. The book generally deals with issues like sacrifices and offerings; cleanness and uncleanness; and holy living. For the purpose of this investigation into reconciliation in Leviticus, we now turn to the book's specific notion of reconciliation in terms of transgression and atonement, its conceptualization of sacrifices and the meaning of the ritual use of blood.

According to Pilch (1993:151) the basic order in the world depends on the relationship between Yahweh and Israel. This relationship forms the basis of a social network of relationship. This network has an ethos of its own. It follows specific rules. This ethos can be described as "holiness". This idea plays the central role in Leviticus. Yahweh is intrinsically holy. Any person or thing standing in relationship to him is also called holy. Within the cosmic order holy primarily means to be whole. To keep God's order, to remain in the place allocated to you and to hold everything in equilibrium, makes holy, whole, pure, and just. Purity is to "observe the system of space and time lines that human groups develop to have everything in its place and a place for everything." To cross the lines that create distinct places and roles is to render a person impure and unclean. Purity, for example, is threatened at the margins when these boundaries become porous and permeable. Purity is endangered by body openings at the very margin of the human body.

These are indicated in Leviticus 11 dealing with clean and unclean food, 12 on childbirth, 13-14 about repulsive scaly conditions and 15 dealing with male and female body effluvia. Laws found in these sections deal with the way in which purity is threatened and how it might be regained.

To be disobedient to God's laws means to transgress these borders and disturb the order. Sin places a person's relationship with Yahweh in jeopardy. It is also detrimental to the community's welfare and solidarity and the cosmic relations. It destroys God's created order and endangers the orderly and balanced relationship between the different areas of life and between God and humans. Humankind's sin and impurity disturb this balance and evoke God's wrath and punishment. The sins committed produce a complex pattern of consequences, personal, social, as well as spiritual. It causes an obligation to hang over the head of the sinner. He becomes unholy, unclean, impure, defective, and false. Humans then have to "carry" their iniquity. This is the burden that accompanies their sin in the form of either the penalty or the retributive punishment that attends a sinful act. The person himself experiences that burden as guilt.

The sinful act unleashes impurity, which is attracted to the sanctuary. Sin in the priestly doctrine is a type of miasma that is attracted magnetically to the holy places and people set apart for God. It adheres to the sanctuary and amasses there until God will no longer bear with the sanctuary. Israel personalized impurity. They transformed the idea of demonic evil into human evil. As Israel demythologized all powers and evil, only one

source of evil remains and that is humankind themselves. They alone are responsible for the disruption of God's order. Their physical and moral impurity breaks down the balance, pollutes God's sanctuary and drives God from their midst. It is therefore forever incumbent upon Israel to rectify the destabilization brought about by their sin. Holy place, person and time have to be regularly purged of their impurities to avoid God abandoning Israel.

This purging was, so to speak, done on invitation. In Israelite religion Yahweh was known as the God who wants harmony to be restored. He is always willing to forgive. Schenker (1981:82) asserts that because of His readiness to restore His relationship with Israel. He provided the actions through which His relationship with Israel could be repaired and invited Israel to perform them. The unbroken repetition of cultic acts indicated and guaranteed God's preparedness for remission of sins. Although it is the priest who makes expiation for the people's guilt, it is God Himself who actually forgives them. Israel only has to accept these measures and follow God's directions. The person taking conscious part in the atonement rituals asserts his/her guilt and simultaneously confesses God as the one who is willing to restore the relationship.

The actions to restore the relationship with God, could take many forms. In Leviticus these measures include ritual as well as ethical acts. They occurred in nearly every feast and dedication of office bearers at the sanctuary. They took the form of offerings, shedding blood, presenting items like frankincense, silver or fine flour to God. They were performed on days of feasts and on the Day of Atonement. The call upon Israel to be holy

because their God the Lord is holy (Lev 19:2), found in the section of the Holiness Code (Lev 17:1-26:46), also includes various areas. Laws are presented for different sacrifices, sexual relationships, everyday conduct, marital relationships, attending to the soil, and to different religious festivals. In all of these Israel uncompromisingly turned to God, as the sole dispenser of expiation. All of these measures were based on Yahweh's willingness to forgive and to be reconciled with his people. They presented both relieve of punishment as well as guarantee of God's forgiveness. These acts of repairing the relationship with God are referred to in most of the cases with the Hebrew term *kipper*. It was a concept which evolved through a series of meanings. Initially the word indicated an action that eliminates dangerous impurity. In a next phase it indicated the presentation of a ransom or substitute. It later developed the meaning of expiation.

3.4 Sacrifice as Means of Reconciliation with God

The cult at the temple had the dual function of restoring as well as maintaining the creative order. Some sort of evil and impurity, deliberately or undeliberately, individually or corporately, could not be avoided (Lev. 4: 13). The cult therefore, played an essential role in providing rituals of reparation and purification to avert God's wrath and punishment. By means of the ritual the divine order that is disturbed by impurity or sin, is restored once more to its original harmony. By this means Boccacini (2002:81) notes, the "people are offered a way back to their proper status provided that in their freedom they are eager to fulfill the required conditions for purification."

Sacrifices offered at the tabernacle were essential for Israel to find expiation from her sins and thus to continue to be acceptable to Yahweh. Sacrifice brings about expiation or propitiation (atonement). The offering of the appropriate sacrifice was the way Israelites addressed the multiple consequences resulting from a sin. It brought restoration of the equilibrium. Restoring and maintaining this equilibrium is in essence holiness (Lev 11:44-47; 20:22-26). To be holy, to become whole again, bears the dual connotation of “sanctification” (by emulating God’s nature 11:44a) and “separation” (from the impurities 20:23-26).

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There are sacrifices to expiate sin. The sin/purification offering (4:1–5:13). The guilt/reparation offering and the reparation offering (5:14–19, 20–26[6:1–7]) were for expiation from an offense for which restitution was possible, or for violation of anything sacred. Either individuals or the congregation brought these two types of sacrifices because of one or another specific sin. They expiated transgressions, such as those against the holy things, those against the divine commandments, and those against God Himself.

On the Day of Atonement (*Yom kippur*) (Lev 16:1–34; 23:27–32) both the temple and the people were purged. A rich variety of rituals were performed with the dual purpose to bring forgiveness for the covenant people of God from all their sins and freedom from the power of sin. Also different sacrifices were used on this day to bring atonement. Aaron not only sacrificed for himself and his house but also offered the sin-offering of a goat for

the congregation of Israel and remitted a second goat outside the camp to die. These different sacrifices indicated different aspects of reconciliation/atonement. Insight into ancient Israel's view of sacrifice can be discerned from key terms in these sacrifice regulations and from the structures in which they are given. However, although elaborate rules and indications are given for the sacrifices, they do not articulate the ideology underlying the sacrificial system. This lack has led to the formulation of multiple theories as to the meaning of sacrifice.

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To understand the sacrifice as a means of expiation is problematic in some sense. In a ritual context the sacrifice always refers to the sanctuary and not to a person. The blood used as an agent in the sin offering "rubs off" or purges the sanctuary. Either by physical impurity (Lev 12-15), inadvertent transgression against God (Lev 4), or inadvertent misdemeanor against God, people caused the sanctuary and its sanctums to become polluted. The sacrificial blood purges this contamination and makes it once more acceptable for God. As the sacrifice purges the sanctuary rather than the person, it is technically not correct to say that the sacrifice brings about "atonement". People are never the object of the purging ritual, only its beneficiary. The ritual is never performed upon man, but for the sake of the person, outside of him. It brings forgiveness and therefore atonement for him. The concept here rather bears the dual connotation of "sanctification" and "separation" from the impurities of the heathen.

Sacrifice can also be understood in terms of “propitiation”. God’s rage is cooled off or averted when he receives a sacrifice. It does not merely expiate in the sense of cancelling sin. It rather propitiates, in the sense of averting God’s punishment. God’s righteous judgment and his wrath could not be simply averted. It has to be paid for by the sacrifice appropriated. The sacrifice has therefore rather metaphorical value than qualitative value.

Some scholars understand the sacrifice as “ransom” or “substitute”. The idea would then be that objective guilt exists. This can only be removed through sacrifice or substitution. The sacrifice siphons off the wrath of God from the community. The sin is transferred to the sacrifice and the sin is thereby eliminated. Yahweh demanded that violation of his holy will, results in death. When the animal loses his life, God’s demand was met (cf Lev 17:11, 14). The animal was killed in exchange for sparing the life of the worshipper. The sacrifice here carries a substitutionary meaning. The idea that the sacrificial victim endures God’s punishment of the sinner is, however a notion in the New Testament not found in Leviticus. The sacrifice serves metaphorically in its death as the ransom that enables the sinner himself to go free.

Still another term that can be used is “redemption”. This intends the release of people, animals, or property from bondage through outside help. They are not in a position to release themselves and only someone strong or rich, can bring it about. By accepting the sacrifice presented to him God redeems the sinner from his guilt or bondage. This is the other side of the coin indicated by the term “forgiveness”. Although no such specific term

is used in Leviticus, it is the intention in many cases. In cases like Leviticus 4:20, 26, 31 and 35 the animal sacrifice pays for sin and brings forgiveness. On the human level restitution aids the restoration of strained relationships. In the case of relationship between the sinner and God, the sacrifice gives expiation and mends their relationship. God forgives the sinner, and the relationship between them is repaired. The person becomes free from guilt and does no longer have to fear any retribution.

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3.5 Shed Blood: Life or Death

The final question we have to answer is why the sacrifice for reconciliation also included blood. The handling of the blood was central in the ceremony and was the most crucial part of the ritual. The law of Yahweh had endowed blood this importance. The importance of blood can be seen in the rule that the priestly portions of the sacrifice were assigned to the one who manipulates the blood (Lev 6:26). The importance of blood is also underscored by different terms indicating its essential role in atonement (Lev 6:26; 7:7; 16:16-18; 17:11).

Blood is important because it is essential for life. As long as it flows in the body that body is alive. Blood let out of the body implies loss of life. Blood outside the human body is not only a disturbance of God's order but is mostly associated with violence and murder. In almost sixty percent of cases where the term "blood" is used in the Old Testament, it refers to death as a result of violence. Shedding human blood is treated as a capital offence. Whoever sheds the blood of a human is to be killed (Gn 9:6). Blood is

related to the divine: shed blood has uncanny power, as it calls down vengeance that is assured by God.

The shedding of animal blood, however, is allowed in OT law. It even plays an essential role in the sacrificial cult. The code for priests (Lev 1-7) demands various dispositions of blood as an intrinsic part of the sacrificial ritual. It was applied to symbols of the divine presence and power: it was splashed against the altar, sprinkled in the sanctuary, or smeared to the altar horns. Bringing blood in contact with these holy objects meant to deal with an object that was close to God and thus pleasing to him. It sanctified whatever the blood touched.

Leviticus 17:11 can be seen as the key passage in Leviticus on the blood ritual. It deals with blood as means of atonement. This is the only text in the Old Testament that comes close to giving a reason why blood effects atonement. It presents a younger explanation of the Israelite reconciliation institute by the blood sacrifice. This verse is explicit that "it is the blood, which is the life that makes expiation". Dickson (1984: 193) has vividly shown the significance of the cross by positing that death does not end life for in African thought death leads into life.

In the context of Leviticus 17:1-16 the making of any sacrificial offering away from an official altar and the consumption of blood in any form was prohibited. The centralization of the sacrificial cult at the official sanctuary gives to blood an exquisite meaning. The prohibition to "eat" blood (Lev 17:10) is a precautionary measure against any heathen

practice where blood is consumed because it is thought to have inherent power and to give life when it is drunk. In Israel it is totally forbidden to consume blood for any reason whatsoever. In Israel blood is to be used for a totally different purpose. It receives here a unique function.

The blood is used as an element in atonement because it is the carrier and symbol of life. Elsewhere (Deut 12:23) blood and life are associated with each other, the one indicating the other. God is, however, the source of all life and he is the only one who controls life. Blood and life both stand in close relation to the living God. Blood indicates God's power and his mercy to give life. Because blood is life and life comes from God, blood is near to the divine and therefore holy and efficacious. Handling of blood in a ceremony at the tabernacle appeals to God's sole authority on life.

The sacrificed blood represents a life that has been taken away. It represents death or, to be more exact, a substitutionary death. In ritual context blood reverses the process of death. Usually when blood is shed, death changes into life. In the sacrifice at the sanctuary blood brings about transition from the realm of the death to the realm of life for the person who sacrifices. The one who sacrifices presents blood/life at the altar, being a replacement for his/her own blood/life. The animal's blood represents that of the worshipper. The shedding of the blood of the sacrificial animal releases the individual's life. The blood of the animal is used as substitution for the life of the sinner. Life is

surrendered and dedicated to God so that he can transform the life of the one who brings the sacrifice.

The blood rites performed by the priests enable the offerer to approach the Lord without shedding his/her own blood. Because a person cannot approach God without blood, this blood takes the place of his own blood. Ekem (2005:26) interjects, however that "it can be argued that the Old Testament hardly gives us any indication that man's (sic) inability to provide a means of atonement leaves him at the mercy of a vindictive God whose aim is always to inflict punishment on offenders." YHWH can be seen to step out of His way to take the initiative to provide a means of atonement. It serves as a ransom that substitutes for the life owed by the offerer. The idea found in Isaiah that one man can take the place of many others and pay the price, is here switched around. The idea of taking another's place is ritually applied here to the animal that dies on the altar and brings life by its shed blood and expiation for the one who sacrificed it. It settles the difference between YHWH and his people and restores the imbalance brought by transgression.

This strange measure rests solely on YHWH's relationship with Israel and his willingness to be reconciled with them. Israel believed that YHWH has graciously given his people a visible way to find forgiveness of their sins. When blood functions as means of reconciliation, it does not only signify life as a gift of God, but also the blood of the sacrifice itself as a gift which God provides as a means through which humans can be saved. The sacrificial blood given to humans by God in a ritual is given to God through

the mediation of a priest by the one who offers the sacrifice. The generous all-sufficiency of God places humans in a position where they can use the opportunity and possibility created by God to offer to God what God has already given to them.

This implies that the blood does not operate in terms of any intrinsic ultimate value, but in terms of its function in the ritual act where it symbolizes a process in which humans are changed. Blood in itself does not effect atonement, only blood from an animal sacrificed before YHWH according to certain prescribed rituals. Blood has only meaning in terms of God's willingness to forgive sins. It is ordained by God to be used for cleaning (Lv 14) and as instrument for receiving atonement (Lv 17:11). God himself bestowed atoning power on blood. The required manipulation of blood teaches that guilt is not automatically removed. It can be removed only by the participation of the guilty person in the way prescribed by YHWH. Receiving life from God is not inherent in the blood itself or the performance of the ritual, but is granted by God within the framework of the cult as prescribed by him. The offering of a sacrificed animal according to the prescribed ritual, establishes the judicial basis for YHWH to grant the presenter forgiveness.

Animal blood can stand in for human life although there is a very real disproportion between human life and animal life. The blood rather has symbolical value. God accommodates animal blood as reconciliatory instrument for redeeming sin. It symbolizes the person's confession that God accommodates the sacrificial blood and that only God can give life. It signifies the offerer's willingness to act on God's terms. The

blood's meaning can only be found in its cultic function. God himself ordained the blood sacrifice for His people. It is God who forgives and gives life. He is willing to forgive the sins in and through the ritual actions where he is recognised as giver of life and the one who sustains life.

To be reconciled to God therefore means to be restored to life. Its ethical implication is restored relations with the creation and with fellow human beings. It implies balance and equilibrium in the life of the society and the individual as illustrated in focal text:

Lev. 4:13-21 *"If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. 14 When they become aware of the sin they committed; the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. 15 The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the Lord, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord. 16 Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. 17 He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the Lord seven times in front of the curtain. 18 He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the Lord in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. 19 He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, 20 and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they*

will be forgiven. 21 Then he shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull. This is the sin offering for the community.” (NIV)

In the original there are three words not clearly distinguished in the English version, which may be rendered assembly, congregation and meeting. The *edah*, or assembly, was a regularly-appointed and well-defined body of men. The smallest number that constituted an assembly among the Jews was ten heads of families. The *edah* also denoted the representation of the people in lawful convention, consisting of the princes of tribes, heads of clans and houses, the elders, the judges, or officers as they are called in the English version. This was the public council, the members of which seemed to have been the called of the assembly mentioned in (Num 1:16; 16:2). The assembly or largest *edah* consisted of the men of twenty years and above, these were called the numbered of the assembly (Exo. 38:25).

The *qahal*, or congregation was simply a multitude or a nation assembled or incorporated with common rights. With the definite article it usually denotes the whole body of the people. The *moed*, or meeting was a set time of meeting, or a stated festival or convention held at such a time. It is the word constantly used in the phrase which has been rendered tent of meeting.

It is obvious that the *edah*, or regularly constituted assembly, is the only body whose act could bring responsibility and guilt on the whole congregation. The act of an individual, however, had the same effect (Josh.6). The *oela*, or burnt sacrifice, is the way by which a penitent sinner is reconciled to God.

Hid from the eyes of the congregation, which is different from the assembly, whether this be the council or the legally constituted convention of the nation. The *qahal* includes the women and children and old men. *And are guilty*. It is evident from this that the word rendered guilt denotes not a distinct class of offences from sin, but merely a different aspect of the same offence. For here the people who have sinned are said to be guilty in regard to the self-same act. Hence the question is not what kind of transgression is a sin and what kind is a trespass, but in a given offence what is the sin and what is the trespass. In every transgression there are two things, and no more: a wrong done and a right undone. The wrong done is the sin that demands punishment; the right neglected is the trespass which calls for redress. Hence it is clear as the text states that he who sins is guilty.

Vrs. 14-15 designate that at unveiling of the hidden sin, a primal representative (Gen. 1:7; Exo.3:16; Lev. 12:21) shall slay the victim on behalf of the congregation. Harrison (1980:65) highlights that the ritual involving the blood-sprinkling (16-21) parallels that prescribed for the high priest (7-12), except that the mention of atonement (20) is not matched by a similar statement in the passage dealing with the high priest's sin offering. As a result of this sacrifice the congregation was assured of forgiveness, because God is 'ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.' Ekem (2005:25) notes that the thought here was to make persons acceptable to YHWH by making them eligible to participate in Israel's religious life. He further states that although sacrifices were regarded as means of removing offences it was not meant for

willful moral offences but “the ritual offences which might be omitted either unwillingly or through carelessness and without any evil intent.

Conclusion

From the discourse so far, it is clear that YHWH was appalled with sin but loved humankind to the point that He would not allow any block between Himself and humans (the objects of His love and fellowship). By prescribing the format and means of appeasement, He secured atonement for His subjects as revealed in Lev. 4:20 ... “and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. 21 Then he shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull. This is the sin offering for the community.” (NIV)

In the next chapter, the people of Asante, their view and significance of sacrifice, their cultic worldview as well as their value of blood will be solicited from respondents through interviews and participant observation interwoven with references relevant to the questions posed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

AN OVERVIEW AND ROLE OF ASANTE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, focus was narrowed onto the introductory matters on the book of Leviticus and a deeper look at Leviticus 4: 13-21. The literary form and structure of the book of Leviticus, with emphasis on its sacrificial essence was assessed. This chapter is concerned with a summary of Asante worldview of the spirit world and the role *afodee/ayeyedee* (sacrifice) plays in Akan religion with specific reference to Asante sacrificial system. The sources of information are a fusion of interviews from the field, and references from aspects of Asante culture as captured from previous research conducted by scholars in this area of study.

4.2 The Asante

The term “Asante” has been explained severally by different historians. Some posit that in their servitude to their overlord, the Denkyira, they sent a variety of items like plantain, cassava, etc among them was red clay (*ntwoma*). *Ntwoma* is also known as *asan*, hence the Denkyira in an attempt to specify them designated them by the *asan* as those who extract *asan* (*asan-te fo*), with time their identity attracted the modifier *asantefo* and they became known as such.

According to Nana Gyamfi Kumanin, *Pampasohene*, Asante is said to have been derived from *esa* (war) and *nti* (for the sake of). Thus, for the sake of war, various chiefdoms came together to fight their archenemy, the Denkyira people. After their victory, the people strengthened the loose alliance and became a unified state. The primary aim of coming together gave them their name, *esanti*. (*esantifo*) (people united because of war with their common enemy)

Generally, the term "Asante" is used in triple connotations: (1) to refer to the ethnic group, i.e. to those who are members of the tribe that forms one component of the modern country Ghana. Historically, the tribe formed an independent state; it conquered other tribal groups, which were consolidated under the Asante territory but were not converted to Asante. Modern Ghana is co-extensive with the former borders of Asanteland. (2) To designate the geographical location in which the clans of the Asante tribe live. In modern Ghana, Asanteland is demarcated the Ashanti Region. (3) To refer to the dialect, Asante-*Twi*. In this study, the term "Asante" will connote the tribe, their language, or their geographical location, which will be differentiated by the context.

To the Asante, the universe consist of the visible and invisible domains where *Onyankopon* is both immanent and transcendent ensuring its sustenance. Everything is therefore seen within a religious context that is why like all Africans they are branded as incurably religious. The social, ~~political~~ and economic settings are closely intertwined with the religious to the extent that the assumptions, beliefs and interpretations of Asante are informed by their religious leanings. The universe is made up of spirits, humans,

animals and plants where the sacred is perceived to overrule and manifest itself in and through all nature – animate and inanimate.

It is also seen in the Asante worldview that the visible world depends on the invisible world therefore there is no need for compartmentalization. The spirit world and the physical world are not two separate worlds but closely knitted together into a complimentary symbiotic interdependence. In terms of superiority, the spirit world controls the physical; the latter is seen as the arena within which the former exercises powers. Humans are dependent on the spirit beings for their needs while the spirits need humans to gladden their hearts, to worship and or venerate them. Dickson (1969: 36) adds that between these two worlds there is harmony and orderliness underlining the importance of this relationship to the Asante. The success of anything in the material presupposes that it had received the approval of the spiritual. The Asante universe is suffused with power created by the Supreme Being (*Onyankopon*), and individuals and groups who succeed in tapping into this power wield authority.

In Asante society, holiness and uncleanness are both transferable and infectious through contact. Coming into contact with a dead body or a menstruating woman required cleansing (*dwira*). In the not too distant past, households kept basins of water at their entrances for entrants to wash their hands and possibly feet before entering into the house. Uncleanness of every kind demanded washing, be it in the spiritual, moral or material sense, in order to avoid contamination and curses. All forms of misfortune – sicknesses, calamities etc. are seen to be the handiworks of the spirit beings, it is in

response to or punishment for wrong doings. Humankind on the other hand, has ways of averting these consequences through sacrificial rituals as directed by priest.

There are a number of spirit beings recognized by the Asante. There is *Onyankopon/Onyame*, the Supreme Being, the originator and creator of all things, *Asaase Yaa*, the earth goddess, the *abosom*, gods, *nananom*, ancestors and *ahonhom ahodoo*, other spirits. These other spirits could be errand spirits both good and evil. In the form of a pantheon, ***Onyankopon*** is seen as the greatest beyond comparison; the creator, *oboadee*, the eternal one, *Tetekeaframoa*, the intervener and avenger, *Patakoagyekoabowobo*, the dependable one, *Tweadumpon*. God has made Himself known by many means to the extent that the Asante affirms that even the least (children) know Him by instinct and need not be thought. The adage (*obi nkyere abofra Nyame*) clarifies this.

Asaase Yaa (Earth goddess) is an integral aspect of Asante thought. *Asaase* is earth, the great creation that provides and sustains livelihood by way of being the bread basket of all humankind. King (1970: 9) asserts that since so many of the Ashanti were and are farmers, the earth became an unavoidable contact that ensured vitality and sustenance of food, medicine and rest. It is also the final resting place of all humankind and during moments of burial prayers and incantations are directed to her, pleading for a portion or space to lay her grandchild to rest.

Abosom (gods) are spirit beings perceived by Asante as intermediaries between God and humans. In Adu Gyamfi's words, the term itself is a derivative of *abo* (stones) and *som*

(worship or serve) which literally means “stone worship”. It presumed that the lesser gods had stones as altars hence the derivative *abosom*. These are spirits that are embodied in stones, rocks, wind, rivers, oceans, streams, animals, and other objects. I guess it is in this vein that Nana Twetwagye argues vehemently that he is not involved in *abo som* (stone worship). To him he worships the spirit (*suman*), and it is not the medium s/he chooses to rest on that he serves. Through the *abosom* people receive blessings, prosperity, protection, direction and recompense.

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Belief in *Nananom* (ancestors) is another cardinal reference point in Asante Religion. *Nananom* are the immediate link between the spirit world and the human world. They shuttle between the “living dead and living”, they serve as emissaries conveying both good and bad omen to those who deserve them. The belief in ancestors connote that life does not end in death and that death is rather a transition into an elaborate society of imbuelement with supernaturalism. The Asante believe that the dead possess power hence prayer and request are directed at them for assistance. A dead relative’s spirit can possess someone to disclose the cause of one’s death especially when it is believed the deceased did not die out of his/her destiny (*se obi anwu ne nkrabea wuo a, ne sumsum tumi si obi so se nsaman kom*).

With this worldview and close association with the spirit world the Asante have to maintain links and fellowship with the spirit world and one sure medium of keeping the rapport is through sacrifices.

According to Nana Obinim, Sacrifice or Offering means more than *afodee*. He classifies sacrifice into *apae*, *mmusu yi*, *ayeyedee* and *ammanee*.

Apae is the equivalence of *mpae* (prayer) as known to Christians. It forms the basis of invoking the deity as a first step of knocking for his or her attention before engaging in the deeper things to follow. It also seems to be the common medium to interact with Nananom even if there is no calamity but peace. Nana Twetwagye corroborates this assertion that each morning he greets the spirits with *apae* in the form of performing libation.

Mmusu yi, is the act of sacrificing or offering an object especially an animal; in some instances it could be money (*sraha*) to the gods or to a designated place to transfer a curse, sickness or calamity from a community or an individual to a beneficiary or to appease the *abosom*. This sacrifice stops a looming disaster which otherwise would have made conditions unbearable for those involved.

Afodee/ayeyedee is a sacrifice or gift offered as thanksgiving for answered prayers or for the deity's up-keep throughout the year. It is an appreciation to *Nyame*, *abosom* or *Nananom* for bounty harvest, good health or success. Agyarko in his doctoral thesis (2010) contends that the term *afodee* is wrongfully designated as a thanksgiving offering. The word *fo* means guilt and *adee* means an object. Therefore, *afodee* means an object offered for guilt. However, his assertion might only be partly true on the grounds that *fo* also means occasion, hence *fo-da* are special days with which occasions and events are associated— *Akwasidae*, *Awukudae*, *Fofie* etc. *Afodee* then are objects offered on such occasions especially for deities, spirits and *Nananom*.

Ammanee is a yearly or occasional ritual sacrifice offered as directed by the gods. It is a sacrifice needed as a rite of passage for the purification and dedication for a set course. *Ammanee* consecrates a day, an event, an occasion or an object and makes it fit for use as per the direction of the gods.

Ammanee and *ammamre* are two different terms that must not be confused. While *ammanee* represents what is prescribed by the gods as a sacrifice needed to purify, consecrate or serve as a rite of passage, *ammamre* connotes the tradition of the people, what is mostly practiced or said by the people. If for instance *ammanee* is always demanded or required before anything could be commenced or performed, then because of its consistency and constant practice *ammanee* becomes *ammamre*.

4.3 The Asante Sacrificial System

Sacrifice plays an important role in Asante religion. The Asante people believe that in communicating with the spirit beings through sacrifice, the ritual fence is removed to allow entry into the presence of these beings. In a conversation with Nana Kwaku Poku, Dikro of Atwima Manhyia, he said *afodebo*, the act of sacrifice are an integral portion of Asante life and thought. It is performed both to avert viciousness and to usher in victuals and well-being. In this section, I will attempt to discuss sacred places, and materials and objects used for sacrifice that are relevant to the Asante. I will then discuss the forms and meaning of Asante sacrifices, the significance of blood in the Asante sacrificial system and God and sacrifice in Asante religion.

4.3.1 Cultic objects

I. The Blackened Stool

Adu-Gyamfi (2007) posited, in Asante society, the stool has varied functions. First, it is a utilitarian object found in every household. Anyone, child or adult, male or female, may own any number of stools. Second, the stool is an object associated with rites of passage; although it does not necessarily possess sacral qualities, as a gift it acquires special meaning. The third function of the stool is as a political symbol. Every chief has one or more stools, which he uses to identify and legitimate his rank. In the words of Kyeremanteng (1964:11), in Asante, stools are august emblems of political, judicial, and social leadership, "the most important of the chief's regalia and the *sine qua non* of his high office." The strong political association of stools is evidenced by the fact that the term "stool" may denote the office of a chief/king. When a person becomes chief, he is "enstooled" in the office; during his rule he is said to "sit upon the stool," and when he dies, the Asante say, "The stool has fallen."

A fourth function of a stool is as a sacred object. The Asante believe that the stool is imbued with the being of its owner; thus, a person's *sunsum* is absorbed into it upon each sitting. Consequently, the sacredness of the stool increases with contact with its owner. To prevent any other *sunsum* from entering it, a stool is placed on its side when not in use. The stool is used in ancestor veneration; through it people establish and maintain contact with the ancestors. The ancestor stools are distinguished from other stools by being blackened. When a chief/king dies, one of his stools is consecrated by being made

black. This stool could be either the one he sat on to eat, the one he sat on to bathe, or the one on which his corpse was bathed. Bells are attached underneath the stools, which are used to call the ancestral spirits. In addition, iron chains are hung on the front foot of each stool, believed to bind the souls of the ancestor to the stools.

The blackened stool is kept in the stool-house, the Asante "Holy of Holies". Some of the blackened stools are thought to be more dignified and honorable than others, depending on their occupant's outstanding achievements or contribution to the state. According to Sarpong (1971:37-38), there are a number of reasons adduced for the blackening of the stools: one view holds it that, it avoids making it look unsightly since it is target of numerous sacrifices which entails the smearing of blood and other substances in festive days. Secondly, it is done to symbolize the death of the owner. Generally, white stands for life, joy and happiness; therefore leaving the stool white could be inferred that the living rejoices over the dead. A third view suggests that black things are fearful, the living are to treat the royal ancestors with reverence hence the blackening to impute this feeling. There is yet a fourth view which asserts that stools are blackened with soot and eggs to prevent decomposition. The details of the significance of the elements of the preservation will be the subject of another work.

II. The Golden Stool

After the formation of the Asante Union, the Asante chief priest (*Okomfo panin*), Anokye resolved that the Union should be maintained. In order to fortify "this union" with a

perpetual binding force and spiritual symbol of unity, Boahen (1975:16) adds that Okomfo Anokye, according to tradition, summoned all the rulers of the various chiefdoms on one fateful Friday. Tradition shows that he pointed a sacred gilded sword (*afena*) to the skies to pay homage to *Okantamanto* (the God who does not renege on His oath or promise). He shook his magic wand (*bodua*- a tail of a cow). Gazing sternly to the skies, he prayed and the result was the descent of the *Sika Dwa Kofi* (Golden Stool of Friday). According to Ward (1966:119), "Anokye brought down from the sky, with darkness and thunder, and in thick cloud of white dust, a wooden stool, adorned with gold, which floated to earth and alighted gently on Osei Tutu's knee." Anokye, according to tradition, told the people that the Stool contained the *sunsum* (Spirit) of the Asante nation. Anokye announced that the power, strength and bravery of the Asante nation depended on the safety of the stool. In ensuring the safety and protection of the stool, Komfo Afua Saa recounted that during the invasion of Asante by the British, the *Sika Dwa Kofi* was sent into hiding at Aboabogya a town within Kwabre for safe-keeping. The area where the stool was hidden is known as Asikaso along the Aboabogya – Ahenkro road. To impress this on their mind, Anokye caused Osei Tutu and the leading *ahenfo* (chiefs) and *ahemaa* (queenmothers) present to give him clippings from their nails and from their hair. They were mixed into a medicine and smeared on the stool. The remainder was drunk by the contributors as a sacramental drink.

Thus, the *sunsum* of each *Ohene* and *Ohemaa* was provided a resting or anchored place in the stool. After this rite, Anokye is said to have given series of "sermons." He told the people that the Golden Stool comes direct from *Onyankopon* (the Omnipotent God) and

that it is the most sacred treasure of all the state stools, for it symbolizes the Asante *sunsum* (personality-spirit). Anokye stressed that it was the symbol of their unity and oneness as a nation, the visible link between them and *Onyankopon*, from whom it descends, and their dead counterparts in *asamando* (the spirit world). The Golden Stool has in antiquity been accorded great significance in the history of the Asante and continues to be so. It is like the Ark of the Covenant of ancient Judah. It is the most sacred object of the Asante people, which is publicly displayed only on a special occasion such as the *Odwira* and *Adae-kese*. It is cleansed of any evil committed by *Asanteman* and receives cultic meal during *Odwira*.

3.3.2 Sacred Places

In Asante society springs, groves, areas beneath huge trees, shrines, crossroads (*nkwantanan*), graveyards, stool-house and royal burial places are all sacred sites of worship. Before the institution of monarchy, families had shrines, springs, and groves as sacred places of worship. The shrines are the places where people go to worship the *abosom*. These shrines could be in the house, in the groves, or at riversides. It is common to find items of worship along riverbanks and under trees like the oak. The crossroads are believed to be a place of meeting of spirit beings. Graveyards and royal burial places are perceived as sacred places where the presence of spirits of the dead are intensely felt. It is at these sites that the living occasionally goes to speak to their departed ones. The stool-house and royal burial place are the most sacred places of the Asante state.

I. The Stool-House

The stool-house is the storeroom of the ancestral stools and the Golden Stool. It is within the palace complex of the chief/king. To ensure the absolute safety of the stools, the stool-house has no windows and consequently, like the ancient Israelite holy of holies, is very dark and gloomy, even during the day. The stool-house is the most holy place of Asante religion, where the ancestors are venerated on *Adae-kese* and *Odwira* festivals. As a guardian of the stools, the chief/king is obliged to stay near the stool-house, so lives in the palace.

In the stool-house, the stools are arranged by order of succession. The stools are not placed on the bare floor; rather, they are placed on a bed or dais that is dressed with a heavy blanket and covered with same blanket or *nsaa*, hand-woven cloth. Each stool has *kuduo*, a brass bowl, containing gold dust placed in front of it. Two bells are placed on either side of each stool, which rung before an offering is made to it.

The concept of the sacred implies restrictions and prohibitions on human behavior. If something is sacred, certain rules must be observed in relation to it. This means that something that is said to be sacred must be placed apart from everyday things or places, so that its special significance can be recognized and rules regarding it obeyed. In view of this, the sacredness of the stool-house demands taboos for its entry. Sarpong (1971:85), records the following people who are not allowed into the stool-house: a white person, a citizen of an enemy state, a circumcised person, a woman in her menstrual period, a sub-

chief whose position indicates that he is a warrior, and royal persons who have an immediate claim to the stool. A person who defiles this sacred place by breaking any of these taboos would, in the olden days, be instantly beheaded to appease the ancestral spirits thus wrongly treated. In addition, when a chief dies, his body is brought into the stool-house; this desecrates the place. Therefore, after its removal to the royal burial place, the stool-bearers purify the stool-house through sacrifice (*ammamee*). The rituals permeate all traditional societies no matter the size of one's chiefdom. What is done at the *Asantehene's* palace is done in other smaller palaces in equivalent proportions to the size and prominence of the stools.

Nana Kwaku Poku added that on *fo-da* like *Akwasidae* the chief and elders clad in white apparel perform libation on the stools, kill sheep and smear the blood on the stools. Various parts of sacrificed animals and fats are cut and placed on the stools. Some of the meat is boiled and served with *fufuo* for each stool. The chief eats his portion of the meal in the presence of the stools (ancestors) and leaves their presence with the doors locked till late afternoon.

II. The Royal Burial Place

Rattray (1927:112) posits that, the Asante have two royal burial places, one at Bantama and the other at Breman. *Asantehene* is given two burials, a "primary" and "secondary" burial. After laying in state the corpse was removed at night and sent to the *bam kesee* at Bampenase. Here the coffin housing the corpse is hole ridden and suspended on a pit

(*asonyeso*) for eighty days for liquid decomposition. The remaining flesh was scraped off and the bones were oiled and placed in another coffin for a chamber prepared for it in the *bam kesee*. This completed the “primary” burial. After one Asante year, on the first anniversary of the king’s death, the remains were removed to the royal mausoleum. This is the “secondary” burial. The mausoleum is a long building approached by a gallery and partitioned into small cells. The entrance to each cell is covered with a silk curtain. Each cell contains the sacred skeleton of a King in preservation. The different bones of each skeleton are carefully and artfully joined together with golden wire, and placed in a coffin adorned with slabs of gold. For each skeleton, there is a table, a chair, a dish, and a water jug; and around each coffin, there is a sword, a musket, sandals, and some other personal articles that had been the favourite of each particular king during his lifetime. The living *Asantehene* visits the mausoleum on festive days. On such days, before the king and his cortege arrived there, the skeleton of each king had already been removed from its coffin and displayed on its bed near its table, ready to receive the living *Asantehene*’s food and drink. The living *Asantehene* enters without sandals on, and without any gold ornament on his body; he enters the cells with his cloths adjusted about his loins.

4.3.3 The Choice of Animals and Objects for Sacrifice and Why.

There are reasons for the selection of one animal over others. The gravity of the offence, sin or calamity to be dealt with plays a key role in the choice of a victim for sacrifice. In Asante society, objects for sacrifice include animals and fowls, eggs, water, alcohol – (schnapps, nsafufuo, pito), white clay, ashes, mashed yam, red oil, blood, lavender and

incense; there are also “medicine” leaves such as *adwera* (hyssop), that are used for purification purposes. These sacrificial objects can be referred to as concrete expressions of human intentions towards God and the invisible world; through them the visible world penetrates the invisible world, and by them the offerer symbolically presents or offers the visible world to the invisible world.”

Tufuo and Donkor (1969:18-19) posits that the fowl is the most common sacrificial object in Asante society. The Asante see the fowl and its eggs as indispensable for propitiation purposes to settle minor disputes or difference between, for example, husband and wife. Among the Asante, the fowl is like the dove in ancient Judah; “in times of sacrifice, it is the peacemaker; times of pleasure, it is the pot.” The fowl’s eggs are inexpensive and easily obtainable; however, “it is considered the most precious food with special propitiatory significance for sacrifices to spirits, deities and all supernatural elements.” The white part of the egg symbolizes purification, healing, and contact with ancestral spirits and deities. The number of eggs used depends on the magnitude of offence committed. In some cases, fowls alone are used, while in others both fowls and eggs are used. The fowl and eggs are also used in thanksgiving offering to spirit-beings.

According to Nana Akyinko, another common object used for sacrifice is the *odwan* (sheep). Its meat is considered the richest of all domestic animals. The blood of the sheep is the chief food of all Asante *abosom* and the sacred stools. Sheep are used in Asante sacrifice for serious offences against the *abosom* and the ancestors, and against one’s father or uncle. In addition, big animals like cows are used in serious cases. In the olden

days when human sacrifice was deemed necessary, today, a cow is offered instead. The use of a cow in sacrifice could also serve as a sign of the wealth of the offerer. If the incidence borders on death, a cow or bull may be requested. In many cases however, a dog, cat, goat, or sheep may be a preferred substitute. As it is said, "*Suman a odi nnipa mogya no, ye de kraman, kra, aponkye anaa odwan na esesa nnipa no.*" (to the spirit or deity that consumes blood, a dog, cat, goat or sheep is given instead of a person).

Animals designated for sacrifice were to be carefully selected. Nana Akyinko and Obinim concurred that a sacrificial animal must be without blemish that is the affected animal must have no physical defects or deformation hence the phrase "*odwan anaa akoko fitaa a otua dua*". The sacrifice must be fit in appearance as befitting a gift for *Nananom* and the *abosom* to whom reverence must be seen to have been accorded. The sacrifice must be whole from the head to the tail. It must not be mad, blind, or dumb; besides it must not be lame in the fore or hind legs. In fact a castrated male sheep, goat, cow etc. is abominable as a sacrifice to any deity. In the course of the interview when it became necessary for a sacrifice to be performed, it was realized that there were no native fowls hence one of the assistants to Nana Osei, the assistant to Nana Obinim chosen to demonstrate the process suggested the use of a poultry fowl since it was just a demonstration, but he was met with a sharp rebuttal. The priest retorted "*yenfa ade foo mma Nananom anim, wo nnye a na wo nnye ntesaa dee ye no yie*". That is to say, "cheap things are not to be brought before the ancestors; if it must be done it must be done well." This was ample manifestation of how the sacrificial animals to *Nananom* and or *abosom* were taken seriously.

In many cases, McCaskie asserts foodstuffs are offered to *Onyame* (God), the *abosom* (gods) and *Nananom* (the ancestors). The most widely used foodstuff is the yam. In old Asante culture, the yam was the basic staple, the basis of all Asante peasant agriculture. In addition to its nutritional importance, the yam is the preferred foodstuff in sacrificial offering. As an offering, it is cooked and mashed (*eto*).

Nana Akyinko, further adds that there can be no sacrifice without drinks. The drinks offered as libation create the atmosphere that invokes the *ahonhom* (spirits), *Nananom*, or *Odomankoma*. "*Nsa na yede kankye frefre sumsum mu atumfo*." The drinks vary from gin (schnapps), *nsa fufuo* (palm wine), *kube nsuo* or *pito*. *Pito* is sometimes a preferred drink because most of the spirits manifest as from a Northern Ghana descent. Drinks are used alongside most offerings as libations. Although water is used, alcohol is the most frequently offered libation. The power of alcohol shows that it is stronger than water, and it is thought to be surpassed only by blood. Akyeampong (1996:74) stresses that the Asante consider alcohol a sacred fluid that "bridge the gap between the physical and spiritual worlds." As a result, it has the ability to facilitate communication with the spiritual world. In Asante society, alcohol is not poured down the throat of a dying person for the fear that, it would impede his or her journey to the spirit world. However, once the person is dead, an alcohol libation helps the deceased's transition to the spirit world.

Red (palm) oil (*ngo*) plays a role in festive occasions among the Akans. Red is associated with blood, sacrificial rites and the shedding of blood. A red-eyed mood means a sense of seriousness, a readiness for a serious spiritual or political encounter. Red is used as a

symbol of heightened spiritual and political mood, sacrifice and struggle. Because of its significance in Asante sacrifice, the role of blood in Asante sacrifice needs to be discussed in detail.

4.4 Types of Sacrifices

Theories of sacrifices can be found in the idea and practice of sacrifice in Asante tradition. In Asante tradition one cannot choose a single theory and designate it as the only aspect of sacrifice. In Asante society, sacrifice and offerings are made either in recognition of blessings received, as a plea for continued communion, or in an attempt to obtain forgiveness for any infraction or effect reconciliation. Whatever is given to a deity, is given to show acceptance or belief in that deity and that the deity can protect and provide for him or her. Broadly speaking in the words of Nana Twetwagye, there are sacrifices like blood sacrifice, food sacrifice, and other sacrifices that involve – ‘bese’ (kola), *sedee* (cowries), or *sika* (coins).

Blood sacrifice mostly deals with “*mmusuo*” (abomination/evi). In the event of or anticipation of a calamity like a person cursed to die blood is used to exchange destiny (*nkrabea*) of the victim. The curse is returned to the curser. On occasions of “*Nnapon*” like *Akwasidae* and *Odwira*, the gods demand blood for sacrifice.

Food sacrifice is offered during harvest. At harvest the first fruit or food is given to the gods before any person tastes some. Again on occasion of family gathering food is

offered to the ancestors before the family members eat. On “*Fo da*” (certain “high days”) – *Fofie*, *Kudapakuo*, *Kwakuo*, *Kwasidae* etc. food sacrifice is also given to visiting spirits. This food is mostly “*eto fufuo* made of *bayere fufuo*, *ngo* and *kosua* (mashed meal prepared from white yam spiced with palm oil and egg).

“*Sraha*” *mmusuo* is accomplished by sacrificing *bese*, *sedee*, and *sika* in the coin form to exchange fate, destiny etc. The offerer overturns the curse “*adanee*” back to sender or even to unsuspecting passer-bys. In some instances the *sraha* is administered as a gift to others who upon its usage become the victims of the transference secured by the sacrifice.

I will discuss sacrifices in Asante society under the following subheadings: gift sacrifices, communion sacrifices, and atonement sacrifices.

I. Gift Sacrifices (*akyedee afodee/ayeyedee*)

Nana Baffour Awuah, *Gyasehene* of Akropong – Ashanti states that, gift sacrifices are conceived of as a gift to a deity to secure their favour or to avert their wrath, as a token of recognition and gratitude or as a simple expression of thanksgiving to the deity. *Nyame* is offered sacrifices of praise from time to time to thank Him. A sheep is given in thanksgiving to *Nyame* during the installation of a chief. In addition, in old Asante, and perhaps today in some circles, after a good yam harvest people offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving in honour of *Nyame* in their compounds. Gift sacrifices for *Nyame* were offered as a part of regular worship. They are also made to the *abosom* and *Nananom* in appreciation for success, health and children.

Gift sacrifices are also made as a sort of first-fruit offering. The Asante believe that the first products of one's work are consecrated to the god who gave the blessing. Since the Asantes are mostly agrarian in occupation and yams are considered one of the fruits of humankind's labour, the first yams are given as first-fruit offering. New yams are cooked, mashed and mixed with palm oil, and a portion is offered to the *abosom* and the ancestors. This "first-fruit offering" may be placed in front of the shrine of an *obosom*, on the blackened stools of the ancestors, or may even be dropped on the ground. The rest of the cooked yam is shared with and eaten by the family or the clan in a sort of thanksgiving dinner for the harvest that God has provided.

The gift offering is perceived to connote the idea of feeding the deity. This idea stems from a common Asante practice. Before eating, the Asante set aside a little food as an offering to the deity; similarly, before drinking, especially at a gathering, the Asante spill a few drops of wine on the ground to invite *Nyame* and *Asaase Yaa* to come and drink with them. Whether or not this should be classified as feeding the deity is debatable, because it could be a sign of recognizing the presence of the deity. This leads to the second type of sacrifice, communion sacrifices.

II. Communion Sacrifices (*Nkabom afodee/ayeyedee*)

As in ancient Judah communion sacrifice, in Asante communion sacrifices, part of the victim is given to the deity and the remaining eaten by the offerers and their family members. Among the Asante, the eating of the victim represents the communion between the spirit-beings and humans. In Asante tradition, the eating of the victim is vital because

the meat of the sacrifice is believed to give the eater food and nourishment. In this way, the spirit-being is perceived to give the participants in the communion sacrifice new force and vitality, on the assumption that what "had been eaten passed into the eater." (Yerkes 1952:208)

Mbiti (1970:179) hints that communion sacrifices are sometimes offered to the ancestors. In this case, it symbolizes fellowship, a recognition that the ancestors continue as members of the human families, and tokens of respect and remembrance of the ancestors are maintained. Like the communion sacrifices in ancient Israel, in the communion sacrifices for the ancestors, some part of the sacrificial victim are specifically the share of the ancestors: the blood, lungs and fat. Thus, pieces of the fat from the entrails and the lungs are deposited on the centre props of the blackened stools and the head and parts of the intestines are placed before the stools.

It is important to explain the significance of the various parts of the slaughtered sheep in this rite. Meyerowitz (1949:179) elaborates on the sacrifices; first, the blood is to give life and strength to the ancestors and to help them remain in contact with the living. In the ceremony for the state, it is the *Asantehene* who rubs the blood unto the stools. The fat used is that which covers the lower intestines of the sheep; the intestines placed before the stools are a thank-offering. The lungs symbolize the air or breadth of life without which no human, alive or dead can live. The remaining meat is used to prepare ancestral

banquet (*nsamanaduane*) to be eaten in the presence of the ancestors. The meal is mainly mashed yam or plantain (*eto*).

This meal according to Nana Gyamfi Kumanini, Pampasohene, is eaten in a basin (*asanka* – adulteration of *asem ka* – resolution) into which all dip the hands to share in communion. He stated further that the use of the *asanka* was not without reason. Before the meals, all cases of misunderstanding were heard and reconciliation fostered, after which the meal was set up for consumption and as each one dips the hand in the meal all acrimonyes are resolved (*asem ka*)

Communion sacrifice may also be offered to the *obosom*. Such sacrifices are offered on special occasions, sometimes at an annual ceremony for the adherents of the particular *obosom*. The priest/ess or their assistants kill the animal. The meat is either cooked or fried, which is eaten by the adherents as a community of the *obosom*. This communal meal strengthens the bond among the adherents on one hand, and between the adherents and their *obosom* on the other hand.

III. Atonement Sacrifices (*Mpata afodee/ayeyedee*)

The atonement sacrifice is the foundation of all reconciliation when respect and love is due the spirit-being that has been offended. There are kinds of atonement sacrifices in Asante tradition. I will classify them under the following categories: propitiatory, expiatory, and substitutionary sacrifices.

A. Propitiatory Sacrifice

Parrinder (1969:73) states that in Asante society, propitiatory sacrifice may be offered for a variety of reasons: to remove sin, avert danger, or obtain a blessing. Propitiatory sacrifice is "directed against misfortune, sickness, barrenness, quarrels, drought, and any disruption of normal life." This sacrifice is intended to appease either *Nyame*, the ancestors, or the *abosom*, depending on who is offended. The appeasement factor in the sacrifice is inherent in the rite more than the notion that it is directed towards a deity or a cultic spirit.

Propitiatory sacrifice is sometimes offered to *Nyame* because drought, sickness, or other catastrophes are often thought to occur because the creator has been offended. The Asante respect the idea, "*Biribiara wo Nyame nsa mu*" (everything is in the hands of God). To appease *Nyame's* anger, the propitiatory sacrifice is offered directly to him. In times of drought, for example, a collective sacrifice is made to him in each village. Sawyer (1969:71) believes that the propitiatory sacrifices appease God and "re-establish the equilibrium broken by the disobedience which is in itself an invisible disorder." Thus, with the propitiatory sacrifice, the help of God is requested as "that supreme power that can set right the errors or shortcomings of mankind (sic)."

God is not the only spirit-being who attracts propitiatory sacrifices. Other divinities are also placated through sacrifice for sin committed by an individual because it is presumed that sin may have caused the person's present calamity. When one violates a taboo of

Asaase Yaa, she is appeased by sacrifice. In addition, propitiatory sacrifices are offered to the ancestors. They are placated and their aid is invoked in times of crisis and during festivals such as the *Adae* and *Odwira*.

Propitiatory sacrifices are sometimes made to some spirit-beings. Among the Asante, a sacrifice of appeasement is sometimes offered to wrathful spirits responsible for an illness. In most instances, the sacrifice is placed in earthenware pots and left in at *nkwantanan* (crossroad) of a road or path. The Asante believe that the first person to pass by the sacrifice and break the pot will attract the illness of the patient.

In a practical way Nana Akyinko demonstrated that in a case of a calamity, the native priest demanded for an animal which will be used as a sacrificial substitute on behalf of the human being to appease or placate the *sumsum* or *suman* (spirit or deity) to whom the curse or incantation has been directed for settlement.

When a victim or client comes before a deity for redress, the native priest does not just give prescriptions but first consults the oracle for directions. In a given moment, the native priest comes before the deity with a fowl to ascertain if the gods can and would like to intervene. The priest calls upon the highest among his/her deities as follows:

“Nana Anwhere, asem sie na mo nana Nimako de aba, se mo agye no atumu a mo ma yen hunu” (your grand child is here with an issue, if you will intervene or not make it known). The fowl is then killed and hurled forward, if it falls on its back with its stomach up it signifies the willingness of the deity to arbitrate in the matter. If it falls face down, then the deity is not interested in handling the case. In some instances eggs are used in the

enquiries, the egg is splashed on the floor and when all the shells fall inside up it intimates the acceptance of the deity to prosecute the case. If the deity declines some section of the shell may tumble. The reason for the decline may be just a total disinterest in cases of such nature, resistance from other deities in the spiritual realm or unconfessed facts in the presentation which petitioner would have to make bare before *Nananom* can intervene.

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After the acceptance, the deity will prescribe the main sacrifice for the remedying of the situation. When the items are brought the person kneels down and the object of sacrifice (animal especially) is circulated around the head for three (3) or seven (7) times. Sometimes the person is allowed to say what s/he requires or desires unto the animal, it is then collected by the priest and either killed or released as a "scapegoat"

It is not always that the sacrifice is dealt with instantly by the deity; some are adjourned until a coming *Fo-da*. In such instances, clippings of the fur or feathers of the animals or birds respectively are tucked into the splashed egg or the spilt blood of the inquisition awaiting the coming occasion. The waiting time is not idle time; it offers ample time for fruitful interaction, consultation and arbitration among the spiritual stakeholders in the *honhom wiase* (spirit world) for a verdict to be reached pending the *fo-da*.

B. Expiatory Sacrifice

Expiatory sacrifice carries the sense of making reparation for a fault or a sin committed.

The commission of sin is a serious offence against God, not the ancestors. Thus, it is different from the mere violation of a taboo, which has practically nothing to do with God but is an offence against the ancestors. Expiatory sacrifices are offered for such offences such as murder, theft, death threats, and serious disputes between persons. In other words, they are offered when a *mmusuo* (evil) is committed.

Expiatory sacrifice is often considered a kind of substitution sacrifice. It is offered in place of the offerer, who might have suffered some kind of misfortune or is believed to be under the wrath of a deity or spirit, the sufferer offers a sacrificial animal. The sufferers expressly state that they give the sacrifice as a ransom, or even as a substitute for themselves. Thus, they believe that the animal is offered in their place and so bears their punishment.

In a case where illness and calamity have befallen a person, a substitutionary sacrifice can take another form. In most cases, a white or black fowl is rubbed against the body of the offerer to transfer the illness or misfortune to the fowl. The fowl is then carried to a refuse dump, which is normally at the outskirts of the village or town, and released. There is no particular intended destination of the fowl after its release; however, it is believed that it goes away, carrying with it the illness or calamity of the offerer. Quarcoopome (1987:91) asserts that the basis of this sacrifice lies in the Asante belief that there are companies of wandering spirits (*born-to-die* spirit) who agree to enter unborn babies in

the womb and to be born, only to die shortly thereafter. When such babies are born, they are kept alive by a substitutionary sacrifice to alter the agreement. This usually takes place when the baby is seriously ill, and upon the instruction of an oracle, the substitutionary sacrifice is performed.

4.5 Sacrifice and Libation (*afodee/ayeyedee ne nsaguo*)

In the Asante sacrificial system, libations (*nsagu*; pouring of wine or drink) accompany all sacrifices. Libation is performed before the sacrifice is offered to its intended recipient. During libation, *Onyame/Onyankopon*, the *abosom* and the ancestors are called (in the case of the *abosom* and the ancestors, by their names). Then the officiant gives the purpose for which the sacrifice is being offered and what the community anticipate receiving from the spirit-beings. Thus, libation is accompanied by prayer. The normal procedure is for the officiant to bare his chest, slip off his sandals, and move forward from the group. The liquid container (calabash or glass) is lifted to the sky, apparently to *Onyame/Onyankopon*, as recognition of his presence, and then it is poured out with the necessary accompanying prayer.

A libation, offered in association with a sacrifice serves as a preparatory act. Its purpose is to invoke the deity to join the offerer in the sacrifice. A libation poured before a sacrifice is made serves as an "invitation card" to "come" to the offerer before the sacrifice is given up to the deity.

Libation is the medium mostly used to invoke the deities. It is the preliminary offering of alcohol (schnapps, *nsafufuo* {palm wine} and *pito*) that aids in arousing the spirits after

which the business for the day is tackled. Nana Obinim subscribes to this assertion, however, he intimated that it is not always that alcohol is used. Others use water, lavender, ash, incantations and other objects prescribed by the deity.

In demonstrating the act of libation, Nana Akyinko lifted up a bottle of schnapps, took a couple of steps forward from his seat, lowered his native cloth from his shoulders to his elbow (*okwaha ne ntama*), pushed his native sandals forward as virtually standing bare foot except for the great (*nan kokromoti*) and long toes touching the rear of the sandals and began the *apae* (recitation) below:

“Twereampong Kwame, nsa

Ye kyere wo nsa na yen mma wo nsa

Asase Yaa mponim, nsa

Nananom abosom aduasa, nsa

(bosommru, bosomptra, Antoansuonyamaa, akonodi, etc)

(asuo Tano, Aboabo, Asuoyeboah, Mamensen, etc)

Nananom nsamanfo, nsa

Ahum ne aham

Etwie ne ahaha ne anono, nsa

Nananom ene ye daponda, y’ahyia se oman

Se yere be da mo ase, na y’agye mo nkyen akwankyere

M’adaworoma nti na ye te asaase yi soo

Se y’aye biribiara anso mo ani a mo nhunu yen mmobo na mo mu mo ani nguso

Efiri se, sebe, abofra gya ne nan gu ne na so a, ontwa ntwene na opepa

Mo me gye nsa nom na mo nnyina y’akyi, akyigyina papa

Dee eye aban amanee, mpatu wuo, yaredom, ohia ne animguase dee mo pa gu ma yen

Obi nko nhyira nhyira ne busieni

*Nnipa bonefo a onpe mo nananom yie dee, ne nkokomoaso mo onoara ne so
Nananom mo nkwa so."*

This could be translated thus:

Dependable God (of Saturday), here is drink

We point drink to you but not for your consumption

Thursday earth goddess, here is drink

Numerous gods of our community, here is drink

(mention names of gods within the society or community in hierarchical order)

(mention names of rivers)

Spirits of our ancestors, here is drink

Spirits of nature

Flora and fauna, here is drink

We are gathered here as a people on this great day
to give thanks and receive directions from you

We are because you are

We ask for your forgiveness

Deal not with us according to our wrongs

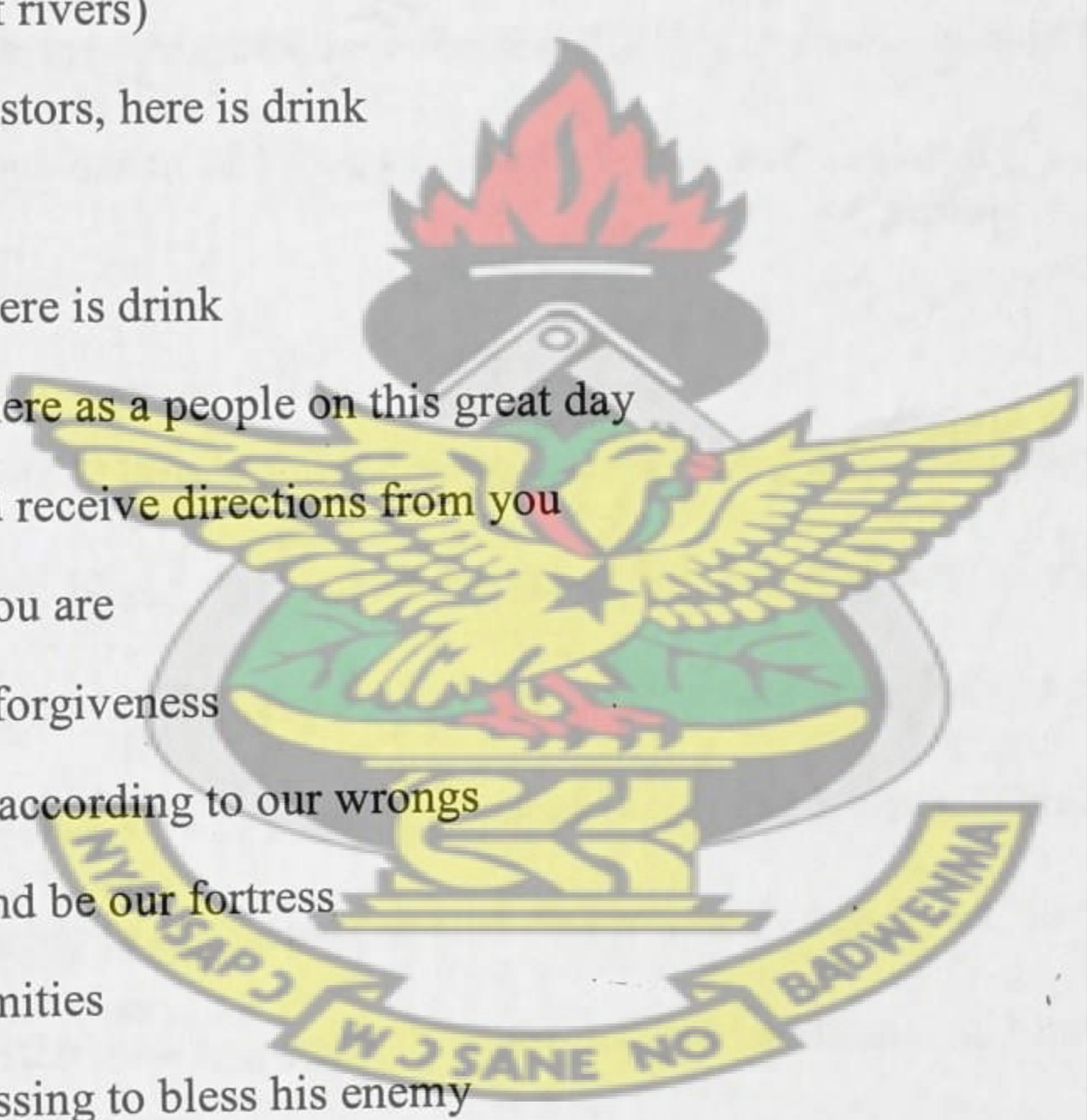
Have this drink and be our fortress

Ward off all calamities

No one goes ablessing to bless his enemy

Let the evil wisher fall into his own pit

May the ancestors live forever.



Each of the phrases in the prayer are punctuated with "wie" – an affirmation of the gathering that they are in solidarity with the pray-er of the prayer and that they are of one

accord. It also affords the pray-er the opportunity to take his time to speak audibly to *Nananom* without rush.

4.6 The Significance of Blood in Asante Sacrifice

In Asante sacrifice, it is the spilling of the blood of the victim that makes the ritual especially efficacious. Akyeampong (1969; 10-12) affirms shedding of blood serves important functions in Asante sacrificial system. Firstly, blood is a life-giving force that symbolizes life, and the Asante believe that the life that is destroyed will be reconstructed as a superior life; one has to sacrifice life to gain life or avert calamity.

Secondly, the Asante believe that blood creates a bond between the offerer and the spirit-beings. Through the blood, the offerer becomes inextricably tied to the deity or spirit-being. There is an ownership established; the offerer is claimed by the spirit-being and the spirit-being stands in a special relationship with the offerer. Through the blood, a reciprocal relationship is reaffirmed, so that "faith" and "confidence" in the spirit-being is restored. Thirdly, the Asante people believe that the shedding of blood "revivifies the spirit-being"; in other words, it awakens the spirit-being to respond more vigorously to the desires of the offerer. In turn, it revives the offerer, too. The *Asante* saying, *mogya mu ye duru sen nsuo* (blood is thicker than water) explains the efficacy of blood as compared with water.

It is worth noting during a sacrifice the animal's blood is poured on the altar or some other cultic object within the shrine or on the ground in a cultic place. If the sacrifice is meant for the spirit of a sacred river, the blood is drained into the river.

4.7 God and Sacrifice

In the context of the Asante sacrificial system, an important question that needs to be answered is, "To whom or to what are sacrifices addressed?" Komfo Afia Saa of Aboabogya, Ashanti, contends that she makes sacrifice to *Nyankopon* (Creator God). She continued that it is *Nyankopon* who grants or rejects request but has delegated some of His functions to *abosom* and *nananom*. On the contrary, Nana Akyinko and Nana Obinim are of the opinion that the sacrifices they make are unto the *abosom* and *Nananom*. According to Nana Akyinko, he sees the deities, dwarfs and agents they choose to reveal themselves in; he interacts with them so why should he say it is unto God? It must be noted that this is no denial of the existence and supremacy of God.

The second response is what can be termed as the "mediumistic theory." According to this theory, the gods, and ancestors who receive sacrifices often are intermediaries between God and humans so that any sacrifice offered to them is offered ultimately to God. According to Busia (1954:193), for the Asante, the *abosom* are the mouthpieces of God and so servants acting as intermediaries between *Nyame* and humans.

The weakness with this theory is that it reduces the gods and ancestors, who are free and responsible beings, to mere mediums who may not be entitled to receive veneration in their own right. The Asante seek the *abosom* and ancestors to grant health, children, prosperity in business, or protection from misfortune and from witches. Therefore, they must be seen as being responsible for their actions, meriting praise, or blame, and capable of demanding, accepting or rejecting sacrifices without *necessarily* having to refer to God. Yet they are dependent on God for their existence. Because they are free and responsible, they deserve to be thanked when they perform well and be blamed when they perform badly. One way of thanking them is sacrifice.

For instance "At the start of the farming season", Nana Kwaku Poku elaborated, "*Okomfo panin*, (the Chief priest) , would summon the elders of the village to the shrine and give prescriptions of items needed to be sacrificed to *Nyankopon*, the gods (sic) to appeal for rains and bumper harvest." Even in contemporary times when the role of traditional priests have taken a backstage people consult them on individual basis and some people offer sacrifices on their own to gain supernatural favour. Hence, thanks are given to *nananom* and *abosom* for good moments. They should also be liable to blame, only that for fear of repercussions humankind are petrified with fear to blame them.

The mediumistic theory does not do justice to the Asante sacrificial system. Neither the sacrificial structure nor the sacrificial rituals and prayers intend every sacrifice to be given ultimately to *Nyame*. Among the Asante, sacrifices are always addressed to specific

spirit-beings and sometimes the *abosom* and ancestors are explicitly requested to carry the sacrifice to *Nyame* and to intercede before Him on behalf of a person or community. If such intermediary role were always implied in every sacrifice to the *abosom* and ancestors, it would be unnecessary to make it explicit on occasion. If sacrifices are offered ultimately to *Nyame*, what of those sacrifices offered to evil spirits to ward them off? Such sacrifices are always contemptuous and not fit for human consumption; hence, there is never sacrificial meal involved.

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To understand why relatively few sacrifices are offered to God in the Asante community, we must understand what sacrifices mean for them and then see how this meaning affects their relationship with God. For the Asante, Adu Gyamfi (2007) posits that sacrifice is a means of establishing contact with the invisible world, and when offered directly to God, it means an entry into the divine presence. In Asante mentality, cultic actions are categorized in qualitative terms of the *more potent* and the *less potent*, rather than in vertical terms of the *higher* and the *lower*. Sacrifice is conceived as a cultic action that is *most potent* in establishing communication with the spirit-beings. Therefore, it is not reserved for God alone, but can be offered to all and any spirit being when contact with such beings is required. In this case, the Asante see no contradiction in offering sacrifice to God as well as to the *abosom* and the *Nananom*. In Asante thought, prayer is insufficient to bring one into the presence of God; it is as if one were speaking to God over the fence. However, in communicating with God through sacrifice, the ritual fence is removed and one enters into the presence of God. To do that often is simply not acceptable.

In this section, I have demonstrated that Asante strongly believe that through the offering of sacrifice they can achieve their objectives and that there can be peace, joy, protection, and security. The survival of Asante traditional religion in the midst of the attacks and challenges of modern times and its ability to influence other religions and their adherents is due to its insistence on sacrifice. Is it any wonder then the contemporary practice of Christians roaming every and any place for *akwankyere* and donating *afodee*? The cultural orientation has not been appropriately addressed hence such syncretism.

Sacrifice is an integral part of Asante culture; it cuts across religious systems and through it there is religious and social interaction. Therefore, we conclude with the assertion that: "No sacrifice, no Asante religion."

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that sacrifice plays an important role in Asante religion. The offering of sacrifice is an expression of belief in deities or spirit-beings and in their power as personal entities that can be gladdened or enraged. The offering of sacrifices also show that human beings can control the excesses and regulate the activities of the spirit-beings, particularly to make them do or not do certain things in the best interest of humankind.

The study has shown that, sacrifices have multiple purposes. They are offered, among other things, to thank the spirit-beings, to avert the anger of the spirits and to improve spirit-human relations. Another important thing is that blood plays a significant role and is seen as the most effective medium by which to approach the divine presence. It is used

to appease the deities and as purification agent. The information gathered in this chapter will aid our understanding of sacrifice performed during worship.

In the next chapter, effort will be made to juxtapose sacrifice in the Old Testament with sacrifice in the Asante religion. The similarities and differences therein will be identified and analyzed with a view to seeing how the study can enrich Christianity in Asante domain and foster a dialogue between Asante religious beliefs and the Christian faith.

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CHAPTER FIVE

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND ASANTE SACRIFICIAL PRACTICES

5.1 Introduction

Chapter Two dealt with the concept of sacrificial systems as pertains in the Old Testament with Leviticus 1 – 7 as the main passage of deliberation. Instructions, materials, occasions for sacrifice and offering as well as the significance of blood were discussed. On the other hand, Chapter Four was involved with the overview and role of sacrifice in Asante religious thought. Categories of sacrifice, cultic objects, choice of animals and why, including the significance of blood formed the crust of the discourse. With this background, this chapter will engage in a comparative analysis to draw out similarities and dissimilarities, bringing out the essence of the religio-cultural patterns and not necessarily a demonstration of direct contact between the two worldviews.

5.2 Similarities Between the Old Testament and Asante Sacrificial Systems

A closer look at the sacrificial systems in the two religio-cultural settings under discussion reveals some similarities worth pointing out. Below are the details:

A. The purpose of Sacrifice and Offerings

Generally speaking, in both worldviews sacrifice and offerings were given with the intention of invoking the deity (Num. 23:1-6), expressing homage to the deity to win his favour by a costly gift, to appease the wrath of the deity (1 Sam 7:9; 2 Sam 24:21-25), and to rejoice (Lev. 22:17-19). A number of motivations were present in the event of a sacrifice. In Chapter Two (2.5) section A, subsection I, the burnt offering in the Old Testament corresponds with Chapter Four (4.4) section A which deals with propitiatory sacrifice in Asante religious practice. Though the mode of sacrifice differ, in both instances sacrifice is made to appease the deity for a sin committed or to ward off a calamity. The offenders lay their hands on the head of the sacrificial animal and confess their sin and symbolically transfer their guilt to it, before it is slaughtered and the blood offered to the deity.

Moreover, (2.5) section B shares a common purpose with (4.4) section B. These sections deal with sin and guilt offering on the one side and expiatory sacrifice on the other in which the sense of making reparation for a fault or sin committed is inherent. The blood so obtained served as the medium of pacification and forgiveness.

Again in both worldviews the concept of gift and communion offering was common. Cereal offering in (2.5) section A, subsection II corresponds with the Gift sacrifices in (4.4) section I. Gift sacrifices are given in expectation of gaining the favour of the deity or as a first-fruit offering from the harvest of the land. In both instances it required no blood.

What is more, the peace offering in (2.5) section A, subsection III has some semblance with the communion sacrifice in (4.4) section II. In the communion sacrifices in ancient Israel, the sacrificial animal is immolated and shared between YHWH, the priest and the offerer, hence its reference as a communion offering or shared offering respectively. As in ancient Judah communion sacrifice, in Asante communion sacrifices, part of the victim is given to the deity and the remaining eaten by the offerers and their family members. Among the Asante, the eating of the victim represents the communion between the spirit-beings and humans. In Israel, the fat like the blood belonged to YHWH (Lev. 3:16-17; 7:23-25). They could eat neither blood nor fat in its sacrificial ceremonies before the Lord (Lev 1:5; 3:16). Similarly, in the communion sacrifices for the ancestors, some parts of the sacrificial victim are specifically the share of the ancestors: the blood, lungs and fat. Thus, pieces of the fat from the entrails and the lungs are deposited on the centre props of the blackened stools and the head and parts of the intestines are placed before the stools.

The demonstration of communion and fellowship as the sacrificial meal was eaten together underpinned the peace offering; it is perhaps the most prominent significance. The practice of eating or sharing meals together demonstrates unity of purpose among the people themselves and between the people and the deity (YHWH, Nananom or abosom)

B. Choice of Sacrificial Animals or Objects

Another striking similarity has to do with the kind and condition of animals and accompanying items required for sacrifice. The use of animals, birds, water, incense, ashes and blood are common to both traditions. There are food items that accompany the animal sacrifices like cereals and yam. The animals provide the avenue for the transfer of sins and curses as the offerer lays his/her hands on. They also provide the blood necessary for the atonement of the sacrifice to be effectual. The blood of the sheep is the chief food of all Asante *abosom* and the sacred stools. Sheep are used in Asante sacrifice for serious offences against the *abosom* and the ancestors, and against one's father or uncle. In addition, big animals like cows are used in serious cases. In the olden days when human sacrifice was deemed necessary, today, a cow is offered instead.

Likewise, bulls, goats, lambs etc. sustained the sacrifices of the Israelites. For the whole congregation on the Day of Atonement, he-goats were required (Lev 16). The guilt offering (*ašam*) normally prescribed a ram for its offering (*ayil*). Some purification ceremonies required a male lamb(s) as the guilt offering (Lev 14:10, 12; Num 6:12). The prescription of a female lamb or goat from the flock in Lev 5:6 appears to be oriented more to the sin offering,

In both instances the sacrificial animal must be without blemish. It is untenable to present maimed and deformed animals for sacrifice either to YHWH or the *abosom*. An act of this nature attracts the wrath of the deity and in so doing one might receive harsher sanctions that might surpass the original calamity for which the adherent approached the

deity. As pointed out in Chapter Three (3.3.3), the state of the animal is as important as the animal itself. The phrase (*akoko fitaa anaa odwan fitaa a otua dua*, that is to say a spotless and fit fowl or sheep) epitomizes how pleasant and presentable the sacrificial animal ought to be. Deformed animals and cheap animals like the mass bred poultry species are frowned upon by *Nananom* and the *abosom*. Interestingly (4.3.3) is in line with (2.4.A) which offers an unequivocal statement on the state of sacrificial animals as in Lev 22:17-25

The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: 'If any of you — either an Israelite or an alien living in Israel — presents a gift for a burnt offering to the Lord, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the Lord to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. Do not offer to the Lord the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as an offering made to the Lord by fire. You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep that is deformed or stunted, but it will not be accepted in fulfillment of a vow. You must not offer to the Lord an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not do this in your own land, and you must not accept such animals from the hand of a foreigner and offer them as the food of your God. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and have defects.'"

C. Significance of Blood and Water in Sacrifice

Blood and water play a significant role in both Israelite and Asante sacrificial systems. They are the media for cleansing and purification. Blood is the key object for atonement, pacification and propitiation because it contains the efficacy to alter an unclean condition. Lev. 17:10-12 places blood in a perspective of a life giving force hence a prohibition on the eating of blood. Apart from giving life, YHWH is categorical on the specific purpose of blood in vrs 11 "For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you

upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life." The import of blood is carried in this verse that blood is given by YHWH to the Israelites for the specific purpose of atoning for and even ransoming their lives.

In Asante sacrifice, it is the spilling of blood of the victim that makes the ritual especially efficacious. Blood is a life-giving force that symbolizes life, and the Asante believe that the life that is destroyed will be reconstructed as a superior life; one has to sacrifice life to gain life or avert calamity. Like the Israelite concept, in Asante, when blood is shed in sacrifice it means that a human or animal life is being given back to God, who is the ultimate source of life. Asante and Israelites believe that blood creates a bond between the offerer and the spirit-beings (YHWH and *abosom*). The concept of blood purging both communities reaches its climax in ceremonies of the Day of Atonement and *Odwira* (*Addaekese*) in Israel and Asante respectively.

Water is a multi-purpose fluid whose significance cannot be overemphasized. Among its functions during sacrifice and offerings it serves as puritan that ritually cleanses objects from all sorts of contamination. Though a physical substance it has the tendency to clean beyond the physical into the spiritual. During Israelite ceremonies, the high priest bathed in water before putting on both the lower garment (Lev. 16:4) and the regular garments (Lev. 16:24) for the burnt offering activities. Various assistants involved in ceremonies and sacrifices wash their clothes in water and wash themselves with water to avoid the tendency of returning the impurities so contacted into the sanctuary and the community.

Water is used every step of the way as various rituals are cleansed and administered in the sanctuary as outlined in Lev. 1-7.

Equally in Asante, dirt and contaminations must be avoided at all cost during ritual sacrificial moments. The native priest and or king who administer the rituals as the situation may arise cleanse their victuals and themselves before commencing rituals. On the various *fo-da* (special days) sacred water is used to cleanse the palace, the cultic objects, the *Asantehene*, the paramount chiefs and many more of *mmusuo ne nfomso*.

5.3 Differences between the Old Testament and Asante Sacrificial Systems

One main difference between the two sacrificial systems is the concept of the spirit-being(s). In the Asante Sacrificial system a pantheon of spirit-beings could be seen, the ancestral spirits, *abosom* and the *asuman* are invoked. A cursory look at the sampled *apae* (libation prayer under 3.5) reveals a reference to a number of gods and spirit-beings -- *Asaase Yaa*, *abosom*, and *Nananom nsamanfo*, in subordination to *Onyame*. Furthermore, under 3.7 the intermediary role of the various spirit-beings is elaborated. On the contrary, in the Old Testament reference is made of only a monotheistic nature of the normative post-monarchic cult. YHWH is arguably the one to whom sacrifices are meant for. Any conception of other gods besides or beneath YHWH was a contravention beyond pardon. It is however hinted in the biblical text that other gods existed side by side YHWH although sacrificing to any has been theologically presented as sacrilegious. The pantheon of spirit-beings as it were remains in the Asante worldview a major difference in relation to the worldview of Israel.

In line with the above, that is the recognition of pluralism of spirit-beings sacred places of worship or sacrifice was to be expected. Asante perform rituals at various places that they deem fit. Such places include the stool-house where the blackened stools of dead royal ancestors and the Golden stool are kept, shrines, riverbanks, under trees etc. In Israel, rituals are undertaken in the yard of the temple. In case of the scapegoat, however the sacrificial animal is led to the wilderness and released. There was an altar for the sacrifice of animals, grain and fruit, the temple was the most sacred place of Israel religion.

In Israelite religion the sacrifice is burnt unto the LORD, the atonement in Asante religion does not witness the sacrifice being burnt. In addition, although offerers put their hands on sacrifices and transfer their sins and misfortune unto them, while in Israel such animals are sent into wilderness and released (scapegoat in Lev. 16) as a substitute of the offerer, in Asante the animal is killed and the portions designated for the spirit-beings are offered then the rest eaten. By laying on of hands and confession made unto the victim, it is presumed that the victim is contaminated and unwholesome for the consumption of the same people on whose behalf the victim is sacrificed, ironically however, the opposite is the case.

Animals sacrificed in Asante apart from their condition which is of utmost importance, the age, gender and number does not seem to be an issue, as against the Israelites whose sacrifice must be between eight days and three years, as well as being a male.

5.4 Conclusion

Attempts have been made so far in this chapter to sketch some differences and striking similarities concerning sacrifices and offerings in the two religio-cultural settings under study. The cause of sacrifices and offerings as the recognition of the need to give thanks for favours showered by the deities, the desire for fellowship and communion and the necessity of dealing with evil and its ramification on individuals and the society cuts across both cultures and religions. Both the Israelites and Asante are mindful of what unattended evil could do and take every step necessary to ward off such eventualities through sacrifice. In both events the people, sacred places and objects are cleansed by both water and blood. The role of blood is of such an enormity that without it the spirit-beings and the deities cannot be pacified and atonement effected.

With the sins, evil and calamity dealt with, the community breath freshness and receive strength from the deities to carry on. In Israelite community, the numerous sacrifices in addition to the Day of Atonement reinvigorate the people to dwell harmoniously with one another and YHWH. The same can be said of the Asante society who through sacrifices spanned through the year like *Adae* revivifies, reaffirms and renews the *sumsum* of the people to galvanize them into a formidable state.

Some differences outlined show that though, some practices look alike on the surface their essence and purpose are etymologically miles apart and does not coincide at all.

Having dealt with the similarities and differences, the stage is set for the concluding aspects of the study. The next chapter handles recommendations and the application that can be structured from the study to enrich Asante Christian practices.

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CHAPTER SIX

Recommendations and Conclusion

6.1 Recommendations

The study in its totality gives me an urge to point out some recommendations that need to be engaged to create a really incarnational and integrated Asante faith.

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1. *Fo-da* and Reflections

It is my observation that faith life in recent times is bedeviled with noise, hurry and crowd. The level of superficiality and shallowness is overwhelming to say the least. The need therefore for reflective moments cannot be belaboured. Fortunately, we have *fo-da* or *nnabone* (sacred days) that can serve as retreat days for effective solitude and meditation. Traditionally these days serve as fallow days to give rest not only to the people but also to nature. It also serves as days to embark on communal labour and to strengthen social life. I am advocating for Christians who antagonize such concepts to rather reflect over and use them for profitable innovations that can help deepen our faith and practice.

2. Libation – Structure and Content

Libation is the main or common form of prayer in Asante religion. It serves as a preliminary invocation of the spirit-beings. It is that which invokes or “awakes” them to

dispense further directives or divinations for the well-being of their subjects. But libation has come under intense condemnation from Christians. Because libation is seen as idolatry and that it is used to invited demons (*ye gu nsa frefre ahonhom mmone*) it has successfully overshadowed the numerous noble functions of chiefs/kings to the extent that it is seen as a taboo for a Christian to vie for chieftaincy title. Chieftaincy therefore has been left in the hands of mostly corrupt elements who engage in diverse acts of corruption including multiple land sales, immorality and even bloodshed. The dread of libation especially has kept many well meaning potential leaders from serving their people with diligence. It is not my intention to discuss chieftaincy into details here, hopefully it will be a subject for further enquiry. For now suffice me to say that performance of libation needs to be engaged wholistically.

I posit that libation as a prayer model should be endorsed and practiced even in the church by “maintaining the structure and changing the content.” The greatest contention on libation has to do with the calling on “demons” to preside over the affairs of humans. We do not however call on demons, (*yen ngu nsa nfrefre ahonhom mmone*), we call on *Nananom, ne ahonhom pa se won mmeigyina yen akyi akyigyina pa*. This raises the question as to whether the ancestors are worshipped or venerated. When Christians call on the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and the like, are they worshipping these “ancestors” or venerating them? In the same vein distinguished individuals in our culture could be mention as we recall their heroic feats in our ancestry or heritage. Some remind us of bravery like Yaa Asantewaa, sacrifice like Tweneboah Kodua, administrative ingenuity like Osei Tutu, these are icons and beacons of society worth recalling and emulating.

Prayer is words and thoughts conveyed to a superior-being for many reasons. It must not be stereotyped. What one chooses to say will make that prayer abominable or otherwise. Therefore, modeling libation prayer form is the sole prerogative of the pray-er of the prayers. When Christ modeled the “LORD’s prayer” for the disciples and by extension for later Christians, He meant it to be a structure but not to be recited verbatim all the time. To this structure one can maintain the content or change the content (words) with additions that suit the occasion or the context. Instead of calling on the divinities and *Nananom* to preside over the affairs of humans, they could be mentioned and eulogized with their legacies to serve as an inspiration for posterity. Finally, prayers could be concluded in the name of the great ancestor Jesus, the Christ.

Permit me to illustrate this point by recalling the libation demonstrated by Nana Akyinko in 4.5.

“Twereampong Kwame, nsa

Ye kyere wo nsa na yen mma wo nsa

Asase Yaa mponim, nsa

Nananom abosom aduasa, nsa

(bosommru, bosompra, Antoansuonyamaa, akonodi, etc)

(asuo Tano, Aboabo, Asuoyeboah, Mamensen, etc)

Nananom nsamanfo, nsa

Ahum ne aham

Etwie ne ahaha ne anono, nsa

Nananom yefrefre mo, ene ye daponda, y’ahyia se oman

Se yere be da mo ase, na y’agye mo nkyen akwankyere

M'adaworoma nti na ye te asaase yi soo

Se y'aye biribiara anso mo ani a mo nhunu yen mmobo na mo mu mo ani nguso

Efiri se, sebe, abofra gya ne nan gu ne na so a, ontwa ntwene na opepa

Mo me gye nsa nom na mo nnyina y'akyi, akyigyina papa

Dee eye aban amanee, mpatu wuo, yaredom, ohia ne animguase dee mo pa gu ma yen

Obi nko nhyira nhyira ne busieni

Nnipa bonefo a onpe mo nana nom yie dee, ne nkonkomoaso mo onoara ne so

Nananom mo nkwa so."

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The highlighted portion is the locus of controversy in libational prayers. The invitation of the spirit-beings, especially the ancestors seem to border on necromancy (Deut 18:11) and hence contestable. Remembering our heroes, predecessors and well meaning ancestors by mentioning their names and proclaiming their feats however, does not constitute necromancy and idolatry but an act of immortalizing their achievements and preserving their legacies. These worthy ancestors then become models from whose achievements motivation and inspiration is derived.

The structure, form and the content below hopefully would provide a practical illustration of what is being suggested.

"Twereampong Kwame, nsa

Ye kyere wo nsa na yen mma wo nsa

Asase Yaa mponim, nsa

Nananom nsa

(bosommru, bosompra, Antoansuonyamaa, akonodi, etc)

(asuo Tano, Aboabo, Asuoyeboah, Mamensen, etc)

Nananom nsamanfo, nsa

Ahum ne aham

Etwie ne ahaha ne anono, nsa

Nananom , ene ye daponda, y'ahyia se oman

Se yere be da mo ase, na y'akaekae mo bre ne nfatohoa pa a mo agya ato ho ama nkyirima

M'adaworoma nti na ye te asaase yi soo

Se y'aye biribiara anso ani a yesre ahummobro ne bone fakye

Efiri se, sebe, abofra gya ne nan gu ne na so a, ontwa ntwene na opepa

Mo me gye nsa nom na mo nnyina y'akyi, akyigyina papa

Dee eye aban amanee, mpatu wuo, yaredom, ohia ne animguase dee mo mpa gu ma yen

Obi nko nhyira nhyira ne busieni

Nnipa bonefo a onpe mo nana nom yie dee, ne nkokomoaso mo onoara ne so

Nananom mo nkwa so."

Ye yi apae yi wo Nananom ne yen Twereampong din mu. Wie, wie ,wie or ame, ame, ame.

Unless otherwise stated, the difference between the two prayers recorded might not be apparent and gradually the content could be altered with practice and time. Format and posture of prayers differ from culture to culture and ours could be one tailored for our own identity with our vernacular punctuations and not couched in Western flavour.

3. Redemptive Analogies

The practices of the Old Testament have successfully been integrated as the foundation for the New Testament. In a similar vein the practices of sacrifice and other aspects of Asante Traditional Religion could be censored and packaged as the basis for our faith in

the Christian message. The Concepts of atonement, pacification, purification, (*mpata ne dwira*) etc. are not foreign to the Asante and like their Biblical parallels are achieved mainly by blood. Jesus as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, can be used as redemptive analogy to drum home the essence of animals used in sacrifice for the placation of both individual and communal sins. Substitutional penal rights could be seen emanating from *Onyame* to those who put their trust in Christ who was made a sacrificial victim by the Supreme Being on behalf of erring humankind and the creation (*Etwie ne ahaha ne anono*).

Graduation from Old Testament worship into New Testament worship is seen largely as a part of the progressive nature of God's revelation to humankind and His subjects. The traditional practices of Asante (African) Traditional Religion could and must be seen as the foundation upon which to project into New Testament worship. This fits into the progressive agenda of God's self-revelation to all creation and cultures.

Ekem (2005:96) draws an inference from the second century C.E., that Jewish-Christian Adoptionists and varieties of Gnostic Christianity propagated their teachings and presented their audiences with food for thought. At another level Christianity was compelled to define itself not only to the Jewish world from which it emerged, but also in relation to the polytheistic world into which it moved and from which it began to draw its greatest number of converts.

Like other African ethnic groups, the Akan people of Ghana find themselves in a complex multi-religious situation. Christianity and Islam exist side by side indigenous religions providing fertile grounds for inter-religious dialogue. The very presence of the

Church in Africa demands dialogue for its own health and growth. God certainly has surprises in store for us.

The Church must reroute its hermeneutic enterprise, Dickson (1991: 145-146) profoundly states that “To interpret the Bible in the African church’s own existential circumstances would be for the church to uproot that element which is at the core of the inherited exclusivist character of Christianity. ... Thus, one of the true marks of a church should be that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will have learnt to relate the Bible to its own circumstances as a community of believers set amid wider communities with which it must necessarily interact”. This point cannot be overemphasized, it is about time Asante Christians develop a biblical hermeneutics that reflect deeply on our cultural values and beliefs with the mindset to ensuring a wholistic integration and enculturation.

4. Integration of African Traditional Religion (ATR)

As stated in the introductory matters, a Theological student in filling an evaluation form for ATR course decried its study in Seminaries since to him it was demonic to dabble in the practices of African Traditional Religion. A “holy” place like a seminary should be devoted to sacred things and not to profanity as ancestral religion. In this light Seminaries, Bible Colleges and Theological Institutions should endeavor to appropriately integrate the study of the values of African Traditional Religion and customs into the academic curricular and the psyche of students and their trainees. If culture is the footprints of God (*Onyankopon*) in the life of every people, then it must be appropriately

integrated into the religious, moral and psychological fabric of a given people for identity and diversity.

In 1982, at Aboabogya in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, a Methodist Reverend Minister was antagonized, vilified and castigated for introducing native musical instruments (*atumpan, frikyiwa, dawuro, fontonfrom, dansuom* etc.) into the Church's worship. He was eventually transferred to another place perhaps to make for peace. Certainly, not all practices in our Asante liturgy (for want of a better word) are acceptable.

For instance, our young ladies ritual of *Bragoro* (puberty rites) is not entirely wrong but the exposure of their near nudeness could be concealed. Without any attempt of modification the Church has labeled it as fetish and has condemned it, hook, line and sinker. Interestingly, in the Baptist denomination there is a ceremony (White Bible Ceremony) for young ladies who remain faithful until their hands are requested in marriage. Members get enthused with this occasion, travel far and near to grace it and use it as a point of reference for chastity. I dare ask, "Is *Bragoro* rejected just because it is of African origin and White Bible Ceremony accepted just because it is of Western origin? If the essence and philosophy underpinning both practices seem similar, which I deem so, why condemn the former and condone the latter? This is only one instance out of a lot which time and space will not permit me to enumerate, a proper engagement and integration of African Traditional Religion in our thought life hopefully will enrich our practices.

6.2. Conclusion

The overarching preoccupation of this project has been to delve into the practice and concept of Sacrifice in the thought patterns of Israelites as illustrated in the Old Testament in general and Leviticus chapters 1-7 in particular and that of Akan, as exemplified by Asante. The facts as revealed by the literature reviewed, the interviews conducted and field observations demonstrate that Sacrifice is at the heart of the worship of the Israelites and Asante religion. Sacrifice is the ingredient that creates a lasting bridge in the deity-human intercourse, the sum total of what is given as a means of thanksgiving, communication, devotion and a propitiation leading to reconciliation and the aversion of disaster in case of offences. What is offered or sacrificed defines the extent to which one reveres and venerates the spirit-being(s) to whom one pays obeisance. Religion, as legion as its attempted definitions are is unified in Sacrifice one form or the other. No matter ones religion, sacrifice is akin to it, it is that which gives concrete meaning to religion.

In this research attempt has been made to identify with the what, why and how of Sacrifice in the most practical setting as possible. It has been realized that the faith pattern of Asante practitioners of religion has been a swing between total neglect of concrete rituals and an over reliance to near abuse of the same. Sacrifices fall within this range. There is a section like most mainline churches who deem the concrete expression of faith like sacrifice as syncretism and at the other extreme some AICs (African Indigenous Churches) prescribe items for sacrifice almost as an arbitrary practice. The balance is a healthy understanding of Sacrifice and its right usage.

I am of the view that an in-depth understanding of the concept of Sacrifice will foster a proper integration of Africaness or Asanteness into our faith patterns. The reverence and awe that surround the atmosphere of worship in a traditional worship gathering seem by far absent in most Christian gatherings. Though sameness or Hebrewism of Asante is not the object of the study, there is some meaningful leads that can help us enrich our present Christian practice for the better. Sacrifice in both thought-worlds major in the eradication of evil and its consequences as well as renew faith, fellowship and relationship with the spirit-beings.

The similarities also suggest that God has left his footprints and self-revelation in every culture. Every people like the Asante have unique practices of life that must permeate every aspect of their lives including religion. Christianity is foreign to every culture, including Judaism, had it not been so, Judaism would not have persecuted the early Christians and branded them as people who had “turned the world upside down.” (Acts 17:6) It is not the Whiteman’s religion as some suppose but rather has been over dosed with western colouration. The gospel must be properly incarnated into the Asante culture to ensure integration rather than displacement.

Let us keep our heritage, in it lies our destiny, for in this great future one who forgets his/her past has no present. *Se wo were firi wo krom hene aben a wo yera bedwaase.*

Asem-se be! (If one forgets the sound of one’s kings trumpet s/he will be lost at a durbar.

A word to the wise is enough.)

Glossary of Some Asante – Twi Terms

a

abusua	descent, kinship, relatives or family
abusuapanin	head of family or clan
adae	festival days on which offerings are made to the ancestors
afe	a year
afisem	household matters, issues making rounds in a family
afodee/ayeyedee	sacrifice
akwasidae	the most prominent of the festive days for the performance of
rituals	
ammamre	traditions and customs
ammanee	rituals performed in response to the directives of a deity
apae /mpae	prayer
asamando	Sheol/the land of the living dead
asase yaa	spirit of the earth

b

bosom	god
bosommru	one of Asante patrilineal ntoro or titled gods
bosompra	one of Asante patrilineal ntoro or titled gods

d

dabone	designated day for the observance of rituals
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f

fo-da	days set for rest
fufu	white, pounded meal of yam, cassava, plantain
fofie	a 'high' Friday

h

hene	king, chief, ruler, head
hema	queen

k

komfo	traditional or native priest
kra	soul of a human being
kyeame	linguist, spokesman for a chief

m

mmoatia	dwarfs
mogya	blood
musuo	evil, abomination
mpata	atonement, pacify, placate

n

Nananom	ancestors
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nkrabea	destiny, fate
Nnapon	Ceremonial 'high' days
Nyankopon/Onyame	creator of all things, almighty God
nsa	drink, alcohol
nsaguo	libation
nsamanfo	ancestral spirits of the dead

o	
odikro	head of a village or town, accountable to a superior king
odwanmaa	lamb mostly for sacrifice
odwira	festival for the cleansing and purifying of Asante society

s	
sika-dwa kofi	golden stool of Friday
suman	deity/god
sumsum	spirit



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APPENDIX I

Select List of Persons Interviewed

Chiefs and Palaces

Name	Position/Status	Place	Date
Nana Gyamfi Kumanini	<i>Pampasohene</i>	Manhyia	20/04/2012
Nana Kwaku Poku	<i>Dikro</i>	Atwima Manhyia	27/04/2012
Nana Baffuor Awuah	<i>Gyaasehene</i>	Atwima Akropong	04/05/2012
Nana Gyapong Adusah IV	<i>Dikro</i>	Atwima Koforidua.	11/05/2012
Nana Osei Kofi	<i>Kyeame</i>	Atwima Manhyia	18/05/2012

Priests and Shrines

Name	Position/Status	Place	Date
Nana Afua Saah	<i>Komfohema</i>	Aboabogya,	25/05/2012
Nana Akyinko	<i>Komfopanin</i>	Ashanti	1/06/2012
Nana Obinim	<i>Komfopanin</i>	Techiman.	8/06/2012
Nana Kofi Nti	<i>Komfopanin</i>	Atwima Manhyia	15/06/2012
Nana Osei	<i>Komfo abedikyiri</i>	Offinso-Buasi	22/06/2012
		Atwima Manyia	

APPENDIX II QUESTIONNAIRE

These questions are geared towards sampling the opinions of Nananom on Sacrificial practices in Asante communities and religion. The purpose of this exercise is purely academic and confidentiality is assured. I will be grateful for your utmost cooperation please.

Capacity: (a) Traditional Priest (b) Chief (c) Traditional practitioner

How long have you been in this capacity?

Have you been or are you affiliated to any other religion apart from traditional religion?

What is Sacrifice?

Why should one offer Sacrifice?

Describe the ingredients of a standard Sacrifice.

Can you furnish us with the type of Sacrifices you are involved in?

Do you have specific rituals for set occasions?

If there are variations, what inform the differences?

In your opinion who is the one to whom Sacrifices are given?

Can you relate to us an example of what Sacrifice has achieved for you in your years of practice?

Would God, Nananom or abosom not act on behalf people without Sacrifice?

Is libation Sacrifice?

What role does libation play in the worship of deities?

In your years of practice, have you identified if the status of the object (with or without blood) matters to the deities?

If *Nyankopon* is the one that Sacrifices are meant for, what role does the lesser gods play?

If it is the lesser gods that Sacrifices are meant for, does it not constitute worship of idols?

Can you kindly demonstrate practically the act of pacification (*mpata*)?

Can you perform a real act of libation making bare the essence and cultural embellishments?

Are there any helpful thoughts and additions you may want to provide besides these questions?

