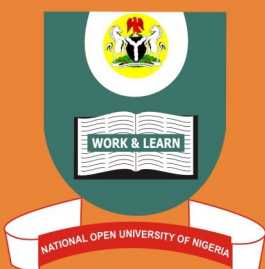


CTH 607

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

COURSE GUIDE

**CTH 607
OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY**

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Introduction

CTH 607: Old Testament Theology is a one-semester 2- credit unit course. It will be available toward the award of the post-graduate diploma degree in Christian theology. The course is also suitable for anybody who is interested in the theological study of the Bible.

The course will consist of 15 units and it will examine a theological study of themes in the Old Testament including: God, revelation, creation, sin, election/salvation, and Life after Death. The material has been especially developed for students in African context with particular focus on Nigeria.

There are no compulsory prerequisites for this course. The course guide tells you briefly what the course is about, what you are expected to know in each unit, what course materials you will be using and how you can work your way through these materials. It also emphasizes the need for Tutor-Marked Assignments. (TMAs) Detailed information on (TMAs) is found in the separate file, which will be sent to you later. There are periodic tutorial classes that are linked to the course.

What you will learn in this course

The overall aim of CTH 607: Old Testament Theology is to lead you to study the theological ideas found in the Old Testament with particular emphasis on God, humanity, sin and salvation.

Old Testament theology is a part of Biblical theology. Therefore, our study of the theological themes of the Old Testament will include the witness of the Old Testament to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Your understanding of Old Testament Theology will equip you to explain Christian faith to other people - Christians and non-Christians. You will find biblical theology to be an enriching study as you benefit from the insights of other biblical theologians.

Course Aims

The aim of this course is to give you an understanding of the following basic doctrines of biblical theology as found in the Old Testament: God, creation, humanity, sin and salvation. This will be achieved by aiming to:

- Introduce you to the meaning, history and methodology of Old Testament Theology,

- Lead you to study the existence, nature, manifestations and attributes of God as found in the Old Testament,
- Assist you to describe the Old Testament Theology of revelation,
- Expose you to the theology of creation/providence and to some of the practical issues related to this theme like the problem of the presence of evil in the world (theodicy),
- Highlight the designations, origin, nature and life of humankind,
- Explain to you biblical doctrines of election and covenant from the perspective of the Old Testament,
- Guide you to study theocracy and the law in the experience of the Israelites,
- Explain to you the place of sacrifice and worship in the Old Testament religion,
- Lead you to examine the nature and consequences of sin in the experience of Old Testament people,
- Highlight the idea of salvation in the Old Testament,
- Expose you to the Old Testament theology of death and life after death.

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims set out above, there are set overall objectives. In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are always included at the beginning of a unit. You should read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check on your progress. You should always look at the unit objectives after completing a unit. In this way you can be sure that you have done what was required of you by the unit.

Stated below are the wider objectives of this course as a whole. By meeting these objectives, you should have achieved the aims of the course as a whole.

On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

- Define the meaning and discuss the history and methodology of Old Testament Theology,
- Explain the existence, nature, manifestations and attributes of God,
- Describe the Old Testament Theology of divine revelation,
- State the Old Testament theology of creation and providence and the implications for theodicy,
- Discuss the designations, origin, nature and life of humankind,

- Explain the Old Testament doctrines of election and covenant,
- Define theocracy, analyze and evaluate the law in the Old Testament,
- Describe the place of sacrifice and worship in the Old Testament religion,
- State the nature and consequences of sin in the experience of Old Testament people,
- Discuss the idea of salvation in the Old Testament,
- Describe the Old Testament idea of death and life after death.

Working Through This Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials provided by the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at points during the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of this course there is a final examination. Below you will find listed all the components of the course and what you have to do.

Course Materials

Major components of the course are:

1. Course Guide
2. Study Units
3. Textbooks
4. Assignments File
5. Presentation Schedule

In addition, you must obtain the materials. You may contact your tutor if you have problems in obtaining the text materials.

Study Units

There are three modules, fifteen study units in this course, as follows:

Module 1

- Unit 1: Meaning, History and Methodology of Old Testament
- Unit 2: God I – Existence and Nature
- Unit 3: God II – Names and Manifestations
- Unit 4: God III – Attributes
- Unit 5: Divine Revelation

Module 2

- Unit 1: Creation, Providence and Theodicy
 Unit 2: Humankind I – Designation, Origin and Nature
 Unit 3: Humankind II – Image of God, Male/Female and Life
 Unit 4: Election and Covenant
 Unit 5: Theocracy and The Law

Module 3

- Unit 1: Sacrifice and Worship I
 Unit 2: Sacrifice and Worship II
 Unit 3: The Problem of Sin
 Unit 4: Redemption and Mission
 Unit 5: Human Destiny and Hope

The first five units introduce you to Old Testament Theology and examines the doctrines of God and divine revelation. The next five units address the theology of creation, providence, theodicy, humankind, election, covenant, theocracy and the law. The last five units discuss the theologies of sacrifice, worship, faith, sin, salvation, death and life after death.

Each unit contains a number of self-tests. In general, these self-tests question you on the material you have just covered or require you to apply it in some ways and, thereby, help you to gauge your progress and to reinforce your understanding of the material. Together with tutor marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual units and of the course.

Textbooks and References

These textbooks are recommended for your study in this course. However, the first is compulsory for you.

1. *The Holy Bible* (RSV or NIV).
2. Jacob, Edmond (1958) *Theology of the Old Testament*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers.
3. Kohler, Ludwig (1957) *Old Testament Theology*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
4. Youngblood, Ronald (1971) *The Heart of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.

Assignment File

In this file, you will find all the details of the work you must submit to your tutor for marking. The marks you obtain from these assignments will count towards the final mark you obtain for this course. Further information on assignments will be found in the Assignment File itself and later in this *Course Guide* in the section on assessment.

Presentation Schedule

The *Presentation Schedule* included in your course materials gives you the important dates for the completion of tutor marked assignments and attending tutorials. Remember, you are required to submit all your assignments by the due date. You should guard against lagging behind in your work.

Assessment

There are two aspects to the assessment of the course. First are the tutor marked assignments; second, there is a written examination

In tackling the assignments, you are expected to apply information and knowledge acquired during this course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadlines stated in the Assignment File. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total course mark.

At the end of the course, you will need to sit for a final three-hour examination. This will also count for 70% of your total course mark.

Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAS)

There are fifteen tutor marked assignments in this course. You need to submit all the assignments. The best five (i.e. the highest five of the fifteen marks) will be counted. The total marks for the best four (4) assignments will be 30% of your total course mark.

Assignment questions for the units in this course are contained in the Assignment File. You should be able to complete your assignments from the information and materials contained in your set textbooks, reading and study units. However, you are advised to use other references to broaden your viewpoint and provide a deeper understanding of the subject.

When you have completed each assignment, send it together with form to your tutor. Make sure that each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline given. If, however, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor before the assignment is done to discuss the possibility of an extension.

Final Examination and Grading

The examination will consist of questions which reflect the type of self-testing, practice exercises and tutor-marked problems you have come across. All areas of the course will be assessed.

You are advised to revise the entire course after studying the last unit before you sit for the examination. You will find it useful to review your tutor-marked assignments and the comments of your tutor on them before the final examination.

Course Marking Scheme

This table shows how the actual course marking is broken down.

Assessment	Marks
Assignment 1-4	Four assignments, best three marks of the four count at 30% of course marks
Final Examination	70% of overall course marks
Total	100% of course marks

Table 1: Course Marking Scheme

Course Overview

This table brings together the units, the number of weeks you should take to complete them, and the assignments that follow them.

Unit	Title of work	Week's Activity	Assessment (end of unit)			
	Course Guide	1				
Module 1	Meaning, History and Methodology of Old Testament Theology	1	Assignment 1			
Unit						
1.						
2.				God I – Existence and Nature	2	Assignment 2
3.				God II – Names and Manifestation	3	Assignment 3
4.				God III – Attributes	4	Assignment 4
5.	Divine Revelation	5	Assignment 5			

Module 2			
Unit 1			
1	Creation, Providence and Theodicy	6	Assignment 6
2	Humankind I – Designations, Origin and Nature	7	Assignment 7
3	Humankind II – Image of God, Male/Female and Life	8	Assignment 8
4	Election and Covenant	9	Assignment 9
5.	Theocracy and The Law	10	Assignment 10
Module 3			
Unit			
1	Sacrifice and Worship I	11	Assignment 11
2.	Sacrifice and Worship II	12	Assignment 12
3.	The Problem of Sin	13	Assignment 13
4.	Redemption and Mission	14	Assignment 14
5.	Human Destiny and Hope	15	Assignment 15
16.	Revision	16	
17.	Examination	17	
	Total	17 weeks	

Table 2: Course Overview

How to get the best from this course

In distance learning the study units replace the university lecturer. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. In the same way that a lecturer might set you some reading to do, the study units tell you when to read your set books or other material. Just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise, your study units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate points.

Each of the study units follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives enable you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study. When you have finished the units you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If you make a habit of doing this you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course.

The main body of the unit guides you through the required reading from other sources. This will usually be either from your set books or from a *Reading* section.

Remember that your tutor's job is to assist you. When you need help, don't hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

1. Read this *Course Guide* thoroughly.
2. Organize a study schedule. Refer to the 'Course overview' for more details. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignments relate to the units. Whatever method you chose to use, you should decide on it and write in your own dates for working on each unit.
3. Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything you can to stick to it. The major reason that students fail is that they lag behind in their course work. .
4. Turn to *Unit 1* and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
5. Assemble the study materials. Information about what you need for a unit is given in the 'Overview' at the beginning of each unit. You will almost always need both the study unit you are working on and one of your set books on your desk at the same time.
6. Work through the unit. The content of the unit itself has been arranged to provide a sequence for you to follow. As you work through the unit you will be instructed to read sections from your set books or other articles. Use the unit to guide your reading.
7. Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study material or consult your tutor.
8. When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can then start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
9. When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor-marked assignment form and also written on the assignment. Consult your tutor as soon as possible if you have any questions or problems.
10. After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objectives (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in this *Course Guide*).

Tutors and Tutorials

There are 8 hours of tutorials provided in support of this course. You will be notified of the dates, times and location of these tutorials, together with the name and phone number of your tutor, as soon as you are allocated a tutorial group.

Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must mail your tutor-marked assignments to your tutor well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor by telephone, e-mail, or discussion board if you need help. The following might be circumstances in which you would find help necessary. Contact your tutor if:

- you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings,
- you have difficulty with the self-tests or exercises,
- you have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face to face contact with your tutor and to ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussions actively.

Summary

CTH 607 intends to introduce you to biblical theology of the Old Testament. Upon completing this course, you will be able to answer questions such as:

- What is the meaning of Old Testament theology?
- What are the attributes of God in the Old Testament?
- How can you explain the Old Testament theology of divine revelation?

- What are the implications of the theologies of creation and providence for the existence of evil in the world?
- What does the Old Testament teach about the nature and life of humankind?
- How can you explain the Old Testament doctrine of covenant?
- What is the meaning of theocracy in the Old Testament experience?
- What is the role of sacrifice in the religion of the Old Testament?
- What does the Old Testament teach about sin and its consequences?
- What is the idea of salvation in the Old Testament?
- How can you explain the Old Testament idea of human life and life after death?

Of course, the questions you will be able to answer are not limited to the above list. Biblical theology of the Old Testament offers you more. I am excited to lead and guide you in this study of theological themes in the Old Testament and in the whole Bible. I hope you will enjoy the course.

MAIN COURSE

Course Code	CTH 607
Course Title	OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY
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MODULE 1

- Unit 1: Meaning, History and Methodology of Old Testament
- Unit 2: God I – Existence and Nature
- Unit 3: God II – Names and Manifestations
- Unit 4: God III – Attributes
- Unit 5: Divine Revelation

UNIT 1 MEANING, HISTORY AND METHODOLOGY OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY**CONTENTS**

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 - 3.1 Meaning of Old Testament Theology
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 - 3.1.5 Themes of Old Testament Theology
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is the beginning of this module as well as this course on Old Testament Theology. The three modules will deal with: God and Revelation; God Creation and Israel; God, Israel and Humanity. Several theological themes of the Old Testament will be studied but the major ones are God, humanity, covenant, sin and redemption. The concern of this particular unit is a study of three concepts: Meaning, History and Methodology of Old Testament Theology; Existence, Nature, Names, Manifestations and Attributes of God; and Divine Revelation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define Old Testament theology,
- Discuss the reasons for the problem in the study of Old Testament theology,
- Describe the methodology of Old Testament theology,
- Explain the history of Old Testament theology with reference to some pioneers of the discipline,
- State how Old Testament theology is related to other branches of Old Testament and theological studies,
- List theological themes in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Meaning of Old Testament Theology

Old Testament (OT) theology is an aspect of Biblical theology. It is in order to consider, though very briefly, the meaning of Biblical theology. Biblical theology is the study of the theology found in the Bible. It is also related to exegetical theology, which involves getting out of the Bible “what it actually says in its original setting.” Biblical and exegetical theologies employ numerous critical tools of biblical introduction/studies. Some examples are textual criticisms, literary and source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism. Biblical theology can be studied under two major divisions: Biblical Theology of the Old Testament, and Biblical Theology of the New Testament. The focus of this course is the theology of the Old Testament. With this brief explanation of biblical theology we will now consider the meaning of OT theology. Old Testament theology has been defined and explained in different ways. Ludwig Kohler (1957, 9) defined it as an attempt “to bring together and to relate those ideas and thoughts and concepts of the Old Testament which are or can be important.” This effort thus requires and involves some other Old Testament studies, which will be explained later on.

Edmond Jacobs’s own definition (1958, 11) of OT theology is “the systematic account of the specific religious ideas which can be found throughout the Old Testament and which form its profundity.” This definition implies rightly that Old Testament theology involves the study of those concepts that are considered to be significant for our faith and life.

OT theology is thus theological reflection on the Old Testament. It is not, primarily, a study of OT language/literature, religion, ethics, history but it combines elements of all these. As a theological study, OT theology examines the revelation of God as experienced and recorded. Various studies, which constitute a necessary presupposition of an OT theology, according to Kohler (1957, 9), are: Exposition of the OT text, literary and historical criticism, and comparative religion.

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

State and explain one definition of Old Testament theology.

3.1.1 The Problem of Old Testament Theology

W. C. Kaiser Jr. (1988, 477) has described OTT as “a discipline in search of a definition, a methodology, an organizing center or motif, and a permanent berth in the curriculum of divinity.” He made this statement in view of the controversial nature of the subject. OT theology is a controversial study because of at least two reasons. First, there are many disagreements among the scholars concerning many points of detail. Second, there is no agreement about the actual nature of the discipline. For instance, different scholars have proposed different subjects as the central idea in the study of OT theology. Some examples are the Kingdom of God on earth, the sovereignty/Kingship of God, the law and prophet hood as the unifying principle, the presence and action of God, the relationship of God with humanity and creation.

However, it should be noted that the problem of meaning and approach is not peculiar to OT theology. Some other theological approaches, and indeed most other disciplines, have similar problems.

The very comprehensive definition of E.C. Rust (1969, 71) catches the meaning and essence of OT theology very well. He states:

The theological ideas of the Old Testament concern the nature and activity of God himself, as he discloses himself to the Hebrew people; the relationship of nature to God as its Creator and Sustainer; man’s responsible relationship to God; and the inter relationship of man to his fellows and to his natural environment, under God.

The merit of this definition of OT theology is that it contains and provides some key doctrines of the discipline. It is against this background that I decided to develop this course on OT theology along the major themes of God, Divine Revelation, Creation/Humanity, and Israel.

3.1.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

Discuss two reasons why Old Testament theology is a controversial study.

3.1.2 Methodology of Old Testament Theology

One major reason why OT theology presents a problem of approach is, according to Rust (1969, 71), “Because we are dealing with historical revelation and not with the thought patterns of one circumscribed period of time.” OT theology is an historical study of the revelation of God experienced and described by various people over a period of about two thousand one hundred years. E.C. Rust who offered this explanation also suggested a three step approach to the study of OT theology (1969, 71):

- In the first place we should “carefully differentiate Old Testament theology from the history of Hebrew religion,”
- In the second place we should “ask ourselves how we are to assess what is of abiding significance in Israel’s faith.”
- In the third place, we should determine “the pattern in which to arrange the theological ideas of the Old Testament faith.”

Using his own procedure, Rust went ahead to summarize OT theology under the following key topics:

The characteristic patterns of Hebrew thought: Hebrew psychology, Hebrew Cosmology and the Hebrew view of nature;

The Divine Disclose: the Divine glory, The Spirit and the word, Prophetic Consciousness, The Law and the Priesthood,

The Covenant God of Israel’s Faith: The Electing God, The Love of Yahweh, Yahweh is Righteous, The Holiness of God;

The People of the Living God; The Covenant Structure of Israel’s life; The Nature of sin; Judgement and Repentance, Forgiveness and salvation, The Eschatological Hope;

The Living God and Individual man; The Image of God, Human Survival; God the Creator.

3.12 Self-Assessed Exercise

Describe the three step approach to the study of Old Testament theology suggested by E.C. Rust.

3.1.3 History of Old Testament Theology

Prior to the 18th Century, biblical theology was studied as part of dogmatics, i.e systematic theology. However, since then it has developed as an autonomous theological discipline. Rationalism, The Enlightenment of the 18th Century and the use of historical-critical tools to study the Bible all contributed to the rise of Biblical theology. We will survey the history of OT theology by considering some important biblical theologians and their contribution to the development of OT theology:

J.P. Gabler. He argued in 1757 that biblical theology “should confine itself to a description of the religion of the Bible” and not trespass into the domain of systematic theology. Gabler explained that it was necessary to treat “biblical theology from an historical point of view.” According to Jacob (1958, 20), Gabler’s proposal for biblical theology which remains valid is that “the purpose of biblical theology is to describe what the authors of Old Testament thought concerning divine things.”

W. Eichrodt. He published **Theology of the Old Testament**, Vols. I and II, in 1967. What made the work of Von Rad to be significant is that he did not follow the traditional scheme of systematic theology. Instead, he discussed OT theology “round a specifically Israelite notion, that of the covenant regarded in a threefold way: the covenant of God with the people, with man, with the world” (Jacob, 24). He emphasized the underlying unity of the OT by pointing out the enduring features of OT religion and religious institutions.

G. Von Rad. He authored **Old Testament Theology** in 1962 & 1965. His own Approach to OT theology is by “reportage, retelling the story of Israel’s salvation – history... as it was ‘confessed’ at the ancient Israelite sanctuaries in credos like those in Deut. 26 and Joshua 24” according to Porteous and Clement (1983, 408).

Brevard Childs, **Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments**. London, in 1992. Childs advocated a canonical approach to biblical theology in which each of the two Testaments will be read in the light of the other. For him the “OT theology must not be described in abstraction from its connection to the NT.”

Some other notable OT theologians are:

Edmond Jacob
Ludwig Kohler
Ronald Youngblood

E.C. Rust
S. Ola Fadeji

3.1.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

Mention the names of three pioneers of biblical theology. Discuss the contribution of one of them to the development of OT theology.

3.1.4 Old Testament Theology and Related Studies

Old Testament theology is related both to other branches of theological studies. OT theology depends on and collaborate with other OT studies like: One, form criticism which is concerned with how OT books are formed and composed as well as their authenticity; Two, archaeology, which provides insights about the human environments in which the manifestations of God were received; Three, history of Israel, since OT theological studies work with historical facts like Exodus from Egypt, deliverance from the Red Sea, Sinaitic Covenant and the conquest of Canaan. The history of Israel is thus a part of the theology.

OT theology is also related to systematic theology in general. However, while biblical theology of the OT is confined solely to the Bible, systematic theology uses other sources and dialogue with other disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology and natural sciences. OT theology also collaborates with NT theology to make its message full and even complete.

3.1.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write a short note on how Old Testament theology is related to other Old Testament and theological studies.

3.1.5 Themes of Old Testament Theology

In view of all that has been explained so far in this unit the major theological themes/concepts of the OT that will be examined in the subsequent units are as follows:

- God (Existence, Nature, Names, Manifestations, Attributes),
- Divine Revelation,
- Creation/Providence/Theodicy,
- Humankind (Descriptions, Origin, Nature, Image of God, Male/Female, Life)
- Election and Covenant,
- Theocracy and the Law,
- Sacrifice and Worship

- Sin, Redemption and Mission
- Human Destiny and Hope (Life Before Death, Death and Life after Death).

3.1.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

List ten theological themes in the Old Testament.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In view of all that has been said above, we may conclude that the two main views of OT theology, in the opinion of Kaiser Jr. (1988, 477), are: “first that it must restrict itself to being **purely descriptive**, second that it must include a **normative element**.” In this course we will attempt a middle approach between these two views as we study OT theology Themes. We will be descriptive and historical. At the same time we will point out enduring features of the OT especially as they find fulfillment in the NT.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, I have introduced you to most of the fundamental issues of Old Testament theology. The meaning, problem, methodology, history and themes of the theological discipline were considered as well as how OT theology is related to other Old Testament and theological studies. Next unit will start a study of how God is experienced and described in the Old Testament.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

“Old Testament theology is a discipline in search of a definition and a methodology”. Discuss.

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UNIT 2 GOD I – EXISTENCE AND NATURE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main body
 - 3.1 The Existence of God I – Old Testament Assumption
 - 3.2 The Existence of God II – Critical Reflection
 - 3.3 The Nature of God I – Personality
 - 3.4 The Nature of God II –Anthropomorphisms
 - 3.5 The Nature of God III – Critical Reflection
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having introduced you to the meaning, methodology and history of the study of OT theology in the last unit, we will now begin the proper study of God in this unit. We will examine how the OT presents the existence and nature of God. The focus of the study is that the OT does not argue to prove the existence of God. It simply calls us to worship God. As for the nature of God, the OT uses human description to explain the personality of God.

From this unit on you will be asked to refer to and study many passages in the Old Testament to learn theology when two or three references are provided for the same point I advise you to look up and read at least one of them in your Bible, preferably in RSV or NIV. You will not only be learning from the OT but you will enjoy your study that way.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Differentiate between theoretical and practical atheism in the OT,
- Discuss the reasons that show the existence of God in the OT,
- Evaluate the OT evidences of the existence of God,
- Explain the personality as an important nature of God in the OT,
- Describe the nature of God with the use of anthropomorphic language in the OT,
- Analyze the anthropomorphic description of God in the OT.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Existence of God I – Old Testament Assumption

The OT does not prove, deny or question the existence of God. This assumption (that God exist) is said by Kohler (1957, 19) to be “the Old Testament’s greatest gift to mankind.” As a matter of fact, the person who says or thinks “there is no God” is declared to be a fool (Psalm 14:1; 53:1). This denial of God’s existence is practical (not theoretical) atheism. Theoretical atheism is the emphatic denial of the existence of God. That is not known among the people of the Old Testament. Practical atheism is to know that God exists but to ignore that existence, to live as if God does not exist, to pretend as if the existence of God does not matter to a person. It is also an attempt to question God’s action as it affects lives and not His existence.

Beyond the above presupposition in the OT we find reasons, actions and attitudes to show the existence of God which include the following:

The existence of God is the basis and rationale for faith which is often expressed through worship in form of prayer (Psalm 34:5) and praise (Psalm 117:1). The nations and peoples of the entire created world know the existence of God.

In the OT various parts of creation are described as praising God:

Lighting, clouds, winds, mountains, hills, trees, animals and birds are recognized as worshiping God (Psalm 148:7-10), Mountains and hills will sing and trees will clap their hands for God’s people (Isaiah 44:23; 55:12). The language is no doubt figurative, Morning stars (angels) sang praises to God when the earth was created (Job 38:7; Psalm 65:13; 148:2-23).

Heaven and earth including the seas and everything in them are called to praise God (Psalm 69:34; 96:11; 98:7).

From theological point of view, sin, apostasy and godlessness also witness to the existence of God. These things exist if only there is God. Sin is ultimately failure to turn to God and revolts against God (Isa. 9:13; I Kings 8:50).

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercise

What is the difference between theoretical and practical atheisms?
Discuss three Old Testament evidences of the existence of God using three passages.

3.2 The Existence of God II – Critical Reflection

We should note that, on the whole, the Bible merely points to the unquestionable reality of God and does not attempt to prove the existence of God rationally. The traditional major philosophical and theological proofs of the existence of God are ontological, cosmological, teleological and moral. These arguments in systematic and philosophical theologies try to establish a strong probability of God's existence so as to overcome some of the intellectual objections of unbelievers. I advise you to read something about these in some systematic theology books. The references are provided at the end of this unit.

The existence of God can neither be proved nor disproved. God is above human reasoning. Does it not make sense to believe that God exists? What do we think of a professor of epistemology who is an atheist and who thought that he has "proved successfully" that there is no God in a lecture with a round of applause from the audience. At the end of the lecture he walked out but when he dashed his foot against a stone he cried "Oh God." Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) pioneered the Death of God philosophy. To him the belief in the Christian God is not worthy of belief because it impoverishes human lives. Today there are people who reason that the idea of God as an objective reality is not compatible with modern scientific knowledge. Why did Nietzsche die with insanity? God is His own interpreter.

Most readers will readily agree with Kohler (1957, 20) that "For the Old Testament the existence of God is unquestionable. The questions are how God is and who He is." This is a welcome thought to the African mind. Africans who have a religious culture know that they "are" only because God "is". The missionaries did not come to give us a proof of the existence of God. They came to declare to us how God has revealed Himself and His love to the whole world in Christ Jesus.

Self-Assessed Exercise 3.2

Write a short note to evaluate the OT evidences of the existence of God.

3.3 The Nature of God I - Personality

Since the existence of God is not questioned in the OT, the essential question (who God is) concerns the nature of God. The OT has no definitions of God's nature unlike the New Testament that describe God as a Spirit (John 4:24), light (I John 1:5) and love (I John 4:8). However, several passages describe the constancy of God's character and trustworthiness of God is nature (Num. 23:19'; Mal. 3:6).

God is portrayed in the OT as one who is Person and Personal. God has no sexual characteristics. God is neither male nor female. Sex is not relevant to God. God is above sexuality. Sexuality belongs to creation. God has no male/female counterpart. Theologically speaking it can be said that God is Man (not human). God is taken for a man and acts like a man. According to Kohler (1957, 22) we speak of God “as man so that we should understand Him not as thing, power, or impersonal Being, but as one set over against us in a personal relationship.”

In Genesis 18 The LORD (vv 1, 10, 13 etc) appeared to Abraham along with two angels (Gen. 16:7; 19:1) like three men (Gen. 18:2). We must admit that God has the power to appear lack humankind and that we like the capacity to understand that. However it should not be too strange to us. After all humankind was created in the image, likeness of God (Gen. 1:27). Moreover, God in Jesus Christ also took the nature of a servant and he was born historically in human likeness (Philip. 2:7-8). This thought about the nature of God using the human appearance and language will be examined a little more in the next section.

3.3 Self-Assessed Exercise

Explain what it means to say God is Person and Personal.

3.4 The Nature of God II – Anthropomorphism

In this section we will study the nature of God in the OT with the anthropomorphic, anthropopathic and theriomorphic language. Before we examine the theological concepts let us first of all understand the ordinary meaning of these terms:

Anthropomorphic: (“of a god or animal) having the form or qualities of a person **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** New Edition, 1987, p. 35.

Anthropopathic: to ascribe human feelings and passions to God.

Theriomorphic: the use of activities of animals to illustrate the actions of God.

The OT is full of language which ascribes to God the attributes of human being. This description of God as human Person is an anthropomorphic language. Examples found in the OT include the following:

God speaks, laughs, has a mouth, has lips (Gen. 1:3; Ps. 2:4; Jer. 9:12; Isa. 30:27),

God hears, sees, smells, writes (Ex. 16:12; Gen. 1:4; 1Sam. 26:19; Deut. 9:10).

God has eyes, hands, fingers, an arm, ears, feet (Amos 9:4; 9:2; Deut. 9:10; Jer. 27:5; um. 11:18; Nah 1:3).

God has a head, a face, a back and heart (Ps. 6:7; Num. 6:25; Ex. 33:23; Hos. 11:8).

Since God is spirit without bodily form these expressions should not be taken literally. But we cannot go further than that. What is it to us if God who made human mouth and spoke “mouth to mouth” with Moses possess mouth? (Ex. 4:11; Num. 12:8).

Closely related to the above is the use of anthropopathic language to describe the feelings and passions of God like those of a man. God: feels delight (Jer. 9:24), shows favour (Isa. 60:10), rejoices (Zeph. 3:13), rebukes (Isa. 17:13), hates (Deut. 12:31), rejects (Jer. 14:19), abhors (Ps. 106:40), God can be provoked to anger (Jer. 7:18) and can be jealous (Ex. 20:5).

Less unknown to many people is the use of theriomorphic terms to describe the nature of God. The OT has references to the use of the activities of lion, the bear, the leopard and the moth to illustrate God’s actions. (Lam. 3:10; Hos. 5:14; 11:10; 13:7; 5:12). However, the Israelites did not use this much.

3.4 Self-Assessed Exercises

Use five passages in the OT to describe the anthropomorphic nature of God.

3.5 The Nature of God III – Critical Reflection

It is necessary at this juncture to make some clarifications about these special languages used to describe God.

In the OT we see a God who does not change in nature or character but is capable of change of expression, a God who can smile when we do good and frown when we commit evil. Kohler (1957, 24) clarifies, God “is presented as changeable and therefore very much alive but always the same God. The result is a great richness in the conception of God.” The use of anthropomorphisms is not to humanize God, the purpose “is to make God accessible to man.” These languages are limited to describe the nature of God. In several other instances the OT reveals emphatically that God is not human (Num. 23:19; Hos. 11:19).

Anthropomorphism cannot express the divine personality fully the OT thus prohibit making a visual representation of God. As Jacob C. (1958, 42) justifiably explains, “To make a representation of God means to desire to imprison him with certain limits and God was too great for anyone to be able for an instant to dream of setting a limit to what clearly never ceased, namely his life.”

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

State three clarifications about the anthropomorphic description of God in the OT.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From our study of the existence and nature of God in this unit we can conclude that God is eternal and God is living. This means that God has no beginning and God has no end. God exist in eternal past and God will continue to exist in eternal future. we must not be embarrassed if we cannot fully comprehend or explain the existence and nature of God. As Jacob (1958, 38) affirmed: “Just as life is a mysterious reality which can only be recognized so God is a power which imposes itself on man and comes to meet him without his being always prepared for it.”

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the existence and nature of God as found in the Old Testament. The findings can be summarized as follows:

The OT assumes and provides copious evidence of the existence of God. An attempt was not made to prove that God exists.

God is presented in the OT as Persona and Personal, not as thing, power or impersonal Being.

Anthropomorphic languages are used throughout the OT to describe the nature of God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Use four passages to discuss the OT theology of the existence of God. Write a brief essay to analyse and clarify the anthropomorphic language used to describe God in the OT.

7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 GOD II – NAMES AND MANIFESTATIONS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Names of God I – Yahweh, Yahweh Tsebaoth, Council of Yahweh
 - 3.2 Names of God II – El/Elo-him, Baal, Adon, Melek and Ab
 - 3.3 Manifestations of God I – Angel, Face, Glory
 - 3.4 Manifestations of God II – King Messiah
- 3.5 Manifestations of God III - Monotheism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment Question
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will continue the study of God started in the last unit when the existence and nature of God were considered as revealed in the OT. The unit is devoted to the names and manifestations of God which include Council of Yahweh and King Messiah.

To most primitive people, like the Israelites, “a person is concentrated in his name.” Name stands for the significance and existence of a person (Gen. 2:18-23; 27:36). For a Hebrew, a name gives knowledge of the innermost being of a person. The names of God in the OT are: El-Elohim, Yahweh (Jahweh or Jehovah); Yahweh Tsebaoth; Baal; Adon; Melek; Ab.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the names of God in the OT, such as Yahweh, Yahweh Tsebaoth and Council of Yahweh,
- Explain OT names of God like El/Elo-him, Baal, Adon, Melek and Ab,
- Describe the manifestations of God as Angel, Face and Glory in the OT,
- Discuss the identity of King Messiah in Biblical theology,

- Highlight OT belief in monotheism and how it relates to other forms of beliefs like polytheism, henotheism (monolatry), pantheism, panentheism and dualism.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Names of God In Yahweh/Yahweh Tsebaoth, Council of Yahweh

Yahweh was the proper name of God revealed to Israelites by Moses (Exodus 3:14) Yahweh is derived from the Hebrew word for “I AM.” Given through the personal self-disclosure, Yahweh became “the central name for God in the Old Testament”. It is quite possible according to Jacob (1958, 49). However, that “the name Yahweh may not have been an absolutely new revelation to Moses.” (Read Gen. 4:26; 9:26). Second Isaiah defined Yahweh as the first and the last (Is. 41:4; 48:12). This may be the best commentary on Ex. 3:14. Please note that Yahweh is rendered in some texts as Jahweh and in some Bible versions as Jehovah.

All the potentials contained in the name of Yahweh can be summarized thus: “the only genuine existence as over against that of idols which are nothing, a complete presence since the ends of the earth shall see him, an eternal presence since it knows no end (Is. 9:6, 26)”

Yahweh Tsebaoth. This name means God is the leader of the armies or the hosts. Various scholars as have identified the armies:

- (a) The earthly armies of the Israelites (I Sam. 17:45; Num. 10:35)
- (b) The armies of the stars, starry hosts,
- (c) The celestial armies of spirits and angels.

There may be elements of truths in all these suggestions. Therefore, Yahweh Tsebaoth could stand for God who is the God of the whole world, which include the Cosmos and “whose power is like that of the summation of all armies.”

Council of Yahweh. In several parts of the OT God speaks with the plurality of expression eg. “Let us” (Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7) and “who will go for us?” (Isa. 6:8). In these and similar instances God speaks as the Creator and King of the Universe by addressing the members of the heavenly court. The council is composed of God’s heavenly confidants. It is significant that some OT prophets were “made privy to that council,” **NIV Study Bible**, (1995, 1020) - such as Isaiah (6:1-8), Micaiah (I Kings 22:19-20) and Jeremiah (23:18, 22).

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercise

Describe the designation of God as Yahweh Tsebaoth.

3.2 Names of God II – El/Elo-him, Baal, Adon, Melek and Ab

El and Elo-him stand for the idea of power and pre-eminence of God e.g the mountains of El (Ps. 36:7), the Army of Elohim (I Chr. 12:22). **El shadday** stand for the Supreme God, the Almighty God (Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:3), **El Elyon** as “God Most High”, the creator of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 14:18).

Baal. The two correlative notions that are always mingled in the root **ba'al** are “that of ownership and that of lordship.” Examples of names compounded of Baal borne by worshippers of Yahweh are:

Yerubaal (Judges 8:29, 32)

Eshball (Ish-Bosheth), Meribaal (Mephibosheth) – I Chr. 8:33; 9:39, 40; 14:11.

A combination of Baal and Yahweh Tsebaoth is found in Is. 54:5, “your Maker is your Baal (husband), Yahweh Tsebaoth (the LORD Almighty) is his name.” (NIV)

Adon. It always means lord. (Psalm 114:7; Mal. 3:1) It is frequently used in the vocative ‘**adonai** in recognition of the superiority of God. Under the form ‘**adonay** (meaning thy lord or thy lordship) it is often used to replace “the now ineffable name of Yahweh.”

Melek. The term **melek** reflects concretely “the ideas of power, presence and permanence contained in the name **Yahweh**.” It is usually associated with the kingship of Yayweh (e.g Ex. 15:18; Num. 23:21; 24:7; Deut. 33:5).

Ab. It is found in proper names such as Abram, Abner, Eliab. The name conveys the ideas of the fatherhood of God which is the center of Christian religion and it is inherited from the Old Testament. In the OT, the idea is an expression of the lordship of God. We are required to give obedience and honour to him (2 Kings 16:7; Mal. 1:6; 3:17).

It is of interest that we have in the roots of some original African names (before the coming of Christianity) true (though incomplete) revelation of God as shown in some African names. An example in Yoruba culture is “Olorunosebi”, God does not do evil.

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

List five names of God in the OT. Explain the name El/Elo-him.

3.3 Manifestation of God I – Angel, Face, Glory

In the OT God has chosen to manifest his presence in diverse forms which include: Angel of Yahweh, Face of God, Glory of God. However, since God is spiritual and therefore invisible “no means will be sufficient to give adequate expression” to the presence of God.

The Angel of Yahweh. In some OT passages, the functions of Yahweh and the angel are interchangeable. In other words, “one who sees the angel can say he has seen God” Gen. 16:7-13; Jg. 6:11-23; 13:3-22). In the Old Testament some who had encounter with the angel of the LORD believed they have also seen God, which instilled the fear of death in them (eg. Gideon, Jg. 6:22-23). The appearance of angel was a continuing reality in both Old and New Testaments. Do angels appear to people today? Some people think so. Olubisi Irele (1991) had documented the contemporary encounters of several persons with angels in his book **Angel! Become your First best.**

The Face of God. The face expresses the greatest variety of feelings and attributes of all the parts of the body e.g. joy lights up the face (Ps. 104:15; Prov. 15:13). Therefore, the face of God “hold a very important place in the Old Testament as a manifestation of his feelings.” The face of God is thus the presence of God (Dt. 4:37; Isaiah 63:9).

The Glory of God. Weightiness is the fundamental idea expressed by the root word for glory, **Kabod**. Since anything that has weight “inspires respect and honour **Kabod** not only denotes the obvious objective reality but the feeling, which is experienced towards what inspires respect.” (Ps. 29:1; Jos. 7:19’; Is. 42:8; 48:11). One of the characteristic Hebrew words used to describe and understand the divine activity of disclosure is glory. According to Rust (1969, 75). “The glory of God is the way in which he manifests himself - his visible appearance, with the accompanying feeling of awe on the part of man... We may say that God’s glory is his radiant splendour which he sends forth when he appears in the storm and the fiery lightning” (Ex. 3:2ff; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Isa. 6:2ff).

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

What is the Glory of God in the OT?

3.4 Manifestations of God II – King Messiah

Let us consider the identity of King Messiah in the OT at this juncture. In Genesis 14:18-20 we have the account of how Abraham gave a tenth of his possessions to Melchizedek who was a king and priest. Some scholars consider him to be a pre-incarnate manifestation of Christ (1 Heb. 7:1-28). We observe that his titles as kings of righteousness and peace are messianic titles (Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16).

The concept of King Messiah is also related to Davidic Kingship. The Davidic covenant include a promise of the Lord to raise up a person in the house of David who would be anointed to rule God's people (I Sam. 7:11b-16) While the Messianic Hope has roots that go further back than the institution of kingship (as seen in the Judges), "In the history of the Messianic hope David constitutes both a finishing and a starting – point "Jacob (1958, 331).

In the Bible the Israelites were looking for the Anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ, the King (John 1:25, 41, 49; 4:25). The Davidic Kingship continued and the Christian understanding is that Messiah was born a descendant of David. Jesus is called "the Son of David" a popular Jewish title for the coming Messiah (Matt. 1:1; 9:27).

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write a short note on the identity of King Messiah in biblical theology.

3.5 Manifestations of God III - Monotheism

What I will like to do in this section is to consider certain elements and implications of the theology of God's existence, nature, names and manifestations. The OT started with a declaration of what God did in the beginning of creation, "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). The Bible never argues but assumes and declares God's existence. In the words of Youngblood (1971, 7) "the temptation to **atheism** was not a serious problem for the believing Israelite in ancient times. He was convinced that only a fool would be so ignorant, intellectually and spiritually so as to deny the existence of a supreme being".

Youngblood also discussed the idea of monotheism in Israel in relations with some other beliefs about God. The OT consistently affirm **monotheism**, a belief in one Supreme God who is the sovereign creator of the universe. This is the overall emphasis of the belief of Israel about God, in spite of the hints pointing to a plurality within the personality of God in the OT. Israel affirmed monotheism (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:18, 21)

though they were surrounded by and interacted with nations who held to various other beliefs about God. Examples are:

Egypt: **Polytheism**, existence of many gods that are sometime in competition or even conflict,

Edom and Moab: **Henotheism or monolatory**, belief and worship of one primary god among other gods and goddesses.

The pure form of monotheism that is taught in the OT and in the whole bible is shared with two other world religions: Judaism and Islam. Some other contemporary beliefs about God which are largely philosophical are:

Pantheism: The belief that everything is God (or gods), God is all, all is God.

Panentheism: The belief that God is in everything, all things exist in God.

These two beliefs do not make a distinction between God (sometime called Ultimate Reality) and creation/matter.

Dualism: The belief that there is a continuing struggle between two equally strong powers/forces/gods/principles in the universe. While one is good and benevolent, the other is evil and malevolent.

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

“One of the major themes of the OT is monotheism.” Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the study of the existence, nature, names and manifestations of God done thus far certain conclusions can be made. The first is that God has revealed himself to humanity to give us a knowledge of his existence and nature. The second is that through the different names God has manifested himself to humanity in a diversity of ways. The third is that through these various ideas the OT reveals that God is the supreme ruler of the world. Jacob (1958, 37) thus states: “What gives the Old Testament its force and unity is the affirmation of the sovereignty of God. God is the basis of all things and all that exists only exists by his will.”

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have further examined the theology of God in the OT through his names and manifestations. The names of God highlighted are Yahweh, Yahweh Tsebaoth, El/Elo-him, Baal, Adon, Melek and Ab. God's manifestations studied include Angel of God, Face of God, Glory of God. Some particular attention was given in the study of Council of Yahweh, King Messiah and Monotheism. The next unit is devoted to study the attributes of God.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Write short notes on the following OT themes:

Yahweh Tsebaoth,
The Glory of God,
Monotheism.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 GOD III – ATTRIBUTES

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Holiness of God
 - 3.2 The Righteousness of God
 - 3.3 The Faithfulness of God
 - 3.4 The Love of God
 - 3.5 The Wrath of God
 - 3.6 The Wisdom of God
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Our study of who Yahweh is in the OT is not complete unless we examine the perfections or attributes that he has revealed in his covenant relationship with the Israelites. These attributes are holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, love, wrath and wisdom. It should be pointed out that it is not enough to have knowledge of these attributes, God require them from us as we also enter into a covenant relationship with him.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- List the common attributes of Yahweh in the Old Testament,
- Discuss the holiness of God as manifested the Old Testament,
- Describe the Old Testament concept of the righteousness of God,
- Explain the idea of the faithfulness of God in the Old Testament,
- Analyse the major ideas of the love of God in the Old Testament,
- Discuss the nature of wrath as an attribute of God in the Bible,
- Describe the relationship between the love and wrath of God,
- Explain wisdom as an attribute of God in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Holiness of God

The OT understands holiness, in the explanation of Jacob (1958, 86), as “a supernatural and mysterious force which confers a special quality upon particular persons and things.” The holiness Of God is not necessarily one quality among others but the essential characteristic which correspond to the deity of God. That is, holiness is not what God possesses but what God is. When Yahweh is thus defined as the Holy One, the term holy is synonymous with the divine (Isaiah 6:3; 40:25; Hos. 11:9). In the OT Yahweh is referred to as the Holy God (I Sam. 6:20), the Holy One (Isa. 5:16; Hos. 11:9), the Holy One of Israel (Isa. 1:4; 5:19). These expressions indicate the independence, freedom, superiority and power of God.

Old Testament people as well as contemporary scholars all agree that holiness touch the divine mystery. E. C. Rust (1969, 80) thus corroborate the points stated above:” The word holy describes God’s innermost nature. Other persons and objects are holy only because they are appropriated to, dedicated to, God’s service and are used by him...” Holiness thus expresses the mysterious otherness and transcendence of God.

Having explained the holiness of God in the foregoing it should be added that the most basic idea of holiness is derived from the root word which expresses the idea of a cut or separation. God is thus holy because God is separate, distinct, different and peculiar. Hence holiness in term of moral content or purity is an implication, a secondary idea of holiness for both God and the people of God (I Peter 2:9, 10).

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercise

Discuss the theme of the holiness of God in the OT.

3.2 The Righteousness of God

The OT people were sure of the righteousness of Yahweh. One way to look at righteousness is “conformity to a way of acting or thinking.” In the OT this is supported by many instances of the root **Esdq** e.g. objects which conform to certain types are called **Esdq** (hatsedeq): just balances, just weights, just measures (Lev. 19:36; Ez. 45:10). Righteousness refers to conformance to a norm or standard (Ps. 23:3; 4:5; 51:19).

However, righteousness is a concept of relationship, an action much more than a state, “a person is righteous because he acts justly.” It is difficult to define the righteousness of in the OT because righteousness basically has no religious or moral connotation. The righteousness of God is connected with his judgment, justice, mercy and favour.

Rust (1969, 79) thus explains that, “At the religious level, a righteous act is one which conforms to God’s law or justice.” The righteousness of God is the dynamic quality of his character that is seen in his acts. The New Testament also affirms that Jesus Christ is the righteousness of God. People become righteous as they stand right with God to receive this righteousness (Rom. 1:7; 4:6; I Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 6:21).

3.2 Self-Assessed Exercise

Write a short note on the OT concept of the righteousness of God.

3.3 The Faithfulness of God

Divine faithfulness or fidelity comes from the OT word **chesed**. It can be rendered as mercy, kindness, grace and love. It signifies the strength of Yahweh (2 Kings 20:20; Ps. 62:12-13). When **chesed** is associated with ‘**emet**’ it conveys firmness, stability and by implication security and truth (Ps. 25:10; 40:11; 61:8; 138:2).

The idea of faithfulness of God is also related to his covenant with Israel. Thus, in the words of Jacob (1958, 104) “The **chesed** of God is revealed in and through the covenant; It is because God has concluded a covenant that he has shown **chesed**.” (Ex. 34:5-6; Hosea 2:19-21).

In divine faithfulness **chesed** is even beyond the covenant. When human partners break the covenant in unfaithfulness the **chesed** of God is not suppressed. God is always faithful to his character and people (Hosea 2:21; Jer. 3:12; 2 Tim. 2:13). This concept of the faithfulness of God shows that the OT is interested more on the work than in the nature of God, more in his presence than in his existence.

3.3 Self-Assessed Exercise

What does it mean to say God is faithful in the Old Testament?

3.4 The Love of God

The two major ideas of the love of God in the OT are: One, choice or election; Two, loyalty, steadfastness or faithfulness. God’s self-disclosure centers on his electing covenant love (Deut. 10:15; Ezek.

16:8). The covenant love is also loving-kindness, steadfast/loyal love and faithfulness (Deut. 7:9).

God binds himself to his people by the covenant which has the roots of the mystery of election. The “origin of election is found in love... the spontaneous covenant which carries one being towards another being with the desire to possess it and to find some satisfaction in that possession.” The love of God in The OT can also be defined in terms of loving-kindness and grace (e.g. Amos 3:2).

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Highlight the two major ideas of the love of God in the Old Testament.

3.5 The Wrath of God

Wrath is one of the feelings of God. Exodus 34:6-7 even shows that anger is part of divine nature. However, transgression of the covenant is the cause of God’s wrath in the OT. Edmund Jacob (1958, 115-116) believes that wrath is “a particular aspect of the divine jealousy, of that jealousy which is on exclusive love when the people are faithful, but which turns to wrath when the people respond to that love with ingratitude by going after other gods.” Happily, however, God’s wrath is for a moment. (Psalm 30:5)

We need to clarify two misconceptions about the love and wrath of God at this point. The first is the thought that while the God of the OT is wrathful the God of the NT is loving. We see the expression of both love and wrath of God in the OT (Ex. 34:5-6; Ezra 10:14) as well as in the NT (John 3:16; Rom. 2:5). The second is that some people think that the love and wrath of God are contradictory attributes of God. They are not. Love and wrath of God are two sides of divine character. Bruce Milne (1998, 87) reasoned well that without wrath the love of God “would degenerate into sentimentality”. I will add that wrath is tough love. Without holiness (righteousness, justice and judgment) mercy (kindness, goodness and grace) will turn to weakness. God is perfect in his attributes.

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

Are love and wrath contradictory attributes of God in the Bible? Explain

3.6 The Wisdom of God

The wisdom of God (2 Sam. 14:20; Job 15:8; Dan. 2:20-23) expresses the universality of the knowledge of God and the omnipotence of his

deeds. In the OT, wisdom is often mentioned along with knowledge and power.

The wisdom of God shines in his works. The order and harmony that we see in creation witness to the wisdom. Some of the themes of wisdom literature are the punishment of evil and the reward of goodness. God is the source of wisdom (James 1:5-8). While the sages possessed more wisdom than others the messiah has wisdom in its fullness (Is. 11: 2) An attitude of humility indicates human possession of the wisdom of God (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Ps. 111:10; Job 28:28)).

3.6 Self-Assessment Exercise

How did God demonstrate his wisdom in the OT?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The six attributes of Yahweh that we have studied in this unit represent the way that God revealed himself to the Israelites. Not only that, these are communicable attributes of the divine that are expected to be reflected (though at human level) among Israelites and in the lives of all persons who are in covenant relationship with God.. Therefore, since God is holy, God's people are also called upon to be holy (Lev. 11:44-45; I Peter 1:15-16). Jesus asked his disciples to be perfect in righteousness/goodness (Matt. 5:43-48). God ask us to be faithful to Him and to others as he is faithful to us (Luke 12:42-44). We are required to love God and love our fellow humans (Matt. 22:37-40). We should be slow to be angry and not sin in our anger (James 1:19-20; Eph. 4:26-27). The Lord promises to give us wisdom as we ask of him (James 1:5-8).

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we have studied the perfections of Yahweh the ways that he has revealed himself to Israel and to the whole world. The attributes examined are holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, love, wrath and wisdom. It has also been emphasized that these attributes are manifested in the course of the covenant relationship of Yahweh with his people. God desires that these attributes be reflected in his people.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

The Old Testament presents holiness not as what God possesses but what God is. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 DIVINE REVELATION

[CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main body
 - 3.1 The Nature of Divine Revelation I
 - 3.2 The Nature of Divine Revelation II
 - 3.3 The Means of Divine Revelation I
 - 3.4 The Means of Divine Revelation I
 - 3.5 The Effects of Divine Revelation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Our discussion of the OT theology of God as explained in the last three units is based on an assumption, that is, that God has revealed himself to people of the OT. How did the Israelites know God? How did God reveal himself to the people? This unit, which ends this first module in your study of theology of OT, will consider the OT doctrine of revelation. The issues that will be examined are the nature, means and effects of divine revelation.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the nature of divine revelation in the OT,
- Highlight some basic issues concerning the revelation of God in the OT,
- List the various means of divine revelation in the OT,
- Discuss the means in the OT through which God has revealed himself to people,
- Describe the effects of divine revelation on Israel as found in the OT.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Nature of Divine Revelation I

Man does not have a knowledge of God in and by himself, all knowledge of that kind must be granted to him by God, must be made known to him. For the OT revelation implies “the means God uses to

make possible knowledge of God for men.” Revelation is the communication or notification where God is its author.

It has been noted that communion between God and man is the essential meaning of all revelation. Throughout the Old and New Testaments there is a connection between revelation through the word of God and salvation of man (Isa. 40:2f; John 17). Revelation is the means by which God gives knowledge and life.

Th. C. Vriezen (1958, 234) believes however that the communion which revelation opens does not “do away with the holiness of God, the respect and the distance between God and man. It is precisely in God’s revelation that it becomes evident how God, who seeks communion with man, yet remains God!”

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write a short note on the nature of divine revelation in the Old Testament.

3.2 The Nature of Divine Revelation II

Some other basic issues to note concerning the revelation of God in the Old Testament are the following:

There are several expressions used for revealing. Expressions used for revelation include: appear (Gen. 12:7), make Himself known or recognized (Num. 12:6). Both expressions sometime occur side by side (Ex. 6:3; Ezek. 20:5; Gen. 35:7; 41:39, Num. 16:5; 23:3, 4).

God reveals Himself to make known His name and therefore His nature (Ex. 6:3). Revelation is an act of the grace of God (Mal. 1:1-3). God has fellowship with men due to His free and groundless will.

The revelation “is not a single revelation of a harmonious system of lives of thought, but a long gradual movement gathering momentum in the context of history.” Revelation is progressive in the Old Testament.

God makes Himself known more to the leaders of His people for the sake of the whole people of God. The leaders (such as Moses and Abraham) are “mediators of the revelation.” The important thing is that God can reveal Himself, God wills to reveal Himself, and that God has revealed Himself.

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

Highlight four basic issues concerning the revelation of God in the OT.

3.3 The Means of Divine Revelation I

In the OT God reveals himself through a variety of means which include: his work (nature), by visions/dreams, through human persons (mediators), by His word/law/ and His Spirit, and various symbols/representations/manifestations.

In Nature. God is revealed through His works like creation (Ps. 19:1; Ps. 102:25), maintenance of the world (Amos 5:8), what He has done and He continues to do for His people (Ex. 18:11; I Kings 18:37-39; Jer. 16:21) and what God will do to finally execute His will (Is. 49:23; Ezek. 6Z:13).

In Visions/Dreams. The word ‘vision’ usually means a visual image that a person sees while awake. Example of prophets who received the revelation of God in visual images are Amos (7-9) and Jeremiah (1, 24). Chosen individuals may also see or hear God in apparitions (Num. 12:6, 8). In the OT there are accounts of many theophanies through which God reveals Himself e.g. through Isaiah (6) and Ezekiel (1-3). Dreams constitute another means of divine revelation in the OT. In the stories of Joseph and Daniel dreams play an important part (eg. Gen. 37 and 47; Daniel 4).

Through human mediators. God revealed himself through men who are mediators between God and men whose special gifts which “fit them to perceive the presence of God, hear His utterances, His commissions and His announcements and convey them to their day and generation.” Men like that could be called ambassadors or messengers (Is. 6:8; Amos 7:15; Ex. 3:10).

One particular group of mediators deserves a special treatment, that is prophets. An important figure in the OT is the prophet. He plays a very important part in Israelites’ religion. The prophet speaks and carries the word of God. The prophetic tradition of the OT can be traced to Moses and Samuel. The prophetic utterances may also be accompanied with ecstasy. The two types of OT prophets are the ecstatic and the seer.

Th. C. Vriezen (1958, 258) thus opinionated “In our opinion it is therefore an incontestable fact that the religion of Israel (any rate as represented in the Old Testament is fundamentally prophetic throughout and that the Old Testament revelation came to the people of Israel first and foremost through the intermediation of prophets (an was also stated

in Heb. 1:1).” While priests were also important in Israel they were secondary in prominence with regard to serving as vehicles of divine revelation.

3.3 Self-Assessed Exercise

List ten means of divine revelation in the OT.

3.4 The Means of Divine Revelation II

By God’s word. The word is the most common means of divine revelation in the OT in particular and the entire Bible in general. As a matter of fact, revelation by visions involves the word, as well as the revelation through prophets and priests. The prophets used to declare “Thus says the Lord,” while the priests communicated divine instruction (**torah**) to the people eg. Habakkuk (2:1-5). As an element of revelation the word witness to the relationship between God and humanity. So crucial is the role of the word in the spiritual intercourse between God and humanity that Vriezen (1958, 253) had to declare “For that reason the word of a means of revelation is in the closest harmony with the whole of the spirit of the Old Testament religion of revelation, which lays equal importance on the communion and the distance between God and man.”

The Law. One special kind of the word of God in the OT is the law. In the law, God’s desire is communicated to tell Israel what to do to fulfill the will of God. As it was for the Israelites, the three motives for us to observe the law are: gratitude (Ex. 20:1-2), The fear of God (Deut. 6:24), and the promise (Deut. 30:15, 19). More will be said about law in the OT in the next module.

Through the Spirit. The Spirit of God sometime occurs in the OT as a means of revelation as we see in Ezekiel and Isaiah. The more common experience is the inspiration that the Spirit of God gave to people to preach the word (eg. Num. 24:2; Neh. 9:30).

It appears as if there is no adequate language to describe the form in which the Spirit communicates to people in the OT. It may be in form of clothing (2 Chr. 24:20; Judges 6:34), a power of inspiration within the recipient (Ex. 31:3; Isaiah 63:11; Ezek. 36:27), and outpouring (Isa. 29:10; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28).

Through Symbols/Representations/Manifestations. Some other means of revelation can be discussed together as symbols representatives and manifestations. Persons (like priests) who were agents of divine revelation were also symbols of revelation in their

mediatorial activity. For instance the priest interceded for the people in the sanctuary, which contained the symbols used to maintain the relationship of people with God.

God revealed himself to the Israelites through various representations and manifestations like: the ark of Yahweh (I Sam. 4:3; Num. 10:25), and the tables of the Law in the Ark the messenger (or angel) of the Lord (Zech. 1:11; 12:8), the face of God (Hos. 5:15; 2 Chr. 7:14), The glory of God (Isaiah 6:3; Ezek. 1:28).

Most of the means of revelation that have been discussed so far are inward form eg. vision, dream, the word law and the spirit. However, God is revealed and believed in some outward forms in the OT. Some of these means were mentioned under the revelation of God in nature. Some other examples of revelation of God in natural phenomena in the OT are thunder and lightning (Ex. 19:1 Sam. 7:10) and fire on Mount Sinai (Ex. 19).

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

The word and the law are important means of revelation in the Old Testament. Discuss.

3.5 The Effects of Divine Revelation

It is appropriate to also consider the effects of divine revelation on Israel. It was stated earlier on that divine revelation seemed to create communion between God and humanity. Another effect of revelation of the grace of God was for the people to glorify God. The revelation of God and the work of salvation that came with it was meant to glorify God in Israel and among the nations of the world (Ezek. 37:16-37).

Divine revelation in the OT also gave Israel the knowledge and fear of the Lord some scholars eg. Uriezen (1958, 235) that “this fear of the Lord even became the standing expression for what we call religion.” Through the revelation and activity of God Israel came to know God in His holiness, justice and love. God did not just reveal himself for the sake of revelation but to call, to repentance, to save, to commission, to send on errand, to establish personal covenant relationship with people. The recipients of that revelation were expected and required to obey the Lord. Divine revelation requires human obedience and involves human responsibility.

3.5 Self-Assessed Exercise

Describe the effects of Divine revelation on Israel as found in the OT.

4.0 CONCLUSION

At least three inferences can be drawn from the discussion of this unit. The first is the certainty of divine revelation. The people of the OT did not doubt that they have received authentic revelation of God. The second is that the revelation is the basis of the communion and covenant revelation between God and Israel. The third is that the knowledge and fear of God, the word and law received significantly expresses the religion that we find in the OT.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined the doctrine of divine revelation in the OT. The unit started with an examination of some basic issues about the nature of revelation especially the purpose and expressions of revelation. The following means through which God is revealed in the OT were also considered-creation/nature visions/dreams, human persons (as mediators), the word/law, spirit, symbols/representations/manifestations. The last major section considered the effects of divine revelation on Israel.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

State four basic issues about the revelation of God in the OT.
Discuss the word as a means of revelation in the Old Testament.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2

- Unit 1: Creation, Providence and Theodicy
- Unit 2: Humankind I – Designation, Origin and Nature
- Unit 3: Humankind II – Image of God, Male/Female and Life
- Unit 4: Election and Covenant
- Unit 5: Theocracy and The Law

UNIT 1 CREATION, PROVIDENCE AND THEODICY**CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main body
 - 3.1 Old Testament Doctrine of Creation and Nature
 - 3.2 The Significance of Old Testament Doctrine of Creation
 - 3.3 Old Testament Doctrine of Providence
 - 3.4 Old Testament Doctrine of Evil
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit begins the second module of this study of Old Testament theology. The module is concerned with the study of God. Creation and Israel. In this first unit we shall study the Old Testament doctrine of creation and nature. The significance of the doctrine will also be highlighted. Since God is also the maintainer of creation, the doctrine of providence and the presence of evil in the world will also be considered.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the Old Testament doctrine of creation,
- Describe the Hebrew view of nature as found in the Old Testament,
- Explain the significance/implications of the Old Testament doctrine of creation,
- Describe the Old Testament doctrine of providence,

- Highlight the problem of evil in the world from the perspective of the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Old Testament Doctrine of Creation and Nature

According to the Old Testament, creation as we know it now did not exist by accident. God is the Creator and the absolute Proprietor of the universe. The sovereignty of God over the creation is taught (Isa. 43:10). In the book of Genesis, the verb **create** is used to refer to the existence of “the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), sea creatures, birds and insects (v. 21), as well as that of humanity (v. 27).

The Old Testament stated very emphatically that God created the heavens and the earth, that is, the world. God created man “as a potter, fashions man and breathes into his nostrils.” (Gen. 2:7) God created with his word and also with his hand. In the creation story we see the greatness of God’s might, His transcendence and His omnipotence.

Some theologians see this account functioning as a myth. They question the historicity but affirm the validity of the story. Ludwig Kohler (1957, 87) has commented appropriately, “the creation in the Old Testament does not belong to the sphere of natural science but to the history of man.”

The Hebrew cosmology as seen in the Old Testament is that the world is a three-tiered universe: some mountains hold a flat earth; under the earth is sheol; above the earth is heaven (Gen. 1; Psalm 104; Phil. 2:10). Nature is also understood as having a psychic bond with both God and humankind (Isa. 62:4). The sun, moon and stars all possess psychic life (Psalm 19:4-6; 148; Jgd. 5:20).

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercise

Write short notes on:

- a) Old Testament doctrine of creation,
- b) The understanding of Nature of the Hebrews as found in the Old Testament.

3.2 The Significance of Old Testament Doctrine of Creation

The OT theology of creation stated in the last section is significant in some respects. The first significance is that God is recognized as the source of this world. This can be described as a philosophy of life that

has implications for relationship with God and the universe. Vriezen (1958, 186) thus declare: “Proclaiming the One, Holy and Merciful God as the creator of the world became, however, of the utmost importance to the Israelites and Christian conceptions of the world; this made it possible to see nature as an entity to know the world as the perfect work of God, to recognize a close relationship between God and the world.”

The second significance is that the creation story links together the faith of Israel in God as the Creator of the world and as the Saviour. The God of creation is the same God of salvation as seen in Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40-66). Yahweh is described both as the Creator and Redeemer (Isa. 43:1, 14f). This association of God with both creation and salvation gives the Old Testament philosophy of life “clarity, tranquility, warmth and grandeur.”

The third significance of the creation story is that it also teaches God’s sovereignty, His dominion over the entire universe (I Chr. 29:11; Psalms 19 and 24). The OT theology of creation stresses “the absolute nature of God’s sovereignty. Nothing in the universe can limit His authority or thwart His purposes” affirms Youngblood (1971, 20).

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

The Old Testament doctrine of creation is significant in at least three ways. Explain.

3.3 Old Testament Doctrine of Providence

In the OT we see God not only as the Creator, but also as the Sustainer and Maintainer. The providence of God is seen both in the history of the Israelites in particular and the world of the nations in general.

The doctrine of Providence in the Old Testament can be discussed from the concepts of how God is protecting the world, upholding the world, shaking the world, directing the course of history and guiding man.

God upholds the world in conflict. In the OT we see God in control of the sea and the mountains (Ps. 46:3; 89:9; Jer. 5:22). Ludwig Kohler (1957, 89) is of the opinion that God is involved “in a constant struggle for the defense of His work.” (Ps. 89:13; Isa. 51:9; Ps. 100:6). Of course God has to “fight” to conquer. This is an assurance in the power of God to keep us in danger.

God also maintains the world. The sun, moon, stars and the whole creation are made to obey His commands (Ps. 74:16, 17; 136:8, 9, Isa 40:26). God upholds the seasons-rain, dry and harmattan. God is also the

Lord of time. God established time at creation and He has “established the order of sequence of things, how long they shall be, and their end.”

God is superior to His creation. He can destroy it, “disturb His order, change His will, make an end of time, destroy His creation, withdraw His work, supersede His world with another.” God is the God of all ages, of all works, and of all eternities.

God is active in the history of man. History moves toward a determined goal (Joshua 24:28). History is moving with a purpose. History is under God’s management (Is. 18:4). God is the Lord of history. Kohler explains further (1958, 95) that in the OT “History is the revelation of God, the fulfillment of His intimations, the proof that he is in and for Israel, a God that hides Himself, a Saviour, the God of History.”

The guiding hand of God in the life of man is seen in the stories of several OT characters like Abraham (Gen. 12:1), Joseph (Gen, 5:20), David (2 Sam. 16:11ff). The stories of these great figures bear witness to God’s guidance. However while God guides man he does not suppress human will as we can see in Abraham’s intercession for Sodom (Gen. 18:16-33), Moses intercession for Israelites (Ex. 32:11-14) and the protest and intercession of Amos (Amos 7:1-6).

Another important concept of OT anthropology is that “a man is important in the sight of God only as part of mankind, the individual is important only as a member of the people.” It is for this reason that the OT gives much attention to the dealings of God with His people and His community.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

State five ways that shows the providence of God in the world.

3.4 Old Testament Doctrine of Evil

It is appropriate at this juncture to also consider the Old Testament explanation of the existence of evil in a good world created by God, the Sovereign Ruler of the world. The subject is termed **theodicy** in Christian theology. The Old Testament teaching about theodicy will now be highlighted.

We have observed in the past units that the Israelites taught pure monotheism. Their view of the ultimate reality is monistic, it is not dualistic, it does not give room for a force and agent of evil of equal power that is struggling with God as seen in some other religions. The

OT thus teach that God has absolute power even over beings considered to be evil.

In the Genesis story evil is related to sin of humankind and to the devil. Baab (MCMXXLIX, 246) thus explains, “evil comes when man chooses to disobey God, whose will is righteous, and who demands righteous conduct on the part of men. Evil is therefore associated with the act of the will which causes men to defy God.” Humankind sinned for choosing sensuality not for possessing a body that makes sensuality possible.

Evil is also related to the devil which appeared to Adam and Eve as “the Serpent” (Gen. 3:1) identified in the Bible as “the devil” (Rev. 12:9; 20:2). Moral evil as we know and experience it today came into the world as a result of consequences of human disobedience and rebellion against God-fear, death, curse and pains (Gen. 3:7-24).

Of course, just as Adam and Eve passed the buck of their sins to others, today, humankind likes to blame God for the evil present in the world. Some people accuse God to be the source of evil in the Universe because God created the tree of the knowledge of evil (Gen. 2:17). God is also help responsible for evil because God created humanity with the ability to chose evil.

A biblical response is that God did not create evil. Satan was created good but became the devil and source of evil through rebellion against God (Isa. 14:12-15). Humanity also experienced evil when Adam and Eve chose disobedience. Examples of some natural evils in the world today are fire outbreak, whirlwind, flood, tornadoes. We must recognize that some of these are caused by human activities like overgrazing, deforestation and irrigation.

One inevitable conclusion from the study of evil in the OT is that, as asserted by Baab (MCMXXLIX, 247), “In many of its aspects evil in a mystery whose secret is in the mind of God and beyond human reason.” We declare that the entire Biblical perspective is to declare that God has power over the presence of evil (natural and moral) in the world. Evil cannot frustrate the good plans of God for creation and humanity.

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Summarize four main points of Old Testament teaching about the problem of evil in the world.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions are derivable from the study of creation, providence and theodicy in this unit: Since God is the Creator of the universe, God is also the Sovereign Ruler; The Old Testament links God as the Creator of the world and as the Redeemer of Humanity; God is in perfect control of the created world, including mystery of evil in the universe.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined the Old Testament doctrines of Creation, Nature, Providence and Theodicy. The significance of the doctrine of creation was stated with regard to the following implications: philosophy of life, relationship between creation and salvation as well as sovereignty of God. The doctrine of providence concerns how God is protecting, upholding, and directing the world. The doctrine of evil was considered from the viewpoint of monotheism and the relationship of evil with the sin of humanity and the rebellion of Satan.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Describe the Old Testament doctrine of creation/nature and Its significance.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 HUMANKIND I – DESIGNATION, ORIGIN AND NATURE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Designations of Man
 - 3.2 The Origin of Man
 - 3.3 The Nature of Man I – Flesh and Spirit
 - 3.4 The Nature of Man II – Soul and Heart
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit we examined the doctrine of creation and the related issues of providence and theodicy. In this unit and the next we shall consider the doctrine of man in the OT and it will be based on the designations, origin, nature and life of humanity. In all these the psychosomatic wholeness of man in Hebrew understanding shall be emphasized. In order to be true to the OT revelation we will retain the use of the word, man in the generic sense for humankind (Gen. 5:1-2).

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

State the designations of man in the Old Testament,

Describe the Genesis account of the creation of man.

Explain the relationship between the OT theology of creation of man and scientific theory of evolution.

Discuss the various terms used to describe the nature of man in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Designations of Man

The Designations of Man. The Hebrew terms used to designate man in the OT are 'adam, 'enosh, 'ish, and geber. These terms teach us some things concerning man.

'**adam** indicates the relationship of man with the earth ('**adamah**) as well as his origin and external appearance. It also portrays humankind. Man is always reckoned with in the OT "only within and as a number of a group." The OT thus thinks of man in the plural (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:2-4);

'**enosh** stresses the weakness, feebleness and mortality of man (Ps. 8:4-5; 90:3); It indicates the needs of humankind for support from God and one another.

'**ish** denotes that man is a being endowed with power, especially power of his will and choice. It is found in the biblical name Yo'ash. This makes man to be a responsible being (Gen. 2:23).

geber shows the power or strength of man to distinguish him from a woman or child (Ex. 10:11; 12:37; Jos. 7:14). It is almost equivalent to male.

According to Edmond Jacob (1958, 157) from these four terms we can say that "man according to the Old Testament is a perishable creature, who lives only as a member of a group, but that he is also a powerful being capable of choice and dominion." These designations thus corroborate the general Bible teaching about the insignificance and the greatness of human beings (eg. Ps. 8:3-4cf. 5-6).

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercise

Mention four designations (Hebrew terms) of man in the Old Testament.

3.2 The Origin of Man

The OT presents man as a being created by God. Man did not happen by chance. Moreover, God's purpose for man is expressed in the blessing, command and commission of Gen. 1:28. Man was mandated to "Be fruitful and increase in number." Through work (Gen. 2:15) he will be able to fill and subdue the earth and rule over the other creatures. The three basic duties of man are ruling, management and relationship. Man was given the responsibility to rule other creatures and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:26, 28b). Man was asked to work and take care of creation (Gen. 2:15). Man was assigned to nurture healthy relationships as seen in marriage and family life (Gen. 1:27b).

The two complimentary accounts of the origin of man in OT are Gen. 1:26-30 and 2:4-7, 18-22. From these two accounts we learn the following concerning the origin of man, according to Ludwig Kohler: "Man is God's creature. God, his creator, has given man life, a way of life and a mission. God his creator has also prepared for man the locus and circumstances of his life: the creation... The created world is the servant of man. Man is lord of creation. By the will of God, his creator,

man remains under the power and lordship of God: man is God's creature and only but also continually dependent on God. "

Today, the theory of evolution is presented as an alternative view of the origin of man. Based on the publication of **Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection** of Charles Darwin in 1859, it is theorized that living things evolved from non-living things over a gradual long process through the ages. Man thus evolved from lower animals with particular reference to some apes.

The approaches taken by OT and other theologians to explain human beginning on the basis of the relationship between the Bible account of creation and the theory of evolution can be classified and summarized as follows:

Fiat/Direct Creationism: Views that hold on to the biblical account of creation without making any concession for the scientific theories.

Evolutionism: The view of some natural scientist who do not see any merit in the biblical account of creation. They stay completely with the theory of organic evolution.

Progressive Creationism: This is one of the views held by some theologians and scientists as they try to combine the merits of creation and evolution. The view explains that God could have created in a series of act over a long period of time.

You are encouraged to read more about this exciting subject in standard textbooks on Systematic Theology like those stated at the end of this unit. We affirm that from the viewpoint of OT theology man is a created being. God is the source of humanity.

3.2 Self-Assessed Exercise

Describe the OT theology of creation. How does it relate with the scientific theory of evolution?

3.3 The Nature of Man I – Flesh and Spirit

Genesis 2:7 teaches that after God has formed man from the dust of the earth, the breath of life that comes from God animated the body. Man is variously called dust, flesh, heart, spirit and soul in the OT. These terms will now be explored.

Dust and Flesh. These two terms are related and show the transitory nature of humankind (Isa. 31:3; 40:6). Man is dust. God formed the body of man from the dust of the ground. The body will return to the

dust from which it was originally taken (Gen. 3:19; Ecc. 3:19f; 7:7). This means that man is frail and mortal.

Man is also flesh. Flesh is the corporal, lifeless stuff of man to which the breath of life is added to have a living being, a soul. The OT word for flesh **basar** means the skin. It stands for the outward appearance and it signifies the whole person. The overall significance of the use of the word flesh to describe humanity is weakness and thus is what makes it the ground for sin. Flesh distinguishes man from God in the sense of a contrast between strength and weakness (Gen. 6:3; Is. 31:3; Jer. 12:12; Ezk. 21:4; Ps. 56:5; 2 Chr. 32:8). Because man is flesh, he is transitory, weak and stands in need of spirit.

Breathe and Spirit. Man also has a spirit, the breath of God indicate with the word **ruach**. Man thus has the breath of life in Him (Gen. 2:7; Isa. 2:22). Breath is the life and being of man (Joshua 11:11; 10:40). This breath of life can be equated with the spirit of man. This breath and spirit speak of the power which gives man life (Gen. 2:7). In several OT instances, according to Jacob (1958, 161-162), “the spirit comes upon beings who are fully alive in order to give them power to accomplish extraordinary action,” (eg. Jud. 13:20; Joel 3:1).

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

List four major terms used to describe man in the Old Testament.

3.4 The Nature of Man II – Soul and Heart

Soul whereas in Greek philosophy man is seen as an eternal soul enclosed in the body, in the Old Testament man is seen as “an animated body or rather a body to which life has been given,” says Vriezen (1958, 201). The soul as used to describe man in the OT is more than an animating principle “which makes the difference between the dead and the living.” It is a holistic word that means “being” (Gen. 2:7) or “life” (2 Sam. 1:9). At this level, as explained by E. C. Rust (1969, 73) “soul” means man in his totality as a personal self... The “soul” is man in his personal unity of animating principle and flesh.” Man does not possess a soul. These come not different parts of man. Man is a soul.

Heart. The heart is also considered in the OT to be the source of human life (Prov. 4:23). Generally the heart “represents the inner life or character of man.” A person is a soul but has a heart. As the center of thought and intention the heart stands for the inner aspect of man called character.

In spite of the understanding that we may derive from these various terms (flesh, spirit, soul and heart) about man as a created being the overall OT emphasis is the psychosomatic wholeness of man. These are not different part of man. Man is a unity.

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Soul is one of the terms used to describe man in the Old Testament. Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As we study the designations, origin and nature (from the descriptive terms) of man we can make following conclusions:

The various designations shows that man is not significant compared with the greatness of God. Yet he is great compared with the rest of creation;

Man is a created being. He owes his existence to God and made to depend on Him;

The terms flesh, spirit, soul and heart are not different constituent parts of man. They indicate different ways of describing man. He is a unity.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have started a study of the OT theology of human beings. The designations of man studied are **'adam**, **'enosh**, **'ish**, and **geber**. The Genesis accounts of creation of man were discussed. The relationship of the doctrine of creation with the scientific theory of evolution was also highlighted. The nature of man was also considered in term of flesh, spirit, soul and heart. The study of mankind continues in the next unit.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

List and explain four Hebrew terms that designate man in the Old Testament.

Write a short essay on “A Human Being as A Soul”.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Jacob, Edmond (1958) **Theology of the Old Testament**, pp. 151-180.

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UNIT 3 HUMAN KIND II – IMAGE OF GOD, MALE/FEMALE AND LIFE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Image of God in Man
 - 3.2 Man as Male and Female
 - 3.3 The Life of Man
 - 3.4 Implications of the Old Testament Theology of Man
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment Question
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is a continuation of the OT theology of humankind started in the last unit. The unit will start with a study of the meaning of the creation of man in the image/likeness of God and the views explaining the concept. The nature of man as male and female will also be studied. This will be followed by a study of the birth of man and his life before death. The last part of the unit will deal with the implications of the creation of man in God's image for a moral and spiritual life.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the creation of man in the image of God,
- State the three classificatory views of the image of God in man,
- Discuss the human nature as male and female,
- Highlight two aspects of the life of man in the Old Testament,
- Describe the implications of the Old Testament theology of man for moral and spiritual life.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Image of God in Man

Man is created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 28; 5:1; 9:6). The most widely accepted contemporary interpretation of this concept include the following:

One, that there is no distinction between the image (tselem) and the likeness (demut) of God. While the first term refer to “a fashioned image, a shaped and representative figure,” the second is that of “bodily resemblance, spiritual capacity, intelligence, speech, will, freedom, differentiation or reciprocity of the sexes, etc,” according to Jacob (1958, 167). These two terms image and likeness complement and enrich each other.

Two, that in the OT, the image consists in man’s right “to have the animals, plants and the earth at his disposal and to rule over them” (Gen. 1:26; 28; Ps. 8:6). We see the first act of human dominion over the creatures as Adam gave names to livestock, birds and beasts (Gen. 2:19-20).

Three, that man is to be the representative/steward of God on earth to cultivate and manage the creation. This is also the basis of agriculture in particular and civilization in general. It is the fulfillment of Gen. 1:28. The divine image in humanity also manifests in authority over nature with capacity for science and technology to shape and control the universe.

Some possible ways to interpret the **imago Dei** (image of God) is to present man as a rational/intellectual, physical, spiritual/religious, responsible, moral and social/communal being. As a relational being, in the thought of E. C. Rust (1969, 84), it is the image of God that enables a man to be “capable of fellowship God... man has a capacity for responsible relationship with God.”

The three classifications of the various views of the image of God, according to Millard J. Erickson (1998, 520), are: **Substantive View**: certain physical or psychological/spiritual qualities, what man is; **Relational View**: experiencing of a relationship with God and other humans, what man experiences; **Functional View**: something a human being does.

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

State three classificatory views of “The Image of God in Man.” Which of these do you support?

3.2 Man as Male and Female

The accounts of the creation of man as male and female (Gen. 1:27; 2:22-23), also gives additional insights into human nature which include the following:

Both male and female equally reflect the image of God, both are images of God. The male is God's image. The female is also God's image.

Sexuality belongs to the order of creation (Matt. 22:30). Since God is above creation, sexuality should not be ascribed to God. God does not need sexuality to bear children. Sexuality is a limitation of each sex. God is neither male, female nor hermaphrodite. God is God. This is a biblical and theological paradox;

The Bible uses both masculine and feminine imagery to describe Yahweh: God is father – Mal. 1:6; John 17:1. God is also mother – Isa. 49:15; Psa. 22:9-10. The basic theological ideas of fatherhood (or motherhood) of God is that of parenting and ownership. Fatherhood and motherhood are not to be understood in the sense of maleness or femaleness. In other words God can manifest and perform the roles of both sexes. God is both father and mother.

The two sexes (male and female) make up our full humanity. Creation of man and woman in the image of God is “a type of all social relationships.” Male and female were created for marriage/family in particular and relational/social life in general. Jacob (1958, 172) thus reasoned that “Man's destiny is only fully realized within the unity of the married couple.” He made this statement with the awareness that while marriage may be regarded as the normal state celibacy is approved as an exceptional vocation.

In spite of this biblical realization we observe that in most traditional African cultures, everybody is expected to marry. The creation of man as male and female shows God's image in marriage relationship and it is the very basis of all human relationships and communal life.

Creation of both male and female in the image of God also implies that God intentionally and purposefully made male and female to be different in being and some life functions physically/biologically and spiritually/ministerially. Hence, a woman does not have to perform the role of a man to fulfill her being and vice versa.

Two related comments also need to be made at this point. The first is that whereas both sexes are to exercise dominion over nature, after the fall, the woman becomes subordinate to the man (Gen. 3:16c). However in redemption this subordination is converted to responsible care (Eph. 5:25-33).

The second is that whereas the traditional tendency is to restrict the role of the woman to the kitchen, child bearing and the home a more liberating hermeneutics is to call her to join the man to build the society in every sphere of human endeavour. As a matter of fact the portrait of the ideal woman in the Old Testament (Prov. 31:10-31) shows that a model wife and mother can also be “a manufacturer, importer, manager,

realtor, farmer, seamstress, upholster and merchant” (**Life Application Bible**, 1988, 131). The implications of the nature of man as male and female need to be further explored to enrich contemporary feminist theology.

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

The human nature as male and female is a theological paradox. Discuss.

3.3 The Life of Man

The three major aspects of the life of man in the OT are: Birth, Life Between Birth and Death. Only the first two will be treated in this section. The death of man will be considered as part of human destiny in the last unit of this course.

The Birth of Man. Man has the gift of fertility (Gen. 30:1; I Tim. 2:15). The OT teaches that it is God who gives children as a gift and fruit as a reward (Psalm 127:3; Judges 13:3). God also withholds the fruit from the womb (Gen. 16:2; 30:2; I Sam. 1:6).

How do we reconcile the promise of Ex. 23:26 with OT passages where people ascribe their bareness to God? How do we also reconcile this promise with the observation of the increase in the number of married women (even Christians) in bareness today?

In the OT life is not seen in the sense of organic functions like breath and blood. Man has life only as he renews his contact and relationship with God the author, source, giver and sustainer of life (Ps. 63:4). Comparisons and pictures that explain what life is in the OT are: Motion, death is immobility; Water, the source and condition of life (Gen. 2:5); Light, which is synonymous with health, salvation, and happiness (Is. 58:8; Ps. 27:1; Amos 5:18); Power, to make the face of someone shine (Prov. 19:13).

Life Between Birth and Death. Some of the basic principles that govern the OT view of the life of man between birth and death are:

That “The whole of life and every part of it comes from God and is under His guidance.” (Prov. 16:9). Thus, God gives man: power and weakness, hunger and plenty, poverty and riches, blessing and curse (Gen. 4:10-11; 12:1-3; I Sam. 2:4-7; 2 Sam. 16:11-12).

The description of man in the OT appears to be paradoxical. The opinion of human life is not favourable: Unusually long life is considered to be labour and sorrow (Ps. 90:10); The days of man are few and full of trouble (Job 14:1); Wisdom, knowledge, pleasures,

labour, fame, power, achievement, riches etc are vanity (Ecc. 1:2, 14, 17; 2:11, 26; 4:4, 16; 5:10; 12:8) Yet, life is full of joy. Man is expected to serve the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart (Deut. 28:47). Such joy should arise from gratitude, because of the abundance of God's provision (Deut. 12:7; I Kings 4:20).

What we regard as professions today are considered to be social functions in OT as in the case of the king, the judge, the priest and particular crafts like that of the potter and the smith (gold, silver). The modern concept of work is regarded as labour which is meant to provide for life necessity (Gen. 3:19).

3.3 `Self-Assessed Exercise

Highlight two aspects of the life of man in the Old Testament.

3.4 Implications of the Old Testament Theology of Man

The main emphasis of the OT about the nature of man is the creation in the image of God. In this section we will consider the various implications of that assertion which relate to how man is to initiate God through moral and spiritual life.

The starting point is to consider how man is to be both dependent on God and also to be responsible for the decisions taken. Jacob (1958, 173-174) explains that "as a creature man receives his life from God only, but as an autonomous and free creature he is capable of initiative and dominion."

Man also enters into communion with God and participates in the move of God. This requires faith in God characterized by knowledge, trust and obedience. On the basis of the **chesed** he has received from God he is also required to relate with others with **chesed**, righteousness and holiness (2 Sam. 9:3; Lev. 11:44). Man is to do these in humility, fear and joy (Ec. 2:26).

A life of imitation of God or godliness also involves prayer, sacrifice and worship. Jacob (1958, 176) explains: "Israelite prayer aims at uniting the will of man with God's will so that the individual, abandoning himself entirely to God also finds himself fully in God." When man offers sacrifice it is worship to God, a celebration of God's love and gift. The Sabbath also teaches man to rest as God did. God ask man to live to worship him and serve his fellow men.

3.4 Self Assessment Exercise

In what ways can man initiate God in moral and spiritual life?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The following are the conclusions that are based on the study of humanity in this unit:

The chief difference between man and the rest of created living things is the possession of the image of God,

The existence of man as male and female enrich our humanity as seen in social human relationships like marriage,

Man will experience joy in life as he worships and serves the Lord, Creation in God's image also implies initiation of God in moral and spiritual life

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit concludes the study of OT theology of man, which we stated in the last unit. The unit began with a study of the meaning of the image of God in man with emphasis on the relational view. The nature of man as male and female was also considered to be a paradoxical reflection of God who is above created sexuality. The OT view of the birth of man and life between birth and death was also studied. The unit ended with implications of the understanding of man for his moral and spiritual life.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Write a concise essay on "The Image of God in Man in the Old Testament."

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Kohler, Ludwig (1957) **Old Testament Theology**, pp. 146-152.

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UNIT 4 ELECTION AND COVENANT

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Meaning and Images of Election
 - 3.2 Major Elections in the Old Testament
 - 3.3 Meaning and Types of Covenant in the Old Testament
 - 3.4 Major Covenants in the Old Testament I
 - 3.5 Major Covenants in the Old Testament II
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

So far in this course on Old Testament theology we have studied two important theological themes: the doctrines of God and humanity. In this unit we will begin to study more in depth the discourse between the divine and humankind with particular focus on Israel in the Old Testament. The starting point is election, how God chose Hebrew as a people followed by how God entered into a covenant relationship with them. Two crucial and focal points of the election and covenant are the call of Abraham and the Sinaitic experience respectively.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the Old Testament doctrine of election
- List the various images of election in the Old Testament,
- Describe the major elections in the Old Testament,
- Explain the Old Testament concept of Covenant,
- Identify the major types of covenants found in the Bible
- List the major covenants of God with his people in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Meaning and Images of Election

The Biblical doctrine of election is one of the cultural themes and realities of the Old Testament. According to Jacob (1958, 210) election is “the initial act by which Yahweh comes into relation with his people and the permanent reality which assures the constancy of that bond.” In the Old Testament election occurs in a double sense: God elected Abraham and Israel (Gen. 12:1-3; Neh. 9:3); Israel also decided to choose Yahweh for their God (Joshua 24:14-24). Prophet Isaiah appear to be the chief exponent of Yahweh’s election of Israel as seen in Isa. 41:8; 9; 44:1, 2, 49:7. God displayed his sovereignty throughout the OT by exercising His right to make choices. Divine choice is especially relevant to the issue of mercy and salvation offered people.

The most common term used to designate election “the OT is the verb **bachar** which indicates a choice among other possibilities.” The OT used a variety of images to show the union of Yahweh with his people. These include:

- * **Marriage Union.** Marriage is first of all an election before it is a covenant as seen in Hosea (1:2; 3:1-3), Jeremiah (2:1-7; 3:11-12), Ezekiel (16 and 23) and Second Isaiah (50:1; 54:5, 8, 10; 62:4-5)
- * **The father and child.** Israel is regarded and treated as the first born son of Yahweh (Ex. 4:22). Divine fatherhood is endowed with sovereignty.
- * **The clay and the potter.** God acts according to a plan like clay in the hands of the potter (Jer. 18:1-6)
- * **Vineyard.** This image “expresses the hope of God and the obedience that he has the right to expect from his people.” (Hab. 2:17; Isaiah 5:1-2)
- * **The Inheritance.** This is especially applied to the land of Israel, which God gives to His chosen people. This image is a two-way one for the Levites in particular (Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9; 18:2) and for all Israel in general (Ps. 16:5-6).
- * **The shepherd and the flock.** This is very relevant to the Exodus experience (Ps. 78:52; Isa.63:11; Hos. 11:1-4) and it indicates the dependence of the people on their God.

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercises

Explain the term “election” in the Old Testament.
List six **images** of election in the Old Testament.

3.2 Major Elections in the Old Testament

The two major elections in the OT are the time of Abraham and the time of the Exodus. In the words of Rust (1969, 79) “For the tribal groups in Egypt the Exodus became focal point. For other groups the memory of Yahweh went back to Abraham and this calling of Abraham was more central.” The various other elections the OT are:

Choice of Shem among the children of Noah (Gen. 9:24-27) to carry forward God’s plans of revelation and redemption.

Elective purposes of God in the life of Abraham and his descendants to bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

This was later narrowed down to Isaac and then Jacob (Gen. 25:23; 27:36; Mal. 1:2, 3).

Election of Judah in Jacob’s family (Gen. 29:32-35; 35:23; 49; Ps. 78:67-68)

Yahweh and Israel together chose Israel’s King (2 Sam. 16:18)

Yahweh chose Aaron (Ex. 4:14-16; Ps. 105:26)

The choice of David in the Judah family (1 Sam. 16:1-13, Emphasis vv. 7, 13; Ps. 78:70)

Yahweh chose Solomon (1 Chr. 28:5; 10)

Ruth, a Moabite lady became the ancestress of King David by gracious choice (Ruth 1:16; 4:18-22)

A branch was selected from the shoot that would grow from the stump of Jesse (Isa. 11:1-3; Matt. 1:1).

Yahweh chose priests (1 Sam. 2:28) and the priestly tribe (Deut. 18:5; 21:5)

Yahweh chose his holy city (1 Kings 8:16) and His cult places (Deut.)

Every election in the OT as well as in the NT is always totally unmerited. Yahweh chose Israel freely (Deut. 10:15). Israel was not chosen because of greatness (Deut. 7:7f) or uprightness of heart (Deut. 9:4f). Every election, however, has privileges and responsibilities. Moreover, election also always involves service (Deut. 32:36, 43).

3.2 Self-Assessed Exercise

What are the major elections in the Old Testament?

3.3 Meaning and Types of Covenant in the Old Testament

The concept of the covenant is very close to the heart of the OT. Some scholars like Youngblood (1971, 38) even think that it “is the most fundamental and overarching idea in the entire Bible.” A covenant as found in the Bible is “a legally binding obligation (promise)” It is also related to testament, treaty, ordinance, vow or contract. In the Bible the word covenant carries a specially redemptive sense and “It refers to any formal agreement between God and man which possessed legal validity and which is eternally operative.” Covenant usually implies mutual commitment and obligation in the persons related. The usual description according to Rust (1969, 78) is to “cut” a covenant, which means to make “peace” (eg Ezk. 37:26).

The three major types of covenants found in the Ancient Near East are also present in the Old Testament: The first is the unconditional royal grant (e.g. the Davidic covenant). The second is the conditional suzerain – vassal (e.g. the Sinaitic/Mosaic covenant). The third is parity, a covenant between equals, e.g. the treaty between Abraham and Abimelech, (Gen. 21:27). Throughout the OT period, God has made covenants with his people. The major ones are:

In Eden (Gen. 3:15),
 With Noah (Gen. 9:8-17),
 With Abraham (Gen. 15:12-21; 17:1-14),
 At Mount Sinai (Moses) (Exodus 19:5, 6)
 With Phinehas (priesthood) (Num. 25:10-13)
 With David (2 Sam. 7:1-13; 23:5).

Each of these covenants has a promise (or more) and also a sign. They will be highlighted one by one in the next two sections.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

What is a “Covenant” as used in the Old Testament?

3.4 Major Covenants in the Old Testament I

The four biblical covenants to be covered in this section are Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic and Sinaitic covenants.

The Edenic Covenant. In the Garden of Eden Adam and Eve were deceived by the devil to disobey God (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-6). Man fell into sin and God pronounced judgements of curse and pain on serpent/ground and man respectively (Gen. 3:14-19). While Satan and mankind will be enemies, the offspring of the woman would crush the

head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 16:20). The pain of childbirth and human work is a kind of sign of the edenic covenant.

The Noahic Covenant. (Gen. 9:8-11) This was a Royal Grant kind of treaty. God made an unconditional covenant with Noah that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. While the world was characterized by sexual immorality (Gen. 6:1-4), wickedness/evil (Gen. 6:5-6), corruption/violence (Gen. 6:11-12) Noah lived in righteousness, obedience and faith (Gen. 6:9, 22; 7:5; Heb. 11:7; 2 Peter 2:5). The rainbow in the storm cloud is the ‘sign’ of the covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant. (Gen. 15:12-21; 17:1-4) God’s covenant with Abraham consists of two major parts. The first is the royal grant of a land, an unconditional promise made with righteous Abram and his descendants (Gen. 15:6, 16). The second is a suzerain-vassal type made with Abraham as patriarchal head of his pledge to be the God of Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17). A smoking firepot and blazing torch symbolized the first covenant while the Lord required total consecration symbolized by circumcision for the second.

The Sinaitic Covenant. (Ex. 19:1-6) It is also sometime called Mosaic Covenant. On Mount Sinai God made this covenant with Israel as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob having redeemed them from the Egyptian bondage. The covenant was a conditional divine pledge to be the God of Israel. The Lord promised to protect and guarantee the destiny of the people. In turn, they were also required to be consecrated and obedient unto God. The Exodus can be regarded as a sign of the covenant.

3.4 Self-Assessed Exercise

Write a short essay on “The Abrahamic Covenant.”

3.5 Major Covenants in the Old Testament II

After studying the Phinehas and David covenants in the Old Testament we will also highlight the New Covenant.

The Phinehas Covenant. (Num. 13:1-13) The Aaronic/priesthood covenant was made with the zealous priest Phinehas. God promised that Aaron’s descendants would be priests forever. This was a kind of pledge to provide Israel with a faithful priesthood forever.

The Davidic Covenant. (2 Sam. 7:1-13; 23:5) God also cut a covenant with the faithful King David. It was a form of Royal Grant, “An unconditional divine promise to establish and maintain the Davidic

dynasty on the throne of Israel.” An important implication of the covenant is that “salvation would come through David’s line through the birth of the Messiah.” Eventually Jesus Christ was born a descendant of David.

The New Covenant. (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-13) The New Covenant is another very important Biblical covenant. It is a covenant of grace through which God would write his law on the hearts of people. The covenant was fulfilled through forgiveness and salvation made available by faith in Jesus Christ.

Three aspects of covenant that we see in the various covenant- making between Yahweh and the people of Israel, according to Jacob (1958, 211), are:

The covenant is a gift of God to the people,
Covenant creates a relationship, a bond of communion,
The covenant also creates obligations in the form of law.

This examination of covenants in the Bible leads us to the study of theocracy and law in the next unit.

3.5 Self-Assessed Exercise

List seven major covenants found in the Bible.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the OT Yahweh has revealed himself to Israel as the God of election and covenant and he related with them accordingly. God chose Israel with love (Deut. 10:15) and they were also required to love the Lord (Deut. 6:4-5). Since Israel also accepted to choose the Lord he entered into covenant relationship with the people. God initiates and sets the conditions for the covenant relationship. The people entered into it willingly (Ex. 19:1-6 cf. 7-8). Election calls for covenant. E.C. Rust (1969, 79) ties the two concepts together: “The point is that the God of Israel is an electing God. The covenant structure of Israel’s life was within Yahweh’s free choice of his people.”

5.0 SUMMARY

Two theological themes of the Old Testament studied in this unit are election and covenant. The meaning and the following images of election were considered: Marriage union, the father and child, the clay and the potter, vineyard, the inheritance, the shepherd and the flock. After studying the meaning and types of covenant the following

covenants in the Bible were highlighted: Edenic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic/Mosaic, Phinehas, David and New.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Explain the term “election” as used in the Old Testament.
Write a short essay on “The Abrahamic Covenant”.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Jacob, Edmond (1958) **Theology of Old Testament**, pp. 201-216.

Youngblood, Ronald (1971) **The Heart of the Old Testament**,
pp. 27-56.

Life Application Bible (1988), p. 507.

The NIV Study Bible (1995), p.19.

Rust, E. C. (1969) “The Theology of the Old Testament,” pp. 71-86.

UNIT 5 THEOCRACY AND THE LAW

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Origin and Development of Theocracy I
 - 3.2 Origin and Development of Theocracy II
 - 3.3 The Meaning of the Law
 - 3.4 The Nature of the Law
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit brings the second module on Old Testament theology to the end. The unit will further study the covenant relationship between God and Israel through the theocratic governance and the giving of the law. Having elected and covenanted with his people Yahweh ruled them with his word through human ministers who represented him among his people. Yahweh also gave them instructions and injunctions which were meant to guide them as the social, moral and cultic requirements of the covenantal relationship.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define the term theocracy,
- State the theocratic offices,
- Highlight the progressive deterioration in the theocratic governance in Israel,
- Explain the meaning and use of the word “law” in the Old Testament,
- Discuss the nature of Old Testament laws.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Origin and Development of Theodicy

It appears as if Flavius Josephus, the greatest Jewish historian of the first century, coined the word **theocracy** to describe the system of government of the nation of Israel. This form of government arose in Israel on the basis of the Sinaitic covenant as practised during the period of the judges. As a government under the immediate authority of God, theocracy is “any political system in which God is believed to rule His ministers or other deputies.”

Theocracy implies belief in the sovereignty of God over His people. Therefore, the Israelites called God “the King” (Isaiah 6:5; Jer. 51:57). They also gave their children names with theocratic flavour like: Malchijah (I Chr. 6:40), “The Lord Is My King”; Malchiel (I Chr. 7:31), God Is My King”; Elimelech (Ruth 1:2), “My God Is King.”

It is significant to observe that in the Old Testament there were no distinctions made between the sacred/spiritual and the secular, between religious and civil matters. The term of the Sinaitic Covenant (Exodus 19:6) contain both civil words (kingdom and nation) as well as religious words (priests and holy).

In theocracy God used human representatives to govern His people through three theocratic offices. The first is the **prophetic ministry**, through which prophets spoke God’s word to God’s people in God’s name (Deut. 18:14-19). The second is the **priestly ministry** through which the priests, the sons of Levi, read the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 31:9-13; Lev. 10:8-11). The third is the **kingly ministry**, through which kings would govern the people of God wisely in line with the law (Deut. 17:14-20).

In the origin and development of the Israelite theocracy, the word of God played a central role. Youngblood (1971, 62) explains that “Only as the prophets proclaimed and the priests taught and the kings absorbed and practised the covenant stipulations would the people of Israel live in the light of God’s blessings.”

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercises

What is theocracy?

Mention the three theocratic offices.

3.2 Origin and Development of Theocracy II

In theocracy the national community of Israel was under the guidance of God (Judges 8; 1 Sam. 8, 10; Ezek. 40-48). In theocratic governance Israel was also under the practical direction of charismatic leaders or in amphictyony and later under a priesthood. While kingship was tolerated initially in Israel it was accepted later as a divine institution after the house of David came to the throne (I Sam. 9f). We see this in the liturgical coronation texts where the King is called the Son of God (Ps. 2:7).

There was thus a progressive deterioration in theocracy in the political development of Israelites from Sinai to the exile in Babylon. Unlike the period of the judges when the rule of God was asserted (Judges 8:23), Israel wanted a more authoritarian form of government (I Sam. 8:5, 19-20). Thus they changed from amphictyony to monarchy.

In the **Webster's Third New International Dictionary** (p. 73) the term amphictyony is defined as "any association of neighbouring states banded together for their common protection and interest." That accurately describes the relationship between the tribes of Israel before they were ruled by Kings particularly Saul, David and Solomon.

The theocracy of Israel ended when the Northern Kingdom of Israel (with Samaria as the capital) and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (with Jerusalem as the capital), fell to the Assyrians and Babylonians in 722 B.C. and 586 B.C respectively.

However, spiritual theocracy was both prophesized (Mic. 5:2) and realized in the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ (Matt. 2:1-6; Luke 2:52; Mark 1:15). Apostle Peter borrowed the theocratic language of Exodus 19:6 and applied it to all Christians (I Peter 2:9). We await the time when the ultimate theocracy, the Kingdom of God, will be revealed in all its glory and power (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 11:15).

3.2 Self – Assessment Exercise

How did the theocracy deteriorate in Israel?

3.3 The Meaning of the Law

The OT law was "implied and required by the central notion of the covenant." The law was a reminder of the conditions necessary for the maintenance of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his people. The various OT words used to describe the laws are:

debarim, meaning words with divine origin and authority;

mishpatim or **chuqqim**, ordinances that are engraved or fixed in writing;

mitswot, commandments; (decrees, ordinances, statutes)

torah, law with religious origin, which has come to be the supreme term for the law.

What is the law in the OT? Some bodies of laws grew around the Ten Commandments. Some of them are moral and ceremonial injunctions as stated in the covenant code (Ex. 20:22-23:33). Some others are civil and criminal laws (Ex. 21:1-22:7) Israel did not think of the law as legal stipulations like we do today. Therefore, in the OT the “law” could stand for the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), or the expanded commentary, “the book of the covenant” (Exodus 20:22-23:33; 24:7) or the first five books of Moses in the OT or even the entire OT

E. C. Rust (1969, 78) explains what constitute the Jewish Law thus: “So there grew in Israel a corpus of laws consisting of moral injunctions, ceremonial rules, civil laws, and criminal judgments. It embodied laws arising from social custom, rulings of kings and judges, cultic and ceremonial practices, moral injunctions based on prophetic oracles. Ultimately all were incorporated into our Pentateuch and constituted the Jewish Law.”

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

What is the “Law” on the Old Testament?

3.4 The Nature of the Law

Two aspects of the OT teaching about the law correspond to the two successive stages of its development; One, the law as God’s revelation before it is an instruction (Ex. 19:4ff). The law was given within the context of the election and covenant relationship of God with the Israelites (Mica 6:8ff). Two, there was a cleavage between the law and the covenant. The law became the condition for the restoration of the covenant (Hos. 1:9).

The intentions of the law were: “to represent the demands of a holy God upon a sinful people” and “also to make the theocratic system workable.” The law was not meant to be burdensome but to be received, and followed joyfully (Psalm 119:70, 92, 97). The law is an illustration of not only God’s transcendence and sovereignty but also of God’s condescension and presence to reveal His purposes to His people.

Two literary forms used by Moses in the legislative portions of his writings. The first is the **casuistic style**, the form which is also found in the extra-Biblical Cuneiform law. The common structure is “If a man does so-and-so” (e.g. Exodus 22:1, 14). The second is the **apodictic type**, a unique feature of the mosaic legislation. The legal formula is” You shall/shall not” (e.g Ex. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21). It has been observed that while most Casuistic laws treat civil or criminal cases, most apodictic types concern moral or religious issues. The casuistic forms are also usually longer and more complex compared with the apodictic type.

The law can be evaluated to be both positive and negative. Positively, it was a gift of God’s grace to His people (Gal. 3:24). Negatively, it is not capable of leading us to salvation in Jesus Christ (I John 5:1-3).

3.4 Self – Assessment Exercise

Mention the two literary types of law in the Old Testament. Give one example of each type.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The following are some of the major valid conclusions that can be drawn from our study of theocracy and the law:

In the theocratic government God ruled his people by the ministry of the word communicated by the prophets, priests and kings,

Israel’s theocracy deteriorated to amphictyony and later to monarchy,

The laws were injunctions and sacred instructions that God used to maintain his covenant relationship with Israel,

The laws are the moral implications of the covenant of Israel with Yahweh.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have examined the Old Testament doctrine and practice of theocracy and the law. Theocratic offices were highlighted as well as the origin, development and deterioration theocracy in Israel. Discussion of the law started with the words used to describe the law in Old Testament followed by identity of the law. The unit ended with the two aspects, intention, literary forms and a brief evaluation of the law.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT QUESTION

Write a concise essay on “The Jewish Law.”

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Youngblood, Ronald (1971) **The Heart of the Old Testament**, pp. 57-76.

Jacob, Edmond (1958) **Theology of the Old Testament**, pp. 220-225.

Vriezen, Th.C. (1960) **An Outline of Old Testament Theology**, pp. 219-220.

Rust, E. C. (1969) “The Theology of the Old Testament,” pp. 71-86.

Kohler, Ludwig (1957) **Old Testament Theology**, pp. 201-208.

Webster’s Third New Dictionary International, n.d., pp. 73, 1457.

MODULE 3

Unit 1:	Sacrifice and Worship I
Unit 2:	Sacrifice and Worship II
Unit 3:	The Problem of Sin
Unit 4:	Redemption and Mission
Unit 5:	Human Destiny and Hope

UNIT 1 SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP I

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Body
3.1	Meaning of Sacrifice
3.2	Relationship Between Sacrifice and Worship
3.3	Types of Sacrifice
3.4	The Process of Sacrifice
3.5	The Significance of Sacrifice
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignments
7.0	References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is the beginning of the (third and final) module in our study of Old Testament theology. The theme of the module is God, Israel and Humanity. We will examine some of the essential features of Israelites' religion like sacrifice and worship. The concepts of sin, salvation and mission will also be considered. The module will end with a study of human destiny-death and life after death. In this first unit we will study the meaning, history, kinds, process and significance of sacrifice.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of sacrifice,
- Describe the relationship between sacrifice and worship in the Old Testament,
- List the types of sacrifice found in the Old Testament,
- Discuss the two major types of Old Testament sacrifices,
- Highlight the process of Old Testament sacrifice ritual,
- Explain the significance in the doctrine of sacrifice in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Meaning of Sacrifice

The subject of sacrifice is an important theme of the Old Testament because, according to Youngblood (1971, 78), it is “the most important of the ceremonial emphases of the law which the Bible recognizes as being contained in the sacrificial system of Mosaism.” In the last module we studied how God selected Israel and related with the people through some covenants. Along with the covenants God also ruled his people with his word and laws. The Israelites also continued to relate with God through the sacrificial laws.

It is significant to observe laws while Israel shared some similarities with some of the customs and practices of her neighbours, the sacrificial blood system is unique. Indeed blood received greater attention and importance in Israel more than other surrounding nations. The Israelites practiced a unique sacrificial system in many respects. For instance whereas human sacrifice was very common among her neighbours, it was expressly forbidden to God’s people (2 Kings 3:26-27cf. Lev. 18:21; Jer. 7:31).

With this background information we can now consider the meaning of sacrifice. A sacrifice can be defined as, “an offering of any sort to a deity, with the idea of procuring favour or avoiding disaster”, according to Grudem (1977, 556). This definition shows that a sacrifice is an offering, sacrifice and offering can be used interchangeably. The sacrifices in the Old Testament are also offered to God, for a variety of reasons that will be considered under the section on types of sacrifice.

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

Define and explain the term sacrifice.

3.2 Relationship Between Sacrifice and Worship

We can approach the study of sacrifices in the Old Testament from the perspective of sin and redemption. However, I will like us to study it from the angle of cult (a technical word for worship). This approach is adapted because, as reasoned by Kohler (1957, 181), “in the Old Testament the cult is almost identical with the sacrifices.” Sacrifice and cult are two sides of the same coin in the experience of the Israelites. In Jerusalem before the exile, sacrifice (especially using animal) was very prominent in their religion. However, in exile and beyond they developed a worship system that centered on prayer, song and their scripture.

In Israel animal sacrifice was offered both for substitution and expiation. One underlying principle for the act of performing sacrifice in the Bible is to substitute the life of an animal for that of the human being offering it (eg. Lev. 16:21-22). There is also a connection between the blood of the sacrifice and atonement. The blood of animal is offered for the cancellation of sin of the offerer. This is what is known as expiation.

In the patriarchal period Abraham demonstrated the habit of building altar to worship the LORD. He did this at Shechem, Bethel and Hebron (Gen. 12:6-8; 13:18). Eventually in Genesis 22 we read the account of how God tested Abraham to sacrifice Isaac his son. It was a dramatic illustration of the principle of substitution as the LORD provided a ram that Abraham sacrificed “as a burnt offering instead of his son” (Gen. 22:13).

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

What is the relationship between sacrifice and worship in the Old Testament?

3.3 Types of Sacrifice

The two major kinds of sacrifices, are communion and gift/homage in the Old Testament offerings. The **communion sacrifice** always involve the slaughter of an animal to effect communion. The animal may be ox, sheep or goat and the flesh is eaten. Since the people who share in the meal eat together they become a fellowship. Those who participate in the meal are called brothers (Deut. 15:3).

When the Israelites took the meal before the Lord their God it means that God is participating in the sacrificial meal (Deut. 12:7). Therefore, the people also commune and fellowship with God. Kohler (1957, 183) also explains: “The two fellowships, that of human participants amongst

themselves and that of the human participants on the one hand with God on the other hand are concurrent.” A good example of communion sacrifice is the Passover lamb (Ex. 12:3-10, 27).

For the **gift/homage sacrifice** an offering is given to God “to acknowledge the majesty of the recipient and to express the donor’s feeling of respect.” Whereas in the communion sacrifice God receives only a part of the offering as a “member” of the fellowship, for the gift sacrifice the whole offering is given to God. However, a little part is given to the presiding priest. The gift offering may also be presented as “**meal offering**” (Lev. 2:1; 3, 4; 7:9; I Cor. 23:29); or “**burnt offering**” (Ex. 29:18).

The two basic types of sacrifice discussed above can be offered for diverse purposes. For instance a burnt offering can be offered for thanksgiving, recompense, atonement or homage. On the other hand various sacrifices (burnt, meal, drink offerings) may be given to serve the same purpose (like thanksgiving, supplication and recompense). It has been observed that as a matter of fact the sweet savour is the common denominator of all sacrifices eg. Burnt offering (Lev. 1:9), meal offering (Lev. 2:2), bleeding sacrifice (Lev. 3:1, 5).

Other types of offering mentioned and practised in the OT are: **Sin Offering** (Lev. 4:29, 31), **Guilt Offering** (Lev. 5:14, 6:7), **Thank Offering** (Amos 4:5; Ex. 23:18; Lev. 2:11). Study these various offerings in **The NIV Study Bible** (1995), pp. 146-154.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Mention seven types of offering in the Old Testament.
2. Write a short note on “The Communion Sacrifice”.

3.4 The Process of Sacrifice

Youngblood (1971, 81-86) has explained the five steps involved in the sacrificial ritual, using the Aaronic consecration into priesthood (as described in Exodus 29) for illustration:

One, selection of proper animals for the sacrifice. The animal should be young and without blemish (Ex. 2:11) which “symbolized the devotion of the offerer as he presented his gift of life to God and reminded him of his own impurities as he sacrificed a spotless substitute life.” This was fulfilled in Jesus, the perfect sacrifice (Isa. 52:13-53: 12, Heb. 4:5; 1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Two, laying on of hands upon the head of the animal sacrifice (Ex. 29:10). This is “the symbolic transfer of sin from the offerer to the sacrifice” (Lev. 16:21, 22; Isa. 53:6; 1 Peter 2:24).

Three, the slaying of the animal (Ex. 29:11). The act of slaughter shows that the offerer is worthy of death. This is what the death of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary achieved (Isa. 53:5, 7, 8, 12; Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:28).

Four, the pouring of the blood of the animal on the altar (Ex. 29:12). This is a symbol of the forgiveness of sins (Lev. 17:11) which connect the blood of the sacrifice with the idea of atonement (Lev. 1:4, 5; 17:11; Jer. 18:23; Isa. 53:5; 1 Peter 2:4; 1 John 1:7; Rom. 3:23-25).

Five, some parts of the animal will be burnt upon the altar (Ex. 29:13). Those parts are burnt to produce “a pleasing odour” to God (Ex. 29:18) and it indicates consecration and acceptance of the worshipper before God (2 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 12:1).

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Highlight the five steps involved in the sacrificial ritual in the Old Testament.

3.5 The Significance of Sacrifice

The first significance of sacrifice and worship is theological. The doctrine of the cult, argued Kohler (1957, 181), stand “mid-way between anthropology and soteriology, between man’s need of salvation and God’s arrangement for it.” After studying sacrifice and worship in the Old Testament, it will be followed by an examination of the doctrines of sin and salvation.

The second significance of the sacrificial system is spiritual. As analysed by **The NIV Study Bible** (1995, 147): “First, sin had to be dealt with (sin offering or guilt offering). Second, the worshipper committed himself completely to God (burnt offering and grain offering). Third, fellowship or communion between the Lord, the priest and the worshipper (fellowship offering) was established.”

The third significance is that the sacrifices in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the supreme, final, once-for-all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:32; Heb. 9:1-10:18). One of the things that made Abraham to be the father of Christian faith is that in Isaac offered for

sacrifice by Abraham we see a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 22:16, 17; Rom. 8:32).

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

The doctrine of sacrifice is significant in at least three ways. Identify them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is important for us to conclude our study of sacrifice in the Old Testament as done in this unit by stating the threefold purpose of such offerings:

The offering of sacrifices, based on sacrificial laws, served as a means to further the covenantal relationship between God and his people;

Sacrifices also served the purpose of worship, communion and fellowship between Yahweh and Israel;

Sacrifices symbolized atonement offered by God and the consequent consecration of the offerer.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have started a study of the subjects of sacrifice and worship system of Israel as found in the Old Testament. After stating the uniqueness of the practice of sacrifice in Israel the types, process and significance of sacrifice were studied. The next unit will continue the study with emphasis on the worship system of the Israelites.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the five steps involved in the sacrificial ritual in the Old Testament.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Youngblood, Ronald (1971) **The Heart of the Old Testament**, pp. 77-86.

Cruden, Alexander (1977) **Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Bible**, p. 556.

Kohler, Ludwig (1957) **Old Testament Theology**, pp. 181-192.

Vriezen, Th.C. (1960) **An Outline of Old Testament Theology**, pp. 288-292.

The NIV Study Bible (1995), p. 146-154.

UNIT 2: SACRIFICE AND WORSHIP II

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Meaning of Worship
 - 3.2 History of Worship
 - 3.3 Special Times of Worship
 - 3.4 The Significance of Worship
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we will continue the study of sacrifice and worship which we started in the last unit. The concepts of sacrifice and worship are related in the Old Testament. In the last unit we focused on sacrifice but this unit will focus on worship. In Old Testament studies the worship of Israelites is usually discussed with the term cult. A cult can be defined as “a system of worship, especially one that is different from the usual and established forms of religion in a particular society.” **Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English** (1987, 251). In view of the first part of this definition I will use the terms ‘cult’ and ‘worship’ interchangeably.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define and explain the terms cult and worship,
- Describe the historical development from sacrifice to cult in the Old Testament,
- List the various annual feasts and sacred days in the Old Testament,

- Discuss the significance of worship in the religious experience of the Israelites as described in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Meaning of Worship

Every theology has cultic forms and in the cult we find the practical expression of any theology. Jacob (1958, 262) even opinionated “a theology of immanence and a theology of transcendence create particular cultic forms and in any religion the history of changes in the liturgy gives a fairly exact reflection of theological changes.” In view of this realization some scholars give the study of cult “a central and even dominating importance” in Old Testament studies. There are some other scholars, however, who give it a very subordinate position. Some of such people think that worship is actually a practice of theology it is not theology in itself. I am of the opinion that worship is an integral part of most religions and that the study of Old Testament theology is not complete without the institution of its cult.

Three Hebrew words translated “worship” in the Old Testament are **sahah**, **abad** and **sagad**. **Sahah** is “to bow down,” “to prostrate oneself;” **abad** means to “to serve” while **sagad** is “to bow down.” From a study of these Hebrew words Ralph L. Smith (1993, 376) defined worship as follows: “It is service, doing the will and work of God. It is prostrating oneself in public assembly. It is recognizing and acknowledging Yahweh’s infinite worth.”

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

What do you understand by the term “worship” as used in the Old Testament?

3.2 History of Worship

In Genesis we read the stories of the sacrifices offered by Cain/Abel (Gen. 4:2b-5), and Noah (Gen. 8:20-21). This simple forms of worship is also seen in the patriarchal period as practised by Abraham (Gen. 12:6-9) and Job (1:5). One of the reasons why God delivered the descendants of Jacob out of Egypt was to worship by making a sacrifice and to celebrate a festival in the wilderness (Ex. 3:12, 18; 4:23; 5:1).

When the people became a nation through the mosaic covenant on Mount Sinai they also experienced corporate worship. The Decalogue includes commandments about worship (Ex. 20:1-6). The covenant relationship was sealed with sacrifice (Ex. 24:4-8). More cultic laws were provided in the expanded commentary (Exodus 23:10-14).

For the construction of the tabernacle and related instructions for furniture, sacrifices and priesthood we find ideas for public worship (Ex. 25-27). Throughout this period Israel constructed and used a movable sanctuary. During the monarchy and with the building of the temple by King Solomon (1 Kings 5-8) “communal worship involving the offering of sacrifice was centralized in the temple,” as explained by Smith (1993, 320).

While in Jerusalem, the Israelites worshipped God by offering sacrifices for “expiation (sin offerings and guilt offerings), consecration (burnt offerings and grain offerings) and communion (fellowship offerings – these included vow offerings, thank offerings and freewill offerings) as stated in **The NIV Study Bible (1995, 147)**. However, during the exile the people developed a worship style not centered on sacrifice in the temple. A new type of worship which emerged emphasized prayer, singing of Psalms (eg. 100, 108, 147, 150) and reading of Scripture (the law, especially). It has been observed that some cultic activities are common to both Jerusalem sacrifice and exilic/post-exilic worship. These are circumcision, fasts, Sabbath and acts of piety.

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write an essay on the history of worship in the Old Testament.

3.3 Special Times of Worship

Initially, worship in the Old Testament was simple without mediator or stated places or times. Later on, a pattern of set times, places and worship personnel emerged as seen in Ex. 23:10-19; Lev. 23:4-44; Num. 28-29; Deut. 16:1-17. The feasts in the cultic calendar, according to Vriezen (1960, 284), “were instituted in order to maintain the communion between Yahweh, and the people.” The seven annual feasts of the Israelites which will now be highlighted are: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles:

The Passover Feast is a celebration of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Lev. 23:5; Ex. 12:1-14). It was a proclamation of the redemption experience of the people of God.

The Unleavened Bread Feast was meant to remind the Israelites how the Lord brought them out of Egypt (Lev. 23:6-8; Ex. 12:15-20; 13:3-10; 23:15; 34:18). Like the Passover celebration, the feast was marked by eating bread made without yeast.

The Firstfruits Feast was a recognition of the generosity of the Lord to his people (Lev. 23:9-14). Israelites waved the offering and also offered burnt and grain offerings at the beginning of the barley harvest.

The Weeks Feast (also called Pentecostal or Harvest) is a celebration of the blessing of the Lord manifested in a full harvest of the wheat (Lev. 23:15-21; Ex. 23:16a; 34:22a).

The Trumpets Feast (later called Rosh Hashanah, New Year's Day, Lev. 22:23-25; Nu. 29:1-6). In this festival Israelites presented themselves before the Lord for his favour. It was commemorated with trumpet blasts and sacrifices.

The Day of Atonement Feast (also called Yom Kippur, Lev. 16; 23:26-32; Nu. 29:7-11). The purpose of the feast is to cleanse both priests and people from their sins and also to purify the Holy Place.

The Tabernacles Feast (also called Booths or Ingathering, Lev. 23:33-36a, 39-43; Ex. 23:10b; 34:22b). The festival was commemorated as a memorial of the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Israelites also used the occasion to thank God "for the productivity of Canaan."

Some other sacred days of Israelites in the Old Testament are:

The Sabbath: For people and animals to rest on the seventh day of every week (Ex. 20:8-11).

The Sabbath Year: For land to rest every seventh year (Ex. 23:10-11).

The Year of Jubilee: It was meant to be marked at every fiftieth (50th) year to help the poor and stabilize the society (Lev. 25:8-55).

Sacred Assembly: It was meant to commemorate "the closing of the cycle of feasts" (Lev. 23:36b).

Purim: It is meant to remind the Israelites of how God delivered them during the time of Esther (Est. 9:18-32).

Read more about these feasts and sacred days of Israel in the Old Testament in some sources like: Vriezen (1990), **An Outline of Old Testament Theology**, pp. 284-288; **The NIV Study Bible** (1995), pp. 174-175

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

List seven annual feasts and five sacred days of Israelites.

3.4 The Significance of Worship

Our study of the practice of sacrifice and institution of cult in the OT shows that worship is significant in the experience of the Israelites in a number of ways. The first significance is that both sacrifice and worship imply recognition and submission to the majesty of Yahweh. Jacob (1958, 269) explains, “And so we think that the sacrifice takes its place in the general purpose of the cult, which is the affirmation of God’s sovereignty.”

Another significance of the system of worship is that it is based on the experience of the Israelites that God is good to them and so they will like to maintain and purify their relationship with him. In the words of Vriezen (1960, 280), “the cult exists as a means to integrate the communion between God and man which God has instituted in His covenant.”

Another closely related significance to the above is that the cult exists for the sake of atonement or reconciliation. This is because in and through worship Israel heard and received the word of forgiveness of Yahweh. Therefore Israelites felt miserable whenever they cannot go to God’s house to celebrate (Psalm 42:2-6; Ps. 120ff).

Worship is also significant in the Old Testament because it appears to give them satisfaction and fulfillment that they cannot receive through any other means. Ralph L. Smith (1993, 336) reasoned that this is “Because in worship Israel discerned the sources of their existence and the destiny to which they were called.”

Finally worship is significant in the Old Testament religion because it united the people of God. The acts of communal worship, according to Baab (1960, 235), helped to define for the “individual the meaning of the object of faith and of experiences connected with a God-centred life.” These meanings which are communicated through the prophet, priest or choir comes as unified truth for God’s people.

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

What are the reasons that make worship to be significant in the Old Testament?

4.0 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions will be drawn from the study of sacrifice and worship in this unit:

A study of sacrifice and worship ought to be an integral part any Old

Testament theological study,

In the experience of the Israelites as documented in the Old Testament the early simple practices of sacrifice before the exile transformed to ceremonial cultic activities at the exilic and post-exilic period, While the Israelites could worship God at any time, in any place, they had special sacred days and seven other annual feasts which constituted special times of worship,

Worship is significant in the religion of Israel because through the cult they maintained and purified their covenant relationship and communion with Yahweh.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit you have been introduced to the Old Testament theology of worship. After justifying why the subject of worship should be included in a theological study I led you to consider the meaning, history, special times and significance of worship. I wish to encourage you to engage in further studies of sacrifice and worship through the references and other sources listed in the last unit and also below.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

“Worship is significant in the religious experience of the Israelites.” Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 THE PROBLEM OF SIN

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 The Meaning of Sin
 - 3.2 The Sources of Sin I
 - 3.3 The Sources of Sin II
 - 3.4 The Nature of Sin
- 3.5 The Effects of Sin
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

So far we have focused our theological studies of the Old Testament on the communion between Yahweh and Israel. From this unit onward the emphasis will shift to the relationship of God with the whole humanity as we study the themes of sin, redemption, mission and human destiny. The Old Testament presents sin as a problem in the relationship between God and man. Sin is difficult to define. The source of sin is mysterious. The nature of sin is complex and the effects are devastating. This problem of sin is the focus of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- List the Old Testament basic terms for sin.
- Explain the meaning of sin.
- Discuss the identity of the serpent in the Old Testament.
- Discuss the source of sin in human race.
- Describe the Old Testament perspective of sin as rebellion.
- Analyse the problem of sin from the viewpoint of individual responsibility versus communal solidarity.

- Describe the effects of sin.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 The Meaning of Sin

The Old Testament teaches us not only that man is a created being but also that man is sinful, evil and wicked. Sin is thus an important theme in the Old Testament. Since sin is seen to be a part of the nature of man Old Testament anthropology is indeed not complete without a study of sin.

Having established the necessity of sin in Old Testament theology, you should also be aware that scholars differ with regard to the attention that should be given to it in Old Testament studies. Some Old Testament theologians think that “the Bible is concerned primarily with sin’ and so make sin the central issue in their studies. Some others do not take the issue of the fall (in particular) and sin (in general) seriously and even seem to ignore the theme in their work.

The Old Testament is rich in its vocabulary for sin. Jacob (1958, 281) and Smith (1993, 276-280) explain the following basic terms and major words for sin in the Old Testament:

hata or **chattat**, means “to miss the mark,” as one misses a target (Judge 20:16), or to miss the way (Prov. 19:2), or to abandon a straight road. It also includes the idea of failure.

‘awon which means “to pervert” or “to make crooked” (1 Sam. 20:1). It also implies to turn aside and so become lost in thought and act. This idea is related to the concept of guilt (Ps. 32:5).

ma‘al means unfaithfulness to a agreement.

pesha or **pesa‘** means rebellion against a superior, God in the context of the Old Testament.

In addition to these basic words other terms used to express general and particular sins in the Old Testament include: error, obstinacy, folly, pride, greed, deceit, uncleanness, oppression, violence, immortality, wrongdoing and evil. Please note that it is correct for us to think of guilt as another word for sin but it is also an effect of sin.

The following are more specific examples of sins named as the Old Testament:

Job 31: Lust (v. 1), falsehood (v.5), deceit (v.5), injustice (v.13), neglecting the poor/widow/fatherless (vv. 16-17), materialism (vv. 24-25), cursing (v.30).

Psalms 15: Blame (v.2) unrighteousness (v.2), falsehood (v.2), slander (v. 3), bribery (v.5).

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercises

1. Mention four Old Testament major words for sin.
2. Explain the term “sin” as used in the Old Testament.

3.2 The Sources of Sin I

The issue about sin that this section will consider are “What is the source of sin in human experience?” Is the Genesis Chapter Three account to be interpreted as the origin of sin? The starting point is the identity of “the serpent” (Gen. 3:1). It is admitted that Satan is a Hebrew word that mean enmity, to oppose, adversary, opponent, antagonist, and slanderer. Nonetheless it is also said that none of these suggest Satan as a being. In critical Old Testament Scholarship like that of Kohler (1957, 177) it is thus argued that “The story knows nothing of a Satan, as it belongs to a period long before the Exile and Satan appeared only after the Exile.” Actually the Bible also associate the devil with sin in the world (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8).

Jacob (1958, 282) has dialogued intelligently with the above opinion by stating that “The serpent metaphor seeks to insist on the mysterious and sudden appearance of sin.” We observe that it is not stupid to think of Satan appearing in form of the serpent to deceive man into rebellion against God since the New Testament identifies “the ancient serpent” with the devil (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

3.2 Self-Assessment Exercise

Is the serpent in the Genesis account of the fall to be identified as Satan? Discuss.

3.3 The Sources of Sin II

The related concern will be considered in our study of Genesis Three is the reasoning that the text does not say that the devil is the source of sin. Some interpreters even think that there is no story (or basis for the concept) of original sin in the entire Old Testament. This reason is partly based on the observation that the Old Testament never uses the terms “the fall” or “original” sin, it is just the classical, traditional answer of the church to explain how evil entered the good world.

A less critical viewpoint expressed by Jacob (1958, 282) is “that sin as it appears in the Paradise narrative is a power of death which definitely deprives man of all possibility of eternal life”. However, from a more discerning and contextual reading of the whole Biblical revelation it is difficult to deny that the implicit intention of the account is to point to the role of the serpent and the man on how evil and sin entered the human race. This traditional understanding is not without additional biblical support (Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1-2; Rom. 5:12-21).

From the methodology of doing Old Testament theology in a canonical context, while examining the issues of the identity of the serpent and the source of sin and evil, Brevard S. Childs (1985, 226) explains: “the point of the paradisaic state is to contest the ontological character of human sinfulness. Mankind was not created in alienation from God, his fellows, or himself. The theological function of a period of innocence is to testify to a harmony in God’s creation at the beginning”. To my mind Childs approach and interpretation appears to be more faithful to the rationale and “spirit” of the biblical account.

The struggle of western scholars to see the Paradise Story as an account of the source of sin is understandable. Writing from a non-religious worldview and with the tool of historical critical methodology the Genesis story is taken as a myth. But this is not a problem to the African mind and theology. With a religious ontology, the validity and lessons of a story supercedes the historicity. African biblical hermeneutics have no problem treating the story of Genesis Three as a record of the beginning of sin.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write a short note on the source of sin in the Old Testament.

3.4 The Nature of Sin

Two aspects of the nature of sin that this section will explore are sin as rebellion and the issue of individual responsibility and communal solidarity about sin. The Old Testament presents man as a sinner because he chose to rebel against God. Man was created to depend on God which requires obedience and submission to the will of God for him. However, the story of the fall shows that man chose to disobey God, to rebel against the instruction of God and to assert his independence. This is rebellion and sin.

Jacob (1958, 284) also explains: “Sin is presented as a rebellion: finding it unbearable to be content with much when he thought it possible for

him to grasp everything, man rebelled against his divine partner in order to seize, as his booty, the gift that had been withheld.” Theologically, to know something is to have power over it. The knowledge of good and evil, man thought would give him power so as to become like God.

This leads us to the issue if the sin of rebellion as seen in Adam and Eve is universal in its effects? In other words are we to interpret the experience of the fall of man from the viewpoints of individual responsibility or of communal liability? If we pursue the thought further we can ask, do the consequences of sin affect only the doer or do they also affect the relations and descendants? The answer is that the Old Testament teaches both concepts.

Prophet Ezekiel taught the principle of individual responsibility (Ezekiel 18:1-4). The prophet then gave three examples (in vv. 5-32) to counteract a false understanding of passages like Ex. 20:5; 34:7 that seem to provide data for a doctrine of inherited guilt. Some other relevant Old Testament texts are Gen. 18:23 and 2 Kings 14:6.

However, the Old Testament also teaches collective and communal guilt. Some examples are: the transgressions of the Israelites (Lev. 16:21); the sin of the house of Israel (Ezek. 4:4), the iniquity of all of us (Isa. 53:6).

Jacob (1958, 286) explains the issue of communal solidarity about the effects of sin thus: “Because of the solidarity which holds all the people together, the punishment falls not only upon those about him; the whole country, even inanimate nature can be defined by the fault of one man.” This truth is graphically illustrated in the stories and families of Achan (Joshua 7:24-25), Korah/Dathan/Abiram (Num. 16:31-33) and false accusers of Daniel (Daniel 6:24).

We affirm the historic and traditional understanding of the church that the Genesis 3 account of the fall of man teaches the nature of sin as rebellion against God and it is the beginning of the universal history of sin. The Old Testament thus teach the universality of sin in human experience. Some people object to this doctrine because of the righteousness of Noah. In the days of wickedness, evil, corruption and violence (Gen. 6:5, 11) Noah was saved not because of his sinless perfection but because he found favour with God coupled with his life of righteousness, obedience and faith (Gen. 6:8-9; 22; Heb. 11;7). All have sinned today (Rom. 6:23) both because of the inheritance of the original rebellion and also because individuals have chosen to sin against God.

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write Old Testament evidences that support individual responsibility and communal liability about sin.

3.5 The Effects of Sin

In this section we will consider the effects of sin on the offender and others. Guilt or shame is one of the results of sin as we see in the story of the fall Adam and Eve experienced shame and fear (Gen. 3:7-8). David also felt guilty for cutting off a part of Saul's robe (2 Sam. 24:10).

Another effect of sin is estrangement. Sin destroys healthy relationship between humanity and God; between a person and other persons; and between humanity and creation. Sin affected the communion of Adam and Eve with God (Gen. 3:8; Isaiah 9:1-3). The relationship between the couple was also affected as we see in the buck-passing and in the insubordination of the woman to the man (Gen. 3:10-13 cf. 16c).

The last and the most serious effect of sin is that sin attracts judgment and punishment. The judgment that followed the sin of Adam and Eve include curses on the serpent and the ground (Gen. 3:14, 17-18). Their punishment also includes greater experience of pain. The pain of childbearing means that the woman would be having some problems with her own self while the curse on the land (nature) increased the pain of toil for the man (Gen. 3:17-19; Jer. 6:19).

It is necessary to punish every fault "firstly because the offence against God must be repaired, then because it is incumbent to eliminate the contagious poison that sin is from the midst of the people, and finally because the sinner must be penalized" according to Jacob (1958, 287). However, even in the tragedy of the fall and sin of man and the consequent judgment and punishment we see God taking the necessary steps to deal with the problem of sin. That will be examined in the next unit.

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

Describe three effects of sin.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Our study of the theology of sin in this unit leads us to make the following conclusions: First, sin is a complex idea. Therefore no one word is enough to adequately describe sin. Sin is failure, perversion, crookedness, unfaithfulness or rebellion; Second, the source of sin is

mysterious. The story of the fall in the Old Testament perhaps tries to answer the question of how sin and evil came into the world; Three, sin is rebellion against God and has effects not only on the individual offender but also on other living and non living things surrounding man; Fourth, sin always attracts judgment and punishment.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have studied the meaning, source, nature and effects of sin. The meaning of sin was studied from the Hebrew words **hata** (or **chatta**), **'awon**, **ma'al** and **pesha** (or **pesa'**). It was considered if the story of Genesis chapter three is to be regarded as the source of how sin entered the human race. The nature of sin as rebellion and the issue of individual responsibility versus communal solidarity was also studied. The unit ended with the effects of sin: shame, fear, guilt, estrangement, judgement and punishment.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

The source of sin is mysterious in the Old Testament. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 4 REDEMPTION AND MISSION

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
 - 3.1 Explanation of Redemption
 - 3.2 Forms of Redemption
 - 3.3 The Means of Redemption I
 - 3.4 The Means of Redemption II
 - 3.5 Mission in the Old Testament
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Other Sources

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The last unit examined the human problem of sin as presented in the Old Testament. This unit will deal with the doctrine of redemption, that is, how God provides solution to the problem of sin. The unit will start with explanation of redemption followed by forms and means of redemption. Youngblood (1971, 98) asserts the need for and the importance of the inclusion of redemption in an Old Testament study thus: “As a concept that helpfully sums up the ultimate goal of the Biblical narrative from Genesis to Malachi, redemption deserves a prominent place among those subjects that lie closest to the heart of the Old Testament.”

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain in various ways from the Old Testament what God does with sin to redeem humanity,
- Describe what constitute the Old Testament idea of redemption using the root words,
- Discuss the means of redemption from sin as found in the Old Testament,

- Describe and analyse the concept of mission in the Old Testament.

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Explanation of Redemption

The subject of redemption (which includes the ideas of salvation and grace) will be examined against the background of judgement due to sin/rebellion as well as a break of covenant. Our starting point is to consider redemption from the perspective of removal of sin. Ralph L. Smith (1993, 297-299) has explored the rich vocabulary of the Old Testament about what God does with sin to redeem humanity:

“He removes it, turns it aside, puts it off like dirty, filthy clothes.” (Isa. 6:7; Zech. 3:4, cf. 2 Sam. 12:13).

“He lifts it up and/or takes it away.” (Ex. 34:6-7).

“He blots it out” (Isa. 43:25 cf. Ps. 51:1, 9).

“He washes and cleanses it.” (Ps. 51:2; cf. 51:7; Jer. 33:8).

“He unsins, de-sins or purges it” (Ps. 51:7).

“He covers it.” (Ps. 32:1 cf. Ps. 85:3).

“He expiates it.” (Ezek. 16:62-63 cf. Isa. 6:7).

“He forgets sins or does not remember them.” (Isa. 43:25).

“He casts them behind his back and into the sea.” (Isa. 38:17; Mic. 7:19).

“He tramples them” (Mic. 7:19).

“He forgives them.” (Ps. 103:2-3 cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 130:4).

While salvation and redemption may appear like equivalent terms, the issue of how sin is removed is better discussed as redemption. Youngblood explains that salvation as used in the Old Testament denote “the general idea of deliverance or release from danger, slavery, imprisonment, debt, and the like” (1971, 98). Salvation in this sense is a general concept which does not have a spiritual connotation and may have little to do with sins. On the other hand redemption as a specific religious idea “connotes the payment of a price by means of which salvation is effected.” More will be said about this in the next section.

3.1 Self-Assessed Exercise

State five different ways of explaining what God does with sin to redeem humanity.

3.2 Forms of Redemption

There are three root words that constitute the Old Testament idea of redemption, according to Jacob (1958, 292-294). The first is **ga'al** and it shows the protective aspect. We see the meaning of this concept in a Kinsman who has the right “to marry the widow of his nearest relative”. A very good illustration is seen in Boaz who played the role of Kinsman-vindicator or kinsman – redeemer of Ruth. He redeemed the land that belonged to Elimelech and married Ruth to save her family from extinction (Ruth 4:1-11). Some other relevant stipulations that concern levirate marriage in the Old Testament are Deut. 25:5-10.

The second root word is **padah** with the idea of payment of a ransom. Yahweh has paid a ransom for the redemption of Israel. With regard to the redemptive activity of God in the Old Testament there is no payment of ransom to anybody to obtain pardon (Isa. 52:10; 43:3). While most passages use the concept of redemption and ransom to refer to deliverance from outward calamity, in Psalm 130:8 the redemption relates to iniquity and sin.

The third is **kaphar** and it relates to the idea of “to rub”, “to remove”, “to set aside”, “to erase” which means “to cover” and expiation of sins committed inadvertently or consciously and voluntarily (Lev. 5:14-19; 19:20-22; Num. 5:5-8). It has been observed that substitution is common to these three forms of redemption, humanity exchanges sin for a new life.

3.2 Self-Assessed Exercise

State three root words for redemption in the Old Testament. Highlight the contribution of each to the understanding of redemption.

3.3 The Means of Redemption I

Redemption is used in the Old Testament to describe how to get ride of sin. Smith (1993, 299-310) explains three major means redemption. The first is the use of sacrifice to turn aside the anger of God (Gen. 8:21). This is sometimes related to the idea of propitiation or expiation (Zech. 7:2; 8:22; Mal. 1:9). In spite of this possibility some scholars doubt or object to the idea of “placating” Yahweh as implied in some of these texts. It is not a major idea in the Old Testament to try to sway God with gifts and personal favours.

The second means of description also has to do with sacrifices to atone for some sins if they are confessed coupled with appropriate restitution (Lev. 5:14-19; 19:20-22; Num. 5:5-8). It is significant to observe that

sacrifices could not atone for sins against the covenant (Ten Commandments), murders or sins of a high hand (Num. 35:31-32; 15:22-31). Atonement means “a making at one,” “at-one-ment”. It points to unity of two estranged parties. It is the restoration of a relationship. In unit 11 section 3.1.3 we examined two major types of sacrifices – communion sacrifice and gift/homage sacrifice.

Also in unit 12 section 3.1.3 we studied the Day of Atonement as one of the annual feasts of Israel. On the Day of Atonement, the priest was to offer himself a sin offering, confess the sins of Israel on the head of a scapegoat and cleanse the sanctuary (Lev. 16:6, 7-10, 18-19).

3.3 Self-Assessed Exercise

Discuss two ways through which sacrifice constitute a means of redemption in the Old Testament.

3.4 The Means of Redemption II

The third means of redemption and perhaps the most important in the Old Testament is repentance and forgiveness. Jacob (1958, 290) thus declares emphatically “Since sin is a separation from God and an offence against God, it can only be effaced by an act of forgiveness.” Through forgiveness covenant relationship with Yahweh is restored. The prophets in the Old Testament did not speak of sacrifice as a means to remove sin. Instead they called for “repentance” and “forgiveness” as a means of getting rid of sin (Isa. 1:11; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:23-24; Mic. 6:8).

Repentance relates to the concept of judgment. Indeed Youngblood believes that “The judgement was concerned with bringing Israel to repentance” (1969, 82). Repentance conveys the ideas of a change of mind, a feeling of remorse and a “turning away from sin and back to God.” In the particular context of the Old Testament, repentance “meant a return to Yahweh in active obedience to his covenant demands (I Kings 8:48-50).” It can be said that this is the heart of redemption (Isa. 44:22). A part (or evidence) of repentance is confession of sin (Lev. 5:5; Prov. 28:13; Dan. 9:4). When people repent, God forgives.

Forgiveness indicates the sense of pardon accompanied with the removal of guilt (Ex. 34:9; 2 Chr. 30:18). God offers pardon and forgiveness out of his magnanimity. It appears as if the real motive for God’s pardon is his love (**chesed**). Relationship is restored between God and man as forgiveness removes the barrier erected by sin.

This, the Old Testament does not only presents sin as a serious problem it also expresses how sin is to be dealt with and removed. However, the

ultimate means of forgiveness and redemption is founded in the New Testament. The atoning death of Jesus Christ and the power of His resurrection is the biblical witness to victory over sin.

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

Repentance and forgiveness are the most important means of redemption in the Old Testament. Discuss.

3.5 Mission in the Old Testament

In some parts of the Old Testament we see evidences to show that the redemption which Yahweh prepares and offers Israel is also meant for the whole world. For instance in Zechariah the nations will share in the worship of Yahweh and also experience the salvation of Israel. In Isaiah we see the unity of the universalism and particularism of salvation. While Zion remains the mountain of the Lord the nations shall go up to learn the law of Zion and walk in the paths of the Lord (2:2-4).

In the Old Testament the concept of salvation also has a strong eschatological dimension. The day of the LORD is also a day of salvation. Many Old Testament pronouncements are silent about the participation of non-Israelites in the day of salvation. Sometime we even see “a harsh exclusive nationalism.” A good example is the book of Esther that teaches the triumph of Judaism. However, sometimes the Old Testament demonstrates a missionary spirit as seen in the experience of Jonah.

However, the book of Isaiah manifests the sense of mission very strongly. There will be saved people among the nations (61:9). The stranger will become a part of the people of Yahweh (56:3-8; 65:17; 66:18-20). The house of Yahweh will become a house of prayer for all nations. Mal 1:11 is another Old Testament text that sounds like world mission. It is in the figure of the suffering servant that the evangelizing and missionary motif of the Old Testament is perhaps brought to a sharp focus (Isa. 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). If this servant of the Lord is the messiah who brings salvation (53:5), this then is a prophecy of the suffering of the future Messiah who will make forgiveness and salvation available to all humanity. The New Testament identifies the loving suffering servant as Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:21-25).

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Describe and analyse the concept of mission in the Old Testament.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The Old Testament does not only presents the universal problem of sin it also adequately describes how sin can be removed. However, since the nature of sin is complex, redemption from sin is also explained in diverse ways. Redemption is further explained in the Old Testament in the forms of kinsman-vindicator, ransom and expiation with the idea of substitution being common to the three forms. Sacrifices, repentance and forgiveness are the means of redemption. The idea of salvation also has missionary dimension.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit we have studied the Old Testament doctrine of redemption with a little highlight on mission. Redemption was explained in terms of the various description of what God does with sin. Three root words that constitute the idea of redemption in the Old Testament considered are **ga'al** (the protective aspect seen in kinsman), **padah** (payment of ransom) and **kaphar** (implying expiation). Sacrifice can turn aside God's anger and atone for sins. Repentance and forgiveness constitute the chief means of redemption. All nations will ultimately participate in salvation along with Israel.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Discuss repentance and forgiveness as two important means of redemption in the Old Testament.

7.0 REFERENCES AND OTHER REFERENCES

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UNIT 5: HUMAN DESTINY AND HOPE

CONTENTS

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main body
 - 3.1 Life Before Death
 - 3.2 The Death of Man I
 - 3.3 The Death of Man II
 - 3.4 Life After Death
 - 3.5 Human Survival and Hope
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References and Other Sources

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit is the end of this module on God, Israel and Humanity. It is also the last in this course on Old Testament theology. The unit will focus on human destiny and hope in Israel and entire humanity. The Old Testament concept of the destiny and hope of man will first of all be discussed in terms of immediate destiny, that is, life before death. The issue of death will also be highlighted. This will be followed by a study of the ultimate destiny, life after death, which also constitute the human hope.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the immediate destiny of human life on earth before death,
- Explain how death entered human experience through sin,
- Discuss what makes death to be good or evil in the Old Testament,
- Describe and analyze the Old Testament belief about life after death,

- Discuss the nature of human hope in the Old Testament...

3.0 MAIN BODY

3.1 Life Before Death

The greater concern of the destiny of man in the OT is life as it is meant to be now. It can be said very safely that the Israelite were not preoccupied with life after physical death, he “thought of this life on earth as his real existence”, according to Youngblood (1969, 85). However, he had a vogue belief of existence in sheol beyond death.

Th. C. Vriezen has suggested that this lack of interest of the Israelites in life after death is due to their belief that God governs life and history; They are so focused strongly on the present life that they have no room for speculation in religion for life hereafter. He thus opinionated (1960, 204): “The Old Testament leaves life in the hereafter entirely to Yahweh who is the Lord with whom the faithful live in communion and whom they cling to even in death” (Psalm 73). Man becomes what he is by choosing life (Deut. 30:19).” In the OT life consists of a long time. Thus the subjects wished that the king might live forever (I Kings 1:31; Ps. 21:5; 61:7ff). The righteous man prays for the gift of long life or for the maintenance of his life (Ps. 34:12-14; 91:16; Prov. 4:10; 9:11; 10:27). The greatest misfortune that can happen to man in the OT is to be removed in the midst of his days (Ps. 55:23; 89:46; Prov. 10:27; Isa. 38:10; Ps. 102:24).

Johannes Pederson has suggested three fundamental aspects of blessing in human life in OT, according to Jacob (1958, 179-180). These are: Numerous offspring (Gen. 1:28; 9:1) e.g. Abraham and David; Riches and many possessions (Gen. 24:35) e.g. Job, Solomon; Victory over enemies (Gen. 27:29; 49:8-12, 22-26; Deut. 28:7) e.g. Joseph, Daniel. Therefore in the OT “blessing is the power by which life is maintained and augmented.” The result of blessing is **shalom** which includes the idea of abundance, prosperity and peace. This is the immediate destiny of life on earth.

3.1 Self-Assessment Exercise

Describe the Old Testament idea of immediate destiny of human life on earth before death.

3.2 The Death of Man I

It is appropriate that we begin a study of death in human experience in Genesis Two and Three. These chapters seem to imply when man was created and placed in paradise initially he was not forbidden from eating the tree of life which could have made him to “live forever” (Gen. 3:22). This means that, but for the accident of the experience of rebellion, disobedience and fall, man had the possibility and potentials to continue his life as created. However, he was driven away from the garden containing the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24).

It is reasonable to draw certain inferences from that development. The first is that humanity is responsible for the experience of death. God is not the cause. The second is that physical death is a symbol of the spiritual death occasioned by the sin of man (Gen. 3:3). Here then is a biblical realism that is affirmed elsewhere in the Bible (Ezekiel 18:4; Rom. 6:23). The wages of sin always include punishment of death: Death entered human experience through sin.

3.2 Self-Assessed Exercise

Explain how death entered human experience based on Genesis 2 and 3.

3.3 The Death of Man II

In the Old Testament man is portrayed as mortal because he is an earthly being. Death which terminates human life may be good or evil depending on the circumstances. Death is good when a person is old and full of years as seen in Abraham and Job. The death “of the righteous” also appears to be desirable as a blessing (Num. 23:10b) and a honourable thing (Psalm 73:23-24). But death is evil when a person dies miserably and untimely (Jer. 22:18f). The death “of the uncircumcised” (Ezek. 28:10) is also a judgement. These kinds of evil death are referred to in Psalm 73:17-19.

The two corresponding extremities of life are birth and death. In OT both have their appointed time (Ecc. 3:2). Death plays the role friend in the OT when it comes in old age (Job 42:17; Gen. 25:8). The span of human life is variously stated as: 120 years (Gen. 6:3); 70-80 years (Ps. 90:10); 100 years (Isa. 65:20). Early/sudden death is considered as: due to failure to obey parents (Ex. 20:12); punishment for godlessness (I Sam. 2:32); and, a divine judgement (Jer. 28:16-17).

In the Old Testament we see a peculiar form of “death” in which God took some persons to himself. The entire living being, both body and

spirit, were involved as we see in Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:10). This special kind of transfiguration was not “a general religious conception.”

3.3 Self-Assessment Exercise

Death may be good or evil in the Old Testament. Discuss.

3.4 Life After Death

The OT seems to believe that the life of the individual ceases with death. Belief in the resurrection is only vaguely hinted at when it is expressed. A few of the passages that give hints of resurrection or life after death are Dan. 12:2; Isa. 26:14; 26:19; Ps. 49:15; 63:4. The fact that the OT did not say much about life after death is one area which illustrates the need for holistic, canonical approach to Biblical interpretation and theology.

When men and women die they go to **sheol**, the land of silence and darkness. The absence of light there distinguishes it from the earth since light is life. In **sheol** human souls lack vitality as well as capacity for real existence. Some other characteristics of life in **sheol** are: Lack of moral and social distinctions (Job 3:17ff; cf. Ezek. 32:18-32); Lack of knowledge (Ecc. 9:4ff); No worship of God (Psalm 6:5); No operation of God’s covenant love (Psalm 88:10-12).

3.4 Self-Assessment Exercise

Write a short note on what the Israelites belief about life after death as found in the Old Testament.

3.5 Human Survival and Hope

The ideas of immortality of the Soul or the incorruptibility of humanity after death are not taught by the bible in general, and the Old Testament in particular. However, the Israelites knew of human survival in sheol (Isa. 14), which is also rendered in some Bible passages as grave. This was already discussed in the section above.

The Old Testament teaches that humanity will survive beyond death. For instance Job affirmed that after death he will go down to sheol. However, in the end God will remember him, call him from the grave. He will see God and be vindicated (14:13-15; 25-27). This is an expression of hope, however vague it might have been.

It is significant to note that like the New Testament, this focus of the Old Testament is not immortality of the soul as in the Greek philosophy.

In view of the psychosomatic wholeness of humanity his hope is the resurrection of his personal whole. Some other Old Testament passages that teach similar lessons are Isaiah 25:6-8; 26:19. The human hope as expressed in the Old Testament is that “Man survives death because he is in fellowship with God here and now (Psalm 49:15; 73:23ff).” While this hope lack details it is significant that it anticipates the vision of eternal worship of God and communion as described in the New Testament (Rev. 21 & 22).

3.5 Self-Assessment Exercise

Discuss what the Old Testament teaches about human survival/hope.

4.0 CONCLUSION

I feel certain that having studied all the fifteen units that constitute this course on Old Testament theology you will agree with me that the study is basically important to understand not only biblical theology but any other type of theological study. Generally in theology the concept of eschatology deals with the last things or end of the age and includes human death, judgment, heaven and hell, after life and the kingdom of God. The topics that are often considered in Old Testament eschatology are the Kingdom of God, the Messianic Hope and eternal life. This to me is the influence of Systematic Theology on biblical studies. This concluding of the Old Testament which considered human death, and life after death is a type of eschatology.

5.0 SUMMARY

In the first module, with focus on God and revelation, after introduction to the study of Old Testament theology we examined the existence, nature, names, manifestations and attributes of God and the doctrine of revelation. The second module with the theme God, Creation and Israel considered the doctrines of creation, providence and theology. The designations, origin, nature and life of humanity were also studied, followed by election, covenant, theocracy and the law. The third and final module on God, Israel and Humanity was devoted to a study of sacrifices and worship, sin, redemption, mission, human destiny and hope.

I am happy that you are able to take this course. It is important to understand that this is only an introduction to the study of Old Testament theology. I encourage you to continue your study of the subject using standard textbooks. I wish you God’s guidance in your study and God’s empowerment of your ministry.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

Write a concise essay on the immediate destiny of human life on earth from the perspective of the Old Testament.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Jacob, Edmond (1958) **Theology of the Old Testament**, pp. 177-180, 299-346.

Rust, E. C. (1969) "The Theology of the Old Testament," pp. 71-86.

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