

THE USE OF  
THE OLD TESTAMENT  
IN THE NEW AND  
OTHER ESSAYS

*STUDIES IN HONOR OF*  
WILLIAM FRANKLIN STINESPRING

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## THE ISRAELITE CULT AND CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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### INTRODUCTION

The basic presupposition of this article is the author's growing awareness of and appreciation for the influence of the cultus upon every aspect of Israelite life. As a student of the Old Testament, this writer is convinced that the Israelite cultus, or worship pattern, is responsible primarily for the origin, preservation, and transmission of a large portion of the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> However, the interest in Israel's cultic life, while a strict discipline of Old Testament studies, is no mere search into the history of Israel's religion to satisfy one's antiquarian interests. Although Old Testament scholars continue to stress Israel's contributions in such areas as monotheism and ethical prophecy, not enough emphasis has been placed upon what H. H. Rowley has designated "Israel's achievement in worship."<sup>2</sup> Thus, if we believe that the Old Testament is a part of our Christian heritage, if we affirm that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we should not be amazed to discover that the worship forms of ancient Israel are relevant for the Christian church, that the primary forms of Israelite worship have not been negated by the Incarnation; rather the forms have been reinterpreted in the light of the Christ-event. Too often the church has neglected Israel's achievement in worship and the church's worship has bogged into sterility. Thus, the purpose of this article is to explore the major lines of Israel's worship and to suggest the areas in which the Israelite cult can continue to enrich Christian worship.

This article was delivered originally as the author's Faculty Address at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, November 5, 1968.

1. The literature concerning Israel's cultus has become extensive. The original purpose of the article, the scope of the inquiry, and the present place of publication must necessarily limit complete documentation. The reader is directed to the notes and bibliographies of the works cited for full documentation.

2. *Worship in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 271.

At the outset, the nature of the Israelite cult must be defined. To be sure, a cultus may be both "good" and "bad," a fact which explains why the term often has assumed a distasteful connotation. Nevertheless, the term *cult* carries no value judgment; *cult* means simply "organized worship." The character and content of the cult are the basis for value judgment. One cannot gloss over the existence of inappropriate or bad cultic forms in the Old Testament. Thus, in this article, the term Israelite cult is used to convey those forms of worship which this writer finds at the main stream of Yahwism, not the modifications or the deviations which otherwise make up the history of Israelite religion.

Undoubtedly, the scholar who contributed most to the studies of the Israelite cult was Sigmund Mowinckel. Beginning with his monumental *Psalmestudien*,<sup>3</sup> published in the 1920's, and culminating in the two-volume English translation of *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*<sup>4</sup> almost fifty years later, Mowinckel has significantly redirected Old Testament studies. He has written:

It has been said that religion appears in three main aspects, as cult, as myth and as ethos. Or in other terms, as worship, doctrine, and as behaviour (morals). . . . The cult is thus a general phenomenon appearing in all religions, even in the most "anti-cultic" Protestant sects and groups. It is indeed an essential and constitutive feature of a religion, that in which the nature and spiritual structure of a religion is most clearly manifested. . . . Cult or ritual may be defined as the socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the Deity with the congregation is established, developed, and brought to its ultimate goal. In other words: a relation in which a religion becomes a vitalizing function as a communion of God and congregation, and of the members of the congregation among themselves.<sup>5</sup>

More succinctly, Mowinckel defines cult as "the visible and audible expression of the relation between the congregation and the deity."<sup>6</sup>

3. *Psalmestudien I-VI, Skrifter utgitt av Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo, Hist.-Filos. Kl., 1921-1924* (Amsterdam: P. Schippers, 1961), vol. 2.

4. Trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas, 2 vols. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962).

5. *Ibid.*, 1: 15.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Note the words "visible and audible," for they adequately convey the concreteness and objectivity of Israelite worship.

James Muilenburg, noting this objective quality of the Israelite cult, writes:

[Israelite worship] was not a flight to the "dim unknown," to timelessness, or to "a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts," or to a shoreless ocean of quietude and unperturbed peace. Everywhere there is movement, active and ardent speaking, and live response to the speaking and acting Lord.<sup>7</sup>

We would underscore this objectivity, this concreteness of Israel's cult. In the classical sense, Israel's worship made no attempt to offer a psychological salve to escape the realities of living, no other-worldly elevation to the Elysian fields of spiritual bliss; Israelite worship was at every point "existential." Again, from Mowinckel: "In the cult, something happens: a relationship is established and developed which is of vital importance to the congregation, and the acts and words express what happens."<sup>8</sup> So, the purpose of the Israelite cult is, in Mowinckel's words, "to create life,"<sup>9</sup> that is, to maintain the ordered course of the world of nature and the world of man as it was created by God and as it is sustained by God. Encounter with God through worship sustains the world order, reaffirms man's relationship with his creation, and maintains man's relationship with his neighbor. The cult sustains, creates, and recreates a relationship—not magically, but sacramentally,—a relationship initiated, sustained, and continually renewed by God himself.

In the Israelite cult, the overriding purpose was the "representation of history," the contemporizing of those creative historical acts of salvation which had formed, nourished, and sustained Israelite existence. None will deny that the faith of Israel was historically oriented, based upon the fact that God redeemed a people from Egyptian bondage, welded them into a covenant people through the Torah, and confirmed that salvation by the gift of the land. Whatever tribes or clans actually experienced the Egyptian Exodus-

7. *The Way of Israel* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), p. 108.

8. *Psalms*, 1: 17.

9. *Ibid.*

event, all Israel affirmed that God had acted in her behalf, that Yahweh had served Israel, and that this salvation was a continuing process in her existence. To be sure, the Exodus-event happened only once, at a particular point in human history, a unique and unrepeatable act. But, Israel, uniquely conscious of history, could not allow this formative event to recede into timeless myth as her Near Eastern neighbors would have done. In no sense could the Exodus-event be subject to annual repetition in the same way that Marduk in Babylon annually defeated the chaotic Tiamat—the uniqueness of the Exodus-event precluded annual cyclic recurrence. Nevertheless, Israel's cult sustained the faith that because God had acted once, he would continue to act for her salvation. Brevard Childs has written:

The Old Testament witnesses to a series of historical events by which God brought the people of Israel into existence. . . . These redemptive events of the Old Testament shared a genuine chronology. . . . There is a once-for-all character to these events in the sense that they never repeated themselves in the same fashion. Yet this does not exhaust the biblical concept. These determinative events are by no means static; they function merely as beginning. . . . Redemptive history continues . . . the influence of a past event continued to be felt in successive generations, which obvious fact no one could deny. Rather, there was an immediate encounter, an actual participation in the great acts of redemption. The Old Testament maintained the dynamic, continuing character of past events without sacrificing their historical character as did myth.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Israel, freed from the reduction of her past to myth and assured of the continuation of redemptive history, "re-presented" in the cult those historical acts which were determinative for her life. This "re-presentation," in the words of Martin Noth, is

inseparably linked [with] the subject of . . . God acting, and indeed acting in history. . . . "Re-presentation" is founded on this—that God and his action are always present, while man in his inevitable temporality cannot grasp this presentness ex-

10. *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, Studies in Biblical Theology, no. 37 (Naperville, Ill.: Alec R. Allenson, 1962), pp. 83–84.

cept by "re-presenting" the action of God over and over again in his worship. . . . If Christian proclamation means to take its biblical basis seriously, it will have to follow the biblical witness also in the question of the "re-presentation."<sup>11</sup>

These functions are primary to the Israelite cult: to actualize, to re-present unrepeatable historical events, to bring the worshipper into an existential identification with these events, to bridge the time and space gap and to participate in the original history. In the Israelite cult, each generation vicariously entered into that original, and nonrepeatable, history through two patterns: 1) historical recital and 2) dramatic representation.

#### CULTIC ACTUALIZATION BY HISTORICAL RECITATION

Gerhard von Rad has isolated several creedal statements in the Old Testament which he has argued stand at the level of primary tradition.<sup>12</sup> Among these confessions is Deut. 26:5-9:

A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to Yahweh, the God of our Fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

To be sure, von Rad has overstated his position by asserting that these creedal statements represent the "hexateuch in miniature";<sup>13</sup>

11. "The 'Re-presentation' of the O.T. in Proclamation," trans. James Luther Mays, in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), pp. 85-86. This article was written in 1952.

12. "The Form Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966), pp. 3-8. This article was written in 1938. See also von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 1: 121 ff.

13. Von Rad employed the term "Hexateuch *in nuce*," in his *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 16.

nevertheless, for this writer the creedal character of these verses cannot be denied. The emphasis of these creedal statements is historical: Egyptian bondage, salvation from that bondage by Yahweh, the occupation of the land. Moreover, one cannot escape the fact that these affirmations are in plural address—"we" were in Egyptian bondage, "we" were redeemed by Yahweh, "we" were given this fertile land. Each time this affirmation was recited in the cult, the worshipper bridged the time and space gap and became identified with that never-to-be-repeated salvation, he actualized, he contemporized, he re-presented history.

Another example of historical recitation is found in the antiphonal liturgies in Josh. 4:6-7 and 24:14-28. Although the liturgical form has been clouded by the context of historical narration, the liturgy may be easily reconstructed:

The priest: What do these stones mean?  
 The congregation: They mean that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh; when it passed over the Jordan, the waters were cut off.  
 The priest: So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.

These liturgical formulations emanate from the cult at Gilgal, a center of worship which carefully preserved the Jordan crossing and the conquest traditions.<sup>14</sup> In these liturgies the reader is in touch with historical recital of the re-creation of history, a means of allowing the existential involvement of later generations in those acts of Yahweh which effected salvation and which continued to effect salvation.

Or, one may cite a central thrust of the Jerusalem cultus, namely the liturgical affirmation of the Psalter, "Yahweh has become / is king."<sup>15</sup> Despite the discussion which this affirmation has evoked,<sup>16</sup> no thought of a dying-rising Yahweh is intended; nor was the kingship of Yahweh predicated upon an annual cultic renewal cere-

14. So, Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), pp. 152-65.

15. יהוה מלך in Psalms 93, 96, 97, 99 and related themes in the "royal" and/or "enthronement" Psalms. Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1: 107-16.

16. See Kraus, pp. 205-8.

mony. Nevertheless, in the Jerusalem Temple, this liturgical affirmation brought the worshipper face to face with the reality of Yahweh's kingship, not a theological abstraction, but an experiential and existential encounter which demanded a response. Indeed, one may posit that just such a worship encounter underlies the Temple sequence in Isaiah 6, an encounter with the cultic reaffirmation of Yahweh's kingship which redirected the Prophet's life. Thus, in some sense, in the Jerusalem cultus, Yahweh's kingship was reactivated in worship and he "became king" for those who entered into the experience.<sup>17</sup> Cultic recital provokes existential identification.

To be sure, Israel's cult was not limited to creedal and liturgical confessions—a flexibility developed within the cult, as witnessed by the book of Deuteronomy. In fact, Deuteronomy is one gigantic cultic actualization. Deut. 5:3 reads: "Not with our fathers did Yahweh make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive this day." This passage originated between the eighth and the sixth centuries,<sup>18</sup> a time far distant from the Sinai-event; nevertheless, centuries later Israel could corporately and cultically confess that the present generation stood anew at the foot of the holy mountain. Moreover, historical recitation and re-presentation gives way to preaching, a fact which explains Deuteronomy's homiletic or parenetic character.<sup>19</sup> The creed is expanded into

17. Although often misinterpreted, Mowinckel's position has merit:

"To the interpretation that the enthronement psalms on a special festival state that Yahweh has become king, it is not a valid objection to say that Yahweh had, according to the Israelite view, always been king. The latter statement is correct enough. . . . But this did not prevent the view that Yahweh at a certain point of time *became* the king of Israel, i. e. at the election at the Exodus from Egypt (Ps. 114:1 f.), or at the making of the covenant on Mount Sinai (Deut. 33:5). That Yahweh *became* king is bound up with the fundamental fact of salvation in the life of the people. . . . But in the cult the fact of salvation is re-experienced as a new and actual reality. . . . And in the cultic experience the whole attention is concentrated on that which is again witnessed as something actual; it is there conceived as something happening at that moment. The Lord, Yahweh, becomes king, he shows himself as king, and performs kingly deeds, and in the graphic conception and presentation of the cult this is all gathered up in the definite picture of his royal entry and arrival, invisibly mounted on the cherub-borne throne" (*Psalms*, 1: 114-15).

18. This writer places the origin of Deuteronomy earlier than von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 1st ser., no. 9 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953). More cogent is the view of E. W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

19. Nicholson.

injunction and call for obedience as each generation is recalled to affirm Israel's ancient faith, to bridge the time and space gap, to participate existentially and creatively with those events which culminated in the covenant. Thus, Deuteronomy, with its pattern of creedal recitation and homiletical expansion, sets the pattern for Christian preaching.

These examples of Israelite historical recitation will serve to illustrate the means by which Israel sought to re-create her history by liturgical re-presentation.<sup>20</sup> Small wonder that the early church also presented its message by historical re-presentation. The early Christian hymns and creeds contained in the Pauline corpus (I Cor. 15:3-7 and Phil. 2:6-11) are harmonious with the Israelite pattern of historical recitation and re-presentation, for their emphases are upon the historical, concrete memories of our Lord's life and death. Even more illustrative is the creed in I Tim. 3:16:

He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated in the spirit,  
seen by angels,  
preached among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up into glory.

The death and Resurrection of our Lord was a once-for-all, unique, unrepeatable historical event, and the early church, following the pattern of its spiritual ancestor, constructed similar historical recitations by which in the cult they stood again at the foot of the cross, by which they bridged the time and space gap, by which the Christ-event continued in contemporaneity through cultic re-presentation.

And the church continued to formulate her creeds. To be sure, such classic creeds as the so-called Apostles and Nicene were formulated to preserve dogmatic integrity; nevertheless, the basic character of these creeds is rightly historical. Of course, Israel would not have opened her creeds with the theological abstraction of God's "almightiness," nor would she have spoken at the outset of creation; nevertheless, when the Apostles Creed begins the article

20. This position goes beyond and to some extent modifies the conception of "theology as recital." G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 1st ser., no. 8 (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, 1952).

on Jesus Christ, the Hebraic cultic pattern is maintained: "born of the virgin Mary," "crucified under Pontius Pilate," "died, buried, raised on the third day." To give audible expression to the Apostles Creed in worship is not an intellectual exercise in dogmatic assertion; in this audible expression something should happen, the worshipper should encounter anew the historical elements of our faith, and, in some sense, experience the sacramental contemporaneity of our Lord with the worshipper. If we are to take the Israelite cult seriously, then we are confronted with the demand to reactivate the purpose of re-presentation by historical recital, to view creedal affirmations not as tests of theological soundness, but as a means of existential identification with the past, as a means of bridging the time and space gap, as a means of re-creating the original event and existentially participating in those events which have accomplished our salvation.

Undoubtedly, many protestant evangelicals have eschewed creedal statements primarily because the basic purpose has been lost; nevertheless, this writer would plead from the example of Israel's cultus that such creedal re-presentations be restored to Christian worship in order that the church may possess a more vital sense of its history, that it may become more aware of its corporate relationship with the church of all ages, that it may participate in God's saving act in Jesus Christ and recognize the demands that Event makes on the individual. The loss of historical identification undercuts the dynamism of the Christian faith; Israel's cultic pattern has pointed the way to a recovery of that historical involvement in Christian worship.

#### HISTORICAL RE-PRESENTATION BY DRAMATIC PRESENTATION

Recent studies of the history of Israel's religion have demonstrated convincingly that the formative events of Israel's faith were dramatically acted out in the cult. In fact, some of the Old Testament narratives have reached their present form as a result of the historicizing of cultic dramatic re-presentation. We would note three prime examples of this thesis.

First, Johannes Pedersen has drawn attention to the fact that the Exodus narrative in Exodus 1-19 is a re clothed festal liturgy

from which something of the ritual may be recovered.<sup>21</sup> In Exod. 12:42, the "watch night" drama appears, a re-creating and a re-presenting of the drama in which the Hebrews anxiously awaited the intervention of Yahweh in Egypt, a repeated cultic drama which bridged the gap of space and time and reestablished the saving relationship for each generation with Yahweh. In close connection is Exod. 12:1 ff., the instructions for the Passover Feast, said to be observed as "a memorial to all generations." The re-creation of the watch night, the blood on the doorposts and the lintel, the eating of unleavened bread and bitter herbs—these acts were re-created annually and physically in the active cult. For Israel, no sterile symbolism is present, no mere lifeless memory—by re-creating history through dramatic presentation, Israel re-presented her saving history, actualized her salvation, renewed her relationship to her God. Thus, historical recital has given way to historical re-creation.

Further, Hans-Joachim Kraus has proposed that the narratives of Joshua 2-6 are rehistoricized festal liturgies from the Gilgal cult.<sup>22</sup> At Gilgal, through dramatic presentation, the crossing of the Jordan was re-created, the march around the ruins of Jericho reenacted, not in mere historical memory, but in contemporary actualization. The close connection of dramatic re-presentation with liturgical re-presentation as noted earlier is clearly evidenced in these passages from Joshua. Thus, the Gilgal cult, annually or periodically, re-presented the conquest story, dramatizing its history and making it sacramental.

But, the greatest example of re-presentation of dramatic form is the Jerusalem cultus. Much has been written about the royal ritual in Jerusalem with its interlocked themes of David and Zion.<sup>23</sup>

21. *Israel III-IV* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), pp. 728-37. Although Pedersen would end the "Passover legend" with Exodus 15, the limits may be extended to Exodus 19 with ease.

22. Pp. 152-65.

23. The terminology here is woefully inconsistent, reflecting the viewpoint of the proposed content of the festival, e. g., "Enthronement Festival," "Covenant Festival," "New Year's Festival." The author prefers the title "Royal Zion Festival" and is more inclined to the mediating position of Aubrey Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1955). See also Mowinckel, *Psalms*, 1: 106-92; Kraus, pp. 205-18; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 35-52; Keith R. Crim, *The Royal Psalms* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1962).

Despite those who find minimal cultic influence, one has little basis for doubting that the Royal Psalms have their setting in life in a Royal Zion Festival during which those events surrounding the Davidic dynasty were dramatically enacted at Jerusalem. The Psalms speak of the "night watch" at Gihon, of the procession through the streets of Jerusalem which preceded the entrance of the Ark into the Temple, and finally of the reactualization of the Davidic king as Yahweh's servant. The Psalms are primary testimony to historical re-presentation by dramatic actualization.

These three examples are more fully illuminated by this incisive quotation from Mowinckel:

The cult is not only by its origin, but in all places and at all times, drama. The cult is sacred art. But at the same time it is sacred reality, not merely an acted drama or a play, but a real drama and one that manifests reality, a drama which realizes the dramatic event with real power, a reality from which real forces emanate, in other words it is a sacrament. . . . The basic idea is this: that through the dramatic, "symbolic" presentation, realization and reanimation of the particular event this event is actually and really repeated; it repeats itself, happens all over again and exercises afresh the same mighty, redemptive effect that it exercised for our salvation on the first occasion at the dawn of time or in the far distant past.<sup>24</sup>

Precisely at this point Christian worship has departed from the pattern of the Israelite cult, with particular reference to the Lord's Supper. If one will view the history of the Lord's Supper, one will find few periods when the real drama of this cultic presentation has been preserved. The theology of the Lord's Supper has moved from the extreme of the Roman church with its doctrine of transubstantiation to the barren symbolism of nonliturgical congregations. Both positions, this writer submits, are in error. If the Old Testament cult is correctly viewed, then an idea of the actual re-creation of the body and blood of our Lord in the mass is incorrect. The suffering and death of Jesus were once-for-all, nonrepeatable, unique events in history—in no sense can the event be literally and physically re-created in worship. But, on the other hand, the

24. *Psalmsstudien*, 2: 21. Quoted by Kraus, p. 9.

elements of the Lord's Supper transcend barren symbolism. In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, something happens—not with the elements themselves—but in a dramatic re-presentation of history. To borrow the pattern of the Deuteronomic preachers, "not with the disciples did our Lord institute the new covenant, but with us, all of us, we who are here alive today." The Lord's Supper is sacred art, a drama which manifests reality; it allows the worshipper to span the time and space gap of history and stand again with those who first experienced our Lord's death. In the mystery of dramatic presentation, the worshipper reenters original history, not as festal myth, but as actualization. "This is my body broken for you," a brokenness which continues over and over again, a presentness of contemporary encounter. Thus, as one partakes of the elements, one becomes part of the original event which was accomplished for our salvation.

The demand is to recover the true meaning of the Lord's Supper in Christian worship, a meaning which will be patterned from the Israelite cult with its motif of dramatic re-presentation. If the study of the Israelite cult is taken seriously, the Lord's Supper must be rescued from its place as addendum in many congregations and restored to the central place of worship. The Lord's Supper is the reenactment of the Christian Exodus-event, the historical beginning which continues to give the church life. Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." Yet, to remember is not an intellectual discipline, "to re-member" is to re-create, "to re-member" is to become involved, "to re-member" is to actualize, "to re-member" is to re-present, "to re-member" is to respond.<sup>25</sup> In Deut. 16:3, the feast of the Passover is said to be observed, "so that you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt." Here is the annual re-presentation of history. Thus, "This do in remembrance of me" must mean, "so that you may participate in the sufferings and death of our Lord and respond to them." For as Israel was redeemed from Egyptian bondage in the exodus and annually actualized that redemption in the cult, the Christian church finds itself released from a similar bondage and must actualize that redemption by dramatic re-presentation. The Lord's

25. See further, Edward P. Blair, "An Appeal to Remembrance," *Interpretation*, 15 (Jan., 1961), 41-47.

Supper is truly sacramental in that by participating in the drama of our redemption, God himself reestablishes, maintains, and renews his relationship with us and we respond in obedience.

#### THE CULT IN CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

To this point, the attempt has been made to present the primary purpose of Israel's cult as a re-presentation of history through the use of audible and visual means. Beyond the two basic ideas of historical recitation and dramatic presentation and their application in Christian worship, four other areas may be noted briefly in which the Israelite cult has relevance for Christian worship.

First, in worship, evangelicals in particular have tended to over-emphasize the audible aspects of worship to the exclusion of the visible aspects. Primarily in the Lord's Supper the vitality of tangible and visible presentation has been retained. The Israelite cult is "sacred art." Only recently has the church begun to grasp the power of acted-out faith and worship in drama. Contemporary worship patterns need a new awareness of the impact of the visible which often is more effective than the audible. Dramatic presentation of our faith offers a new and creative channel through which the re-presentation of history may be accomplished, through which the dynamism of the Christian faith may be preserved, through which we may bridge the time and space gap of two thousand years.

Second, and closely related to the first, is the area of symbolism. The temple in Jerusalem was filled with symbolism, not merely as decorative art, but as a means of re-creating history. The Ark of the Covenant, the central cult object, stood in its semidarkness as the throne of the invisible King Yahweh.<sup>26</sup> The altar of incense, standing before the "Holy of Holies," continually emitted sweet-smelling smoke to recreate the theophany of Sinai where Yahweh appeared "in a thick cloud."<sup>27</sup> The great free-standing pillars outside the temple, at least according to one interpretation, served as mammoth incense burners by which the whole temple came to

26. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A. Baker, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 1: 107-9.

27. J. Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self-revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 226-77.

represent Sinai.<sup>28</sup> The trumpets sounded in the liturgy were more than musical instruments, their sound re-created the thunder of the Sinaitic theophany.<sup>29</sup> To be sure, the author is not pleading for the installation of incense burners in sanctuaries; he is pleading for an increased realization that cultic symbolism re-creates, re-presents, actualizes, and activates history. With the renewed emphasis upon liturgy and worship, the church can learn much about the place and purpose of creative symbolism from the Israelite cult.

Third, the Israelite cult was, as Mowinckel stated, a place where something happened, a fact which is beginning to dramatize renovations in church architecture. Renewed emphasis upon worship as action and participation by the whole congregation has brought about circular buildings with the communion table at their centers. Startingly, a Northfield, Minnesota, architect has proposed that except for its size, the best analogy for church architecture is the Japanese tea room. The architect, Edward Anders Sovik, said: "Like a church, the tea room is not a place for private meditation, but for dialogue and certain actions in which human relationships are established."<sup>30</sup> This statement is reminiscent of Mowinckel who spoke of the cult as the "visible and audible expression of the relation between congregation and deity." Thus, the recovery of the dynamism of Israel's cult may well influence our traditional conceptions of sacral architecture with renewed emphasis upon the worship as visible and audible, as expressions of relationships, as an event in which "something happens."

Finally, insight into the Israelite cult will grant Christian worship increased flexibility. Every Old Testament student knows that many of Israel's worship patterns were adapted along the lines of Near Eastern culture and even the Jerusalem cultus is a compromise between Yahwistic and Jebusite cultic patterns. Israel could and did adopt forms from her contemporary culture, introduce them into her ancient patterns of worship, and baptize them into her distinctive Yahwism. This freedom to employ non-Christian elements in Christian worship must be recovered. While some have viewed attempts to introduce jazz and modern dance into

28. William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 144-48.

29. Kuntz, pp. 82-86, 227.

30. *Louisville Courier-Journal and Times*, July 14, 1968.



worship as anathema, this writer would suggest that these experiments are harmonious with the Israelite point of view. The increased use of and adaptation of twentieth-century art and music forms offers new and exciting challenges for creative revitalization of Christian worship.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the original thesis of this article is reaffirmed. If the God of Israel is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the church claims he is, then to contend that he chooses to be worshipped in similar patterns is not difficult to affirm. The central purpose of both Israelite and Christian worship is to re-present creative history by means of audible and visible expression, a representation which culminates in active response. Perhaps one reason the Christian church has lost much of its vitality in the twentieth century is that it has lost the art of worship because it has divorced itself from the sense of the history which effected its salvation. Recovering that historical status is part and parcel with the revitalizing of the drama of worship. Edward Blair has written provocatively:

By remembering, the God of the past becomes *our* God, the covenants made at Horeb and Calvary *our* covenants, and the promises given to the fathers *our* promises. In the biblical kind of memory time recedes. The patriarchs and the prophets become our contemporaries. We all tarry behind the bloody lintel, loins girded, staff in hand, the smell of roasted lamb in our nostrils, and wild fear in our hearts while the angel of death passes. We all stand before the holy mountains, dark and quaking, where God is speaking his eternal word. And we all wait for the glorious day when promise will become fulfillment.<sup>31</sup>

31. Blair, p. 47.