

PERCEPTION ENGINEERING AND OLD TESTAMENT RITUAL CLEANSING: A MECHANISM FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL DOCTRINE OF PURIFICATION IN CHERUBIM AND SERAPHIM CHURCH

By

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Abstract

Ritual cleansing is a general phenomenon among all religions. It is a common practice among the African Indigenous churches. But the focus of this paper is on Cherubim and Seraphim church. As a heritage from the Old Testament ritual purification, its practice among Cherubim and Seraphim church has generated a lot of controversies in the Christian circle. Therefore, this paper aimed to examine the areas of disparity in the practice of ritual cleansing by Cherubim and Seraphim church and its conceptual sociocultural, religious, and ethical implications. Also, to engender “perception engineering’ as a mechanism through which a transformational doctrine of purification be achieved in Cherubim and Seraphim church. The method employed was historical approach. The areas of disparity found out by this study includes: monetary incentive (monetization), undermining its usage for body and soul sanctification for fitness in the sanctuary of God, bathing for persons of the opposite sex, and diabolical entanglement. It is important to note that not all of them engage in these practices. Consequently, the following recommendations were made that the leadership of Cherubim and Seraphim should strategically employ perception engineering as a tool to clear away the values and beliefs attached to some unwholesome aspects of the practices of ritual cleansing in the church. Perception engineering is quick, sharp, quiet, peaceful, and strong to such effect. There is need for the church to re-conceptualize their doctrine of purification by engaging a holistic ritual cleansing that embraces body and soul purification of both clergy and laity. Ritual Cleansing should be devoid of demonic invocations and incantations. Cherubim and Seraphim church should consider the ultimate means of ritual purification instituted in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ which is biblically and more potent.

Keywords: Perception Engineering, Ritual Cleansing, Cherubim and Seraphim.

Introduction

In the year 2021, a neighbour fell ill. His mother sent for him. When he got to her, she took him to a Cherubim and Seraphim Church. On getting there, the Prophet asked him to stay back. They were told that, ‘it was the evil ones afflicting him with the sickness.’ The Prophet was doing ritual cleansing for him so that he might get deliverance and healing. Unfortunately, instead for him to get better, his situation became worse. One day, the wife forcefully took him to a teaching hospital. On getting there, the doctors diagnosed him with a curable disease. But because, he was

brought to them very late, the condition had gone out of hand. The doctors lamented the lateness to his wife and his church pastor. Eventually, the man died. During his burial that this researcher attended, his Church Pastor lamented and warned people present not to kill themselves with ignorance.

Ritual purification is traditional to Christianity. It is not a strange practice. Before the advent of Christianity in Africa, the church has been involved in the rite of purification using different means as prescribed in the Old Testament. Ferguson (2013) citing Eusebius claimed that water purification was common among Christian of Eastern Churches which found its origin in the Jewish practice of ablution before prayers. He further said, the practice was no more prevalent among Western Christians. The Latin Catholics engaged in washing before entering the house of prayer. Worshippers sprinkle themselves with holy water before entering the nave of the church or the alter (Hembry, 1990). From fourth century onward, ministers engaged in the custom of water purification as a means of inward purity before they performed holy services. The most prominent ritual purification in Christianity is Baptism. It is an ordinance received from Jesus. It is biblical law in Christianity (Peter, 2003)

There is no doubt that we are in postmodern era, where and when people seek realities of every matter, including religious truth and liberation. One major characteristic of postmodern world is the quest for liberation of individual from selfish and unreliable ideologies and theologies (Lane, 1997). Therefore, there is need for a reflective clarification on the controversial aspects of ritual cleansing in Cherubim and Seraphim Church. This is the task this paper pursued. To achieve this aim, this study tried to examine if water purification in the Old Testament is the same as ‘spiritual bath’ among the Cherubim and seraphim church. And if the ritual cleansing as carried out in the Cherubim and Seraphim is syncretic as many see it. Nonetheless, the aim of this paper was not to play ‘a blame game’, rather to provide mirror through which syncretic ideas in the practices of ritual cleansing in Cherubim and Seraphim church be fished out and checked. Also, to transform the doctrine of purification in Cherubim and Seraphim via perception engineering.

Conceptual Understanding of Perception Engineering

Perception engineering is a methodology that lets you manage an organization’s reputation, marketing and growth. It a process by which individuals select, organize and interpret the input from their senses to give meaning and order to the world around them. The phase of perception engineering this work is adopting is ‘image building for the purpose of obtaining a transformational identity, especially as it relates to the practice of doctrine of purification in Cherubim and Seraphim Church. Who are we? Is a responsive question that pumps up and appeals to people to jointly protect and redeem the image of their organization/institution. In the context of this work, perception engineering is that effectual method that will help the leadership of Cherubim and Seraphim achieve conscious efforts from their parishioners to embrace and strife for a transformed meaning, values and beliefs in the practice of ritual purification. Thereby, the problem of same belief and different ways of practice of the doctrine of purification would be resolved.

Ritual Cleansing is Cross- Cultural

Ritual Cleansing is not peculiar to a culture. People of different cultures all over the world engage in the act of ritual cleansing, especially water purification (Baba, 2017).

In ancient Babylon, ritual cleansing with the use of water was pronounced. Both their priests and all people must wash in river Euphrates and Tigris to be ceremonially clean and to be fit to enter the presence of their deity called 'Bel'. The Hittite also, believed that both the priests and the people must be purified using spiritual water before they appear before their gods. Also, the gods also must be cleansed (Watson, 2007). Gortze (nd) observed that any man or woman discovered to be unclean and spoke blasphemy must be brought before the gods for spiritual washing. With this understanding, in ancient Babylon, anyone under the spell or influence of evil could be clean and set free through the ritual of water. Before any such unclean could enter the sacred place of worship, he or she must be made clean. Watson (2017) revealed that, the Hittite's priests had a text containing instruction about purification for sacred things and services. As the ritual of washing continues, the priests would be saying as the river flows away with this water without looking back, let this person's evil, curse etc go without coming back. The Egyptians who were strategically located at the river Nile also engaged in the ritual of water purification.

Ritual Cleansing in the Old Testament

Through Biblical records, the ancient Israelites engaged ritual purification as means of cleansing from every form of uncleanness and healing from sicknesses. In Numbers 8:7, Exodus 29:4, and Lev. 8;6-10; 16:4, Priests of Yahweh were mandated to undergo ritual cleansing by water purification. Although, there are other means of purification in the Old Testament.

When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean (Lev 15:13). To purify them, do this: Sprinkle the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves (Num 8:7). Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water (Ex 29:4 NIV). Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water. He put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, clothed him with the robe and put the ephod on him. He also tied the ephod to him by its skillfully woven waistband; so it was fastened on him. He placed the breastpiece on him and put the Urim and Thummim in the breastpiece. Then he placed the turban on Aaron's head and set the gold plate, the sacred diadem, on the front of it, as the LORD commanded Moses. Then Moses took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and everything in it, and so consecrated them (Lev 8:6-10 NIV).

In Lev 14:2, diseased persons were to be delivered through ritual cleansing. In 2 kings 5:1-27- Naaman was healed of his disease through ritual bath in river Jordan.

Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents ^b of silver, six thousand shekels ^c of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read:

"With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy." As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'" So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel (2 Kings 5:1-15 NIV).

Likewise, a man with discharge should go through ritual purification. Lev. 15:13.

When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean 9 Lev 15:13 NIV). When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge (Lev 15:28-33). You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them. These are the regulations for a man with a discharge, for anyone made unclean by an emission of semen, for a woman in her monthly period, for a man or a woman with a discharge, and for a man who lies with a woman who is ceremonially unclean (Lev 15:28-33 NIV).

Shogunle and Olajide (2022) exegetically analyzing Leviticus 15:30 opined that impurity is removed from an individual by bathing and waiting until sun set since one cannot enter the sanctuary in a state of impurity. From this opinion, Old Testament ritual cleansing hosts vast importance to religious purification. It is a vocal point. Both major and minor impurity required bathing before entering the sanctuary (Baden, 2020). Purification from a prolong body discharge like menstruation or abnormal discharge required water and sacrifice, involving blood for adequate cleansing (Gane, 2012). In the Old Testament, the spirit of the Lord used to guide the priest and prophets in the choice of the means and place of the ritual cleansing. Baba (2017)

opined that ritual cleans is not new in the cultural and religious settings. People have used it often for spiritual cleansing, healing and deliverance.

Ritual Cleansing in Cherubim and Seraphim Church

Taking Cherubim and Seraphim Church as our template, independent churches in Africa have the doctrine of purification that compels members to do ritual cleansing. Wilson (2014) citing an interview conducted on Emmanuel Adegoke in 2013 stated that, Cherubim and Seraphim Church engage both natural and man-made object to help the pregnant women for safe delivery and find fortune for those seeking prosperity. The selective means of purification comes as directed by the divine message(s). Common among the elements for ritual cleansing in Cherubim and Seraphim include: water from streams, rain, well, tap, dew, and coconut. Others are: locally made sponge, egg laid by local hen, honey, assorted fruit and grain, and table salt. In critical evaluation, Baba (2017) citing Adogame (1999: 192-207) said:

The materiality of the belief of the C&S, TCLA, and CCC as was seen in their worship and moments of ritual performance outside worship demonstrated a blend of biblical belief and some elements of the traditional religion of the Yoruba. In the CCC, water, colour, and number symbolism and different ritual objects are significant aspects of ritual efficacy and materiality of faith.

The blend of both biblical belief and traditional religion of the Yorubas is sacrilegious. Furthermore in the interview conducted in Cherubim and Seraphim by Baba, it was said that the church through the secretary often warn the prophets to desist from the practice (Baba, 2017). Those who engage in such practices are entangled with their past. Asaju (2012) citing Bediako said, all Christian in all places and times do have a pre-Christian past connecting them with the present. This is to say that some traditional heritages are negatively influencing some priests/prophets in Cherubim and Seraphim towards syncretism.

Most African Indigenous churches are notable in helping Christianity meet the peculiarity of spiritual needs of Africans. Dopamu (2000) asserted that, Yoruba indigenous churches link all life's problems with spiritual powers. Their belief is that, behind sicknesses, poverty, disappointment is evil power. Ayegboyin (2011) and Awoniyi (2011) claimed that the major source of suffering, illness, and evil are bad spirits in Aladura churches. In addition, Walls (1997) said, in Africa, causes of illness are often connected with spiritual powers and social offences. In the words of Kolie (2015), causes of sickness are more important in African than their clinical symptoms. In the opinion of Stinton (2014), the belief is that central to the causes of sickness is the offence committed against God or evil spirit.

Significantly to note is that ritual purification with right elements is potent, especially when inspired by the spirit of God. As valuable and potent as they are, they cannot solve all problems. This reality is important to note in operating the doctrine of purification among the cherubim and seraphim Christians. Other Christian denominations should equally take note of this fact.

Disparity Ritual Cleansing in Cherubim and Seraphim Church Profit Making Enterprise

Different from what is obtainable in the Old Testament experiences of ritual cleansing, some prophets/priest collect money for ritual healing from people. Some clients that need to go

to the hospital for treatment will be tied down in the church just for the church or the prophet to benefit monetarily/materially.

Spiritual Sanctification for the Priest and People of God

Instead to lay emphasis on the soul purification of both the clergy and laity, the emphasis is always on using ritual cleansing as an antidote for illness and demonic torment.

Money Ritual as Substitute for Ritual Purification

In some occasions, emphasis is laid on ritual cleansing to effect economic fortune on persons (eto or iwe odo). Instead of natural elements, a special black soap mixed with some occult perfume to attract demons for assistance is used to wash peoples' head in order to bid goodbye to poverty.

Over-dependence to Solve Life's Problems

The belief that all problems could be solved using ritual cleans manifest in some Cherubim and Seraphim churches. Not all sickness required ritual cleans, many sicknesses require medical attention. Some financial difficulty require hard work and smart work.

Implications of Transformational Doctrine of Purification in Cherubim and Seraphim Church

Theological and Spiritual Implications

Ritual Cleansing is not Syncretism in its original sense. It is a biblical doctrine. The Cherubim and Seraphim church picked this doctrine from the bible, the Old Testament. There is connection between water and the spirit of the Lord as found in Gen 1:1. Also, there is connection between fire and blood with the spirit of the Lord. Therefore, Cherubim and Seraphim church should take serious caution not to allow anything associated with evil or occultic power in their practice of ritual cleansing. Ritual Cleansing is not demonic, pure water, with addition of nothing. Incantations and invocations of demons should not be allowed in the practice of ritual cleansing.

Public Image Implication

The practice of ritual purification should be the one that will attract good public image for cherubim and seraphim thereby aiding her reputation for evangelism and church growth. Such practices attached to ritual cleansing that are unwholesome should be discontinued.

Health Implication

The objects/elements of ritual purification should be pure and not contaminated. Ritual Cleansing should be hygienic for purpose of curbing communicable diseases. To avoid unhealthy odour, body purification is very important both to God and worshippers. The Cherubim and Seraphim should not be discouraged from the right use of ritual cleansing, especially water purification. Ritual cleansing must be harmless.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Ritual cleansing is universal and cross cultural. It is a major practice in the socio-religious settings for the purpose of healing, deliverance and purifications of the people of God. In the Old Testament, ritual cleansing is used to purify the priests and the congregation from

their uncleanness. Also, it was used for healing people of their diseases. In the Cherubim and Seraphim church, ritual cleansing is pronounced and it is used predominately for healing the sick. Critically looking at it, there is disparity in the Cherubim and Seraphim practice of ritual purification. Some prophets in Cherubim and Seraphim collect money or other gifts for ritual cleansing for healing. It was also observed that, the value of priests' purification for effective service in the sanctuary of God is undermined. The major emphasis is on healing and deliverance through the use of ritual cleansing.

There is an element of syncretism in the practice of ritual purification among some Cherubim and Seraphim church. This is because, ritual cleansing from the biblical point of view has no connection with evil spirits and incantation. Its focus is on revelative instructions from God. It has been discovered that, over emphasis on the potency of ritual cleansing as the means through which people can get out of their problems is real in Cherubim and Seraphim Church. But, it is also clear that there are sicknesses that need medical attention. There are predicaments that only need social adjustment. Over-emphasis on potency of ritual purification in solving all problems has affected many adherents to continue suffering when there are alternative possible solutions. Someone who needs medical attention that is detained for ritual purification instead to quickly go for medical care could die in the process. To effectively transform the practice of the doctrine of purification among the Cherubim and Seraphim church, perception engineering has the capacity and could help if appropriately used.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, this study makes the following recommendations:

- i. The leadership of Cherubim and Seraphim should strategically employ perception engineering as a tool to clear away the values and beliefs attached to some unwholesome aspects of the practice of ritual cleansing in the church. Perception engineering is quick, sharp, quiet, peaceful, and strong to such effect.
- ii. There is need for the church to re-conceptualize their doctrine of purification by engaging a holistic ritual cleansing that embraces body and soul purification of both clergy and laity.
- iii. Through Perception Engineering, Ritual Cleansing should be devoid of demonic invocations and incantations.
- iv. Cherubim and Seraphim church should consider the ultimate means of ritual purification instituted in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Biblically, this is more potent.
- v. Fervent Prayer should be revitalized among Cherubim and Seraphim churches. Moses Orimolade was notable for his use of prayer to heal and deliver.
- vi. Periodic seminars should be organized with the focus on giving proper orientation (Perception Engineering) to the clergy on proper and dynamic understanding of ritual purification.
- vii. Ritual Cleansing must not be monetized. This is a challenge to those in Cherubim and Seraphim churches who use to take material gains from their clients, they should desist. In the Bible, ritual purification did not attract monetary gain. The church should guide the process of ritual purification not to be abused.
- viii. Bathing for somebody's spouse is an abuse of ritual cleansing, Cherubim and Seraphim church should discourage bathing for matured persons of opposite sex. Biblical ethics disallow this practice.

- ix. Very important to note is that ritual cleansing should be administered by someone already cleaned. The prophets and priest of Cherubim and Seraphim should pursue holiness and sanctification if their administration of ritual cleansing will be potent. Ritual Cleansing is just a means of healing and deliverance, not only the means. Over-dependence should be avoided.

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