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The Concept of Divination in Ancient Israel and Its Implications for Contemporary Christians

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ABSTRACT

Divination is an interaction and relationship between Divinity and humanity. It is a religious phenomenon that could be initiated by either of the parties involved. When the Divine initiates divination, it is called intuitive/inspired divination. But when humans initiate it, it is inductive divination. Divination is often initiated by humans because of their sense of limitation, thereby desiring the Divine to help them proffer solutions to their challenges. There are prohibitions against divination in the Pentateuch (Lev. 19:26 and Deut. 18:10). But the nations that surrounded Israel fully engaged in divination. Yahweh and Israel communicated through dreams, visions, audible voice-notes, and also through mechanical instruments like the Urim and Thummim and the Lots. This paper sought to examine the perspective of Israel on the concept of divination and also see the implications of such perspective for contemporary Christians. Phenomenological, exegetical and analytical methods were adopted in the work. The work discovered that Israel engaged in divination, though in the Yahweh-approved ones. Yahweh engaged Israel through vision, dream and audible conversations while Israel engaged Yahweh through the Urim and Thummim and the Lots. The work concluded that all humans and religions engage in divination and recommends that since divination is communication with God, contemporary Christians should explore and exploit all biblical means of communication with God to their advantage.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of divination can be said to be as old as when human beings became aware of the existence of the Divine. Such existence brought about religion where human acknowledges, venerates and worships beings presumed to be higher than him. Sequel to this is the belief that these (divine) beings would be able to help him out of his difficulties. Human acknowledgement of his incapacitation, limitation and helplessness leads him to connect with higher powers for assistance in unravelling life mysteries. This is the fulcrum upon which the concept of divination stands.

Overtly, the concept of divination is alien to the nation of Israel; there are various pentateuchal stipulations that forbid it. However, a critical and unbiased examination of the concept of divination shows that Israel actually practised divination, beginning with the Patriarchs to the Exodus and even in the Post Conquest times; the Old Testament is replete, though latently, with such practice. Both Israel and their surrounding nations engaged in divination. Whereas Israel engaged Yahweh through Yahweh-initiated means called intuitive or inspired divination, such as dreams, visions, and audible voice-notes; Israel engaged Yahweh through Priest-and-people-initiated means, such as mechanical instruments like the Urim and Thummim and the Lots. There were a lot of similarities in the divination experiences of both Israel and the nations. A significant difference, however, is the divinity behind the divination. Israel contacted Yahweh while the nations contacted Satan and demons through

their several idols or gods. The distinction between Israel and other nations cannot be lightly stressed: Israel was strictly monotheistic, believing in and worshipping only Yahweh. Other nations were polytheistic! Christianity which has been said to be an off-shoot of Judaism and strictly monotheistic also frowns at the term “divination,” though practises what divination describes. Christian rituals like Prayers, fasting, meditation, reading the Bible for divine direction, consulting Pastors or Priests etc., are acts of divination. Since divination is an engagement with the Divine for help, Christians, like ancient Israel should continually engage God for help and direction without doing anything that contradicts the Bible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several scholars of religion have written books on the concept of divination. In this article, this segment shall succinctly make a critique of existing related literatures, drawing out both their strengths and weaknesses and also revealing gaps in those existing materials. This is with a view to aiding comprehension on the concept of divination and also enrich scholarship by making contributions to knowledge.

Concepts of Divination

Although divination is a global phenomenon, it however, means different things to different people. Scholars have different perspectives about the concept of divination. Smith (1936) regards divination as different means of gaining insight and access to human future

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that is menacingly unknown as he plans for foreseen contingencies. The main key in Smith's definition of divination is contingency—an event that may or may not happen. This is what is called “the possibility or probability of life.” The probability is not about what result the divination will reveal or about any guess work, it is about the uncertainties of life.

Awolalu (1979) sees divination as a means to discover the unknown and the future by manipulating some supernatural means and seeking guidance from supernatural sources. Awolalu refutes some critics' assertion that divination is a mere guess work. He cites Professor Armstrong as a strong critic of divination who maintains that some of the problems investigated by divination are ‘partly guessable unknowns’.

Peek (1991) observes that “the sheer volume of information gained through investigation of these systems reveals how much knowledge we lost as a result of earlier prejudices against divination”. As far as Peek is concerned:

...everyday knowledge is insufficient and yet action must be taken. The information necessary to respond effectively is available, but often only through the diviner. That is why divination continues to provide a trusted means of decision making, a basic source of vital knowledge.

Peek sees that the natural (common) senses of humans are not enough to help him handle the enormous and at times seemingly insurmountable difficulties of life. To him, humanity would but need the help of the extra eyes of the gods to see the invisible and decipher his difficulties. The big challenge which Peek also notes is that, not all can have direct access to the secret or special knowledge; only the superhuman, those close to the divinities like the diviners can, and their reports are always reliable.

Peek has successfully implied that the phenomenon of divination is a “special knowledge”. Of course, it is a special knowledge because it is sacred and only the eyes of the gods can see it. Whatever is not easily known, especially by humans, should be considered special. Unequivocally, divination is a special knowledge, and only the “special people,” through special means can know it. Its universality is supported through its practice not only in Africa but also in the Americas, Greece, India, Tibet, Japan, China, Middle East, and Europe; in fact, Judaism and Islam do practise divination.

Hornby (2005) defines divination as “the act of finding out and saying what will happen in the future”. Delving into the origin of divination, which is “divine,” he considers the word as both adjective and verb. Looking at “divine” as an adjective, Hornby sees it as coming from or connected with God or god, a personality that is a super-being or supernatural. Humans get help from God to change a situation. As a verb, Hornby describes “divine” as “to find out something by guessing.” This (latter) kind of definition “by guessing” would give strength to critics of religion who assert that divination is merely a guess work—this submission is rather subjective

and misleading! There are actually innumerable methods of divination globally—there are methods used by the people of the Ancient Near East, there are methods used by the Europeans and there are methods used among Africans. The record of precision obtained in the various forms of divinatory methods will judge whether divination is real or just a guess work as insinuated by some religious critics.

Muthengi (1993) traces divination to the Ancient Near East (ANE). This is undoubtedly an essential thing to do because divination started from there. More importantly is the fact that world history and the beginnings of all things are often traced to this region; hence, he argues that divination was an early science which started in the ancient Near East.

Pongratz-Leisten (2014) also comes from the Near Eastern perspective, but he developed a modern Assyriological definition for divination contrary to the ancient mystical one which had completely perceived divination as magical. He bases his argument on the submission that the diviners in the Near East produced treaties of their craft which are similar in the language, technical terms, the same procedure and strict order of the analysis, investigation and explanation.

That divination is scientific is a submission by most scholars of African religion, especially the natives. Coupled with that is also the fact that divination, especially the Ifa geomancy can be learned and investigated empirically. This is partly true, but not absolutely. Divination of most genres are both scientific and mystical—the two are inseparable if the client or the diviner will arrive at a reliable answer. The mystical aspect of the divination is directly connected with the divinities in charge of the instruments of divination. No matter how mechanical the procedures might be, the gods influence the processes and determine the outcome. But the fact is that there are approved principles and procedures to be followed, which have been tested over time, to arrive at the correct result. Isichei (2004) defines divination as a “quest for patterns of meaning underlying human experience”. Divination is actually an expression of the quest and curiosity of humans concretely demonstrated through a calculated effort of search for knowledge about the unknown. Most often, as Isichei submits, human experiences which seem unfathomable to him propel him to engage in a search for the unknown—through divination.

Merrill (2003) states that divination generally refers to the whole complex of means of gaining insight from the gods regardless of any particular technique. This has been said, but it is imperative that it is reiterated. Divination is a term used to describe any religious and spiritual phenomenon of gaining insight or secret knowledge. There are various forms and techniques employed as we move from people to people and from culture to culture; and at times a particular method of divination may gain so great popularity and acceptability that it becomes so much used by various people groups.

Hagan (2015) sees divination as a way of communicating

with a deity for the purpose of determining the deity's knowledge, resulting in clarification of a decision or discernment of the future. This implies that divination is not limited to just knowing the future; it must have encapsulated several things of religious value and spiritual or mystical undertone.

Burkert (2005) defines divination as human observation of signs and portents perceived to be divine and our response to them. The augurs who observe signs, portents and auspices do so to see what the gods are saying and what messages they have for people. This means that the gods are always sending messages to humans through signs in the celestial sphere, through astral objects, especially the galaxies and other natural behaviours, like the flight of birds, cry of animals or sound by thunder, rainstorm, lighting in the sky etc. The message will not be received except human beings are vigilant, sensitive and observant. The connection of humans to the divine suggests that they have the potency to receive messages from the divine through some extrasensory perception, perhaps beyond the scope of the known five sense organs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research is basically qualitative in nature. However, three basic methods were used, including phenomenological, exegetical and analytical methods. Phenomenological method was used in this work to understand how ancient Israel and Christians understand the concept of divination. It studied occurrences, observable facts, and happenings and did not draw conclusions, but rather allowed the facts to speak. This method was applied to study and see how the peoples of ancient Israel understood and practised divination and why they used the Urim and Thummim and other forms of divination.

Exegetical method was used, though scantily in this work. It was used in studying the etymologies of some important words like divination and Urim and Thummim, etc.; more importantly, meanings and the use of the Urim and Thummim was examined and studied as they occur within the context of the passages where they are referred to.

Analytical method used available information on divination, then examined, studied and conducted investigations on those facts, in an attempt to explain some intricacies in the phenomenon and also in order to make reasonable evaluations and conclusions from such explanations.

Materials used include books on religion, the Holy Bible, a commentary and internet sources. These are all secondary sources of data collection.

Yahweh and Divination in Ancient Israel

Divination is painted negatively in the Pentateuch. It is believed that divination was forbidden in the religion of ancient Israel because Yahweh forbade it. But it is very clear that the people of ancient Near East are known for divination. The first reference to divination in the Bible

is in Genesis 30:27 (New Living Translation). Laban confessed to have known through divination, that the Lord has blessed him because of Jacob. There are several verses of the Bible that speak so much about divination, but the ones that speak so strongly and directly against it are: Lev. 19:26b and Deut. 18:10 which read: "Do not practice divination or sorcery" and "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft" (New International Version) respectively.

Bello (2023) submits that beside the above, in Genesis 44:5 Joseph, as a form of threat to his brother, confesses that he practises divination. Other places include; Nms. 22:7; 23:23; I Sam. 15:23; II Kgs. 17:17; Pro. 16:10; Jer. 14:14; Eze. 12:24; 13:6, 7, 23; 21:21, 22, 23 and Act. 1:26; 16:16. The Hebrew words used which Bible translators give as divination include: nahash (Gen 30:27; 44:5), qesem (Num. 22:7; 23:23; Det. 18:10; I Sam. 15:23; II Kgs. 17:17; Pro. 16:10; Jer. 14:14; Eze. 13:6, 23; 21:21, 22, 23), naphal (I Sam. 14:41-42), miqsam (Eze. 12:24; 13:7) etc. These data reveal that the Hebrew word often used for divination is qesem. But it is also seen that the same word is sometimes translated as sorcery or witchcraft. The bottom line, however, is that the Old Testament writers give divination a negative connotation and as persona non grata for Israel.

Dewaay (The Dangers of Divination, 2015) states that Satan is behind divination, so God cannot support it. He argues that divination is real and substantial and indeed solves life's problem and that this is the more reason why people engage in it. According to him, some people do not care who is behind it or whether God approves it or not; all that concerns them is result—getting out of life's crises, problems, confusions and torments.

He also states that fortune-tellers who engage in divination have access to real spiritual knowledge which is revealed to them by Satan, whose instruments are lies and deception which he uses to "steal, kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10a) his victims. This would mean that Satan is the one putting people into negative situation and they still ignorantly patronize him for help, and that any help he gives to them is to make them acknowledge him, worship him, engage in animism and remain in perpetual spiritual prison.

Dewaay (The Dangers of Divination 2015) further argues that Yahweh forbids divination because it involves lusting for knowledge that Yahweh has not chosen to reveal. But it is logical to imagine why Yahweh would want a life of limitation for the people whom he created in his image and likeness. Why would he desire them to know some things and be ignorant or be in obscurity of other information? He responds that Yahweh is supreme and sovereign and does whatever he likes; and since he alone knows what is best for his beings, he selects for them what they should know and what they should not know. He refers to Det. 29:29, which in paraphrase stipulates that secret things belong to God and those things that are revealed are for humans.

Yahweh forbids divination, Dewaay (*The Dangers of Divination*, 2015) argues, because it was an act of rebellion. He posits that the fortune-tellers, sooth-sayers, sorcerers, necromancers, witches, witch-doctors etc., do not speak for God but for the devil. According to him, people resolve into divination when they disobey God (1 Sam. 15:23) and lose relationship with him and their prayers no longer receive answers (1 Sam. 28:6-18).

This is not only true for Bible characters like King Saul (1 Sam. 15) and King Ahaziah (2 Kgs. 1:2-6), it is also true for people in the contemporary time. The reaction of Yahweh showed his utmost displeasure for divination. He treated the phenomenon as sin and a punishable act. Both characters above, that indulged in the act of divination ended in sudden death. Those who indulge in divination will also be punished like those Bible characters were.

Hagan (*Urim and Thummim*, 2015) submits that Israel practised divination because there were divination types approved by Yahweh (like dreams, visions, and Urim and Thummim); but any form of divination practised by the surrounding nations he detested and disapproved. He further stresses that “most inductive forms were forbidden (Lev. 19:26; Det. 18), although the use of Urim and Thummim and Lots supposes some inductive approaches. According to him, most ancient practices, however, were used by both the populace and the officials. The Bible alludes to the use of omens (Isa. 44:25), arrows (Hos. 4:12), animal actions (1 Sam. 6:7-12), the reading of livers (Eze. 21:21-22), budding plants (Num. 17:1-11), necromancy (1 Sam. 28) and prophetic utterances, called false (Mic. 3:7) or “lying divinations” (Isa. 44:25; Jer. 14:14; 27:9-10; Eze. 12:24; Zec. 10:2).

In the above, Hagan (2015) accepts that Israel practised divination, though the Yahweh- approved ones. His reservation though is for what he called inductive divination, which is akin to mechanical and deductive divinations. The problem, however, with Hagan’s reservation is that the Urim and Thummim which was instituted by Yahweh comes under inductive divination and similar, if not very similar to the ones used by Israel’s neighbours.

Divination involves communication between the Divine and the human. This communication takes both human and divine initiatives. Hagan’s observation that “inductive techniques depend on human initiation” is correct and that “the Bible supposes that a priority rests on revelatory forms (dream, vision, oracle) rather than on inductive ones (Urim and Thummim, ephod)”. The exception to this rule, which Hagan does not state is that, though Urim and Thummim is inductive, it was Yahweh that instituted it, hence it is a legal and holy way of communicating with him. However, later on in the history of Israel it became obvious that Yahweh preferred the “revelatory form” which is natural divination (intuitive/inspired types like dreams, visions, trances, oracle, prophecy etc.). These are media or forms Hagan calls “natural phenomena”, which, according to him “may communicate God’s will, their interpretations must be scrutinized and may be helped by

the verbal”. He later submits “that God is not limited to the use of any one means of revelation”.

Considering why Yahweh forbade divination seeing Urim and Thummim as divinatory tools, especially inductive, Hagan asks: “Why would the Bible record such strong negative injunctions against inductive divination?” But he also defends that Deuteronomistic law repudiates whatever is linked with paganism. The fact is; most of Israel’s approved methods show similarities with the divination practiced by their surrounding nations. The question of veracity may be involved because they prove difficult to interpret. For this reason, verbal forms take prevalence over inductive methods. Yet even prophecies need to stand the test of whether they come true or not (Deut. 18:21-22). This is to say that human needs require discernment of divine desires. God chooses to communicate in a variety of ways, including divination techniques, but always in the clearest, most unambiguous way possible. Hagan (2015) therefore concludes that God determines the medium through which he communicates with his people; but he, Hagan, prefers the revelatory forms or natural phenomenon and still clarifies that even those media must be properly interpreted by a person of integrity.

As far as Otis (*Excited Utterances: A Historical Perspective on Prophecy, Tongues and Other Manifestations of Spiritual Ecstasy*, 1996) is concerned divination was practised in the land of Israel but that it was brought into Israel by the foreigners. This scholar does not shy away from the mention and prevalence of the phenomenon among the Israelites, both in the Exodus and the Post-Conquest Eras, and submits that “diviners also abounded among the aborigines of Canaan and the Philistines (Isa. 2:6; 1 Sam. 28). At a later period, multitudes of magicians poured from Chaldea and Arabia into the land of Israel, and pursued their occupations (Isa. 8:19; 2 Kgs. 21:6; 2 Chr. 33:6)”. Otis points out that the Torah, the Law of Yahweh, forbids such practice as contained in the following scriptural references: Exo. 22:18; Lev. 19:26; 19:31; Det. 18:9-11.

On the other hand, Otis gives some divinatory practices that Yahweh “was pleased to make known his will”. Among such were Lots (Jos. 7:13-19; Num. 26:55, 56; 1 Sam. 10:20-21 and Act. 1:26). Other means mentioned include dreams, prophets, and direct vocal communication, and referred to Urim and Thummim as divination by divine appointment (Num. 27:21). It can therefore be deduced that Elwell agrees that Yahweh forbade divination; his reasons include that it was practised by the neighbouring nations and had some abominable practices accompanying it, like passing children through fire. He nonetheless, sees Urim and Thummim as divination but as one that Yahweh was pleased with.

Dewaay (*The Dangers of Divination*, 2015) though agrees that all religions, including Christianity practice divination; his reservation, however, is in the method employed. Speaking about Judaism and Christianity, and more especially to the Christians, he submits that not all

methods or means of divination are approved by God. According to him, the saying that “Methods are neutral” is unfounded. He therefore posits that:

...the Bible forbids certain methods for contacting the spirit...The term “divination” is a general term that covers any such method. Old Testament scholar Eugene H. Merrill comments on this: The phrase ‘practicers of divination’ refers generally to the whole complex of means of gaining insight from the gods regardless of any particular technique.” The reason for the existence of divination is the fact that the spirit world is hidden from our eyes and information about it cannot be gained by normal means of learning. The various cultures that the ancient Israelites contacted all had means of divination. They believed that their fate and well-being was in the hands of gods whose intentions were mysterious. A good diviner, like Balaam (see Numbers 23), was adept in interpreting signs and omens.

Reacting to why Yahweh forbids divination, Dewaay submits that God spoke authoritatively to his chosen people through Moses, and that what Moses wrote was God’s revealed will. It was the only access they had to true information about their relationship to things hidden from normal means of learning (general revelation). He stresses that divination is any practice not specifically ordained in scripture that seeks to gain secret knowledge (i.e. knowledge God has not revealed). Although Dewaay agrees that ancient Israel practised divination, the Yahweh-approved ones through Lots and the Urim and Thummim, but he placed restraint on divination for Israel. According to him:

God purposely limits his people’s access to such spiritual knowledge for their own good. That which is outside of “the things revealed” is not for us. Why? Because there are spirit beings out there who have been practicing the art of deception for many thousands of years. They are good at what they do. If we dabble at their world we will be deceived. In the same vein section of Scripture that forbids divination, we find this promise: For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so.... (Deuteronomy 18:14, 15)....By limiting both the methods and the persons that were available to the people, God was protecting them from deceiving spirits. Every pagan culture has had its methods of divination. Balak would not have been willing to pay Balaam richly if Balaam had not been good at what he did. The evil spirits that Satan uses to deceive people make these practices work. The reason that divination is so prevalent is that it works.

Modes of Enquiry among the Jews

Ancient Israel actually practised divination. Divination was not alien to the Jews; in fact, they had various modes and media by which they made divine enquiries. These include the Urim and Thummim, Casting of Lots and Cabbala/Kabbala.

Urim and Thummim

This is an instrument of enquiry strung or put in the breast-piece and attached to the ephod which the high priest wore and made decisions for the Israelites. The *modus operandi* has not always been clear due to its limited information in the Pentateuch. However, it has served similar purpose as the prophet, dream or vision (1 Sam. 28:6).

Casting of Lots

Casting of Lots is seen both in the Old Testament and New Testament. People of ancient times were very much familiar with the instrument. It was often used by the priests for determining the animal for sacrifice on the Day of Atonement and the animal as scapegoat (Lev. 16); It must have been used for determining the culprit who stole the accursed thing (Jos. 7:14-18); Joshua also divided the portions of land by Lot; in 1 Sam 14:36-42 it was used to determine the man who sinned and caused Yahweh to be angry with Israel; it featured prominently in the book of Esther (3:7; 9:24-26) and the book of prophet Jonah (1:7). In the New Testament, in Act. 1:26, Lot was used to determine the successor of Judas Iscariot. But beyond this point no mention is made of physical means of determining God’s will.

Hamilton (1856) stresses that a very scriptural reference to Lots is the book of Jonah. The crew resorted to a common practice of the time and drew Lots to identify the culprit responsible for their woes (Jonah 1:7). Despite being cast by Gentiles, the Lots were effective in exposing a guilty servant of God. God was using their beliefs and practices to force his wayward servant to confess his sin and tell them about God, who is unrestricted in what instruments he can use to accomplish his purpose (Ahoga 2006). Lots are generally objects used for divination; for making a choice or decision in matters. In the history of the Bible, the casting of Lots was used to determine the will of God. Although the way it was used is not clear in the Bible (just like the *modus operandi* of the Urim and Thummim is not also clearly stated), some scholars see them as used simultaneously with the Urim and Thummim. There were, however, many instances recorded where Lots were cast without the use of the Urim and Thummim.

Hamilton (1856) reveals that numerous passages in the Old Testament show that the casting of Lots was customarily used for making important decisions. For example, Aaron, on the Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) chose, using the Lots, one of the goats for a scapegoat to bear the sins of the people into the desert (Lev. 16:7-10, 21-22). The division of the land of Palestine after the conquest was accomplished by the use of Lots (14:2; 18:6; 1 Chr 6:54). The service of the Temple, including the musician (1 Chr.25:7-8), the gatekeepers (26:13-16), and the supply of wood for the altar, were determined by casting Lots (Jos. 7:14; 1 Sam 14:42). In the early part of the New Testament era, we see the Lots being used.

The soldiers at the foot of the cross, cast Lots for the clothing of Jesus (Matt. 27:35), thus fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy in Psalm 22:18. Within the church, the successor of Judas Iscariot among the apostles was chosen via the Lots (Acts 1:26). In the latter instance the choice was preceded by prayer. There is no explicit indication that this procedure was approved by God, and it never appears in the latter activities of the church.

Cabbala/ Kabbala

According to Partridge (2013), this is a form of Jewish mysticism, and it is well practised in Judaism. It is about a belief in some form of direct revelation of divine things or information, which cannot be got through the ordinary (five) senses. Although it is Jewish mystical tradition, it was developed in Spain; it is a collection of earlier traditions, like the Talmud, the Book of Creation (Sefer Yetzira), which emphasized the mystical meaning of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet and from Neo-Platonism, a concept of how God related to the world. In the Cabbala, God was known as the 'limitless' (En Sof), from whom came ten aspects of God (Sefirot), by which he is manifested and made known. These 'emanations' of God mediate between the En Sof and the world.

The most important work of the Cabbala is the Zohar, attributed to Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai (Rashbi, first century CE), but in reality, written in thirteenth century in Spain. The 'Talmud of Jewish Mysticism', its final editor/author was probably Rabbi Moses de Leon (c. 1250-1305). Although the study of the Torah is still central in Cabbala, the aim is to find hidden, secret meanings; the Zohar expounds the Torah by literal, allegorical meanings, but more importantly, by mystical insights. Astrology is also bound up in the Zohar: each day is influenced by one of the ten Sefirot. After the Jews were expelled from Spain, the Centre of the Jewish mysticism became Safed, Galilee, where Rabbi Isaac Luria (1544-72) gave a new slant to the Cabbala, using such erotic imagery, which greatly influenced later movements, such as Hasidism. In Luria's view, after the En Sof created the universe, he withdrew from it, leaving Sefirot, vessels that contain the 'divine light'. The last six Sefirot could not contain the light, and shattered. Some of them sank, trapping sparks of the divine light within them.

Implications of Divination for Contemporary Christians

Most Christians have thought that divination is not compatible with their faith. However, the definitions and critical descriptions of the concept of divination have brought to the fore that all religions practise divination, since all religions bring divinity and humanity into communion. This revelation brought by academic engagement thus suggests a broader scope of divination. In fact, it could mean that virtually every religious engagement is divination. The implications of divination for contemporary Christians shall be illumined under the following religious practices.

Prayer

The Christian faith does not trivialize the issue of prayer. Prayer is said to be a phenomenon through which a believer engages the Divine, in a communion, for assistance in time of need. The Christians acknowledge their helplessness and vulnerability to the limitations and challenges posed by life and thus initiate a relationship with the Divine whom they believe is supreme, sovereign, unlimited and invincible. Such prayer is believed to invoke and spur the Divine into acting on their behalf. So, in prayer, Christians call on the Divine, tell Him their requests, worship and adore Him, at times make vows and also thank Him in advance for answered prayers. This is divination! The following scriptures talk about prayer: 1 Samuel 1:9-12; 7:5-9; 1 Kings 18:37; James 5:17-18; Luke 22:40-45; Philippians 4:6.

Scriptures

The Christian Scripture is called the Bible. Although there are two: the Roman Catholic Bible and the Protestant Bible; the most popular today is the Protestant Bible. This is the Scripture of the Christians. They believe that it is the written word of the Divine to humanity, so that humans will understand the works of God, their environment, relationship with others and how to handle the challenges of life. When Christians read the Bible or meditate on it, they believe that God is speaking to them, and oftentimes they profess to have received directions. This is bibliomancy—dependence on a collection of written texts to provide instructions or give divine direction (Joshua 1:8; Matthew 19:4; Luke 4:16; John 5:39; Acts 8:32-37; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15).

Meditation

Both theistic and atheistic humans engage in meditation. It is a pondering, thinking and reflecting on issues through conscious and active engagement of the mental faculties. At times in meditation, no specific thing is thought about. The initiator just comes to a place of serenity and tries to empty his mind of worry, concerns and anxieties and paves way for the Divine to speak to him. Scriptures like Joshua 1:8 and Psalms 1:2 encourage meditation for divine direction. Divination through meditation is intuitive or inspired—although the platform is provided by human.

Fasting

Fasting is a wilful denial of self from all pleasures in order to receive attention and favour from the Divine. Such pleasures could involve food, drink, sex etc. During the period of fasting, *ceteris paribus*, a believer is expected to be focused on the Divine and not on the mundane things; hence his focus, concentration, dependence and humility draw the Divine to assist him. Fasting and prayer often go *pari passu* (Matthew 17:21); when people fast they must pray, if not their fasting is a waste. Fasting is a catalyst in prayer. It does not necessarily partake in the prayer; it rather provides an enabling environment through focus,

concentration, humility, dependence and submission and hence speeds up the rate at which prayers are answered (Joshua 7:6-15; Esther 4:16; Matthew 4:2; 17:21).

Offering of Sacrifices

In African Religion, especially in Ifa worship, sacrifice is inevitable. In fact, worship and divination exercises are not complete until sacrifices are made. The Christian Bible is replete with instances where sacrifices are made in order to obtain favour from the Divine. In the Bible whenever people contacted God, they offer sacrifices (Gen. 4:3-5; 8:20-22; 15:9-18; 22:1-18; 28:18; 1 Sam. 7:9-14; 16:2-3; 2 Sam 24:1-25; 1 Kgs 3). The reason is because sacrifice is inevitable in divination. Sacrifice is an antidote to greed and the Divine speedily answers and assists humans who are devoid of greed and egocentrism. Not all Christian sects subscribe to offering of sacrifices like in the Old Testament; it is, however, encouraged that Christians live a life of sacrifice on daily basis, as Jesus sacrificed himself and also teaches that it is more profitable to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

CONCLUSION

The research has clearly shown that all religions do divination, including ancient Israel and contemporary Christians. What divination primarily is, is the contacting of the Divine by humans in order to receive help. Therefore, all peoples and religions practice divination; although they may differ in their modus operandi and the names they call such practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research, we therefore recommend that:

1. Christians should be holistic and open-minded in their understanding of divination.
2. Christians should know that all peoples and religions, including Christians, practise divination; although names given to it and modus operandi for doing it may differ.
3. Although Christians believe that Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice, it is good that Christians always offer sacrifices in form of giving, donations, helping the less privileged etc. These acts remove greed and wickedness from human heart and make the Divine answer prayers faster.
4. Christians, as a matter of exigency and habit, should always be in communion with God, through reading the Bible, meditation, fasting, praying and giving of sacrifices.

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