Sacred times, sacred spaces: A study of the relationship between Melville Koppies and the African Initiated Churches who pray there

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that

Sacred times, sacred spaces: A study of the relationship between Melville Koppies and the African Initiated Churches who pray there

is my own work. All the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

Barbara Shaw

Signature_________________________ Date______________

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the churches who pray on Melville Koppies and their members. Thank you for including me into your world and for being gracious and generous in sharing your knowledge with me. I will never forget you.

SUMMARY

Approximately 21 African Initiated Churches use the site of Melville Koppies West for prayer meetings on weekends. They have established themselves on the koppie over many years by creating prayer circles surrounded by stones as have many other church groups all over the city of Johannesburg. These churches are formed of people from different backgrounds who have come together in fellowship to practice their religion which guides them in the ways that they live their lives. This study researches sacred spaces and sacred times and their relationship to land in both the Old and the New Testaments. It investigates the issues of land in South Africa with its chequered history and how traditions are being created by these churches for future generations. The history and geography of the site is informed by an interview with the archaeologist Revil Mason and the Melville Koppies Management Committee through their website. The formation of African Initiated Churches in South Africa is explained through the history of missionary activity and colonial influences. This study uses qualitative methodology principles to interview the church groups to establish the importance of this land to them so that their voices can be heard if there is any danger that they may lose the use of this land for church services in the future.

Key words: Melville Koppies; African Initiated Churches; sacred space; apartheid; the sacred centre; land in the Old Testament; land in the New Testament; traditions; prayer meetings; prayer circles.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Revil Mason, an archaeologist who has uncovered many Iron Age sites across the Gauteng region, including Melville Koppies, told me that, when flying over Johannesburg in a helicopter, it is possible to see that the parks and open spaces are marked with circles which show the places where groups of people congregate and pray. These circles are not just marks of human activity, they are sometimes even formally concreted and arranged with stones on the perimeters, making them marks of human intervention on the landscape. These circles are used by members of many various African Initiated Churches as assembly points for prayer and fellowship and have become a feature of our cities and our parklands.

The ownership of land in South Africa has always been a sensitive issue. *Dasein*, Martin Heidegger's concept of person as "being there" in space and time, makes place part of the human experience and not just a geographical entity. Therefore, Heidegger's "being-in-the-world" includes the interaction with the land because

what constitutes the essence of the world of an individual "is the significance that accrues to things by their relatedness to human interests and possibilities" (Goosen 2001:52). This is significant when it includes places that are set apart for religious purposes. These places, such as church buildings, cathedrals, synagogues and circles in the land, make people who use them feel a sense of "rootedness", the opposite of feeling marooned in the world because, according to Catherine McCann, "Nonplace, in contradistinction to the concreteness of place, interferes with meaningful forms of social living and fails the human person in three ways: by not engaging with identity, relationships, or history" (McCann 2008:123).

1.2 PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

According to Peacock (2001:44), anthropologists praise the virtues of the small folk community while criticising the urban large-scale society. He explains that

> [a]nthropologists, along with others, have pointed to the alienation and despair in modern society, the dreary abode of the "homeless mind." These criticisms take many forms, but one is this, that the sheer technological sophistication of modern, urban society renders it a kind of natural system by default; it is organized technically, by means and ends, rather than culturally, by meaning, hence it is meaningless. In this sense, the exotic small community, lacking technology but more deeply grounded in culture, is more meaningful.

My hypothesis is that the western part of Melville Koppies is in the process of becoming a sacred space for the approximately twenty-one groups who have used the Melville Koppies as a site for prayer meetings since the 1970s. This land and its developing traditions, is becoming a place where people are overcoming their "rootlessness" and are creating meaning in a sacred space which can be passed on to future generations. Urban dwellers have left the rural life where people lived

with their families and their tribal members and have come to a place where they must form new roots. These prayer groups have been created in order to recover that lost sense of community. The people in these groups take care of each other even though they are from different backgrounds. In these prayer groups, a strong sense of belonging, which is so central in African spirituality, is thriving in a world which is, to them, culturally barren.

In order to prove my hypothesis, I made contact with "The Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies" and attended two meetings of their representatives. At the first meeting, on 16th August, 2009, I was introduced to the group by the CEO of the association, David Hirsch. I told them who I was and what I was studying. At the following meeting, on 11th October, 2009, I made a short presentation to them explaining that I wished to do my research with their prayer groups and requesting permission to do so. I explained that, amongst other things, I want to make people aware of the importance of maintaining this ground for future generations. To do that, I needed to talk to them to find out how they feel when they come onto this land so that it could be documented to prevent the land being taken for other purposes and to protect its sanctity.

I received a letter from the association confirming that they agreed that I may continue with my research under the aegis of UNISA, among the congregations who belong to the Association of African Independent Churches at Melville Koppies (see Appendix A).

1.3 BOUNDARIES OF THE STUDY

The subject of this thesis can be regarded as "elemental theory" because it deals with a specific community in a specific place (Bernard 1988:118-119). This does

not preclude the application of the theory discussed to other African Initiated Church communities who pray in groups on a particular site but, in this instance, the research has focused on the church groups who occupy Melville Koppies West on weekends for the purpose of communal prayer and companionship.

The scope of my research will therefore be limited to the time and space of Melville Koppies West and the interviews that I conduct with people who use this space for prayer meetings. The conclusions that I draw from this research may be applicable to other groups but Peacock (2001:95-96) warns about the dangers of particularising and generalising. He explains that fieldwork may lead the ethnographer to an involvement with a particular group which could limit his [sic] outlook to this early experience or, on the other hand, generalise by applying the principles learnt on this fieldwork to all similar groups. To avoid this, the ethnographer must communicate the truths of the people he studies to his readers with the understanding that comparisons are not possible because "[e]ach way of life, like each snowflake and each fingerprint, is unique – incomparable." It may be possible to find two groups that are similar but never two groups that are exactly alike.

The interviewees in this study have not been named because it would have made the interview difficult to control as most interviews were done with whole groups and were conducted in a conversational manner where several people may have spoken at the same time. The audio recordings and transcriptions are available for scrutiny if required.

Anderson (1983) says that imperial languages such as English are still vernaculars. He believes that language is not an instrument of exclusion because, in principle,

anybody is free to learn any language but South Africa has eleven official languages and therefore it is patently obvious that it would be impossible to learn them all. It must be noted that language may have inhibited some interviewees from understanding the aims of my research or from expressing themselves fully because of limited knowledge of English. Although I had a translator with me, most of the interviewees spoke English to me even though they may have found it difficult to convey nuances of the language.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Qualitative approach

There are many publications on the subject of methodology. I have chosen one by The National Science Foundation, Virginia, USA, called "User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations" on the website http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/start.htm because of its scope and accessibility. In the Introduction to this handbook, it states that it is "aimed at users who need practical rather than technically sophisticated advice about evaluation methodology". The website states that the "NSF encourages electronic dissemination of its documents" so I have presumed that permission is not required to use this document except for the acknowledgment of the source.

This thesis will use the qualitative approach which operates within a cultural context and emphasises the importance of understanding the context in which events and outcomes occur. This approach means that there is a unique process for each project because each project is unique, therefore

> [a]pplying guidelines requires judgment and creativity … Because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights,

> and capabilities of the researcher, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and style of the analyst. The human factor is the greatest strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis (Patton (1990) in Frechtling & Sharp 1997).

Qualitative research methodology therefore aims to provide information on what people say and how they behave (Steyn 2007:11). The advantages of qualitative research are that the researcher is able to obtain primary evidence directly from the source, that is, the people concerned with the subject of investigation and is therefore able to relate the data to the actual event where it was collected. This means that there is "a strong emphasis on the empirical dimension of research" which allows the researcher to be flexible and to use methods of data collection most appropriate for the situation (Steyn 2007:12).

The field which I will be studying consists of a complex social environment and to ignore the complexity of the background is to impoverish the evaluation of this significant religious context. The qualitative process will consist of interviews with the leaders of the prayer groups and/or with their members. This will depend on the personal choice of the leader and/or the group. Therefore, the qualitative approach to the collection of primary data will consist of:

- Contacting the leader of a prayer group and making an appointment to see him/her and/or the prayer group;
- Observation as an outside observer (to minimise intrusion) of the physical environment and the social environment (how the members of the group relate to each other) by field notes;

- The recording of the interview with a voice recorder and a camera after obtaining the permission of the group/leader;
- An unstructured interview at a time and place convenient to the group/leader in order to encourage free and open responses so that the words of the interviewee are used to describe his/her experience;
- The presence of a translator to minimise misunderstandings.

Ellen (1984:100) explains that it is the interaction between the ethnographer and the informants that determines the quality of the data because fieldwork is subjective and dependent on the relationship between the ethnographer and his/her informants. Just as the ethnographer has a previous life-history and culture, so the informants may also have their own ideas about who the ethnographer is and what his/her motives may be, "[i]n other words, they have imposed *their* meanings on the situation" (Ellen 1984:101).

I acknowledge that, as a researcher, my own perceptions and beliefs will affect, to some extent, the data that I collect and analyse simply because it is bound by a complex interaction between myself and the "other" that is always being renegotiated (Ellen 1984:101). It is also clear that I cannot escape the opinion that "all knowledge is 'constructed' by observers who are the product of traditions, beliefs, and the social and political environment within which they operate" (Frechtling & Sharp 1997). I will therefore attempt to ask open-ended questions that do not lead to a particular answer but rather let the interviewee lead the conversation. Another potential problem is that of language and to this end, I will attempt to use the services of an interpreter who will be briefed on the questions that will be asked.

The qualitative approach to the analysis of the primary data will consist of:

- Acknowledging the different demographics of the participants;
- Reducing the data in order to select, focus, simplify and abstract the data collected from the interviews. This may be a difficult task because, to the researcher, the words that make up qualitative analysis "represent real people, places, and events … a reality that can make cutting any of it quite painful. But the acid test has to be the relevance of the particular data for answering particular questions" (Frechtling & Sharp 1997);
- Identifying the patterns and common themes in the interviews, because "[m]uch of qualitative analysis … is structured by … the 'method of constant comparison,' an intellectually disciplined process of comparing and contrasting across instances to establish significant patterns, then further questioning and refinement of these patterns as part of an ongoing analytic process" (Frechtling & Sharp 1997). This process involves the reading and rereading of the text until the categories become clear. The categories may be *preset* which means that they conform to information that the researcher wants to know or they may be *emergent* which are themes or subjects that recur in the data. While preset themes are identified before the analysis is done, emergent themes are defined after the data has been considered. This is an iterative approach in which the categories change as new themes are identified (Frechtling & Sharp 1997).

- Data display which involves showing the reduced data in such a way that conclusions can be drawn. This may include text, diagrams, flowcharts or any other method that allows the analyst to "discern systematic patterns and interrelationships". This can reveal higher order categories or themes in which to sort the data (Frechtling & Sharp 1997). Within these higher order themes, Frechtling and Sharp (1997) recommend that the analyst be aware of patterns of inter-connection within the data that can be regarded as exceptions. These unexpected patterns allow the analyst to discover information that can be uncovered and used to enrich the data analysis but, they say, "[t]o do this requires an ability to listen for, and be receptive to, surprises" that can lead to new insights and challenges to allow for even deeper analysis and verification of conclusions;

- Using a combination of deductive and inductive analysis whilst remaining open to the possibility of finding new meanings in the richness of the qualitative process which is one of the greatest strengths of the qualitative approach;

- Drawing conclusions from the data reduction and the data display. It is necessary to step back to consider whether the data answers the questions at hand. In order to draw conclusions, the data must be visited and revisited so that conclusions are verified by the validation of the data so that they are "credible, defensible, warranted, and able to withstand alternative explanations" (Frechtling & Sharp 1997).

- Identifying any areas that require further investigation.

1.4.2 Participant observation

The issue of fieldwork in an anthropological sense is one of the most important strategies for collecting data. In the process of data collection, the experience of the researcher may be just as important as the information he/she is recording and observing. This is called "participant observation" and is regarded by Peacock (2001:70) as a rite of passage which may have far-reaching emotional and perceptual effects on the researcher. This may be similar to a religious conversion, "[t]he language is different; the convert tells of himself [sic] and God, the anthropologist in his ethnography tells about people; but reporting the way 'they are' often reveals much about the way 'I am'" (Peacock 2001:71).

Participant observation, one of the hallmarks of anthropology, describes how the researcher, while observing the subject of study, takes part in the activities of the subject of study. This is where the interviewer must be accepted into the community in which he/she is working and is welcomed, winning trust, respect and friendship (Ellen 1984:102-103). The participant observer is fully engaged in experiencing the project setting while, at the same time, trying to understand that setting through personal experience, observations, and interactions with other participants (Frechtling & Sharp 1997). It also affects the way in which interviews are conducted and teaches the researcher the cultural parameters of the group, what is important to it, the hierarchy, manners and taboos that are in place.

1.4.3 The interviews

A non-structured method of interviewing was used which was specifically tailored to the way in which the groups and their leaders led it. It took the form of a friendly exchange rather than a formal interview in order to put the group at ease

and to avoid formal interrogation methods. With the non-structured method, interviewers seek to encourage free and open responses which may lead the interview onto unexpected paths. These in-depth interviews encourage "the capturing of respondents' perceptions in their own words, a very desirable strategy in qualitative data collection" (Frechtling & Sharp 1997).

I assured the representatives at the initial meeting that I had with the group of leaders that they could withdraw at any time and that I would keep their names confidential. People seemed more relaxed when they were anonymous and it might be that they cannot then be held responsible for something that they said that may be at odds with the group. Also, the names were superfluous and I did not see the reason for collecting them and then trying to fit names to the people talking in the interviews. This would have been difficult as sometimes people were interrupted or deferred to others while they were speaking.

Figure 1: Circles visible on Melville Koppies West
Source: Google Earth

1.4.4 Human geography

According to Steyn (2007:14), because anthropology has an interdisciplinary approach, there is a relationship between geography and anthropology because, while geography's main focus is on space and the environment, the holistic perspective of anthropology includes the issue of people's use and interpretation of space. While physical geography is involved with the surface of the earth, including its topography, rocks and soil, flora and fauna, hydrology and climate, the subject of human geography covers the topics relating to human interaction with the environment which includes settlements, economic and ritual activities and movement and transportation of goods and ideas.

The use of participant observation as a tool can provide details about the physical environment where the interviews take place, the human and social environment which gives information about how the actors interact and behave towards each other, the nonverbal communication such as the way people dress, the way they physically space themselves during the interviews and the way that they arrange themselves in their physical setting (Frechtling & Sharp 1997).

1.4.5 Exposé ethnography

In the discussion regarding the effects of apartheid on the study of anthropology in South Africa, Gordon and Spiegel (1993:88) describe how international condemnation of the apartheid regime led to "an outlook that South African society was unique and that social anthropology therefore had to break ground of its own". Amongst the positive consequences of this outlook was the "development of an exposé tradition with roots in liberal scholarship and using

ethnography to focus on people made invisible by apartheid" (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:89). They continue by saying that

> the strength of South African anthropology has been its ability to document, expose, and challenge the social contradictions and political-cultural myths so important in the making of South African society, both for the powerful and for the powerless…. It has also helped humanize the vulnerable people at the bottom of society (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:92).

The system of apartheid not only divided the country by race, it also divided families and communities with population shifts that "enshrined labor migration between the Bantustan labor reservoirs and homelands, putting millions of 'temporary workers' and 'relocated people' into circulation in the mid-1980s" (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:92). Many studies have been done regarding the state of families and communities who became the recipients of migrant labour wages, the migrant labour hostels, the changes in child rearing due to absent parents and the "relict domestic units" created by the system of apartheid (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:93) but "a major lacuna is that most of these studies have failed to ask how people themselves understand the diversity surrounding them and how they construct hierarchies based on that diversity" (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:94). Gordon and Spiegel (1993:94-95) discuss the role of kinship "as a mode of coping with vulnerability" and how, in densely resettled relocation areas where people have to adapt to urban conditions, people have formed kinship relationships, such as Zulu speakers who use Zionism "as a mechanism for urban adjustment". They also say:

> With the collapse of apartheid, epitomised by the breakdown of influx control and an estimated two million people living in informal settlements on the margins of major urban areas, studies of urban adaptation have begun to appear (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:94).

This thesis aims to highlight these issues using Melville Koppies as a microcosm of the creation of kinship relationships through the medium of religious belief which are used "as a mode of coping with vulnerability" and provide succour to those who have lost these bonds because of apartheid. The land on which these meetings take place has been understood to "embody values that inform relations between generations, genders, and social classes" (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:97).

The use of exposé ethnography in this thesis will uncover the ways that people have adapted to the residual detritus of the apartheid system. This has been informed by the use of primary evidence obtained by field work with the prayer groups concerned. The tradition of exposé ethnography has been used in "scholarly and disciplined exposés of apartheid" because it deals with the interface between two opposing forces such as people and the state or the coloniser and the colonised in order to "unveil ambiguity and show the complexity and flux in culture and society" (Gordon & Spiegel 1993:100).

1.5 MELVILLE KOPPIES SITE DESCRIPTION

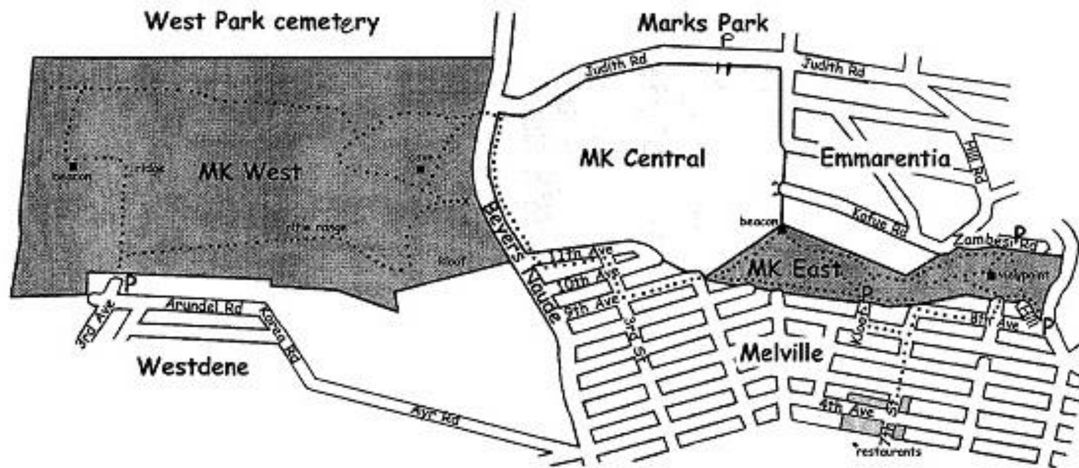

Figure 2: Map of Melville Koppies Nature Reserve
Source: Melville Koppies Management Committee

According to the Melville Koppies website (www.mk.org.za):

> Melville Koppies is a Nature Reserve and a Johannesburg City Heritage Site. It is the last conserved remnant of Johannesburg's ridges as they were before the discovery of gold in 1886. Its geology goes back three billion years. Stone tools show that Early Stone Age man camped here as long as 500 000 years ago. There is a Late Stone Age living floor. Within the last 1 000 years Iron Age immigrants arrived, and remains of their kraal walls can be found on the northern slopes. In 1963 an iron-smelting furnace was excavated and can be seen today.

Melville Koppies is divided into three parts, east, central and west. The whole reserve is 150 hectares and the western side which is used by the church groups is the biggest part at 100 hectares. The east and the central parts are restricted areas and are only open to the public on days when guides are available to take groups of walkers on hikes through the nature reserve (www.mk.org.za).

Figure 3: Melville Koppies Nature Reserve
Source: Google Earth

Melville Koppies West is a long narrow piece of land bordering on the suburb of Westdene on the south, the Westpark Cemetery on the north, Beyers Naude Drive on the east and the suburb of Triomf (formerly Sophiatown) on the western side. The ground rises from the river bed to a rocky outcrop with grasses and brush growing on its slopes. It is criss-crossed by pathways because it is open to the public from dawn to dusk and serves as a short-cut to the neighbouring suburbs. There are many prayer circles on the site, some are concreted and some are just cleared sites. Most of them have stones placed on the perimeters to demarcate the site from the surrounding veld. Each circle has an entrance which is marked in various ways, some are more obvious and some are apparently randomly chosen from the stones surrounding the site. These entrances are carefully adhered to and are the only acceptable ways to enter the circles.

Due to the diligent attention given to the reserve by the management committee and the staff who look after the land, invader plants have been eradicated and only indigenous plants remain. This is a remarkable achievement that shows the wide range of grasses, flowers and trees that must have covered the area before the city was built.

1.5.1 Geology

The geology of Melville Koppies is made up of the Kaapvaal craton, one of the earliest known pieces of the earth's crust. It contains the sediments of the Witwatersrand Supergroup which lie on the basement rocks. The northern slopes are composed of decomposed mineral-rich granodiorite basement, while the ridges and southern part of the reserve consist of the quartzites and shales of the Supergroup. These rocks decompose to a thin, acidic soil which is reflected by the sparse grasses, Proteas and other hardy shrubs which grow there. From the various different rock types and formations, the Melville Koppies represents, in microcosm, most of the features of the Witwatersrand Supergroup (www.mk.org.za).

1.5.2 Flora

Flowers appear on the site in spring and early summer, between September and November but they are not dependent on rain because the warming of the soil stimulates them to flower. After the spring flowers, there is a display of wild flowers throughout the summer, among them are wild gladiolus and orchids. The *Protea caffra* or “Common sugarbush” is widespread, thriving on the acidic soil of the Koppies and resistant to our harsh frosts (www.mk.org.za).

Trees on the Melville Koppies grow on the northern slopes where there is protection from the frost. Among the dominant trees are the *Acacia robusta*, the *Acacia caffra*, the *Euclea crispa* (Blue Guarrie), the *Celtis africana*, and the *Brachylaena rotundata* (Mountain Silver-oak) (www.mk.org.za).

1.5.3 Grasses

The Melville Koppies lies in the grassland biome. This is a "sourveld" area which means that the grasses are mostly perennial and die back in winter. The dead stems are mostly composed of silica and cellulose, not palatable or nourishing to grazers and are therefore regarded as "sour" (www.mk.org.za).

There are 56 recorded species of grass on the koppies, including the earliest summer grasses, "Caterpillar Grass" (*Harpochloa falx*) and "Black seed Grass" (*Allotopsis semiolata*). There are two grazing grasses, *Themeda triandra*, "*Rooigrass*" in Afrikaans or "Red Grass" in English and *Panicum maximum*, called "Guinea Grass" which grows in shady areas. On Melville Koppies West there are areas of thatching grass on places which were used as a shooting range and an "old road reserve". There is also a bronze-coloured grass called *Monocymbium ceresiiforme*, Boat Grass which flowers at the end of summer (www.mk.org.za).

These grassy sections need to be burned in order to clear out the dead grass and to encourage new growth. These fires are carefully controlled to prevent damage to neighbouring suburbs.

1.5.4 Fauna

The MKMC has a list of 185 birds seen on or above the Melville Koppies. Bird ringing takes place in this nature reserve on a regular basis (www.mk.org.za).

Animals that have been seen on Melville Koppies include the African Civet, the Lesser Spotted Genet, and the Slender Mongoose, the Yellow Mongoose, the African Hedgehog, the Mole Rat, the Rock Elephant Shrew, the Scrub Hare, Jameson's Red Rock Rabbit, the Vlei Rat and several types of mice. Snakes and tortoises have also been found (www.mk.org.za).

1.6 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis will consist of the following chapters:

1. Introduction.

   This chapter will spell out the purposes and boundaries of the study, describe the methodology used, the site description and the literature review.
2. Religion and Land: Relationships with land in African Traditional Religion and the monotheistic faiths.

   This chapter investigates the issue of land in the Bible as well as the problems of politics and land in South Africa.
3. The significance of the centre.

   This chapter explains how people respond to sacred centres and how they affected life in the ancient past and still continue to do so.
4. African Spiritual churches: A soft place to fall.

   This chapter describes the rise of African Initiated Churches with an emphasis on Melville Koppies as a microcosm of Pentecostal churches.

5. Melville Koppies: Evidence of previous ritual activity.
   This chapter deals with the past use of Melville Koppies West as a site of ritual activity and other sites of ritual activities.
6. Creating new traditions: Historical and current evidence of ritual activity and the passing on of this knowledge to the future generations.
   This chapter investigates the ways that traditions are invented and the effect of colonialism on social institutions.
7. Report of the interviews held: Evidence of the sacred status of Melville Koppies to the prayer groups who utilise this land for ritual purposes.
   The way is paved for the interviews to take place with the churches and there is reflection on the interviews held.
8. Analysis of primary sources.
   Themes are gleaned from the interviews using data reduction and these themes are then analysed in two sections, the Sacred and the Pragmatic.
9. Conclusion.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

Christianity in South Africa: A political, social and cultural history (1999) edited by Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport proved an invaluable source of information in a field that is not as comprehensively covered by other texts. It contains essays by some of the leading writers and researchers such as Allan H. Anderson, Joy Brain, and John W. de Gruchy. It covers the history of Christianity in South Africa from the time of the missionaries and Dutch rule to the present with essays covering Christianity and colonialism, the Afrikaner churches, the African Initiated churches, the gold mining compounds, gender issues and the creative arts. The book aims to draw “one of the world’s great traditions of belief and morality” into

the mainstream while questioning the assumptions of “the twin pivots of obsessionist slogans and economic greed” (Elphick & Davenport 1999:xiii).

Sacred journeys are covered by Alan Morinis whose book *Sacred journeys: The anthropology of pilgrimage* (1992) has a foreword by Victor Turner. In the preface, Morinis described pilgrimage as much more than an examination of people on the move but is “paradigmatic and paradoxical human quest, both inward and outward” (1992:ix). This book provided the expertise of Erik Cohen’s essay, “Pilgrimage and tourism” and Colin Turnbull’s remarkable story of his own experience of the sacred whilst on a pilgrimage in India, called “Postscript: Anthropology as pilgrimage, anthropologist as pilgrim”. This book covers a broad spectrum of theoretical issues and case studies about sacred journeys that occur around the world in places such as Canada, the Caribbean and West Africa. The origin of this book was a multi-disciplinary conference called “Pilgrimage: The human quest” which took place at the University of Pittsburgh in May 1981 and included papers from many experts such as Morinis whose doctoral thesis from Oxford University focused on the contemporary practices and beliefs surrounding pilgrimage in India (1992:276). Of particular note is the introduction by Morinis called “The territory of the anthropology of pilgrimage” (1992:1) which gives a historical and theoretical foundation of the subject of pilgrimage.

Mircea Eliade’s book *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion* (1959) gave the inspiration for this thesis. His words, though written almost a half-century ago, never fail to move me because his knowledge is both wide and profound and washes over me like music. Writing about religion is a very subjective exercise and I read Eliade’s carefully constructed prose, not only for its factual content, but for

its insight into the depth while acknowledging that his ideas regarding "primitive" people are outdated.

The anthropologists John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, both professors of anthropology and African and African American Studies at Harvard University[1] and previously at the University of Chicago, are world-renowned writers in the field of South African social and cultural transformation processes and postcolonial politics. Their article, "Christianity and colonialism in South Africa" (1986) provided an in-depth study of the effects of Protestant evangelism and colonialism on the Tswana from the perspective of a systematic analysis of the evangelical encounter that "go beyond detailed, if often sensitive, chronicles of events and actions" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:1). The article explains the complex historical problem of the role of missionaries and the effect of Western capitalist culture in Africa which "gave rise to various discourses of protest and resistance" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:1).

James L. Peacock concentrates on the foci of culture, fieldwork and relevance as applied in anthropology. His book, *The anthropological lens: Harsh light, soft focus* (2001) used in *Qualitative research methodology: the anthropological strategy* (Steyn 2007), provides an elementary level explanation of anthropological theory because "[m]eaning at a certain level is given by substantive synthesis" which, Peacock explains, provides a picture of human existence (Peacock 2001:vii). While weaving these facts into a coherent synthesis, it becomes necessary to grasp the

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[1] aaas.fas.harvard.edu/directory/faculty/john-comaroff and aaas.fas.harvard.edu/directory/faculty/jean-comaroff

assumptions behind them through many different lenses, or perspectives. Peacock explains complex theories in simple language with many examples from everyday life and his own fieldwork experiences to make this book accessible to all levels of study.

The technical aspect is mainly informed by Frechtling and Sharp's "User-Friendly Handbook for Mixed Method Evaluations" (1997) of the National Science Foundation, appointed by the president of the United States and confirmed by the Senate. It provides funding for federal research projects (www.nsf.gov). The handbook which provides clear guidance on how to apply the principles of qualitative research methodology is aimed at those who need practical advice about evaluation methodology.[2] It explains the reasoning behind evaluations, the evaluations themselves and a summative evaluation which addresses the outcome of the project and acknowledges that, in the final analysis, data collection "operates within a cultural context and is affected to some extent by the perceptions and beliefs of investigators and data collectors" (Frechtling & Sharp 1997). The handbook uses a hypothetical project to give practical examples of methodology and evaluation. It explains observation techniques, the recording of observation data, the protocol which helps the observer to identify the setting, identify the people, document the actions, assess the quality of the intervention and to be alert to unanticipated events. It also defines the role of the observer and explains how to conduct interviews. Finally, it explains how to interpret the data

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[2] www.nsf.gov/pubs/1997/nsf97153/start.htm

collected to identify meaningful patterns or themes and discusses the problems associated with the analysis of data.

Phyllis M. Martin and Patrick O'Meara's *Africa* (1977 and 1995) provided guidance regarding the historical aspects of this thesis. In Martin and O'Meara, the main sources of information are Brooks (1977) on "European relations with Africa before 1870", Gellar (1995) on "The Colonial Era" and Keim (1995) on "Africa and Europe before 1900".

George E. Brooks was a historian from Indiana University and a leading authority on pre-twentieth century commerce in the coastal regions of Africa. Brooks (1977) sets the tone of the time by painting a picture of the contact between foreigners from Europe and Africans during the Partition of Africa in the late nineteenth century. He uses three themes: firstly, the early trading of luxury items which brought a wide selection of social and cultural influences to Africa such as food crops, endemic diseases and religious practices, secondly, the affect of European commerce and cultural influences, including the slave trade on African societies and, thirdly, the production of crops for export which, with the slave trade, made Africa dependent on world markets (Brooks 1977:114-115).

Sheldon Gellar, Visiting Scholar at the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis at Indiana University, has many years experience working in Africa, particularly in Senegal, and served as Democracy advisor to the USAID/Senegal mission in 1998-1999. His essay, "The Colonial Era" describes the lead-up to the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, the evolutionary theories of Darwin, Spencer, Morgan and Marx which entrenched racial theories and the "civilizing mission" of the European nations (Gellar 1995:136, 138). He describes African resistance to

colonialism, colonial social structures, economics, government and other forms of political repression.

Curtis A. Keim is professor of history and political science at Moravian College, Philadelphia, whose areas of research are conflict and conflict resolution in modern Africa. His essay focuses on the slave trade and its effects on West and Central Africa. He discusses the end of the slave trade in the nineteenth century, the dramatic rise in commodity trade between Europe and Africa and expeditions to Africa by explorers and missionaries. He describes the position in Southern Africa and the conflict between the British and the Boers which deeply disrupted life among the Africans, the discovery of gold and the 1913 Natives Land Act which culminated in reserves for black people (Keim 1995:43).

The political aspect of this thesis involved one of the seminal five volumes published by the Surplus People Project called *Forced removals in South Africa, Volume 5: The Transvaal* (1983). This was written to publicise and support communities to resist the violence of forced removals (www.spp.org.za). It documents the government's policies and the subsequent widespread forced removal of people to reserves and then to "Bantustans" which means that many people were moved more than once until they were completely excluded from economic and social developments. The authorities made these decisions which were based on what the authorities deemed were the places of origin of the people. The strategy of these moves was to

> keep employed urban blacks materially satisfied, try to buy off puppet leaders to give them a show of political participation in the bantustans, evict and deport those who become politically active, or who grow too old or disabled to work in urban areas. Lastly, lower the costs of social

infrastructure by getting rid of the rural unemployed, disabled and old multitudes to neighbouring States, and create buffer zones to ward off the guerrilla army which finds fertile hearts and minds in the bantustans (Surplus People Project 1983:4).

CHAPTER 2: RELIGION AND LAND IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND THE MONOTHEISTIC FAITHS

This chapter will discuss the role of land in religious beliefs. The roots of African Spiritual churches like the Shembe and the churches which practice on Melville Koppies West, lie in both the traditions of the monotheistic faiths and in the remnants of African Traditional religion which remain part of the dual religious systems of African Initiated Churches. I will discuss the various theories around the subject of land and landscape, the role of land in African Traditional Religion, and then I will briefly discuss the history of land issues in Africa, particularly in South Africa. The importance of land in the Old Testament and the traditions of the New Testament will be examined in order to give gravitas to my argument that Melville Koppies is in the process of becoming a sacred space for the African Initiated Church groups who use it regularly as a site for ritual activity.

2.1 SPACE AS PLACE

A phenomenological analysis, according to Tilley (2004:1) is

> the attempt to describe the objects of consciousness in the manner in which they are presented to consciousness. It attempts to reveal the world as it is actually experienced directly by a subject as opposed to how we might theoretically assume it to be.

This means that we may have preconceived ideas about the world that influence how we experience it. A phenomenological analysis which is "a way of Being in the world and a way of thinking in it", re-describes the world to give fresh insights on our experience of the world around us (Tilley 2004:1). Because we are actually physically in the world, we are able to experience the world from a particular viewpoint, in a particular context, time and place because "we live in that world and are intertwined with it. We are part of it, and it is part of us. Our bodily Being-in-the-world provides the fundamental ground, or starting point, for our description of it" (Tilley 2004:2).

We create our own consciousness because we have our own individual bodies and are the authors of our own experiences in the world. This teaches us what is close, what is far, what is above, what is below and what the limits of our vision are. This allows us to understand what space, place and landscape are. It also allows us to sense ourselves, other objects and people around us (Tilley 2004:3-4). The way that the body is connected to the world is the way that we sense our relationships to the things around us which are always changing as we move around.

Specifically dealing with art and the South African landscape, Delmont and Dubow (1995:10) explain that engaging with landscape is a way of re-connecting the processes of our history with those of our social geographies because

> consciousness and experience are not only based on a time-line made by the events of history but are actively produced by the spaces in which we think, the spaces through which we move, the shifting network of sites, boundaries and partitions which mark our social environment and so mark our social being … It is a space lived, not one merely viewed. It is a context created, not simply one recorded.

The relationship between the landscapes in this exhibition and the actual physical land becomes the interweaving of objective place with subjective emplacement which concurs with the theory of phenomenology as described above.

Cilliers (2008:12 footnote 9) in his discussion of space where dialogue or an encounter with biblical texts can take place, explains that space, as described above, is not only land but can be places for "boundary-crossing dialogue and reciprocal enrichment, which should eventually lead to … worship services where meaning is discovered and celebrated in community" as the prayer groups do on Melville Koppies as others have done throughout the ages.

An opposite view is that of Gualtieri who, in seeking the meaning of geography in religions, looks for landscape features that have been incorporated into religious symbol systems and the existential connections between landscape and personal faith (Gualtieri 1983:161). In other words, Gualtieri, instead of positioning humans in the world to experience it without preconceived ideas, asks the questions: "How has the natural environment been altered in conformity with human orientations and priorities? What monuments have been erected, pilgrimage roads built,

gardens planted, rivers dammed, hills deforested, and fields eroded by the impress of human concerns and actions?”. He is looking for the impact of humans on the landscape and, in contrast, how the landscape transforms consciousness by having an effect on the imagination and, in so doing, contributes to the formation of a religious world-view (Gualtieri 1983:163). In order to do this, Gualtieri concentrates on mountains as symbols of ultimacy (Gualtieri 1983:164).

Walter Brueggemann’s work on the land as the central theme of biblical faith which, he believes, is the site within the spatial connections of human life where we most deeply encounter the meaning of existence:

> Place is space which has historical meanings, where some things have happened which are now remembered and which provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken which have established identity, defined vocation and envisioned destiny. Place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued. … It is a declaration that our humanness cannot be found in escape, detachment, absence of commitment, and undefined freedom … Whereas pursuit of space may be a flight from history, a yearning for a place is a decision to enter history with an identifiable people in an identifiable pilgrimage (1977:5).

In this case, the identifiable people are the communities who pray on Melville Koppies West and the identifiable pilgrimage is their interaction with the land “where some things have happened” and are still happening in ways that come from history while making new history.

2.2 LAND AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

Mbiti (1969:1) argued that the basis of African Traditional Religion was the communal life in a small scale society with a common language and value system. The symbiosis of religion and society made them inseparable because religion is regarded as the strongest element in the African traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the lives of the people concerned (Mbiti 1969:1). Although Mbiti may be generalising, this may have been applicable in the past as Hammond-Tooke (1993:215) explained that:

> [w]e have also seen that, despite differences in detail, all Southern Bantu had beliefs and institutions that were variations on a basic pattern: the differences were minor and essentially those of emphasis, deriving from both historical and environmental factors.

Hammond-Tooke (1993:11) believed that even though the apartheid governments tried to emphasise the differences between the various black groups, “there is a sense in which all these peoples had a common culture” represented by the similarities in their initiation ceremonies. Having said this, Hammond-Tooke (1993:13) acknowledged that there are differences which are mainly based on language and the adaptation to the environment even though this may be a “gross oversimplification of an extremely complex historical process”.

In the past, communities of varying sizes were delimited by geographical areas. These communities had a common history which “added to a sense of common origin, unity, oneness and togetherness” (Mbiti 1969:101-103). Renate Sundermeier’s view agrees with that of Mbiti when she says that, in traditional African societies, “the unity of the territory matched the actual or perceived unity

of the people”. The pattern of life was based on uniformity and strict group cohesion ruled in matters of morality, conduct and religion (Renate Sundermeier in Theo Sundermeier 1998:225). Each group had its own creation myths which were based on its relationship with the land on which it lived.

According to Hammond-Tooke (1993:150), these creation myths were simple stories. The Nguni and the Tsonga believed that their groups were started by the creator breaking a bed of reeds, the south Sotho also believed that they came from a bed of reeds, specifically at Ntsuanatsati in the Free State but they also believed that the first men (sic) came from a hole in the ground. The Xhosa believed that all people and animals came out of a cavern “in a land in which the sun rises” while the Tswana, Tsonga and Lovedu had special places where god’s footprints were to be seen on certain rocks.

For all groups, the ancestors had special places which were associated with them. These places could be in the cattle byres, they could be “altars” hung with entrails of the sacrifices made to them, shrines of mud or stones containing the bones of the sacrificed animals or special trees such as those of the Tsonga which were placed on the right-hand side of the village entrance (Hammond-Tooke 1993:155-156).

People regarded those already passed on and those not yet born as part of the group. Food and libation were offered as “tokens of the fellowship, communion, remembrance, respect and hospitality” to the dead who were still regarded as part of the family group to which they belonged in their physical lives (Mbiti 1969:107). The gravesites of the dead became shrines because this was the point where the living and the dead met and where the living could contact the dead. Hammond-

Tooke described how ancestor rituals among the Pedi involved the sacrifice of a goat whose bones were then placed on the grave of the ancestor (Hammond-Tooke 1993:167). This ground therefore became consecrated because, as Mbiti says, "the ground has a religious charge, mystically uniting past and present generations" (1969:160).

In his discussion of African Traditional Religion, Sundermeier (1998:26) describes the importance of land in these traditional societies by saying:

> The land has a mythical quality. It is sanctified as the ancestors' place of origin, by their great deeds, their history and their graves. Its dignity is that of the indigenous inhabitants … Whoever reduces the lands, endangers their life. Land was never private property in Africa. It always belonged to the community … The desire for a home, a place where you belong is regarded as the strongest unalterable force of humankind. "Home" does not simply mean land as a source of livelihood, it means organised space, separation from the unorganised, from the chaos of the steppe or the primeval forest.

Traditional African societies have a different concept of time and space from Western societies. According to Mbiti (1969:27), in African society, space and time are closely linked because it is the *content* of space and time which is important. Mbiti describes this time dimension as having "its own short future, a dynamic present, and an experienced past" (1969:22). This means that continuity and unity are emphasised and individuality and uniqueness are regarded as inappropriate in the group dynamic. What is physically near: their ancestors' resting places and their communal lands, and what is historically near: memories of the departed, experiences and events, are what matters most to people. The contents of time are therefore the events which take place in the "now", the present, in the near and far past and will take place in the near future.

The land, like everything else, including the ancestors, belongs not to one person but to the group and it is the group which is the prerequisite to life. This is expressed in the age-old proverb "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" which Cilliers (2008:1) translates as "a person is a person through other persons". This means that the individual does not and cannot exist alone, s/he exists within the framework of the contemporary community, its geographical space, its ancestors and its history.

Cilliers describes spaces which have become meeting points for interculturality where people from different cultures can meet on the basis of equality and mutual respect, "a sharing with the intention to empower within a relationship of reciprocity" where "processes of inter-facing, inter-forming and inter-flow take place" (2008:14-15).

Africans, like all humans, are tied to the land but Africans are also tied to the group because it provides them with their history, evidence of their roots and of their connection with their ancestors. If they are separated from these ties, it is believed that this will bring disaster to family and community life, as Mbiti (1969:27) says:

> To remove Africans by force from their land is an act of such great injustice that no foreigner can fathom it. Even when people voluntarily leave their homes in the countryside and go to live or work in the cities, there is a fundamental severing of ties which cannot be repaired and which often creates psychological problems with which urban life cannot as yet cope.

Removal by force is therefore more than just the loss of land, it is the loss of the relationship with the land and with others who are also forcibly removed from it. The next section deals with the intensely debated issue of land in South Africa and the effects of the movement of people from their land.

2.3 BACKGROUND TO LAND ISSUES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The history of colonialism and apartheid has made us aware of the role that the "ownership" of land plays in our society with the restitution of land rights to disenfranchised people being part of the current government's responsibility. This section will give a brief background of colonialism and apartheid because these two ideologies have had harsh influences on the problems of land in South Africa which have affected people living on the land in traditional lifestyles and also the ways in which they practice their religion.

2.3.1 Colonialism

The final conquest and colonialisation of Africa by European imperialists took place in the late 19th century when the continent was divided up by political leaders at the Berlin Conference of 1885. The compelling motives for colonialisation included the development of technology in Europe which increased capitalist demands for raw materials, markets for consumption of products and the need for new areas for investment. Both religious and secular ideologies perceived Africans as inferior and advocated Europe's "civilizing mission" in Africa. European governments became convinced that colonial conquest was in the interests of both parties and the partition of Africa went ahead (Keim 1995:132; Mbiti 1969:102).

The colonial division of Africa was brutal for the African people because it disregarded natural land divisions that made up the traditional lands and forced people into "nations" irregardless of their affiliations. These borders were simply drawn on a map by the colonisers and imposed by the colonial forces in the late 19th century. The borders resulted in tragic situations where many communities

were split and fell under different colonial systems (Mbiti 1969:102). Delmont and Dubow (1995:11) speak of the colonial landscape as

> part of that massive act of land theft, that chronicle of dispossession … the experience of a new land, a confrontation with the unfamiliar … a space not yet made over for transported identity … For conquest is as much a cognitive victory as it is a military one … the process of translating alien territory into a space for the self.

The conquest period proved to be a shattering experience for many. Although colonial rule led to the abolition of slavery, it also meant the end of African political, economic and cultural autonomy, the transformation of all into colonial subjects with few political and civil rights and the decline and belittling of traditional authority and values (Gellar 1995:138). Colonialism was essentially a system of political, economic and cultural domination forcibly imposed by a technologically advanced foreign minority on an indigenous majority. As a system, colonialisation justified itself through ideologies which asserted the superiority of the coloniser and the inferiority of the colonised. The colonisers thought that they represented the most advanced human forms of organisation and that it was the right and the duty of "higher" civilizations to conquer "lower" civilizations to bring progress and prosperity to all parts of the world. This was reinforced by racial theories which asserted the biological superiority of the "white race" (Gellar 1995:140-41).

2.3.2 Missionary activity

Colonialism also had a profound impact on traditional belief systems of the people in Africa. As the slave trade wound down at the beginning of the nineteenth

century, Christian missionary endeavour escalated bringing with it a concomitant growth in commerce, as David Livingstone said:

> By encouraging the native propensity for trade, the advantages that might be derived in a commercial point of view are incalculable; nor should we lose sight of the inestimable blessings it is in our power to bestow upon the unenlightened African, by giving him the light of Christianity. Those two pioneers of civilization – Christianity and commerce – should ever be inseparable (quoted in Brooks 1977:126).

This quote clearly explains the attitude of the colonisers of that time who evangelised Africans who were then expected to dress and behave in the manner of Europeans "as an outward manifestation of their conversion to Christianity" (Brooks 1977:127). The breakdown in structure that colonialism caused became a breeding ground for missionaries who wanted to "organise and discipline" African communities whilst collaborating with the colonial authorities. As commerce grew and Africans began to realise that there was no turning back, they began to see the value of the education that missionaries provided as it was the entry point that they wanted into the world of commerce that the colonialists brought (Brooks 1977:128).

As the social structures broke down and the traditional authorities were undermined by the colonisers, religion in Africa succumbed to Christian conversions as missionaries spread out into the southern African interior. Elphick describes the pervasive influence of Christianity on South African history by relating the development of Christianity from the Dutch Reformed Church which embraced the belief that "people's salvation depended, not on their ancestry, but on a personal conversion to Jesus Christ" (1999:2-3). As the number of different churches grew in southern Africa, the missionary zeal intensified starting with the

Khoikhoi, moving through the Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi, Sotho and the Tswana (Elphick 1999:3).

Sundermeier describes how the belief in ancestors which forms the core of African Religion so completely contradicted the missionary teachings that the missionaries "utterly opposed it, because they saw in it the most fundamental threat to belief in God and a flagrant denial of the first commandment" (1998:120). Mageza explains how African Religion is fraught with colonialist concepts of "primal", "tribal" and "magic" used to denigrate the religion in the "prejudice of nineteenth century scholarship". This, he believes, is part of a colonialist mentality (1997:19-20) that seeks to demonstrate the inferiority of African Religion and therefore the superiority of Christianity even though it practiced evangelisation "by means of cunning and deceit, not to mention violence and outright war" (Mageza 1997:23).

As Christianity took hold and land ownership became the tool that the colonialists and politicians used to control the population in Africa, the noose was slowly tightening in South Africa.

2.3.3 South African politics

The Natives Land Act of 1913 conformed to the segregation proposals of the Lagden Commission (1903-1905) which was convened to make recommendations for "a common *native policy*" for the Union of South Africa which was declared on 31st May 1910. The Act covered the ownership, leasing, purchasing and occupation of land in the Union of South Africa for both whites and blacks while defining the nature of black tenancy, reprehensibly, as "servants". It also demarcated "native areas" where only blacks were allowed to acquire land and stipulated that blacks were not permitted to own or lease land from white people. This contentious Act

had far-reaching consequences for the country as it had two objectives, firstly, to prevent purchases of land by blacks in "white" areas which was regarded as "a threat to white supremacy on the land" and, secondly, to keep black people as a source of cheap labour. Spies describes the Act as "a major step towards large-scale territorial segregation" which would ultimately lead to the Bantustan policy during the apartheid era (Spies 1993:44, 58-59, 78) which was designed to prevent black people from owning land and from moving around the country freely. This was to prevent large numbers of people coming to the cities in search of work and to keep the black population undereducated and therefore only able to do menial labour.

The Native Land and Trust Act of 1936 was promulgated after 20 years of debate around the 1913 Natives Land Act. It declared that a special fund be set up for "Africans" to buy land allocated to them which would only be purchased "on a tribal basis". In addition, it appointed "native commissioners" to control the number of labour tenants employed by farmers and entrenched the taxation of farmers who employed registered squatters who were people who were moved from company and government lands. This tax was, in effect, a fine levied on land owners who allowed these people to live on their land and who paid for this in produce or rentals (Surplus People Project 1983:347-348). This was the beginning of "black spots", the forerunners of the "homelands" or "bantustans", places where "the State's disorganisation strategies have been extreme, vicious and direct" (Surplus People Project 1983:5). These disorganisation strategies were ways for the state to separate people and destroy their economic, political and ideological bonds by the "processes of disorganisation, and subsequent

reorganisation of the oppressed/dominated classes" into structures that benefit the ruling classes (Surplus People Project 1983:6).

The Nationalist government of South Africa shaped the cornerstone of apartheid with the Group Areas Act of 1950 which entrenched the compulsory separation of residential areas. This act cut across all traditional property rights and led to the eviction of many people of colour from homes that they had lived in for generations. In the process of this cruel act, long-standing communities were dislocated or destroyed "in the cause of the apartheid logic" (Scher 1993:323).

The apartheid government of South Africa regarded urban Africans as "temporary sojourners" and tried to prevent the migration of black people to the urban areas. It believed that blacks residing in urban areas, even for generations, belonged in the reserves set up for them (Scher 1993:345-347). These reserves were simply the government, advised by H.F. Verwoerd as minister of "native" affairs, imposing its will on black people, creating artificial boundaries and "Bantu authorities" without considering the cultural boundaries between people created over time. Verwoerd believed that the "black nations" would be so grateful for what the whites bestowed on them by creating the Bantustans that he made the shocking statement that "[i]t must be realised once and for all that the development in the Bantu areas will begin with what they themselves know and with what is their own, and it will grow and be adapted to the demands of modern civilisation by the Bantu themselves with whatever aid the white can give" (Verwoerd quoted[3] in Scher 1993:357-358).

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[3] House of Assembly Debates, 20 May 1959, col 6214-6241.

The Bantustan policy, described by Verwoerd above, separated people into ethnic groups and allocated reserves to these groups. People were moved and removed from "white" urban areas and from rural areas to their ethnic reserves. This was described by the Surplus People Project as "[p]eople who have lived peacefully together for 150 years, people who have intermarried and who speak many languages, [who] are being forcibly driven apart" (1983:113).

The system of labour tenancy was limited and finally abolished in 1967 under government notice 1335 in Gazette 1830 as farmers put pressure on the government. This caused many people to relocate from the farms where they had lived and worked because they were then regarded as "squatters" who were evicted and forced to move to the Bantustans where they tried to find land on which to subsist (Surplus People Project 1983:120).

At the same time, Influx Control affected many people who had to get a "pass" in order to work in an urban area. This meant that they were legally unable to live in these areas and, according to the Surplus People Project (1983:121), by 1983, when it was published, over four million people had already been arrested and sent to trial under pass laws.

In 1966, John Vorster was elected unopposed as prime minister. In comparison to his predecessor, Dr Verwoerd, Vorster was regarded as a *verligte* which was a liberal, left wing who "favoured a broad, open, and tolerant Afrikaner nationalism" (Liebenberg 1993:421-422). In his attempt to free the country from isolation caused by the apartheid policies, Vorster attracted criticism from the right wing Afrikaners, the press and Dr A.P. Treurnicht who suggested that the *verligtes* had

deviated from "the Lord and His Word" (Liebenberg 1993:425). But the wheels had begun to turn, albeit slowly.

From 1968, the South African government relaxed the laws that prevented white people from setting up businesses in the homelands. As industrial development began to open up and the homelands acquired partial self-governing status from the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act of 1971, Vorster announced in 1972 that any Bantustan could become independent "in the normal sense of the word" (Vorster quoted[4] in Liebenberg 1993:435). By the end of 1978, most of the homelands had moved towards independence but the fact that none of the independent homelands were recognised by other countries showed that South Africa's policy of separate development was offensive to them (Liebenberg 1993:435).

The deadly and explosive riots that started on 16th June 1976 in Soweto were not only about the issue of being taught in Afrikaans, they were also about the political powerlessness, economic hardship and social insecurity of black people and the government's refusal to acknowledge this (Liebenberg 1993:461-462). Over the next few months, many buildings were burnt down and many people violently lost their lives. One of the results of the riots was that Soweto obtained a degree of self-government and the Community Councils Act of 1977 replaced the Bantu Affairs Administration Boards even though it was largely unpopular.

This short summary of the history of land relating to black people in South Africa stands in sharp contrast to the way that traditional societies viewed their land. By

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[4] House of Assembly Debates, 19 April 1972, col 5280.

the time that apartheid in South Africa was at its zenith, black people in the rural areas and in urban areas were dispossessed people who had lost their land and were either living in the city away from their ancestral lands or were forced to live under the rule of government appointed "Bantu authorities" who, the government believed, represented "the natural Native democracy" (Scher 1993:347).

2.4 LAND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The creation narrative in Genesis sets the scene for the subject of land and its geographical content, such as mountains, rivers, deserts and valleys, and the relationship between the land and humanity in the Old Testament. According to the writer of Genesis, the monotheistic God created the land and as the tale moves from the creation of light and darkness through water and land, the stars, the heavens and animals, it reaches the apotheosis of creation on the earth which is man and then woman. After eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God curses the ground (Genesis 3:17) and expels them from the garden of Eden, changing the relationship between humans and the land forever.

This relationship is made clearer when chapter 6 of Genesis tells of what happens when wickedness covers the earth, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Genesis 6:11-12), as if it were the ground itself that was tainted by the evil that humans had done. The flood, God's punishment for the wickedness on the earth, covered the land, submerging the mountains and killing all living things. After the flood ended, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4).

In Genesis chapter 13, we are introduced to the concept of the Promised Land:

> [14] And the LORD said unto Abram … Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever (Gen 13:14-15).

Kaiser says that, in the Old Testament, "few issues are as important as that of the promise of the land to the patriarchs and the nation Israel" and that the word *eretz*, ארץ which means "land", could be regarded as the central idea of the entire canon (1981:302). Kaiser discusses whether the land was part of the original covenant to the patriarchs but Genesis 15:18 clearly states "That day Yahweh made a covenant with Abram in these terms: 'To your descendants I give this country, from the River of Egypt to the Great River, the River Euphrates …'" (New Jerusalem Bible). He describes the solemnity of the covenant, the sacrifices required from Abram and how God sent a sign, a smoking furnace and a flaming torch (Kaiser 1981:303), to pass between the sacrificed animals to confirm His covenant, which included the land, with Abram. This dramatic and serious moment sealed the everlasting promise that God made regarding the Promised Land and the seed of Abram which would cover the land.

The promise of the land to Israel is referred to eighteen times in the Book of Deuteronomy and the land is described variously as "a good land" filled with brooks, springs, wheat, barley, grapes, vines, figs, pomegranates, olives, honey, iron and copper (Kaiser 1981:305). On the other hand, Kaiser (1981:308) describes the loss of land by saying:

> The history and theology of the land divides right at this point. In the succinct vocabulary of Brueggemann, the Jordan is "the juncture between two histories." In the one "history is one of *landlessness on the way to the land*" and in the other it is "*landed Israel in the process of losing the land*."

> Thus the *sine qua non* for continued enjoyment of life in the land is obedience that springs from a genuine love and fear of God. Failure to obey could lead to war, calamity, loss of the land, or death itself (Deuteronomy 4:26).

Kaiser is dealing here with the loss of land and the return to the land which, he says, is both historical and theological. That the land was given to the Israelites by God does not seem to be the question; that is the history of the land. The theological question therefore is whether the people of Israel were obedient to God. If they were, the historical fact of the land as God's gift remained unaltered. However, whether the coming generations would enjoy the benefits of the land, depended on whether they were obedient and were fulfilling their part of the Covenant.

In testing Abraham's faithfulness to the monotheistic God and therefore to Abraham's right to the Covenant of the land for his descendants, God sent Abraham twice (Gen 12:1; 22:2) to mountains without telling Abraham where he was going. Abraham obeyed without question even though the first instruction included the possibility that Abraham would have to sacrifice his only son.

In Genesis 12, God tells Abram to leave his country, his family and his father's house and go to a place "which I shall show you" (Gen 12:1). Abram obeyed, not knowing where he was being sent (cf. Gen 22.2). He climbed the mountainous area east of Bethel and settled there. He built an altar to God "and invoked the name of Yahweh" (Gen 12:8).

The word Beth-el, בית אל, means "house of God". Bethel was also the place where Jacob had a dream about the ladder to heaven and God's promises that He would keep him safe "wherever you go, and bring you back to this country" (Gen 28:15).

Jacob then made a pillar from a stone and poured oil over it, naming the place Bethel and promising that if God takes care of him on his journey, "then Yahweh shall be my God" (Gen 28:21). It was also in Bethel where God gave Jacob the name of Israel, ישראל. Just as Abram did, Jacob raised a monument at the spot where he had spoken to him, a standing-stone, on which he made a libation and poured oil. Jacob named the place Bethel, the place where God had spoken to him (Gen 35:14-15).

Moriah, the second place, is evidence of the use of high places in the Bible for ritual use. In the Book of Genesis, Abraham is instructed by God to take his son Isaac to a mountain "which I shall point out to you" (Gen 22:2) where Abraham is to sacrifice his only son to prove that he fears God and is obedient to His will. This holy act starts "[w]hen they arrived at the place which God had indicated to him" (Gen 22:9). After the angel of Yahweh stopped Abraham killing his son, Abraham saw a ram caught in a bush which he believed was sent by God. Abraham then called this place "Yahweh provides", יהוה יראה, the place where God tested him and where he prevailed.

Moriah is also mentioned in 2 Chronicles 3:1 as the high place where Solomon built the magnificent temple according to his plan and installed the Ark of the Covenant "in the Holy of Holies, under the wings of the winged creatures; for they spread their wings over the place where the ark stood, forming a canopy over the ark and its shafts" (2 Chronicles 5:7-8). When the priests came out of the temple, the ceremony that took place on that mountain was befitting of the sanctity of this place:

> [11] Now when the priests came out of the Holy Place … [12] and all the levitical singers … dressed in linen, were standing to the east of the altar with

> cymbals, lyres and harps and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing the trumpets, [13] and the harmony between trumpeters and singers was such that only one melody could be heard as they praised and gave thanks to Yahweh—and the singing began, to the accompaniment of trumpets, cymbals and musical instruments, and they praised Yahweh "for he is good, for his faithful love is everlasting"—then the Temple was filled with the cloud of the glory of Yahweh (2 Chronicles 5:11-13).

In addition to Mount Moriah, there are other high places which are accorded holy status. Among these are Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia (1901-1906, sv 'Sinai, Mount'), there are many views that regard Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb as the same place and many views that make them distinctly different places. They may be "two eminences belonging to the same range" or they may be two names referring to the cosmos, meaning "moon" and "sun". Rabbinical literature considers these two names to refer to the same mountain and lists seven other names given by different texts. What is not in contention is that both Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb were synonymous with holiness, "Sinai and Moriah are the two sacred mountains, through whose virtue the world exists" (1901-1906, sv "Sinai, Mount"). Even before the Law was given to Moses, Mount Sinai was one of the sacred places where the local Semitic divinities had been worshiped, as God said to Moses from the burning bush

> "Come no nearer," he said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. I am the God of your ancestors," he said, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this Moses covered his face, for he was afraid to look at God (Exodus 3:5-6).

This was the start of the great event that was to occur — the giving of the Ten Commandments. Three days after the Israelites reached the mountain of Sinai, on the day of the giving of the Law, there were peals of thunder, flashes of lightening,

dense clouds and the loud trumpet blast. “Mount Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke, because Yahweh had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke rose like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain shook violently. Louder and louder grew the trumpeting” (Exodus 19:18-19). Then God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses who gave them to the people. Moses approached the dark cloud and God gave him the Laws. Again, Moses went up the mountain which was covered with clouds and stayed there for forty days and nights. In that time, God gave Moses the instructions for building the temple. After giving the instructions to keep the Sabbath, God gave Moses “the two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18).

This momentous event in the book of Exodus happened after the Jews left Egypt. Before they left, Yahweh gave instructions for the Passover to “be commemorated by you, and you must keep it as a feast in Yahweh’s honour. You must keep it as a feast-day for all generations; this is a decree for all time” (Exodus 12:14). The ceremony which happens in Jewish homes to commemorate the Passover always ends with the wish that those present would meet “next year in Jerusalem”. Just like the Passover ceremony decreed by Yahweh, this wish has been passed down through generations of religious Jews who have, through the ages, regarded Jerusalem as the *axis mundi*, the centre of their world. Psalm 125:3 (King James Version) describes this city, which is regarded as holy by all three monotheistic faiths, by exclaiming: “Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains as God surrounds his people forever”. This beautiful verse compares the land around the holy city to the arms of God, protecting and loving and accepting the land and its people forever through good times and through bad, “forever”.

Philip Sheldrake says that the human sense of place is a critical theological and spiritual issue because the world around us is not just raw data but something we experience "as bearing meaning. Indeed, the very notion of the world is a human construct. We do not dwell in pure nature but in 'the realm of mediated meaning'" (2001:1-3). The meaning attributed to Jerusalem by the Jews (and the other two monotheistic faiths, for that matter) is therefore mediated by the particular experiences and history of the Jews. Taking the Jews away from Jerusalem would therefore have the opposite effect on the nation, instead of breaking them apart and assimilating them into the conquering society, whether it be Babylon or Egypt, the memory of Jerusalem, their holy city and their love for it, would bind them together forever. This was so in the time of the Psalms and it is so today as Jews all over the world recite their wish to gather "next year in Jerusalem".

Jewish synagogues to this day have a place which is called a *bimah*. This is a raised platform where the *chazan* (the cantor) stands whilst leading the prayers and reading the Torah. The archaeologist William Dever connects this word loosely with the Old Testament's use of the word as describing the pagan Canaanite cultic use of "heights" for ritualistic use. He explains that these connections to pre-Yahwistic religion were condemned by early Old Testament references such as 1 Kings 12:31 and 2 Chronicles 11:15. This was because of their connections with idol-worship, divination and sorcery but that the use of the word changed and therefore he regarded the use of the word *bimah* as signifying "a specific public cult-place, usually open-air and typically prominently located" (Dever 2005:92-93).

He describes how later in the Old Testament, for instance, Saul's visit in 1 Samuel 9:12-14 and also David's visit to the high place at Gibeon to offer sacrifices "according to all that is written in the law of the LORD which he commanded

Israel" (1 Chronicles 16:39-40), that these "high places" became more acceptable (Dever 2005:94-95). Dever rationalises this acceptance of "high places" by Deuteronomic writers by quoting 1 Kings 3:2 which says that the people sacrificed in these "high places" because the temple had not yet been built (2005:95).

Sheldrake, when discussing the vital connection between place, memory and human identity, said that "[t]he concept of place refers not simply to geographical location but to a dialectical relationship between environment and human narrative" (2001:1). The Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem has, from the time of the Old Testament up to today, served as the basis for this dialectical relationship by providing both the environment and the narrative for an on-going dialogue which tells the story of a place of both victory and defeat, happiness and sadness, good and evil, honour and disgrace, unity and division. The destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was a dark and cruel time for the Israelites. According to the prophet Jeremiah, the destruction of the first Temple was a punishment from God who said

> Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bride-groom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate (Jeremiah 8:34).

This event, tragic as it was, once again served as a focus for the Jews. This is reflected in the prayer called the *Amidah* which is recited in the original language of the time of the Temple by Jews around the world. This prayer is regarded as the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy and is said by religious Jews three times each day and on other special occasions whilst facing towards Jerusalem at the exact

times that it was said in the Temple as a substitute for the sacrifices made in the Temple. The prayer ends with a wish to rebuild the Temple:

> May it be your will, O my God and God of my fathers, that the Temple be rebuilt speedily in our days, and give us our portion in your Torah, and there we will worship you with reverence as in ancient days and former years. And may the Mincha offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasing to God, as in ancient days and former years.[5]

The fact that the Temple has been destroyed does not stop it from being a sacred place. The remnant of the Herodian retaining wall that once enclosed and supported the Second Temple, called The Western Wall (הכתל המערבי) is regarded as part of the original Temple buildings and is the holiest of Jewish sites. It has also been called the "Wailing Wall" because, for centuries, Jews have gathered there to lament the loss of their temple.[6]

The land plays a pivotal role throughout the Old Testament from the drama of the creation narratives, the concept of "The Promised Land", the land of milk and honey, the land of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through to the festivals of the land such as Succoth and Tu B'Shevat. The Jews' torturous journeys across the land, their battles in the defence of the land in the name of their God, and their huge and highly detailed construction projects to build the temple, the house of the Lord, in which to house the ark of the covenant, the Holy of Holies, "the most sacred object in preexilic Hebrew ritual and worship" (Blaiklock & Harrison 1983, sv "Ark of the covenant", "Temple") offers a person a place where

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[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amidah

[6] http://www.sacred-destinations.com/israel/jerusalem-western-wall

he or she is “called upon to imitate God the Creator and to live in obedience as a child of God” (Marchadour & Neuhaus 2007:10). And that place is, more often than not, in a high place, on a mountain.

Even during two millennia of exile since the destruction of the Temple, Jewish religious tradition has generated a strong sense of unity which has existed throughout its history. From the very beginning, this unity was identified with the concept of ancestral Biblical land or, to use the traditional religious and modern Hebrew term, *Eretz Yisrael*. This land was seen as a place of destiny, a national home and refuge, and there was always hope for some form of redemption and return. Land in Jewish life and praxis was meant to show and engender continuity and therefore the land of Israel and its sacred spaces were always seen as central to Jewish life, then, as it is now.

2.5 LAND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The role of land in the New Testament has a completely different connotation to that of land in the Old Testament because “the whole tenor of the New Testament message and revelation of God's saving purpose amongst His people points in a different direction”[7]. Christians such as Catherine McCann believe that, with an attitude of openness, the sacred can be found anywhere, in unexpected places because

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[7] David Devenish “The Land in the New Testament” http://www.christianzionism.org/biblesays/devenish01.asp

> [t]his wonder is perceived more easily within Christianity's understanding of the incarnation through which the ordinary is no longer at all what it appears. Everything, every place carries within it the potential for sacredness because the holy has once and for all become ordinary in Jesus (2008:133).

This means that sacred places for Christians are not necessarily consecrated (although they may be) but are places where a sense of the sacred has been experienced. That sense can be a hierophany or it can simply be a place where a Christian has found peace, beauty, healing or "most of all when it fosters a responsible growth in values, and especially that of love" (McCann 2008:134).

The reason that the particularity of place is not deemed important in Christianity is because, in the apostolic era, there was an urgent need to move away from places that were known to preach the gospel. Jesus said "… after the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This meant that the disciples were to move from their homes into the entire inhabited world, the *oikumene*, and, in doing so, they would make the journey, the experience of being in transit, the central metaphor for their encounters with God. The disciples often had hierophanies or conversion experiences whilst on their way between places, for instance on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) or Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). "In a sense, it seems that the marginal ground *between* fixed places is where God is most often encountered" (Sheldrake 2001:34).

Time in the Old Testament was "linear" in that the events recorded happened one after the other and land was used by different generations. Its provenance was woven through the narratives of the Jews and their Covenant with their God.

Because the New Testament is a collection of testimonies of faith made up of stories, parables and lessons and not a linear historical narrative, it must therefore be treated differently. In this case, rather than dealing with the sanctity of the land as expressed in the Old Testament, I shall, firstly, deal with the Kingdom of God, then I will discuss the many times that testimonies describe how Jesus climbed mountains in his short ministry and, finally, I will describe the phenomenon of pilgrimage as a liminal experience.

2.5.1 The Kingdom of God

Brueggemann (1977:170) believes that the promise of the Kingdom of God in the New Testament denotes “the end of one age, one kingdom, one political-historical arrangement and the announcement of a new age, a new kingdom, a new political-historical arrangement”. This stresses the difference between the two arrangements, the image of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world. The theme of “kingdom”, according to Brueggemann (1977:171), although spiritualised, never loses the nuance of the physical realm, that is, the land, because “[h]owever rich and complex the imagery may be in its various articulations, the coming of Jesus is understood with reference to new land arrangements”. He explains that the new arrangement means that those who have the land must lose it and those who do not have it, now have a promise of land. He uses the Song of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) to show parallels in the Old Testament, when the landless were given land and the landed had the land taken from them. The land for the landless, in the context of the Kingdom of God, is recognised in the person of Jesus and his preaching evidenced in the rejection of the world of grasping and the emphasis on the world of gifts.

In order to illustrate this argument that the word and person of Jesus as the re-arranger of the land in the new age, Brueggemann gives several examples in the New Testament which include: the narrative of the woman who was a sinner in Luke 7:36-50 which "contrasts the landed and the landless, the Pharisee and the nameless woman" (1977:172), the parable of the rich man and Lazarus where the situations of the rich and the poor are inverted after death, the rich man who seemed to possess all being in agony in Hades while the poor man was being comforted.

Jesus' promises of restoration, healing and cleansing show that Jesus is acting for those dispossessed and that his ministry aims to restore those rejected to their rightful possession (Brueggemann 1977:174). In doing so, Jesus becomes a threat to the old arrangements and those who do not want things to change and therefore becomes a threat to landholders (land here understood both in literal and symbolic senses). This mobilises his opponents, leading to his destruction simply because those who have most to lose are those who possess the most (Brueggemann 1977:174). And in this context, they are the inhabitants and conquerors of the land of Israel.

The land being given to Jesus' disciples is given in a dialectic way because "the way to land is by loss. The way to lose land is to grasp it. The way to life in the land is by death" (Brueggemann 1977:175). The whole dialectic is encompassed in the person of Jesus and the New Testament because

> when the people are landless, the promise comes; but when the land is secured, it seduces and the people are turned toward loss. Thus the proclamation of Jesus is about graspers losing and those open to gifts as receiving (Brueggemann 1977:175).

2.5.2 Matthew 4:8 – The devil takes Jesus to a very high mountain

According to Weber (2000:56), Matthew's entire gospel is about training his disciples, "who were marked for leadership in the kingdom". But first, God tested Jesus' morals in order to demonstrate just how powerful the Son of God was, "even in the face of the devil himself" (Weber 2000:39). The devil, firstly, asked Jesus to turn stones into loaves, then he dared Jesus to throw himself from the parapet of the Temple but Jesus declined both of these. Finally, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain where Jesus could see "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour" and offered them to Jesus in return for his homage (Matthew 4:8). This final test on a mountain may have been the hardest of all for Jesus to resist not because he would rule the world (because that had already been part of God's plan) but because "Satan's offer would allow him to rule the earth without going through the sacrifice of the cross … a kingdom and all its glory, minus the suffering" (Weber 2000:40).

2.5.3 Matthew 5 – The Sermon on the Mount

As Jesus went through Galilee preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God and healing the sick, a great crowd began to follow him (Matthew 4:23-25). He went onto the mountain with his disciples and sat down "to speak directly to his own … to instruct his disciples" (Weber 2000:56). The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five sermons given by Jesus and includes the Beatitudes, or blessings that will give Christians entry to the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 5:13-14, Jesus used metaphors of the land to refer to those listening to him as "salt for the earth" and "light for the world", using the example of a city that is built on a hilltop that cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14). He said that Christians must not solemnly swear

on heaven "since that is God's throne", nor on the earth "since that is his footstool", nor on Jerusalem "since that is the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:34-35), meaning, presumably, that it is the abode of God.

In Matthew 7:24, Jesus once again uses metaphors of the land, describing one who listens to him and acts on his words as a man who builds his house on a rock so that when "rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house" (Matthew 7:25), the house withstood it all. On the other hand, one who listens but does not act on his words, is a foolish person who builds his house on sand and when the weather became turbulent, the house fell "and what a fall it had!" (Matthew 7:26-27).

2.5.4 Matthew 17, Mark 9:2, Luke 9:28 – The Transfiguration

The Transfiguration, described in three of the Gospels, Matthew 17, Mark 9:2-9 and Luke 9:28-36, took place on an unnamed high mountain. Lee (2005:2) says that, in order to understand the concept of the Transfiguration, we must realise that it is not disconnected from the body of Jesus and from ordinary human experience. She explains that it is Jesus' transfigured body "that discloses the face of God and the hope of God's future" to a mystified group of disciples as well as an unbelieving world. The Transfiguration is as much about Jesus' transformation as it is about the disciples' transformation and that of the world. She explains that the transfiguration on the mountain is

> the meeting place between human beings and God, between the temporal and the eternal, between past, present and future … The attachment between them, at every point, is Jesus himself ... dressed in the garments of divine light yet clothed also in the garb of creation. He is the point of intersection, the bridge between heaven and earth, the source of hope,

> bringing to birth – through incarnation, death and resurrection – God's eschatological future (Lee 2005:2).

2.5.5 Mark 3:13, Luke 6:12 – The Apostles appointed

Once more, Jesus, after healing many, went up onto a mountain to avoid the crowds that were following him and to deliver a message to his disciples. The message was to appoint twelve men to be his "companions" (NJB). These men are named and were chosen by Jesus to go out into the world to proclaim the message and to drive out devils (Mark 3:13-19).

2.5.6 The Mount of Olives

The Mount of Olives is a hill which stands on the eastern side of the City of Jerusalem. In biblical times it was thickly covered with olive groves and other trees and on its slopes is a very large Jewish cemetery which has been in use from as early as the First Temple Period and is still in use today. Many well-known figures such as the prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are buried there. It is considered an honour to be buried in this cemetery because it is believed that this is the place where the resurrection will begin when the Messiah comes (www.goisrael.com).

The story of the Mount of Olives weaves in and out of both the Old and the New Testaments but takes a greater role in the events of Jesus' life on earth just as Sinai took a greater role in the story of the Israelites. I have included this short section on the Old Testament in the manner of "Chapter 5: Shrines and places of power: Evidence of previous ritual activity on Melville Koppies West" because it establishes the site as being of ritual importance before Jesus used it just as Melville Koppies West is regarded by Mason as the site of ritual activity before the

current churches were established there. Important events from both the Old and New Testaments that took place on this mountain are:

2.5.6.1 2 Samuel 15:30-32 – King David's sorrow

During the time of King David's reign, his son, Absalom, conspired to overthrow his father and won the people over to his side. King David, afraid of what his son might do, took flight followed by his retinue and his army. As they left to go into the wilderness, all were weeping aloud (2 Samuel 15:23). The king stood in the Kidron Valley at the foot of the Mount of Olives and, like a mourner,

> David then made his way up the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went, his head covered and his feet bare. And all the people with him had their heads covered and made their way up, weeping as they went (2 Samuel 15:30).

This large emotional group climbed the Mount of Olives and reached the summit, the holy place "where God is worshipped" (2 Samuel 15:32). As King David, weeping and mourning for what he had left behind and for what he was to face, passed the summit, he was met by a retainer, Ziba, who brought donkeys for the king to ride and supplies to feed the soldiers in the desert. It was as if the king was rewarded for making such a grave decision and his people were rewarded for their loyalty.

2.5.6.2 2 Kings 23:12-14 – King Josiah destroys the cult objects

In 1 Kings 11:6-13, it tells of King Solomon who built a "high place" on the Mount of Olives for himself and all his foreign wives to worship gods other than Yahweh. This desecration caused Yahweh to be angry with Solomon because Yahweh had twice appeared to King Solomon forbidding him to follow other gods. Because of

King Solomon's betrayal, God promised that he would punish the next generation of King Solomon by splitting the kingdom in two after Solomon's death, leaving one tribe for Solomon's son.

The narrative continues many years later when King Josiah "bound himself by the covenant before Yahweh, to follow Yahweh, to keep his commandments, decrees and laws with all his heart and soul, and to carry out the terms of the covenant as written in this book" (2 Kings 22:3). To show his commitment to the covenant, King Josiah ordered all cult objects burnt, pulled down houses, killed the priests and destroyed altars to other gods in high places all over the country, throwing the rubble and ashes into the Kidron Valley at the bottom of the Mount of Olives. To make sure that these sites were never again used for sacred purposes, King Josiah took the bones of the dead and put them there making them unsuitable for any other worship (2 Kings 23:4-14).

2.5.6.3 Zechariah 14:1-15 – Yahweh takes control

Chapter 14 of the book of Zechariah describes the final days when Jerusalem will be destroyed and half the people living there will be sent into exile. Then Yahweh will go into battle against the conquerors of the city. On that day, Yahweh will take control by standing on the Mount of Olives which will split in half, forming a huge valley. The image of the "king of the whole world" (Zechariah 14:9) towering over the city from the Mount of Olives while mountains split as if there was an earthquake, darkness falls, cold and frost cover the earth, waters flow towards the east and the west, shows the power of Yahweh who shall be, from that time on, "the one and only and his name the one name" (Zechariah 14:9).

2.5.6.4 Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11 and Luke 19:28-38 – The procession into Jerusalem

The Mount of Olives enters the New Testament with a description of the procession from Bethpage, the "house of green figs", on the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem. The procession started off with people shouting and the citizens of Jerusalem in confusion. The scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem was described in all three gospels as jubilant but showing the humility of Jesus as he rode a donkey into the city, not as a conqueror but as the son of God who wished, not for riches, but for the salvation of mankind. Matthew 21:8-11 gives a vivid description of this tumultuous event:

> [8]Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road, while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in his path. [9]The crowds who went in front of him and those who followed were all shouting: Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens! [10]And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil as people asked, "Who is this?" [11]and the crowds answered, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee." (Matthew 21:8-11).

2.5.6.5 Matthew 24:1-3, Mark 13:1-4 – The Olivet Prophecy

Once again, the Mount of Olives plays a part in the revelations of Jesus. While leaving the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus predicted the fall of the temple: "You see all these? In truth I tell you, not a single stone here will be left on another: everything will be pulled down." (Matthew 24:2). He then retired to the Mount of Olives where his disciples asked him to tell them when the temple will be destroyed, what the signs of Jesus' coming back to earth will be and the signs of the end of the world.

Then follows the famous Olivet prophecy, named after the Mount of Olives. It is a long sermon which explains the signs that will herald the end of times. These include wars between nations, famines and earthquakes. People who believe in Jesus will be hated, tortured and killed; there will be betrayal and false prophets, who will deceive many,

> [13] but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved. [14] This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed to the whole world as evidence to the nations. And then the end will come. (Matthew 24:7-14).

2.5.6.6 Matthew 26:30-35, Mark 14:26-31 – Jesus' last night

At the Passover meal on the night of his arrest, Jesus told the disciples about his coming betrayal, crucifixion and death and identified Judas as the betrayer. He also gave instructions for what has become known as the Eucharist, the breaking of the bread and the wine which became the body and the blood of Christ. After the meal, Jesus and his disciples went once more to the Mount of Olives. There Jesus described that during the coming night he would be abandoned by his disciples, using a quote from Zechariah 13:7, "I shall strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered" (Matthew 26:31). But he would rise once more and, like the shepherd, lead the flock to Galilee. The disciple Peter denied that he would disown Jesus and said that even if he had to die with Jesus, he would never disown him and the rest of the disciples agreed with Peter (Matthew 26:35).

2.5.6.7 Matthew 26:36-38, Mark 14:32-35, Luke 21:37, Luke 22:39-46, John 18:1-2 – Jesus' agony

The narrative of the Mount of Olives continues as the story of the life of Jesus reached a climax. The Garden of Gethsemane at the foot of the mountain became

the scene of Jesus' agony as the time came for him to sacrifice himself in a cruel and horrific manner. Even though he felt sadness and anguish, his soul was "sorrowful to the point of death" (Matthew 26:37-38) and "his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44), Jesus understood that the events to come would be what God wanted, "your will be done", and he would accept this and obey Him (Matthew 26:42).

As he was speaking these words, a crowd of armed men came with the traitor, Judas, who identified Jesus and the men arrested him. Jesus forbade his followers from drawing swords because it was not necessary as God would protect him: "do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, who would promptly send more than twelve legions of angels to my defence? [54] But then, how would the scriptures be fulfilled that say this is the way it must be?" (Matthew 26:53-54). That last sentence explained how Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, the desertion of his disciples and his crucifixion were all part of God's plan for mankind.

The Garden of Gethsemane, called that because there was an olive press in the grove, still exists and there are eight olive trees that have existed for centuries and may have been there during the events of Jesus' agony and capture. Although the trees in the Garden were cut down by the Romans for firewood and weapons during the siege of Jerusalem in 68-70 CE, if any still remain, they were the silent witnesses of the events that unfolded on the last night of Jesus' life that would change the world forever.

2.5.7 Matthew 28:16 – All authority given to Jesus

After the crucifixion, the burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea and the resurrection, Jesus met the women who had sat outside the sepulchre on the way.

He told them to tell his brothers that he would meet them in Galilee (Matthew 28:9-10). The eleven disciples found Jesus on the mountain where they had arranged to meet and Jesus delivered what is known as “the Great Commission”:

> [18] … He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.”

Donham (2001:139) says that the core religious meaning of the Great Commission is what took British evangelists to Africa in the first place. The missionaries were to

> take the good news, Christ's message of salvation, to every corner of the globe so that the End might come and the Millennium be ushered in. To play one's part, however humble, in bringing the Bible's grand narrative to a close propelled missionaries overseas to seek out, as it were, suffering and setback, to become Christ-like themselves (Donham 2001:139).

2.6 SIMILARITY BETWEEN THREE HOLY PROCESSIONS

The missionaries, carrying on the work of Jesus’ disciples by making their own journey to the *oikumene*, and spreading the word of Christianity on the African continent, were not the only ones spreading their word. Islam, with its own concept of the sacredness of land, was also making inroads into Africa.

Eliade said that “it is not the infinite variety of the religious experiences of space that concerns us but, on the contrary, their elements of unity” (Eliade 1959:63). The hierophany is “a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection in the world” (Eliade 1959:21). It is the break in space and time which reveals a fixed point, the central axis for orientation in our world. The hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a centre (Eliade 1959:21). The three ceremonies that I will

describe show that religions of the world are closer than we think. In each one of them, the sacred manifests itself through an hierophany and the role of sacred space and sacred time is simply the vehicle through which the holy reveals itself to us.

There are three different ritual processions from three different religions which show remarkable similarity. Each takes place in a very specific place and at a very specific time and serves to describe a particular community, its history and beliefs. These ceremonies give the participants an experience of sacred space which Eliade describes as "'the founding of the world': where the sacred manifests itself in space, *the real unveils itself*, the world comes into existence" (Eliade 1959:63). He describes how sacred space opens communication between cosmic planes, allows passage to the centre which renders *orientation* possible (Eliade 1959:63).

2.6.1 Joshua's procession around Jericho

The first is the story of Joshua in the Old Testament. When Joshua got to Jericho he was told to take off his shoes because the place where he stood was holy (Joshua 5:15). Chapter 6 of Joshua describes how the Lord commanded Joshua to march around the walls of Jericho once a day for six days (Joshua 6:3) but seven times on the seventh day. This remarkable scene circling the walls of Jericho must have been awe-inspiring for the Israelites and terrifying for the people of Jericho:

> And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew with the trumpets: and the armed men went before them; but the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets (Joshua 6:13).

2.6.2 The Hajj

The second is the Hajj, the holy pilgrimage of Islamic people to Mecca, one of the five pillars of Islam. The people (approximately three million in 2010) enter Mecca and the Great Mosque wearing white seamless cloth and walk counter-clockwise around the *Kaaba* seven times (Krüger, Lubbe, & Steyn 1996:242) while reciting prayers. This is called a circumambulation, *Tawaf* in Arabic. This scene is described by Karima Diane Alavi:

> The Ka'ba … serves to remind pilgrims that God is the source of all creation. The spot where the Ka'ba is situated is literally seen as the center of creation. Often the most emotional moment for the Hajji is the instant that she first lays eyes on this awesome scene … It was from a distance that I first laid eyes upon the Ka'ba, and I knew that this was the most magnificent sight I would ever see. There was a virtual sea of people continuously swirling around the solid black structure, and I wondered how I would ever manage to find a place in that crowd of tens of thousands of worshipers. With astonishing ease, I became like a drop of water in that ocean of people and joined the waves of worshippers who were praying, walking in silence, or crying as they became overwhelmed with emotion…. There is one [prayer] that people pray during the Tawaf and then continue to chant throughout the pilgrimage, creating a rhythmic echo like a heartbeat that reverberates throughout Mecca 24 hours a day (Alavi 2007:30).

2.6.3 The Shembe procession to their holy mountain

The third ritual ceremony is the Shembe pilgrimage up their holy mountain Nhlangakazi in Ndwedwe, KwaZulu Natal. The Nazareth Baptist Church of the Shembe people is an African Initiated Church which "integrates Christian values and Zulu culture". The Shembe religion, a combination of African Traditional

Religion, the Old Testament and the Christian faith, practices ancestral worship, polygamy and traditional medicine (Mkhize 2007).

On the first Sunday of the year, approximately 400,000 Shembe people walk barefoot, following the example of Jesus, for 80 kilometres to the top of their holy mountain which is “their Mecca, the holy mountain where God instructed [the prophet [Isaiah] Shembe to form the church – like Moses at Mount Sinai” (Mkhize 2007). Their annual pilgrimage is reminiscent of the Islamic Hajj in that they follow their prophet, the link to God, on a holy pilgrimage to “their Mecca”.

A trumpet signals the start of the day and the pilgrims in their snow-white robes walking along the dusty paths through picturesque valleys “soon resemble a slow-moving snake visible as far as you can see” (Mkhize 2007). As the mountain is reached, the sounds of drums and trumpets get louder and men with containers on their heads walk slowly to their resting place high up on the mountain, near their Prophet Bishop Shembe’s tent.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has investigated land as it is viewed in African Traditional Religion and provided an explanation of land issues that were affected by colonialism, missionary activity and by the apartheid government’s policies in South Africa. It then described the way that high places are used in the Old and the New Testaments.

The three processions from the monotheistic faiths are examples of pilgrimage journeys which are taking their adherents closer to the centre, the sacred place where hierophanies occur. Joshua’s procession around Jerusalem, the Hajj and the

Shembe are journeys with great symbolic significance for these respective religions and become, as Sheldrake (2001:34) says, the marginal ground between fixed places where the sacred is experienced. This journey to the centre is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CENTRE

3.1 RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY AND THE HUMAN BRAIN

Dr Andrew Newberg has investigated intense religious and spiritual experiences from the perspective of a scientist to find out whether there is commonality across cultures or even between people who have had deep mystical experiences. He has performed empirical brain imaging experiments on Buddhist monks and Franciscan nuns to explore the connections between "human consciousness and the persistent and peculiarly human longing to connect with something larger than ourselves" (Newberg in Kephart 2001).

At the most intense mystical moment of the experience, Dr Newberg has found that there is a reduction of sensory input to certain parts of the brain, namely, the posterior superior parietal lobe, the place where the brain orients a person in space by drawing distinctions between the individual and everything around him or her. This "shutting off" of stimuli allows the person to reach the transcendent peak of spiritual experience by breaking the connection between the person and

his or her surroundings, dissolving the boundaries between the self and that which lies outside the self (Kephart 2001).

Because this experience of deep transcendence crosses the boundaries between reality and mystical experience, it makes the mystic aware of his or her connections to everything in the world and allows him or her to perceive "that the self is endless and intimately interwoven with everyone and everything the mind senses. And this perception would feel utterly and unquestionably real" (Newberg in Kephart 2001). These brain imaging experiments do not mean that Dr Newberg believes that the religious mystical experience is purely physical. He thinks that the way that the brain is assembled is not simply due to evolution and asks the question of whether a Higher Being designed the brain so that it would be capable of perceiving and receiving that Higher Being (Kephart 2001).

3.2 THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD: *AXIS MUNDI*

What does feel utterly and unquestionably real to neophytes and mystics alike is the experience, described as "liminality" by Turner (1989:96) and as "hierophany" by Eliade (1959:11), that relates to the religious mystical experience of Newberg.

Liminality, according to Turner, is a condition of humility described as "a moment in and out of time" where people come from a structured, hierarchical and differentiated society, that is, the world of daily living, and go to a place which is unstructured and homogeneous where all are equal and submissive to ritual elders (Turner 1989:96) which may be called, for instance, God, prophets, bishops or messiahs. In the process of liminality, all attributes that distinguish categories and groups in the structured social order are set aside as those in this state are merely entities in transition, without place or position. Neophytes in transition have to

submit to the generic authority of tradition because they are *tabulae rasa*, a blank slate, on which is inscribed the knowledge and the wisdom of the group (Turner 1989:103).

An hierophany, as described by Eliade (1959:11), is the opposite of the profane, it is something sacred which shows itself. He believes that all religions are "constituted by a great number of hierophanies, by manifestations of sacred realities" which may be as simple as a tree or a stone or as complex as the incarnation of Jesus Christ. All objects are able to be cosmic sacralities for those to whom they are revealed as such while continuing to be the object in its cosmic location.

Eliade believes that it is the hierophany that is the break in space, Turner uses the metaphor of a moment in and out of time and Newberg describes it as the transcendent peak of spiritual experience which breaks the connection between the person and his or her surroundings but all agree that there is a place, a time and a thing that we can call an "absolute reality", which reveals an absolute fixed point, a centre which the religious person calls "the center of the world" (Eliade 1959:21-22).

These centres may be a building, a relic or simply a place where the evidence of human intervention on the landscape becomes the focal point for those seeking the divine.

3.3 STONE CIRCLES

There are many examples of ancient stone circles around the world. The United Kingdom is covered with stone circles as approximately 10 000 have been

discovered so far that are pre-Roman in origin. The most famous of these is at Stonehenge which dates from c3000 BCE. There are many theories for its purpose and a few facts have been uncovered that have connected its design with the phases of the moon, the burial of cremation remains, the midsummer sunrise and the midwinter sunset (www.stone-circles.org.uk). In Scandinavia, there are stone circles dating from the Iron Age, stone circles have been found under the water at Lake Michigan in the United States and in the sea at Holm-next-the-Sea in Norfolk, England.

The latest discovery of a 25-acre arrangement of at least seven stone circles, and possibly many more, at Göbekli Tepe, a remote hilltop in southern Turkey falls under Eliade's description of an ancient "cosmic mountain" which he calls "our world", being holy ground, because it is the place nearest to heaven, "because from here, from our abode, it is possible to reach heaven; hence our world is a high place" (Eliade 1959:39).

Göbekli Tepe certainly qualifies as a "high place" associated also in the Old Testament with religious rituals and early encounters with God (Witherington III 2013). It was built at least 7 000 years before Stonehenge, not of rough blocks as were other circles, but from "cleanly carved limestone pillars splashed with bas-reliefs of animals – a cavalcade of gazelles, snakes, foxes, scorpions, and ferocious wild boar", animals which were native in the area and may have been regarded as guardian spirits (Mann 2011:39). Human and animal bones show that Göbekli Tepe was the site of a primary burial ground, where rituals related to the dead were performed and sacrificial animals were offered, according to Witherington III (2013).

Some of the pillars at Göbekli Tepe are over 5 metres high and weigh 16 tons (Mann 2011:41,48) which is a remarkable feat as, at the time it was built, humans lived in small nomadic bands that foraged for food and hunted wild animals. This is described by Mann (2011:39):

> The pilgrims who came to Göbekli Tepe lived in a world without writing, metal, or pottery; to those approaching the temple from below, its pillars must have loomed overhead like rigid giants, the animals on the stones shivering in the firelight – emissaries from a spiritual world that the human mind may have only begun to envision.

Mann says that things have changed since then less than we think. Places of pilgrimage such as the Vatican, Mecca, Jerusalem, Bodh Gaya or Cahokia, the Native American complex near St Louis, have always existed as religious centres. Spiritual travellers came from far and wide to be inspired by these sacred places. In the case of Göbekli Tepe, the human sense of sacred "may have given rise to civilization itself" rather than the other way around (Mann 2011:40, Witherington III 2013). This means that, in order to feed the many workers who were building the site over many years, people must have begun to cultivate wild grasses in the area and therefore "[r]eligion motivated people to take up farming" (Knox 2009).

3.4 PILGRIMAGE: THE SACRED JOURNEY

Journeys to sacred places are as old as time itself as Göbekli Tepe has proven. Krüger explains that, in discovering the roots of religion in Africa, he felt that he was on a pilgrimage to discover the emergence of humanity as Africa was the place where humanity emerged and spread over the whole world, discovering sacred places as far as it went (1995:173-174):

> This struck me vividly one day while I was studying some exquisite Bushman engravings in the Upper Karoo. There they were, strange animal-like phantasmagoria on large black dolomite boulders strewn over a brown koppie on a vast, flat, hot barren … forbidding landscape. This had obviously been a “place”, in the full religious sense of the word, for its inhabitants or for those who sought physical and spiritual refuge on its bare slopes; not a mere locality, but a source and centre of meaning and power ... It was a deeply humbling and at the same time an illuminating experience to stand in a seemingly empty landscape and realise that in fact it is filled with a human presence thousands of years old. They were here, and in a sense still are. I was standing on “holy” ground (1995:173).

The connection between land and religion, Krüger maintains, is that in certain places and concrete things, at certain times, “the truth of the world is felt acutely” (Krüger 1995:174). Krüger, in identifying a holy place, tells the story of Melville Koppies West and its relationship to the people who pray there. Just as the Bushmen left traces of themselves in their sacred space to which they presumably returned as pilgrims, so the prayer groups are creating their circles, their sacred places, to which they return time and again. Places of pilgrimage, such as Melville Koppies West, regarded as sacred by those who go there for religious purposes, occur all over the world and play a large part in religious ceremonies; they are, at the end of the journey to the sacred place, the harbingers of sacred times.

Alan Morinis (1992:ix) defines pilgrimage as “a paradigmatic and paradoxical human quest, both outward and inward, a movement toward ideals known but not achieved at home. As such, pilgrimage is an image for fulfilment of all people, inhabiting an imperfect world”. This means that it is not just a movement of people from home to sacred places but is undertaken in the search for succour, physically and spiritually, by those who believe that, by leaving their homes and

journeying to the place that they regard as sacred, they, too, will find ways to deal with the difficulties that they face in this world.

According to Cohen (1992:50) who bases his work on that of Mircea Eliade, among others, he perceives of the world as a "sacred Centre, an ordered, hallowed cosmos and a surrounding dangerous but alluring chaos". He sees pilgrimage in this socially constructed space as a movement towards the Centre while, in comparison, other journeys, such as tourist journeys, are movements towards the Other, in the opposite direction, towards the chaos. The Centre, for pilgrims, is away from the profane and is a place of rejuvenation, healing and blessings (Cohen 1992:51). Cohen describes this state as "liminal", meaning that it is connected to transition rites defined by Van Gennep as part of the rites of passage which ensures "a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another" (Van Gennep 1996:530). This concept is explored further in section 7.6.1.

Pilgrimage, which is done mostly with others, is expected to give a journey an existential quality (Cohen 1992:53) and has "an explicit, culturally recognized meaning" (Cohen 1992:56) so that it becomes the passage from the profane world to the common, sacred centre where the pilgrims are recreated, revitalised and recommitted to their basic cultural values by the experience of pilgrimage which Cohen considers to be not only meritorious but also socially legitimate (Cohen 1992:59).

Communitas, according to Turner (1989:94) falls into the second phase of Van Gennep's rites of passage. It lies between the phases of separation from structure (for instance, daily life) and reintegration into that structure from the experience

of communitas. This in-between stage “breaks in through the interstices of structure, in liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure in inferiority”. It is held to be sacred because it falls outside the profane realm of daily life and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency (Turner 1898:128). These are the places of exceptional creativity in the form of symbols, myths, rituals and works of art (Turner 1898:128).

Turner (1973:217-218) therefore agrees with Cohen’s notion and says that pilgrimages seem to be regarded by pilgrims as, firstly, the journey toward a sacred source of communitas and, secondly, as the sacred time when communitas is experienced as a source of healing and renewal both for the individual and for the group of pilgrims because “the health and integrality of the individual is indissoluble from the peace and harmony of the community; solitude and society cease to be antithetical”.

The experience of the individual on the pilgrimage is that of a journey to the centre of his/her world, the quest for the Other. As the pilgrim approaches the sacred centre, as he/she moves from the disassociation from the structure of daily life towards the centre. Aziz (1987:253) believes that, instead of cohesiveness in the group of pilgrims, there is a growing dissociation from others around them (Aziz 1987:253). She regards this as a natural development as, in her experience of pilgrimages, particularly with Hindu pilgrims in India and Nepal, people seemed to become less sociable, less talkative and less concerned with their fellow pilgrims “as each devotee focuses more and more on the divine; for the devout, everything else fades in significance at this moment” (Aziz 1987:253-254) .

Colin Turnbull, an anthropologist, went on a pilgrimage in India which required a very difficult journey to the source of the sacred Jumna River. He describes the final approach to Jumnotri as going across a sheer cliff-face far above the tiny torrent that seemed to be a mile below. The terror of this crossing, rather than dissuading him from continuing, urged him forward

> as though there was something I had to reach and would reach – because it was "right," because it was "a sacred place". There was no intellectual judgment made or rational decision to go forward rather than do the sensible thing and go back … Yet the impulse was as strong as any physical push forward could have been or has been in my life (Turnbull 1992:265).

He was far ahead of his party and alone when he faced the cliff. He crossed over and found a rocky overhang to shelter from the snow and a storm that was raging. He looked down towards the Ganges Valley and around himself but the blizzard obscured everything. He realised that he was very sick but rather than be concerned about his condition,

> I felt an extraordinary pleasure and satisfaction. I had arrived, and it no longer mattered what happened. I was totally, absolutely content with everything as it was, whatever that might be … I was … content to find myself alone in a quest that had become so sacred that it seemed to brook no sharing (Turnbull 1992:266).

This experience, it seems, is exactly what Dr Newberg has discovered. Turnbull, in that mystical moment, was able to break the connection between himself and his surroundings, shutting down all stimuli and dissolving the boundaries between the self and that which lies outside the self (Kephart 2001).

Thirty years later, Turnbull set off, once again, for Jumnotri as winter was fast approaching. The journey, as before, was gruelling but as he approached the ledge

on the cliff, it was exactly as he remembered it, and knew immediately that "[t]his time something different lay ahead for me, the certainty that Jumnotri, this time, was for me a sacred place and all that mattered was getting there" (Turnbull 1992:267-268). Once again, he became a pilgrim, dedicated exclusively to the quest for the sacred:

> I can even point to the place the transformation began, halfway across that bridge. When I was at the mouth of a cave not many minutes later and the Nepalese Buddhist rang the brass bell hanging at the entrance, I was entirely ready for the experience that followed … (Turnbull 1992:269).

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described how the human brain is wired to have experiences of the sacred, called hierophanies by Eliade (1959:11), which allow it to position itself in the everyday world through pilgrimages to sacred places such as stone circles or other places where these spiritual experiences are likely to happen. The next chapter introduces African Initiated Churches that have spirituality as a focal point of their existence.

CHAPTER 4: AFRICAN SPIRITUAL CHURCHES: A SOFT PLACE TO FALL

In the introduction to *Christianity and social change in Africa* (2005:19), Toyin Falola says that Christianity in Africa has brought with it

> a way of reinterpreting power relations and generating new conflicts. Its ideas have provided Africans an opportunity to deal with a new reality of ritual order, social control, freedom, gender relations, and class differentiation. The history of Christianity in Africa is about the consequences of encounters with peoples, ethnicities and places, with Islam and indigenous religions, and with state power. As the encounters unfolded, the reality became complicated.

It is true that the reality of Christianity in Africa is complicated as it is in other parts of the world where missionary activity sought to evangelise indigenous people. This is because Christianity has brought with it a way to relate to the expansion of Western culture, economics and globalisation and to engage with its transformative changes while side-lining the value of traditional practices. Falola therefore speaks of the paradox of Christianity and change "that cannot be

ignored or resisted" but he adds, on the other hand, the existence of "the traditions and worldview that are too strong to destroy" (Falola 2005:19-20).

This chapter will firstly, examine the early missionaries and the profound effect they had on the religion of the indigenous people while, at the same time, they had a more subtle effect on the culture of people in Africa. Secondly, it will discuss the history of the formation of African Initiated churches in South Africa and thirdly, it will use the churches of Melville Koppies as a microcosm of African Initiated churches in this country at this time.

4.1 THE EVANGELICAL ENCOUNTER: THE EFFECT OF MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Comaroff and Comaroff (1986:1-2) describe the debate between the role of missionaries as philanthropists and the condemnation of them as agents of imperialists as "a crude equation of cause and effect". This is because the economic and political factors overshadow the impact of cultural and religious changes on the people involved. They acknowledge that their analysis of Protestant evangelism on one section of the population, the Tswana, makes their argument seem to be based on particularity but even though the variations in community structures, in the theological backgrounds of the evangelists and in the circumstances of the encounters have to be considered, they believe that this argument "concerns the generic nature of missionary agency in the colonial process".

The mission agency, they believe, played out in both the political world of institutional power relations and in the more subtle day-to-day world of meanings and activities of those exposed to it. Both of these played out in the material and

symbolic world of religion and politics and even though the circumstances of each are idiographic, they become “both a vital and a consistent element in the colonial encounter” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:2). They explain that the mission agency was not only in the visible and palpable forces of influence but had a huge effect on the day-to-day, taken-for-granted habits, aesthetics, epistemology and even the built environment. This is rarely an act of “overt persuasion” but “requires the internalization of a set of values, an ineffable manner of seeing and being” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:2). It is in this indirect manner that the missionaries had the most influence because

> while the colonial process often entailed material dispossession, even brute force, a critical part of the subjection of native peoples lay in the subtle colonization, by the missionary, of indigenous modes of perception and practice (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:2).

They believe that these processes of overt and subtle colonisation are closely related and that the disjuncture between them created a situation where the missionaries failed where they most hoped to succeed – in creating a unified black church based on Christian principles. On the other hand, the missionaries succeeded in an area which was less tangible, that of preparing African communities and individuals for their integration into the industrialist capitalist world (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:2). An example of this is the Tswana people, the Baralong Ratshidi (Tshidi), the subject of the Comaroffs’ study in this article, who first met the missionaries of the London Missionary Society in the 1820s.

Mason describes in his autobiography *Stone, iron and dreams* (completed in 2010 but not yet published) that the 1823 Matlwase Mission of Thomas Hodgson and

Samuel Broadbent was the earliest site that represents the beginning of historically recorded action north of the Vaal River.

The missionaries reached north of the Vaal River within years of the local collapse of built settlements. Matlwase was the site of contact between the Wesleyan Methodist missionaries Hodgson and Broadbent and the Seleka-Rolong Iron Age community. Hodgson's graphic personal account of his daily life in South Africa, including his personal hard labour in the building of the cottage that Mason was to excavate, is set out in his letters to the London office of the Methodist Missionary Committee and his 1821-1831 diaries. In 1964, Mason located Hodgson's diary in the hands of his descendant, Ms E. Melville and arranged for the 1977 publication of the diary by Wits Press with Mr Richard Cope of the History Department as editor. In 1965, Mason visited the Methodist Missionary archives in London where Hodgson's entire correspondence from Matlwase is preserved in the Methodist archives.

The social order of African society at the time of the missionaries was based on the concept of chiefdom and the ritual processes were used by the leadership of the communities to "impose an authoritative imprint on the everyday world" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:11). The individual and his or her experiences were moulded by the way that he or she lived in the community, by the way that the space was organised, for example, the centre of polity which was the chief and his court, and the working class which was clearly divided into men's and women's work which included the task of reproduction. The power of the community was represented by the livestock which they owned and was used to purchase "rights in a woman's reproductive capacity and horticultural labour" (Schneider (1977:199). These hierarchical relationships were cemented by the repeated

practice of rituals and by the ownership of material objects because "[p]roducts embodied the social processes of their own construction", just as the visible and invisible forces were interrelated.

While the missionaries had a profound effect on the daily lives of the communities in which they worked, the chiefs of the Tswana quickly took advantage of the missionaries and their Christian message by requesting goods and military aid to help them in the chaos that prevailed during the *mfikane,* a period of widespread chaos and warfare among indigenous tribes in southern Africa during the period between 1815 and about 1840. The missionaries reluctantly supplied the goods and the guns and also shared their skills in the sinking of wells and other technical undertakings. This made the missionaries a prized resource to the Tswana and, In this way, the missionaries became part of the political life of the chiefdom and became enmeshed in the local population and its daily life (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:3-4).

The missionaries deferred to the chiefs' "secular" rule because they understood the difference between the church and the state and avoided challenging the status quo in this regard and, in addition, they needed the chiefs to maintain order and ensure a stable environment in which they were able to establish their churches. But the missionaries strongly opposed tribal activities that they considered "heathen" such as rainmaking rites and male initiation ceremonies because they felt that they were critical impediments to the spreading of the gospel. The converts to Christianity also began to resist taking part in these activities and this led to deep divisions within the communities and especially between the chiefs and the missionaries. These disputes happened throughout

South Africa and relations between the missionaries and the local rulers deteriorated.

According to Comaroff and Comaroff (1986:4-5), the advance of missionary Christianity "eroded not only the spiritual aspect of the chieftainship *but its entire foundation*" (italics mine). In seeking to restore religious authority to God, they drove a wedge between the two dimensions of power and legitimacy which, for Tswana, were indissoluble. The communal rites that the missionaries opposed were essential to the chief's control over people and property and the dissolution of the chief's authority into new divisions of religion and politics "engendered a new pluralism". This meant that the converts to Christianity created another centre within the community with its own leaders, resources and political relationships and, in so doing, they attacked the basis of chieftainship which was its exclusive authority over the political process and all other spheres of life in the community. Religion and statehood was, in Western imperialism, two different things but in traditional African society they were interwoven into the fabric of community life.

Because of this difference between politics and religion, the missionaries believed that they were not interfering with the internal politics of the community but their involvement was significant albeit indirect and almost incidental. The missionaries' intention was to reclaim religion from "heathen" practices but leave the political authority intact. This was impossible in the African worldview of that time and therefore they only succeeded in fracturing the authority and producing "a dualistic order with competing foci of power relations" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:5) as the leaders either appropriated the church for themselves or opposed the newly converted groups. The missionaries themselves were then in an even

worse situation because of the political disputes that this dualistic order created within the communities that they evangelised. Comaroff and Comaroff explain these disputes by saying: “In this instance, the process tore at the political fabric everywhere … The missionaries rarely escaped being caught in the fissure that they had created between church and chiefship” (1986:5-6).

This fissure was caused by industrialisation which valued hard work, free enterprise, orderly process and a self-regulating market which used money, “the sanctified currency of what had become a moral economy” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:12). Industrialisation put an emphasis on wage labour and private property and actively discouraged anything that would “subvert the divinely wrought inequality of the workplace” but mainly, its primary focus was to divide the sacred and the profane within the lives of the individuals, creating “an immortal self, and submitting the body, now shameful and transient, to sober constraint” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:12). The fissure was deepened by the missionaries’ cultivation of the art of “civilisation” which marginalised those who laboured and offered “the trappings of propertied individualism” to those who would be converted. The missionaries believed that the “natives” lived in moral chaos and sloth and hoped to introduce the concept of marriage as a sacred bond between two people which then formed the monogamous household “as the elemental unit of production and consumption” and discouraged the communal ownership of resources because

> [i]f civilisation was to flourish, the “holy family” of the Christian cosmos, and its conventional, gender-based division labor, had to triumph over “communistic” interdependence (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:13).

In spite of the missionaries' attempt to split the sacred from the profane, this quote from Comaroff and Comaroff shows that they were inextricably linked in the minds of the missionaries who sought to introduce western standards of morality and practice including agricultural production and its division of labour, the imposition of western styles of building and organisation of the land, the western style of dress and physical modesty, the regulation of life by the clock and the calendar and the introduction of literacy, specifically to read the Bible, but also to "open up a discourse about the self as both subject and object, and encourage the transcendence of a purely sensual existence" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:15). In these ways, the missionaries had a palpable influence over both the converts to Christianity as well as those who opposed it. The conversion that they sought was not just on the religious level but also "as a subtle internalization of its categories and values" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:15).

The missionaries promised that those who accepted their teachings would be rewarded both in this world and in the next. The converts believed that their lives would be improved as they accumulated the goods promised to them for selling their labour and by living a life of moral worth. But the reality was that this did not happen because the missionaries did not have the power to make it happen. In addition, the message was not simply heard but was filtered through a lens of their own culture. As the converts realised that the realities of life were harsh and not what they had learned from the missionaries, they began to question the biblical text and express the inconsistencies between it and the colonial order that ruled their lives. Resistance began with those who were taught at the mission schools and slowly an independent Black Christian movement began to grow even though it was still "framed in the rhetoric of liberal democracy, individual equality, and the

separation of church and state" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:17). At the same time, there emerged the movement of Zionist Christianity which comprised many small churches who rejected both the colonial and the post-colonial worlds and began to create a world view that was inclusive of their history but gave them the independence to worship and behave in a way that they preferred rather than what was prescribed for them by the missionaries.

4.2 THE POLITICS OF PENTECOSTALISM

These small churches have grown into a movement called "an indigenous contribution to Christianity in South Africa" by Pretorius and Jafta (1999:211) who say that they have experienced the largest increase in membership in relation to other religious groups. This is confirmed by Anderson (2005) who describes the Pentecostal movement as "collectively one of the significant African expressions of Christianity in South Africa today" that has at least ten million followers. These churches may also be regarded as the "fifth major Christian church type, after the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Reformation, and the Pentecostal churches" (David Bosch quoted by Pretorius & Jafta 1999:211)[8]. Although in the past these churches have been derided by the mainstream churches, the government and other bodies, their fierce independence and rootedness in the African soil has led these African Initiated churches to be considered as sharing "an emotional and ideological affinity for individuals, communities, and localities of Old Testament and New Testament

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[8] Bosch, David. 1987. Introduction, in *Quest for belonging*. Gwero: Mambo Press: 9.

times" in their common quest to establish a new African Christian identity (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:212).

Even though the African Initiated Churches (AICs) are founded and exist within a shifting and divisive historical and political scenario, there have been several events that have become defining moments in their history:

4.2.1 The Ethiopian churches

The schism between missionary Christianity and the missionary educated entrepreneurs produced the "Ethiopian" church, named after the biblical reference in Psalms 68:31, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God" and its association with Cush, the son of Ham, an outcast who started the black race (according to white supremist interpretation). This claim, seen through the lens of biblical connections, gave these people an independent route into the "moral teachings of a society whose organisation resonated with parallels to their own" (Kiernan 1995:120). This form of African unity, brought together originally by the mission churches, consisted of people from different tribal backgrounds, especially on the Witwatersrand, where migrant workers from different cultures were forced to live together in compounds. The Ethiopian churches were a response to the deliberate exclusion of black pastors and the segregation of white leadership from black members of the church because "racial discrimination and segregation were a constant feature of missionary churches from the beginning of evangelisation, the reservation of leadership to white missionaries became a matter of contention" (Kiernan 1995:119).

4.2.2 Further schisms

In an assertion of autonomy, Nehemiah Tile broke away from the Wesleyans in 1884 and founded the "Tembu Church" which led the way for other tribal churches among the Tswana and the Pedi (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:213). The first church that was called "The Ethiopian Church" was established on the Witwatersrand in 1892 (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:214) and these two events caused schisms from both the Congregational and the Presbyterian churches.

The Ethiopian churches were regarded with suspicion by the government of the period but this attitude changed when the South African Native Affairs Commission of 1903-1905, set up to recommend political and territorial separation between black and white, gave the Ethiopian Churches independence from government supervision (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:215). This was a direct political act of the South African government which was reflected in the actions of Ethiopian church by the leaders who

> did not see their work as directed to political ends, although they did seek answers to the questions of liberation within the Christian faith, and they did foster a new consciousness of African dignity and self-reliance. The movement was political in the sense that it complemented the activities of the African political elite by raising, in the church sphere, issues of African equality and rights.[9]

[9] Odendaal, André. 1984. *Vukani Bantu! The beginning of Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912*. Cape Town: David Philip: 29, 84, quoted in Pretorius & Jafta (1999:215) footnote 27.

4.2.3 The influence of South African politics

The political scenario in South Africa was changed by the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and therefore the Ethiopian leaders were almost compelled to become prominent in several political organisations because their status was being undermined and their land was increasingly being alienated by the subsequent Native Land Act of 1913. Most importantly, the South African Native National Congress, which later became the African National Congress (ANC), was formed in 1912 from a selection of secular and religious leaders which included members of the Ethiopian churches (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:215). According to Pretorius and Jafta (1999:215), the rise of the ANC was concomitant with the waning of the Ethiopian churches because of the threat of secular forces such as the African labour organisation and the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union. But the Ethiopians were already in the process of splitting into fragments due to internal fission as well as the "reassertion of provincial, regional and tribal divisions" (Kiernan 1995:121).

By the 1970s, the indigenous spiritual churches, called the Zionist churches were growing at a rapid rate and their numbers overran those of the Ethiopian churches. This trend has continued and the difference in size between them continues to grow even though the Ethiopian Church is still one of the largest black churches in South Africa. They still continue to use the liturgy, ritual activities and traditions from the missionaries and are therefore less obviously African in ethos than the indigenous spiritual churches even though they are tolerant of the customs of indigenous churches (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:216). In fact, even though they belong to the mainline churches in kind, some of these churches have started moving towards the Zionist churches in practice.

4.2.4 Zionist churches

The name “Zion” in the name of a church was first used by an American, John Alexander Dowie, who sent an emissary to South Africa in 1897. The central teachings of the Dowie tradition were: divine healing, submersion of adults for baptism and a belief in the imminent return of Christ. According to Pretorius and Jafta (1999:217), the commonalities between traditional African religions and the beliefs of the Pentecostal churches such as Dowie’s were: the emphasis on healing through the power of faith and the indwelling Spirit which resonated with the traditional belief that witchcraft and the ancestors were the source of illness and misfortune.

As the Zionist churches were started on the Witwatersrand, a Zionist church was also established in Wakkerstroom in 1903 by a Dutch Reformed minister, Rev. P. Le Roux and in 1904, Daniel Bryant baptised twenty-seven Africans in Johannesburg. A black leader from Le Roux’s church, Daniel Nkonyane, introduced the white robes, bare feet, holy sticks and Old Testament symbolism, “all visible hallmarks of Zionism today” (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:217-8). There were also influences from other white people in the Pentecostal and Apostolic churches as well as from white American churches, particularly from Dowie’s “Zion City” in Chicago, which gave the movement its name.

The Supreme Being, the Bible, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, baptism and the ancestors are all central to the practice and belief of the Zionist churches. Healing services where symbolic natural substances such as water, plants or tea are used together with the laying on of hands to heal people of physical or psychological illnesses are used. The leaders of these churches, men or women, who have had

some Christian teachings, particularly from other Zionist churches, often have personal revelations and then form groups of believers to whom they preach. These groups include the two biggest Zionist groups, the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) of Lekganyane among the Sotho-Tswana and the Shembe among the Zulu. These two churches have huge followings and both combine spiritual and material success which are, according to Vilakazi[10] (quoted in Pretorius & Jafta 1999:218), "the founding of a new society, and the inculcation of new social and economic values".

4.2.5 Pentecostal Churches

The definition of Pentecostal, according to Anderson (2004:13), can be described as churches and movements that claim an encounter with the manifestations of the Spirit of God and that place an emphasis on the charistmata, experientially and theologically. He believes that Pentecostalism does not lend itself only to a theological definition because "Western categories would not be adequate to understand the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the Majority World". Pentecostalism should be described as inclusive, pluralistic and remarkably diversified because diversity has become a character trait of this branch of Christianity (Anderson 2004:10). In fact, Anderson believes that it is better to speak of "Pentecostalisms", each derivative "identifiable within their own geographical and socio-economic contexts" (Anderson 2004:10).

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[10] Absolom Vilakazi (ed) 1986. *Shembe: The revitalization of African society*. Braamfontein: Skotaville: 155-6.

Pretorius and Jafta (1999:220) acknowledge that these African Initiated churches are numerous and individualistic in that they each have their own history and that they range from churches which are bridges back to African culture to those churches that are simply independent of Western churches. They can be categorised as spiritual, "modern revivalist", evangelical, healing, revolts against colonial oppression or any number of these traits. These churches emphasise the power of the Spirit through healing, prophecy, exorcism and speaking in tongues (Anderson 2005).

The migrant worker system created a society based on dislocation and disorientation as people who came from a close-knit, homogeneous society moved to urban areas where they came into contact with people with different cultural and value systems. As Kiernan (1995:123) explains: "Social stress and uncertainty result from being thrown into relatively close and protracted association with outright strangers in work and residence". This is made worse by the emphasis on competitiveness, time-keeping, productivity and the lack of employment opportunities, especially among the poor and illiterate.

The Pentecostal churches became the answer to many of these problems for people who found themselves in these situations. These Pentecostal churches are made up of typically small groups of people, predominantly women, gathering in classrooms, garages, open fields, at rivers and on mountains and hills.

These churches became a soft place to fall for those who were exposed to the hardships of life in the cities, towns, "locations" and squatter camps of this country. These churches, big or small, provide a welcoming and supportive environment for their members with social, spiritual and material assistance,

healing both spiritual and bodily ills and forming "coping institutions which aimed at the delivery of benefits in the here and now" (Kiernan 1995:124). They do not try to change the system, unjust though it may be, rather, their aim is to become refuges for people who find themselves overwhelmed by modernity. They understand that paid work is necessary but they believe that it is possible to live a life that is dignified, sober, frugal and diligent even amongst those who do not. "The unity and cohesion of the congregation is, therefore, based on the principles of shared responsibility and mutual support" (Kiernan 1995:125).

4.3 MELVILLE KOPPIES CHURCHES: A MICROCOSM OF PENTECOSTAL AFRICAN INITIATED CHURCHES

4.3.1 Background history of churches on Melville Koppies

According to the leader of Circle 21 who has been praying on Melville Koppies for many years, the churches were chased off the land in the 1970s by the "Blackjacks" who were security personnel in black uniforms who were hired by the municipality to protect council officials carrying out service cut-offs and evictions (McKinley & Veriava 2005:Endnote 30). In about 1977, while South Africa was going through unprecedented insurrection, their leader, Sam, called several meetings for all the churches in the Arbouretum which was a shady area on the stream next to Beyers Naude Road, out of view. The churches then started returning to the koppie in stages and claimed spaces where they established their circles.

4.3.2 The ties that bind us

The prayer groups who meet on Melville Koppies have a special connection with the area but all over the city there are groups of worshippers who meet in open spaces such as parks and undeveloped land. The circles, created by these groups in these places, are visible on Google Earth and Mason described how he saw them from the air when flying over Johannesburg in a helicopter for archaeological surveying purposes.

Just like many other African Initiated church groups, the Melville Koppies groups emphasise their unity as a group. I have noticed in my interviews that, while they gather for religious reasons, there are also strong social bonds that are formed within the groups themselves and also sometimes between different groups. An example of that was displayed when a group that I interviewed[11] was discussing the arrangements for a funeral of a family member of one of their members. They were collecting money and were planning a visit to the home of the deceased. For this, they were joining forces with other groups so that the sum of money was more substantial and presumably, the support was greater.

> … we pray but most of the important thing is that one day or two days we gather and share ideas about belief, about believing in the spiritually. So for us to gather in this place is a very important thing because we share ideas, we share everything, we share spiritual, we share love, we share everything, even maybe if we want to make a process of anything, maybe like now its coming to Good Friday we want to go somewhere to have maybe a Passover with the other churches, we gather here, we donate money, we make available transport to take us there. Everything we are

[11] Interview on Circle 25, 29/08/2010

> doing, maybe we have lost one of our membership … where he is going, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, we gather here, we make some ideas how can we take that person there … (Interview on Circle 15 28/02/2010).

The quote above from an interview with a prayer group on Melville Koppies confirms that Kiernan is correct. Not only are these groups a soft place to fall for members of these groups but it confirms that they consist of people from different cultures coming together to find comfort and support for the difficult times of life as well as the good times. Spiritual needs are catered for and life cycle events such as birth, death and other rites of passage are regarded as group rather than personal responsibilities. This takes away the isolation and loneliness that people living in urban areas, perhaps without their families, may experience when dealing with these experiences, as Oosthuizen says of African Initiated Churches: "Almost uniformly, however, a Christian sense of sharing and caring is their distinguishing mark" (1997:8).

There is a deep conviction amongst African Initiated Churches that the Bible forms the basis for their gatherings and this was repeated over and over in the interviews conducted on Melville Koppies, because, as Oosthuizen says, "More and more it is the past that endures. The spiritualities of the past have a way of reappearing in the religions of the present. Intellectual rationalizations of religion and philosophical and theological fashions do not last. In contrast, deep spiritual themes reassert themselves" (1997:9). The interviewee on Circle 25 explains this:

> Our church name is The Holy Apostolic Church in Zion under the Reverend, this is our constitution. We follow everything according to the Bible but our purpose to come and pray at the mountain. We believe even from the Bible, even Moses went to the mountain … whenever they wanted to talk to God, they went to the mountain so we choose this place as the

> mountain ... Everything we are doing, we are doing Biblical. Even when we prophesise or we pray for each other or we do anything, we go according to the Bible. Like now, you see, they are kneeling down, they are opening, trying to tell God: Now we have started here to praise You (Interview on Circle 25 29/08/2010).

This quote shows that this member reveals several elements of his/her church which are common with other African Initiated Churches: 1) The name of the church has the word "Zion" (see 4.2.4 Zionist churches); 2) The Old Testament plays a part and carries a value equal to that of the New Testament amongst AICs; and 3) The importance of being in a group is shown by the repeated use of we/they/us because "[t]he more intense and numerous are one's relationships, the more one's own spirituality is enhanced. It is essential, therefore, to enter into networks of solidarity" (Oosthuizen 1997:9). These church groups serve as networks of solidarity in the same way that tribal affiliations served the same purpose in rural areas. The difference, of course, is that these people are not kinfolk and they do not even, in some cases, share birth countries. But they share a common thirst for the words of the Bible and for the comfort of others because in African Initiated Churches, "the secular onslaught against the wisdom of centuries is counteracted calmly and strongly" (Oosthuizen 1997:9).

4.4 CONCLUSION

As missionary activity began to encroach into Africa, with the concomitant rise of commerce, the people soon began to realise that if they wanted to benefit from this, they would have to "play the game" and conform. They soon realised that western education and religion went hand-in-hand and that resistance was futile. The development of a new branch of Christianity, the African Initiated Churches,

was their response to the missionaries. It was as if they were saying: “We will play the game but we will play it our way”.

The following chapter takes a step back into the past to uncover the history of Melville Koppies and explains the relationship between the land and the people who occupied this and other sites for ritual purposes.

CHAPTER 5: SHRINES AND PLACES OF POWER: INTERPRETATION OF EVIDENCE OF PREVIOUS RITUAL ACTIVITY ON MELVILLE KOPPIES WEST

5.1 INTERPRETING EVIDENCE

Hammond-Tooke acknowledged that our knowledge of the past two millennia in southern Africa is patchy because of the lack of record-keeping. We have to painstakingly piece together evidence from the research of archaeologists, linguists, physical anthropologists and even biologists. The evidence that is left, pottery, beads, implements, settlement patterns and bones of both animals and humans needs to be interpreted "using sophisticated dating methods, theoretical models and comparison of sites from over a wide area" (Hammond-Tooke 1993:24, 26). He explains that interpretation involves the formation of a hypothesis of how the facts fit together. This hypothesis is then tested by new finds and is either confirmed or refuted which leads to the pursuance of a new

theory. These hypotheses may be conflicting because of the dearth of facts and must always therefore be critically assessed (Hammond-Tooke 1993:26).

This chapter will describe shrines found on the African landscape which are used to introduce a personal interview with the archaeologist, Professor Revil Mason, where he gives his interpretations of various findings both on Melville Koppies and on other sites to show how he deduces that these sites may have been used for ritual purposes in the past.

5.2 SHRINES ON THE AFRICAN LANDSCAPE

"Shrines in the African context are cultural signposts that help us understand and read the ethnic, territorial, and social lay of the land" (Dawson 2009:vii). Dawson explains that shrines on the African landscape help to shape and define village, community and ethnic boundaries and are physical manifestations of a group's claim to a particular piece of land. They are markers of identity and are symbolic of a community's "roots" in the land where they live and work. He continues: "The shrine is representative of a connection with the land at the cosmological and supernatural level and, in terms of a community's or ethnic group's claim to cultivable territory, *serves as a reminder to outsiders that this is – in very real terms – 'our land.'*" (Dawson 2009:vii) [italics mine].

The word "autochthony" means indigenous, "from the soil" or "of the earth". This concept appears in anthropological literature as a concept which legitimises the claim to land and the existence of a distinct group "with rights to institutions". In the African context, this concept implicitly accepts that societies can move or migrate into new areas (Dawson 2009:viii). Dawson (2009:viii-ix) explains that these claims on the land are not only based on tenure which reflects, firstly, the

movement of groups of people who settle in unoccupied areas and, secondly, the creation of earth shrines that are symbols of ancestor veneration and show that these people have strong bonds with the land that they occupy.

Dawson explains that this link is closely linked to a group's identity and that groups who practice earth and ancestor veneration have a primordial interconnectivity with the land in their ethnic discourse and the shrine, be it potsherds or a particular mountain, rock or tree, "is the ultimate symbolic manifestation of this link – the shrine is autochthony made real" (2009:ix).

In Africa, the shrine comes to signify the group or community's connection with the spirit of the land and with its ancestors. This creates "internal forms of solidarity and identity. Shrines act as important symbols of group membership and collective identity … shrines serve to culturally demarcate the landscape, asserting origin, ownership, and historical connectedness with a piece of earth" (Dawson 2009:x).

5.3 TYPES OF SHRINES

In a personal interview, Mr David Hirsch (2011), CEO of Melville Koppies West churches, explained to me that in the 1980s, the churches were becoming re-established on Melville Koppies West after being chased from the land (see section 4.3.1). Instead of making new circles, new groups were advised to use old circles that were no longer in use. This was to preserve as much of the land and vegetation as possible.

The churches initially appeared reluctant to take over circles previously used by other people. Mr Hirsch witnessed one of these new groups as they moved onto

an existing circle. The church leader walked around the circle tapping on the ground with his staff until he heard a hollow sound. He dug into that spot and uncovered material items left there by the previous occupants of the circle. It was obvious to Mr Hirsch that the group was not comfortable until they had found and unearthed the belongings that were put there by other people. He was unable to say how the group knew that there were objects buried there or whether the new group would continue the tradition of burying material items under their newly acquired circle. This deliberate burial of material objects and the ritual of uncovering it, is evidence of the shifting landscape of Melville Koppies West.

According to Dawson, African shrines are variable and may be material objects like those described above or they may be stones, shaped rocks, gravesites and even natural features such as mountains, ponds, rivers or trees. The common factor of all these shrines is that they "embody a specific or localized representation of a larger supernatural force" (Dawson 2009:xii). There are two different types of shrines in Africa:

5.3.1 Land shrines

According to Colson (1997:47-48, 52-53), land shrines may be man-made, making them objects of human intervention. They are places of local history where offerings may be made to the ancestors or other deities for protection and invoke "the idea of continuity over several generations", for instance, *Isivivane* which are places recognised by a community where people have left stones or rocks in piles or in spoke patterns to mark places of spiritual or historical significance.

Land shrines can act as vessels, in a literal sense, for the spirits of ancestors and other deities who once lived on the land and require regular placating and

petitioning for blessings, requests for intercession, divine sanction, for rites of passage such as births and deaths and for success in hunting or planting. They are, therefore, given offerings of sacrifices, foodstuffs and other items of value. These shrines are reference points for knowledge about a group's social universe and they demarcate areas of territory. They say: "we got here first" (Dawson 2009:vii-viii).

Land shrines are usually set apart from the places of daily life and are approached with caution through intermediaries chosen for the purpose. This is because they may be dangerous if not treated properly. These spirits are approached when sanction is needed for changes to be made within the community because "they represent, after all, the continuity of human life forces, not the power inherent in nature" (Colson 1997:52).

5.3.2 Places of power

Colson makes a distinction between land shrines and places of power (Colson 1997:47) which are physical features such as mountains or rivers that are regarded as intrinsically sacred or that have power which is acknowledged by those who go there for ritual purposes. Colson explains that mountains, rock faces, caves, trees and forests are among the sites that are accepted as having the potential to become places of power and to "engage the human imagination and become imbued with sacred authority" (Colson 1997:49). Colson describes natural features that are fixed in space (such as those on Melville Koppies), showing permanency rather than transience: "here, right here, one can expect power to manifest itself" (Colson 1997:50).

Once a place of power has been acknowledged, it becomes linked to human history as the place where people found guidance in the past making it important for people who use it (Colson 1997:51). This may make the place of power known even outside of the immediate vicinity "providing those living throughout the region with common geographical referents which remained constant over time" (Colson 1997:54).

Melville Koppies has been acknowledged as a place of power, firstly by Mason's theory that the cave was used for ritual purposes (see section 5.4) and secondly by the current incumbents, the African Initiated Churches who expressed their bond to this land (see section 8.3.3). Melville Koppies is then, according to Colson's theory, both a man-made shrine as the circles are created for holy purposes by those who pray there as well as a place of power which is "guaranteed by the understanding that those on religious errands should have the right of free movement across communal boundaries" (Werbner in Colson 1997:48).[12]

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[12] This quote is from Colson and appears in Werbner, R (ed.). 1977. *Regional Cults*. London.

5.4 PLACE BECOMES SPACE: HOW ARCHAEOLOGY MAKES MEANING FROM FACTS

Figure 4: Melville Koppies Cave
Source: Melville Koppies Management Committee

On the western side of Melville Koppies there is a cave which may have been a place of power or a site of ritual activity. This chapter will use a personal interview on 12th November, 2010 with Revil Mason who originally excavated the Iron Age furnace site and the surrounding village on Melville Koppies East, to explain whether there is any archaeological evidence of previous ritual activity on Melville Koppies West. The basis for this thesis was a discussion which I had with him when I was considering the subject of sacred spaces and the African Spiritual Churches. I had observed the activity on Melville Koppies West from a distance and had been on a guided trail on the East side of the koppies when I mentioned it to him. We

then entered into a long-standing discussion about the prayer circles which he had observed all over the city from a helicopter whilst surveying for various companies and eventually we had a formal interview. The reason for this interview was that I was hoping to strengthen my argument that there is something special about this site which could be explained by the consistent use of it for ritual activity.

According to Dever in his discussion on archaeology, material objects reflect the human thought and behaviour that produced them. They are therefore symbols, visible realities that point to an invisible reality beyond themselves. The study of all artefacts can be compared to a code which must be deciphered; they are the data which is used to reconstruct the past. This data only becomes meaningful evidence when it is interpreted "in the larger framework of both their original context and our own current concerns" (1990:9-10). Interpretation involves both critical evaluation and intuition and that is why it can never be truly scientific in the narrow sense but is really just an educated guess because we can never go back in time to prove, without doubt, what these artefacts meant to their owners or makers.

Whilst Mason was excavating the furnace and the village on the eastern side of Melville Koppies from about 1963, he noticed the crack on the western side which was later called "The Melville Cave" even though it was not strictly a cave but more like a deep crack in the solid rock. The cave was situated above the stream which runs through the Melville Koppies, firstly through the western part, under the road which runs between the eastern and the western koppies, through the eastern part and into the Emmarentia Dam. The stream is now known as the Braamfontein Spruit. The crack is situated under a krans, a steep outcrop of rock which is now covered with trees and bushes but at the time of its discovery was

more accessible. It runs about three or four metres into the solid rock, is about two metres in height but is very narrow, approximately one metre wide. This would make it unlikely to have been used as a dwelling place but may have provided shelter from the elements for passing travellers.

Mason found bits of pottery and stone tools in the soil coming out of the cave and in the flat surface in front of the cave. There was very little pottery found on the eastern side where the furnace and the stone-walled villages were being excavated but this pottery, found in the cave, was similar to that small amount found on the eastern side. This suggested that findings in the cave and the stone-walled settlements were contemporary.

The excavation of the site and its surrounds were documented and a typed report in Mason's possession contains detailed drawings and lists of the contents of the cave. There was approximately five tons of ash found. This caused Mason to consider whether people actually lived in the cave but the amount of ash and the size of the site were incompatible with habitation. He subsequently realised that the ash was not produced there but had probably been brought from the smelter furnace on the eastern koppie. In the ash there were several things found. Firstly, near the end of the Stone Age, the San or Bushmen had used the cave and had left a selection of stone tools. This was, according to Mason, normal technology and was not generally regarded as evidence of ritual activity.

In addition to the stone age tools, there were dozens of fragments of pottery in the cave together with a lot of bones and teeth from many different animals such as steenbok, kudu, jackal, impala, blesbok, wildebeest, zebra, springbok, buffalo, ostrich and porcupine. Mason (2010) explained:

> … here's this extraordinary variety of bones and teeth of different animals in this tiny confined space. In addition to that, we found this really very wide variety of pottery bits. A very high proportion of them are decorated. This sort of pottery we found in the furnace … could have come straight from the furnace people and then this kind of pottery with the lines (decoration) we didn't find in the furnace but we found a lot of these [at the cave site], a high proportion are decorated bits of pottery. Now … there's one, two [counts drawings from the report] … about twenty-five different pots, vessels, and with a high proportion of them being decorated. Now, how do you explain this mass of pottery in such a confined area? … Now, normally in a collection of this kind, you find … this kind of material, bones, teeth, animals, potsherds, bits of the technology of the people, you find those in an ash-heap … at a settlement, a village site. But now … there couldn't have been a village in this cave and people couldn't have lived in the cave.

Mason considered whether this large collection of ash, different animal remains and potsherds, all accumulated in a site which was obviously too small for them to be regarded as evidence of daily living, was deposited in this confined space for a particular purpose:

> Could all these things … the pottery and the bones … have been symbols of life? And could these things have been the sort of things which spirits would need? They wanted to be associated with the life of the people, with the things they were doing, with the pottery they were making, obviously with the bones, the animals they were eating … and the ash itself could be a symbol of successful domestic life. So this is all material symbols of successful domestic life.

He regarded the pots, the ash, the bones of animals as *symbols* of daily life and food supply rather than *evidence* of daily life deposited on the site by people living there, but the position of the site, higher up, isolated from the village on the opposite side of the river, made this a possible place of ritual offerings, a land

shrine (see 5.2.1). He explained that the ancestors were said to be on the tops of mountains, out of reach, because they could not be disturbed there by the noise and business of daily life, cattle coming and going, smelting and other activities taking place. The ancestors were accessible in this quiet isolated spot and if the people wanted to communicate with them, the only things that they could take as offerings were the things that they produced, the ash from their fires and parts of the animals that they killed and ate. "So this" he said "suggests to me that this accumulation of material had been deliberately carried and dumped in this cave … presumably as an offering to the ancestors."

In order to ascertain whether this site could be compared to a similar site which showed evidence of ritual activity, Mason (2010) described how he found a site in the Skurweberg, south of the Magaliesberg:

> … must be twenty-five kilometres, thirty kilometres north east of Melville, on top of an isolated koppie, I found a very peculiar set of pottery … just below the summit, it was an isolated summit, I found a big collection of decorated pottery, exactly the same kind of thing as this [in the Melville Cave]. But also not in a village context.

The villages, he explained, were down below the koppie and therefore this set of pottery had to have been carried to this remote spot for a particular purpose because again, as with the Melville Cave, this was not a place where people could live. This, he believes, supports his suggestion that these were sites of ritual activity. The Tswana people believe that the spirits of the ancestors dwell on high places and that it is best to leave them undisturbed because they may be helpful or, on the other hand, they can be malignant if disturbed. The people who inhabited these villages in the Skurweberg were not wealthy and therefore all they

had to offer, to make a gesture to the ancestors, would be the bits of pottery that they would use in their daily lives.

Artefacts found *in situ* can give clues to their original use by examining the context in which they are found but there are also artefacts found in a secondary context which means that they were put to a different use from that originally intended. Dever (1990:10, footnote 10) calls such recycled objects "curated", a term which, he explains, is part of what archaeologists refer to as "cultural formation processes", that is, the way that debris is formed and transformed over time. These two findings of potsherds and other objects in the Melville Cave and in the Skurweberg, could therefore be called "curated" objects because they were not originally made for ritual use. The pots were made for daily living and "recycled" as ritual offerings in this context and the animal remains were put in inaccessible places, not for human consumption, but possibly as an offering to appease the ancestors who, it was believed, inhabited these places.

There are other places where ritual offerings have been deliberately accumulated and these are normally situated in high places. For instance, Mason names an ancestor shrine which he discovered in 1983 on the lower slopes of Linksfield Ridge, Johannesburg, in the suburb known as Bruma as a "model" for signs of other ritual activity. He describes the shrine as a *thokolo* which consisted of two layers of bones and potsherds which were concentrated in one area. This shrine was possibly built by Sotho people who lived on the lower slopes during the 19th century (Mason 2010; Mabona 2004:122). He describes the *thokolo*:

> The north Sotho and Tswana people make sacrifices to their ancestors and they slaughter, say, two or three different animals like a sheep and a calf and then they will cut off a leg and the skull which are edible of course and

> they'll put it articulated onto the surface of the shrine and then they will cover it up and they'll put stones on top and then they will make offerings to those stones in recognition of the ancestors, so this is well established.

Mason described other evidence of high places being used for ritual activity. He described tracks which cross the Magaliesberg and have existed since the Stone Age, up to a million years ago. These tracks lead to high places where big piles of pebbles are found. They are called *isivivane*. These piles of pebbles exist in other high places in the world, including Tibet and although their exact function and meaning is not fully known, his hypothesis is that the accumulating of pebbles could be a way of recognising the spiritual part of your culture in a material way. Instead of building cathedrals or churches, people of limited means may have wanted to make a ritual gesture so "they put a pebble on a pile and the big question is why did they put them high up?" (Mason 2010).

The interview with Mason used in this chapter has been used to ascertain whether, according to archaeological evidence and reasoning, Melville Koppies West was previously a site where ritual activity took place. Mason said that he believes that there is evidence of Melville Koppies West being the site of a land shrine in the past.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Shrines and places of power are dotted all over the landscape of Africa. These are the spaces where people believe that the connections between the living and the dead are especially strong.

I think that Melville Koppies West, having been, in Mason's speculation, the site of a land shrine, is currently in the process of becoming a "place of power" through

its repeated use for religious purposes. But this new religion is not the same as the old religion and therefore the interpretation of the land by archaeologists in future generations would differ from the interpretation of findings of the past. Whether or not the mountain is imbued with the secrets of the past and whether or not we are interpreting them correctly, Melville Koppies West and its status as a place of power needs to be preserved for the use of ritual activity by its current occupiers, the African Spiritual churches who gather there as well as in honour of those who used it in the past. The following chapter introduces the subject of the creation of traditions, a process that I believe is taking place on Melville Koppies West.

CHAPTER 6: CREATING NEW TRADITIONS: HISTORICAL AND CURRENT EVIDENCE OF RITUAL ACTIVITY AND THE PASSING ON OF THIS KNOWLEDGE TO THE FUTURE GENERATIONS

Cultural developments in recently decolonised regions such as those in Africa have stimulated academic interest in the phenomenon of the creation or invention of new traditions in these areas. The studies in this field of research document the relationship between cultural and political change and how this has influenced the use of tradition as an ethical, political and economic resource (Otto & Pederson 2005:11-13). The basis of traditions is the repetitive practice of rituals and customs within a group or community which have connections with the past and which create social institutions which serve the needs of the community or group.

6.1 CUSTOMS AND THE COMMUNITY

"Customs" refer to "social activities that are repeated and have a certain recognisable and fixed form". These may be customs such as funerals, initiations,

marriage ceremonies or ritual practices which have been recognised, acknowledged and internalised by the participants (Otto & Pederson 2005:26). Customs turn into traditions when they become subject to conscious orchestration and therefore they happen at specific times and also possibly in specific places because "[t]raditions serve to legitimate customs, providing a reflexive space that confirms customary patterns", justifying and validating them (Otto & Pederson 2005:26-27). Customs and traditions exist in all societies and this is what makes them function as cohesive units. The traditions and customs of these social units, be they rituals, narratives or rules of behaviour, are passed from one generation to the next through oral or written instructions. But these communities and customs, like nations, as Anderson (1983) says, "are to be distinguished … by the style in which they are imagined". This is because they have "finite, if elastic, boundaries" which means that they do not stand alone, stagnant over time but are adapted, innovated, invented and altered through time, in fact, "[t]he whole nature of man's being is sacrally malleable" (Anderson 1983). Referring to nations and nationalism, Anderson says that these are, in the same way as the customs and communities described above, cultural artefacts. To understand them properly, "we need to consider carefully how they have come into historical being, in what ways their meanings have changed over time … that the creation of these artefacts … was the … distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces" (Anderson 1983). These forces, in the case of African Initiated Churches, were the missionaries, the colonialists, western education, the introduction of modern economic principles, Christianity, the English language and the ideologies of the apartheid government in South Africa.

6.2 SACRED RITUALS AND THE COMMUNITY

Sacred rites are meeting places, points of liminal contact between the sacred and the profane. They are visible, tangible, repeatable patterns through which the sacred is experienced; they are ritual dramas aimed at the restoration of well-being; they mark transitions in the life cycle or they commemorate events or persons. Rites are actions of word and gesture performed in a particular place and at a particular time by a group or individual. Ceremonies are performed in conjunction with hunting, planting, harvesting, historical events, installations, pilgrimages, healing, rain-making, war, life cycles and the movement of the seasons, among other reasons. The ritual life of groups of people reveal their understanding of the origins of the cosmos, the sacred, the root metaphors of societies, birth, death and other significant moments of passage or transition.

The power of ritual has a profound effect on identity formation and the ability to relate to the world in a meaningful way. This helps the individual to understand the world in the context of common values and meanings, as the society navigates its way through social change. Ritual brings order to communication, builds a sense of security and belonging and opens people to a sense of the sacred. Sacramental rites ascribe values, a sense of meaning, to the cosmos by their repetitive, traditional nature which calls for surrender, for participation within the ritual which leads to experiences of *communitas*, a sense of solidarity which brings people into contact with their transcendent selves. The community then connects with the collective memory of the faith community (Schmidt 1988:392, 410-12, 434-5).

6.3 "INVENTED" TRADITIONS

The definition of tradition is a ritual, belief or practice which has connections with the past. This inventory of tradition, which may be passed down by word of mouth or by practice from generation to generation, formulates rules of conduct or social interaction (Otto & Pederson 2005:12, 33). The concept of "invented tradition" was first examined by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their book *The invention of tradition* (1983). In the introduction to this book, Eric Hobsbawm defined the concept of "invented tradition" as

> a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983:1).

It appears that the term "invented traditions" is therefore an oxymoron because it means two opposing things: firstly, the word "tradition" implies a connection with the past and therefore with the continuity of practices and rituals which were handed down from previous generations, and secondly, it implies innovation and progress, that is, the new, as opposed to the old.

The difference between the two definitions, that of tradition and that of "invented tradition", is the qualifier of the latter which is that "invented traditions" are based upon *currently accepted practices*, as opposed to repetitive rites, beliefs, practices and/or experiences which have been practiced over a period of time.

The "invented traditions" are therefore patterns of current behaviour which have been accepted by a community or group in order to create new traditions which will serve the present purposes of the community or group. Radical social, political

or economic change, such as colonialism, urbanism or apartheid, is normally the catalyst which allows for the formation of new "invented traditions". This happens more frequently when the strength and legitimacy of old patterns (traditions) are weakened or destroyed or are no longer applicable to new situations (Otto & Pederson 2005:14; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983:4-5) but just like the practice of old traditions, these new "invented" traditions also have the capacity to symbolise and establish social cohesion and membership of a group or community (Otto & Pederson 2005:14).

Invented traditions are, according to Otto and Pederson (2005:33), intended to be innovative forces because "they invoke the authority of the past and of repetitive action to legitimate something that in fact is new". Hobsbawm calls this "social engineering" which is "often deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation" (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983:13).

6.4 THE CREATION OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Otto and Pederson (2005:26) discuss Berger and Luckmann's concept of *institutionalisation* which they describe as actions made by different people which, by mutual acknowledgement, confirm the type of relationships that they have with one another. This, they say, is the basis for the creation of social institutions which become "the product of a shared history of interaction and exercise by their very existence [which assert] a certain control over human conduct". This, according to Berger and Luckmann, happens in all social situations which continue over time and which create social worlds that are experienced by individuals as an "objective reality … because most of the content of these social worlds *antedates* the individual's birth and conscious recollection" [italics mine]. In other words, these

relationships are made in the individual's lifetime and relate to the individual's life as it is lived, that is, the objective reality of the individual in his or her world.

The relationship between the person and the institution of which he or she is a member is dependent on three elements: 1) the human production of the institution through repetitive actions; 2) the acknowledgement of the institution by the individual and 3) the internalisation of the institution over time which allows it to direct and inform the actions of the individual. According to Otto & Pederson, this social dialectic becomes an institution only when the social world is transmitted from one generation to the next. In addition, the institution also requires *legitimation* from the new generation that still needs to internalise the social world of the parent generation (Otto & Pederson 2005:26-27).

The creation of institutions which makes our lives more predictable and secure because of their acceptance by those who are affected by them, is a continuing process because of the way that situations change and the way that we solve problems of interaction (Otto & Pederson 2005:32).

6.5 COLONIALISM AND RELIGION: AFRICA AND INVENTED TRADITIONS

Terence Ranger says that at the time of colonialism in Africa, the British themselves became the inventors of what he calls "neo-traditions" in Africa. These were taken from English schools, English manners and customs, professional and regimental traditions and were used in the colonies to define and justify their roles and their "rituals of exclusiveness" (Ranger 1983:211). They made use of the "theology of an omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent monarchy" which became almost the only ingredient of imperial ideology that was presented to Africans (Ranger 1983:212, 229-230). The administrators and missionaries referred

to the European royal families in terms which made them appear to be influential, dead or alive, just like the ancestors or God. The royal families were painted as patriarchal and benevolent providers who were able to judge what was best for their "children" in Africa.

Ranger describes how the British found very little common ground between British and African political, social and legal systems and that the British then "set about inventing African traditions for Africans" (Ranger 1983:212). These invented traditions were created not for the Africans themselves but for the British who sought to exclude the Africans and turn them into peasantry and bolster their own social status by expropriating the Africans' agricultural surplus through unequal terms of trade, tax or rent whilst entrenching their subordinate role "in a shared cultural system defined by mission Christianity" (Ranger 1983:213).

The European military, bureaucratic, educational and economical systems brought to Africa many invented traditions that had a very large influence on African societies affected by them. The Africans were offered a clearly defined point of entry to the colonial world but this entry was dependent on a master/servant relationship (Ranger 1983:227). The colonial rulers regarded the neo-traditional customs and rituals as important because they gave credibility to their claims of patriarchy and benevolent supremacy.

Africans themselves bought into this fallacy and its attendant "implications of subordination" (Ranger 1983:237) and the colonialist inventions of "tribal traditions" once again were used to elevate the status of the colonialists above that of their supposedly "grateful" subjects. This was used in the education of Africans in the mission stations at the time in order to inculcate the value of

European culture above that of traditional African culture and “to relegate the traditional values to the level of folk lore” (Ranger 1983:244).

In order to do this, the missionaries did not only enforce the liturgy of their respective churches, they also insisted that “civilized” homes were neat square buildings that were decorated in the European style and that Christian decency deemed traditional dress to be “nakedness”. European attire, they taught, would signify that the person was no longer a “heathen”. They also introduced a new conception of time which was no longer a continuous cycle of events, rituals and seasons but became a commodity that, evangelists taught, would put the neophyte “on the path to redemption when his career was objectified in time – time here being seen as a resource to be put to work in the interests of moral and material accumulation” (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986:13-14).

To show the value of the colonial “invented traditions” to the Africans, Ranger uses a missive from Bishop Willis after a visit to African converts in Kenya in 1916:

> Trained or half trained in a Mission School, the Convert returns to his native village, and is lost to sight. Next time the missionary meets him he is in self-imposed charge of a little congregation of Readers, from which in due course a little group of candidates for the catechumenate emerges…. the visitor on any Sunday to the native congregation in Kisumu will see … a drilled and uniformed congregation. Not all, but some hundreds of them, will be found clothed in a short shirt of white with dark blue facings and a dark blue spine pad; the letters, roughly worked, C.M.K. across the breast; and on the red fez cap a blue cross on white shield…. And throughout, in varying degrees of efficiency, the same thing. The colours vary, the shape of the cross on the cap differs with the different districts, but the general idea is to be seen everywhere. The interesting part of the organization is that it is entirely the native Christians’ own idea. They have designed and paid for their own uniforms. They drill and organize themselves without

> instruction or intervention from any white man; a clearer proof of natural independence it would be difficult to find (Quote from F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot[13] in Ranger (1983:246)).

This quote from Welbourn is a perfect description of the African Initiated Churches that have thrived and grown in many countries in Africa. He clearly acknowledges that these small churches were started by the converts themselves with no help from the missionaries and that they were both self-sufficient and creative, taking this new religion, originally forced on them, and making it work for their own purposes.

6.6 COLONIAL INVENTED TRADITIONS AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

The difference between colonial invented traditions and pre-colonial African traditional culture is that the colonial invented traditions were assumed to be fixed, rigid rituals which “gave reassurance because they represented what was unchanging in a period of flux” (Ranger 1983:247). The colonialists naturally assumed that African traditions were also inflexible and unchanging but this was not the case. African rituals and hierarchies were fluid and “allowed for an adaptation so spontaneous and natural that it was often unperceived” (Ranger 1983:247). African traditions were so unlike the colonialist invented traditions such as coronation rites and church services that it was impossible to compare them. Ranger (1983:248) describes pre-colonial African traditional culture by saying that, in the nineteenth-century, there was not a single tribal identity but that people

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[13] Welbourn, FB & Ogot, BA. 1966. *A Place to Feel at Home: A study of two independent churches in western Kenya.* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 24-25.

assumed multiple identities as they moved through the various stages and periods of their lives and that these "overlapping networks of association and exchange extended over wide areas. Thus the boundaries of the 'tribal' polity and the hierarchies of authority within them did not define conceptual horizons of Africans".

In pre-colonial society, there was a secure communal environment which gave each person in the group a place within the group but, in the twentieth century, the group and the position of the individual were subject to gerontocracies (ruling by the elders) which the colonial forces "invented" to define ethnicity and tribalism by "the defining of territorial boundaries, the alienation of land, the establishment of reserves" to establish order and security and enforce a sense of community by entrenching their "invented traditions" in a complex social situation which, they believed, was a result of chaotic pre-colonial circumstances (Ranger 1983:248). The colonialists, administrators, missionaries and scholars therefore invented a form of traditional African culture which they used to serve their own ends which were those of political, economic and cultural domination. In the process, they invented traditions with a dubious connection with the past but which would encourage the conscious act of handing down these traditions "as a central element in creating continuity with the past and the future" (Otto & Pederson 2005:38).

6.7 MELVILLE KOPPIES FAITH COMMUNITIES AND "INVENTED TRADITIONS"

The quote by Welbourn and Ogot in 6.5 above can be used to describe the faith communities on Melville Koppies and the traditions which, I believe, are in the

process of being “invented” by them. These people are forming small groups which are headed by bishops who are in self-imposed charge of a small congregation and who provide benevolent leadership and a focus for the group. The gatherings of these groups on Melville Koppies West will, I believe, become institutionalised (as it is described by Berger and Luckmann in 6.4 above) as coming generations legitimise them. This is because they are formed by actions which are acknowledged by the participants and confirm the type of relationship that they have with one another as well as between the groups. This is shown by the groups’ care and consideration of one another and of the environment that they inhabit for their prayer meetings. In addition, this gathering of the faithful is a “product of a shared history of interaction” which surely exercises “a certain control over human conduct” (Otto & Pederson 2005:26).

The description of the uniforms in Kenya in 1916, as described by Welbourn and Ogot, are remarkably similar to those worn on Melville Koppies and by all African Initiated Churches that I have seen. There is a predominance of blue and white but “the colours vary, the shape of the cross on the cap differs … but the general idea is to be seen everywhere”[14] (Ranger 1983:246). There are two keys to understanding the issue of uniforms. The first is the colonial emphasis on military and ceremonial regalia and the second is explained by Sundermeier (1998:10) who says that outward appearances and signs are just as important in African culture as internal but, according to him, the external takes priority over the internal. This makes clothes and the things around us significant because “[c]lothes make people

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[14] Quote from F.B. Welbourn and B.A. Ogot, *A Place to Feel at Home* (London, 1966), pp. 24-5.

in Africa too, in the village, in public life and at church.” Clothes and external appearances are not simply the expression or mark of belonging to a group, they are also signs of identity, convictions, ideologies and beliefs, shown by the priests who came out of the Holy Place in “dressed in linen … and the harmony between trumpeters singers was such that only one melody could be heard as they praised and gave thanks to Yahweh … and they praised Yahweh for he is good, for his faithful love is everlasting” (2 Chronicles 5:11-13).

Like the description of pre-colonial African traditional culture by Ranger (1983:248) above, the members of these groups do not come with a single fixed “tribal” identity but come with multiple identities, such as those imposed by the colonialists, for instance “Zulu” or “Sotho”, those which define what they do, “domestic worker” or “librarian”, those which define who they are, “mother”, “sister” or “father” and those which describe where they come from and where they go “home” to at the end of the working year. The groups themselves, as the overlapping networks to which they belong, are shifting continuously and people move between groups and come and go as they will.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The gathering of people on this mountain on a Sunday at a particular place and time are providing the basis of the invention of tradition as described by Ranger and by Otto and Pederson. It is very obvious that the formation of the prayer circles and the rituals which are practiced in them are patterns of current behaviour which have been developed and accepted by these communities to serve their needs which are those of people living in a culturally barren world and who have been affected by the vagaries of migrant labour and the complex

political situation of this country. The rituals such as the long walk up the mountain, the wearing of uniforms, the bending of knees in the circles, the removing of shoes, the songs and prayers of the groups gathered for prayer, the overnight stays on this mountain and the joy and acceptance of strangers and followers alike, are “invented traditions”. These new traditions have strong connections to the past, be it the Christian past or African traditional culture but have been created by these people, in their lifetime and for the future of their children who may use this mountain for their own religious rituals.

The thesis now shifts from the theoretical to the empirical. The following chapter deals with the actual interviews which were conducted on the mountain with the members of the churches.

CHAPTER 7: REPORT OF THE INTERVIEWS HELD: EVIDENCE OF THE SACRED STATUS OF MELVILLE KOPPIES TO THE PRAYER GROUPS WHO UTILISE THIS LAND FOR RITUAL PURPOSES

An ethnography is the final product of research. It is a written account of the subject of an anthropologist's fieldwork. This includes both the facts of the subject of investigation, the deductive, as well as the inductive described by Peacock as "guided by theory and other mental constructions of the researcher" (2001:109). Bernard (1988:195) describes "inductive" as looking through field notes looking for patterns and themes and "deductive" as testing these patterns and themes against the field notes. This chapter will report on the actual interviews conducted, the deductive, and the analysis of the data collected, the inductive, will be the subject of Chapter 8.

7.1 GROUNDWORK TO PREPARE FOR THE INTERVIEWS

To gain access to the site, I spoke to Wendy Carstens, chairperson of the Melville Koppies Management Committee (MKMC) at the Annual General Meeting of the committee on 15th August 2009. She put me in contact with David Hirsch, CEO of the Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies. Hirsch has been working with the prayer groups for over 20 years and knows the site and the prayer groups intimately. Hirsch invited me to attend a representatives' meeting taking place the following morning, Sunday 16th August, 2009. These meetings are held every second month to discuss matters of common interest such as circle maintenance, applications from new churches for circles, security of the site and relationships with the authorities such as the Johannesburg City Parks Department (JCP) and the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD). At these meetings, representatives are chosen to the MKMC and a committee is elected with a chairman and a secretary who takes minutes.

The meetings take place at Circle 35 which is high on the hill and is regarded as a "visitors" circle because it is not used by a specific church but is available for anyone to use. I attended that meeting mainly as an observer and was given a list of the circles, their numbers, the names of the churches that use them and the contact details of their leaders. David introduced me to the group and explained that I wanted to do research with the churches. We agreed that I would make a presentation at the next meeting and then a decision would be made whether to give me permission to do my research or not.

I attended the following meeting on Sunday 11th October, 2009 together with Robson Ndlovu, my translator, and made a presentation to the group. Ten

representatives were present and my presentation was part of the agenda of the meeting[15].

This is part of the report I wrote about my presentation:

> There was a prayer and then the minutes from the last meeting were read. Then I was introduced and made a presentation with Robson's help for those who did not understand or preferred to ask questions in their own language.
>
> Parts of my presentation:
>
> *I don't want my study to be just a lot of words that have no purpose. I want this study to make people aware of the importance of maintaining this ground for future generations.*
>
> *The role of land in this country has always been a very sensitive issue and so, to understand the importance of this land, I must talk to you and see what you feel when you come onto this land to pray. We do not want a block of flats to be built on this land and the way we can prevent it is to understand the importance of this land for your prayer groups.*
>
> *I believe that people in the city have left the rural life where people lived with their families and their tribal members and have come to a place where they must form new roots. You have formed these prayer groups to create that lost sense of ubuntu. You take care of each other even though you are from different backgrounds. In these prayer groups, both ubuntu and spirituality are thriving.*
>
> *I want permission to talk to you alone or in your groups to understand what you feel when you come onto this mountain. I want to know how you see your groups and this place in the next generation.*

[15] See Appendix C for an example of the minutes taken at these meetings.

> David Hirsh, the CEO of the church groups, added that the document that I will produce can be read by anyone. It can also be used in negotiations with the city council.
>
> After my presentation, a man stood up and spoke about how he felt when he came to the koppie. He said that as he approached the mountain, he knew that God was with him and when he got to the mountain, he knew that he had God in his heart. This was a great comfort to him. He gave a short explanation of how he felt.
>
> Then there were some questions to Robson and it seemed that they thought that the interviews were to take place then and there. We explained that I would make an appointment with each one and they could see me alone or with their groups.
>
> Then Leva's son (Leva is a relative of Robson's who I have known for many years) stood up and said that he gave me 100% support. The others agreed and it had a very good outcome. They were willing to speak to me and Leva's son made me promise to come and see him. He and another man said that they wanted to talk to me.
>
> We stayed for a bit longer. A man and a woman arrived and introduced themselves. They were from a group in Braamfontein and wanted to move to Melville Koppies and asked if it was possible to use one of the circles. It was decided that the representatives would meet with the elders of his group to discuss the matter.

This meeting was a preliminary meeting to ask for permission to conduct interviews with the church groups. This permission was granted and I started the actual interviews in the new year (2010).

7.2 INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The schedule for the interviews conducted is as follows:

Date	Circle no	Number of people interviewed
28/02/2010	15	20
02/05/2010	26	5
24/05/2010	21	7
08/08/2010	7	4 chosen for the interview from a group of 14
08/08/2010	35	9 representatives interview including David Hirsch
15/08/2010	38	3 chosen from a group
29/08/2010	25	1
29/08/2010	8	5
26/09/2010	24	1
17/10/2010	11	2

Please note that the number of people interviewed at each meeting is not necessarily accurate because people were continuously arriving and leaving throughout the interview.

There were several meetings that were arranged but did not take place for various reasons, among them, bad weather (the winter was particularly severe that year), people not keeping appointments and groups going to funerals. Also, the groups are in flux and so people come and go and change their cellphone numbers. I tried to always make an appointment but if the group with which I had made an interview did not arrive, I gave anyone else who wanted to talk to me an opportunity to do so.

The interviews were conducted close to or in the prayer circle where the group or person being interviewed was a member.

7.3 DESCRIPTION OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

I introduced myself at each interview with a short explanation of what I was doing and what I hoped the outcome would be. I asked permission from those present to record the interview. This was granted, sometimes after a discussion with those present.

Circle 15

The circle was a long walk from the gate. We walked there together in a long line. The circle was big, well established, concreted and had good shade and big rocks suitable for sitting on the perimeter.

The people were very welcoming and spoke easily and were relaxed. There was a definite division between men and women who stood on opposite sides of the circle. I sat in the centre of the circle and spoke to the group. I addressed everybody but the women were reluctant to talk. Eventually they spoke when I addressed them directly but even so, they were reticent. When the interview was completed, the group broke up into men and women. The men started singing and the women then joined in. They made me promise to come back to them again, it seemed as though they enjoyed being interviewed and being able to put their feelings into words.

Young people seemed more relaxed with only women and no older men. They were animated. When more members came, we stepped back and then the prayer meeting started with singing and dancing. The men beat their staffs on the ground

to make a beat and there were drums and clapping. One senior woman joined in the dancing but the rest stayed outside the circle of men.

Circle 26

The circle was high on a ridge and looked east over the nature reserve. There was shade and places to sit. The interviewees did not remove their shoes because this was not regarded as a prayer meeting which would start later.

The leader of this group came directly from a burial society meeting (unconnected to the prayer group) with his wife. There were three younger men also present. This was a very difficult interview because it was obvious that although the group was grateful for the space that they had on Melville Koppies, their bishop felt that this place was “second best”. He had valid reasons for this, namely, that there were no facilities like toilets and water and that when it rained they were unable to hold their services. He said that they were too poor to afford a building and that is why they came to Melville Koppies. Some of the others were more concerned with the group/community relationships than with the sense of the sacred on Melville Koppies.

Circle 21

This circle is on the south side of the hill among the grasslands which lead down to the suburb of Westdene. We entered the area from the southern end and walked to the circle which looked down towards the suburb. There was very little shade but as the afternoon progressed, the sun moved behind the hill and provided shade. There were four women and three men. The bishop lit a candle and put it in a hole in the rocks to burn during the service. He was very gracious and welcomed

us. He believed that we would bring them blessings and that I should come again one day “not for work” but to take part in their prayer meeting. He said that anyone was welcome to join them for prayers. He made sure that everyone, including the women, was given a chance to speak and he contained the interview to 15 minutes so that it would not interfere with their prayer meeting.

Circle 7

The circle is down next to the river close to the cave that Revil Mason spoke about. The area is densely wooded and there are large rocks and long grass. It seems peaceful even though it is very close to the road.

The circle is clearly demarcated and had obviously been in use for a long time. The entrance to the circle is marked with rocks and poles and the little wall around the circle had been painted together with the rocks. There is a pole in the centre of the circle. This group was already praying when we were brought to them by the coordinator of Melville Koppies West who had an aunt in this group. It seemed to be mostly women but there were children and one or two men. The aunt chose three women to speak to me and they came out of the circle to speak to me while the service continued. The singing can be heard in the background of the interview.

Possibly because there were no men in our interview (except for the translator), the women were quite happy to speak about their feelings. When I had finished talking to them, I encouraged the coordinator to share his feelings about the place. When coaxed, he was eloquent and spoke with a deep concern about the land.

Circle 35

This interview was conducted at a meeting of the representatives at a visitors' circle, high on the hill. My interview started before Hirsch arrived to lead the meeting and then continued after his meeting had finished. There were no women present except for myself. Even though these meetings of the representatives started with a prayer, they were not treated like a prayer meeting and so shoes were not removed before we sat around in the circle. The mood was relaxed and people spoke freely, especially when assured that they could express themselves in their own languages. This visitors' circle is only used from time to time so it is not in the same condition as the circles that are used regularly.

One of the representatives listened intently and then turned the question onto me. Instead of me asking them how they felt, he wanted to know how I felt when I came onto the mountain. He was, in a way, testing me, finding out something about me before he revealed what he was going to say. He asked me if I pray and whether I go to church. When I answered appropriately and he was happy with my answers, then he announced that he was going to tell me "The big thing" which was, quite simply, that he believed that when we come to this place, we receive grace and that when we are here, "our lives are in the hands of Jesus Christ".

Circle 38

This circle is placed on one of the main paths up the hill from Beyers Naude Drive so the walk there is steep. The circle is small for the number of people who belong to the group. The service had already started when we joined this group. The group were preparing to go to a funeral of a member of another church and that is

why they started early. I had made an appointment with the bishop so he left the group to talk to us. I was always aware that we were taking up his time so I made the interview as short as possible. He agreed to us talking to other members of the prayer group and, in order to minimise disruption to the service, he sent two women and one man to talk to us outside the circle. During our interview, the sounds of the group singing can be heard on the voice recording. We took a picture of the second interview but there was no proper opportunity to take a picture of the Bishop.

Circle 8

This circle is high up on the hill, is concreted but is very small in comparison to other circles. It has good shade and is well used but also well tended.

I made an appointment with the bishop of this small church. I met them at their circle and found that they had come, not for a prayer meeting, but only to meet with me. That is the reason that they were not in uniform and did not remove their shoes when they went into their circle. The men spoke freely and the women were more reticent but they eventually felt at ease and spoke to me.

Circle 25

After the interview with Circle 8, we walked down the hill. There was a group praying at Circle 25. We did not want to disturb them but one man came out of the circle to speak to us. After the interview, he went straight back to the circle and we were unable to speak to him again or take a photograph. But the interview was well worth it. The group seemed very cohesive and so we did not want to intrude.

Circle 24

I made an appointment with the leader of the group who did not turn up for our first meeting. This was a second appointment with him. We found the circle which was unpaved and dusty. There were several young men sleeping, none of them were eager to speak to us. I found out afterwards that they had been on the mountain the whole night and were therefore tired. We waited for the leader but he did not arrive. We interviewed Raphael who came to the circle to wait for the leader but just as we were interviewing him, a woman arrived who told us about the previous week's incident when the Metro police came and chased them all away. There was a discussion about the incident. The woman saw Hirsch talking to the Metro police on that day. Most of the people from the circles went out of the reserve except for one circle that refused. This disturbed the interview but there was still some benefit in speaking to Raphael. He told us about people coming to Melville Koppies from all over the world for healing, especially during the World Cup in 2010.

Circle 11

We went to meet someone who did not turn up. Then we met Solomon but we had already interviewed his group and I did not want to disrupt it again. As we walked up the mountain with Solomon, we came across two people sitting in a concrete circle. The pastor was one of the leaders whom I had met before at the leaders meeting. He was the one who had questioned me at that meeting. Solomon asked them if we could interview them and they agreed.

The pastor gave us two readings from the Bible to look at, Mark 16:15-20 and Romans 10:9-13. He insisted that these must go with the interview. He also told me that people had come to the koppie from different churches such as the Roman Catholic and the Anglican churches and from different countries, he mentioned America and Afghanistan. He believed that he had healing powers and he told us how he goes to sleep at a place further down the valley where people gather for healing rituals. He believed that his hands were like magnets.

The ten interviews that were conducted provided the data for this study. There were both formal interviews where appointments were made and informal interviews which happened along the way. Both types provided valuable insight to the views and opinions of the members of the churches on Melville Koppies West.

7.4 A NARROW GATE AND A HARD ROAD

7.4.1 Crossing the threshold

Van Gennep describes the process of moving from the profane to the sacred as consisting of three different stages, the separation from the previous world, the transition to the next and the rituals which incorporate the person into the next world. These he calls *preliminal rites*, *liminal (or threshold) rites* and *postliminal rites* (1996:532).

As the members of the churches who pray on Melville Koppies West come through the gates and walk to their circles on Sundays, they cross through these three stages from the profane to the sacred. Firstly, they walk or get out of their cars, taxis or buses, and move through the gate and up the hill. The steep pathway up the hill passes by a big tree where people greet each other and change into their

uniforms, carrying out the preliminal rites. Then they walk slowly up the hill towards their circles along the pathways, moving into the liminal rites because "[w]hoever passes from one to the other finds himself (sic) physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he (sic) wavers between two worlds" (Van Gennep 1996:532). This walk, I believe, is that place "between two worlds" in this three-tiered process which is re-enacted each Sunday at Melville Koppies West.

Finally, they arrive at their circles and before they pass through the boundary signs, which may simply be stones put vertically into the ground "ceremonially placed by a defined group on a delimited piece of earth" (Van Gennep 1996:531). They enter their circles through one entrance marked by two stones. If a service is in progress or about to start, they remove their shoes as God instructed Moses on Mount Horeb by saying: "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5-6), and, in one case, a woman crouched down and touched the stone at the entrance with her forehead.

This process was described by a member of Circle 26:

> Really, the point is this: if you are a Christian, really, if you are a Christian, if you know that you are calling Jesus' name here in your heart, when you come this side you got something that is filling you, a spirit, the spirit is coming to you to say that here that now I'm somebody, I'm not the guy who was down there, now I'm somebody, my spirit is changing, you see, you feel that … Jesus do you hear me? He can say "Yes I hear you". If you feel like that some … Jesus it is feeling in my heart, inside your heart …

7.4.2 Togetherness

When the members have passed through the first two phases and reached the third phase, that is, their prayer circles and their communities,

> the ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined and "structural" type; he (sic) is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents in a system of such positions (Turner 1989:95).

The members believe that their prayer groups are not just places where they find a sense of belonging but that the whole area on a Sunday becomes one large community of people who are together even though they are praying in different circles. Turner explains that, in the liminal period, in which I understand this community to be at this time, the society is unstructured or partly structured, a *comitatus,* "a communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual leaders" (1989:96). These leaders may be the bishops or they may be the leadership of the cornerstone of their belief system, God Almighty and His son, Jesus. At a leaders' meeting this was expressed by one of those present:

> And what I found out, even if we are [in] different places like there is a circle here, circle there, circle somewhere else, but most all of us togetherness in this place. We just love each other. We can move to our place where we worship to go to another circle, to do talk about God. Every time say God maybe something like they pray for the children or someone is sick, we come together to pray for that person and then God hear us very easy because you know, some of the people God hear them quickly, some of them He takes time but it depends how you communicate with God, you see (Leader talking at Circle 35).

When the members were dressed in their uniforms, there was a definite physical division between the women and the men who sat opposite each other on the perimeter of the circle. This was not the case when they were not in uniform and the feeling was more casual. In fact, shoes were not removed when the group met specifically to talk to me rather than to hold a prayer meeting even though they were in their circle. The children present were allowed to play in the circles or to take part in the rituals if they wanted to and they were treated with benevolent indulgence by the adults, especially the women.

7.4.3 Reflections on the interviews

The interviews that took place inside the circles were generally more formal than the interviews which took place outside the circles. This may have been because there was a formal request for the interview and an appointment was made and therefore there was an expectation that this was an official meeting and was to be treated seriously. It seemed that people were slightly wary of talking at first, especially the women, but this could have been shyness or a sense that talking about feelings was an unfamiliar thing to do in a mixed group. After the introduction where I explained why I was there, the men were more forthcoming but generally, I found that this kind of interaction was unusual for them and there were times when there were long silences because this was unknown territory.

One of the circles that I visited is placed on one of the main paths up the hill from Beyers Naude Drive so the walk there is steep. Before I got to the circle, I noticed that people had left their shoes a few metres from the circle. I removed my shoes and tried to walk up to the circle but experienced great difficulty as the path is very rocky and my feet are very tender and unused to walking over rocks. It caused

great hilarity because no-one else had this trouble but for me it was a rite of passage because "[t]here is something about bare feet touching where other feet, of varying degrees of physical and spiritual cleanliness, have trod a moment before and for countless moments before, into such an ancient past" (Turnbull 1992:267).

This small incident made a big impression on me because it, firstly, made me humble in front of the group, showing that I am vulnerable and it impressed upon me that I was not part of the group but an outsider who came to "do research". Ellen (1984:102) encourages researchers to become as "human" as possible and to try to do what insiders do in order to fade into the background. This, Ellen says, may include learning new skills or overcoming self-consciousness, exactly what this incident taught me. Even though the groups made me feel welcome, the researcher is always an outside observer and there always will remain a degree of detachment because the research and therefore the researcher are not permanent but only there for a specific time and reason (Steyn 2007:39).

When I started the interviews, I was anxious, not because I thought that I would be treated as an outsider but because I was afraid that I would do or say the wrong thing that might unknowingly be regarded as offensive. I wanted to show the groups that although I understood that I could never be one of them, I respected the awe in which they held their religion and their rituals. My translator and companion on this journey, Robson Ndlovu, who had been a member of one of the churches in the past, helped me with this and advised me as to the proper protocol to use when approaching a group.

7.5 CONCLUSION

Meeting these people, observing their closeness, hearing their words, and sharing a small part of their lives was a life-changing experience for me. I am honoured and privileged to have been allowed into their world. As I walked up the hill with them time and time again, I felt that liminality that Van Gennep speaks about and eventually, after I became known to them, I was greeted as if I was an old friend who was coming to visit. As I climbed up the steep hill with the mountain dust in my hair and my nostrils, I began to understand why they came to this place – it is unlike any other place for them. It may look the same as other places and it may not be unique in any other way, but for these groups, this place is their special place. Only now do I understand why one person said:

> I'm full with that loveness that I'm with God now. I'm in the presence of Him now because I've chosen this mountain. Because I've chosen here, He's with me now. So, this mountain to me is like a holy place …

The following chapter is an analysis of the interviews that I held with these groups on their mountain, in their environment.

CHAPTER 8: ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY SOURCES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The crux of qualitative analysis is the definition of themes or patterns and the organisation of these into coherent categories that summarise and bring meaning to the text. Frechtling and Sharp (1997) explain the role of the analyst:

> It is the analyst's job to weave the various voices and sources together in a narrative that responds to the relevant evaluation question(s). The more artfully this is done, the simpler, more natural it appears to the reader. To go to the trouble to collect various types of data and listen to different voices, only to pound the information into a flattened picture, is to do a real disservice to qualitative analysis (Frechtling & Sharp 1997).

This chapter will analyse the empirical data recorded during interviews with the prayer groups who go to Melville Koppies West to pray. The data will be analysed in themes suggested by the data itself and the concluding chapter will reiterate the assumptions of this thesis and measure the findings against these assumptions.

The data that has been collected for this thesis contains both group and individual opinions. As the interviews were conducted either in a group situation, with an individual or with representatives chosen by a leader, it is therefore important that, in the drawing of conclusions, it is not forgotten that the data is relative to the person him/herself and his/her personal experiences and position within the group.

In the process of analysis, it became clear that there were two higher order themes that placed the data into two distinctly separate categories, data regarding religion which I have called “The Sacred” and data that deals with the profane which I have called “The Pragmatic”.

Please note that the quotations that are indented have been transcribed from the actual interviews.

8.2 THE SACRED

In order to analyse the data that I have collected, it is appropriate to reiterate my hypothesis for this thesis which is that Melville Koppies West is in the process of becoming a sacred space for the African Initiated Church groups who have used this site for prayer meetings since the 1970s. I believe that this land and its developing traditions is becoming a place where people are overcoming their “rootlessness” and are creating a sacred space which can be passed on to future generations. Urban dwellers have left the rural life, due to many reasons including the political situation in South Africa, where people lived with their families and their tribal members and have come to a place where they must form new roots. These prayer groups have been created by these people in order to recover that lost sense of community. The people in these groups take care of each other even

though they are from different backgrounds. In these prayer groups, a strong sense of belonging, which is so central in African spirituality, is thriving in a world which is, to them, culturally barren "where rapid urbanization and industrialization have thrown people into a strange, impersonal, and insecure world where they are left groping for a sense of belonging" (Anderson 2005).

8.2.1 Spiritualism

Spiritualism, described as a "human depth experience", falls into a category that includes mysticism, transcendence and altered states of consciousness. Krüger (1995:274) explains that these terms refer to "the need or drive evident in all known human societies to go beyond everyday cognition so as to achieve a higher, deeper, purer or truer vision of the world … and one's own place in it all".

Many of the interviewees felt that this land stimulated them to experience a dimension that was lacking for them in other places. They felt that, once on the koppie, they were protected from harm, surrounded by people who loved them and were in the presence of their holy God with whom they felt directly connected. They attributed this to the fact that they were free to worship on the koppie with others who were like-minded and that they would not be disturbed as they would be if they were in a school or a hall. They felt that, in this place, they had status, they were "somebody", not just another person in the street: "I'm talking about the spirit sometime. He talk to me alone, he doesn't talk to anybody else". It seemed that they believed that their individual prayers were heard and answered if they prayed in their circles. One person believed that Jesus communicated directly with him on the koppie and gave him a message that something at home required his attention:

> When I was the whole night praying, tomorrow morning, Sunday, about six or seven o'clock there is a voice to me saying: "Please … at home in your house there is something that is so, so, so, so" … when I phone or I wrote a letter, sure … [it] was the same thing that voice was telling me.

They were not always able to describe the concept of spiritualism but more than one person described it as a "pressure", an exigency which compelled them to take action, to answer the call from God:

> That's what I really like about this place. It gives me pressure with God … I feel I have the pressure when I come here, I feel *something*, something is nearby, it's there in me, it's there. When I come I just go up the mountain here, I feel something is there, it's just inside, it's there. That means I'm not lost to God, I'm just with Him, always, around this mountain.

This quote expresses the feeling of being "special" that praying on the koppie gives to this person. He expresses the feeling of belonging, not just to a group, but also to world just beyond his grasp and an understanding that gives another dimension to his life. Another interviewee confirmed this by saying "to praise Him, I choose this place because it's nice to me, I'm free and the whole spirit is around me".

Pilgrimage is a journey towards the Centre, the meeting point of the heavens and the earthly planes where the pilgrim ascends, both geographically and spiritually from the profane (Cohen 1992:50). An interviewee described his journey up the mountain:

> I'm telling you the thing I'm feeling, it's difficult to explain to you but there is something. I know that immediately I come out of the car and walk up the steps to that mountain, I'm feeling a nice spiritual, a nice "cool" up in my mind that now it's time to speak to God, it's time now to speak to Jesus.

Spirituality is a theme that many acknowledge together with the liminal feeling of passing from the profane to the sacred. Many expressed this by describing the walk up the mountain from the gate. The path is steep and rocky but this is not of importance to them and one person laughingly told me that it was her "gym" when she felt down and needed fresh air and exercise.

8.2.2 High places/the mountain/in nature

All of the interviews were conducted *in situ*, either at the circles themselves or close by. Sheldrake (2001:3) explains that our perception of the world is dependent on the system of signs and symbols that exist within our society and that this includes "the fundamental beliefs about God or about the nature of the human condition". The world around us is not just data but is a human construct that has meaning and therefore "[w]e do not dwell in pure nature but in 'the realm of mediated meaning'"[16] which is what anthropologists call "culture".

The impression that the interviewees have about the mountain is garnered from the Bible, particularly the New Testament. They regard the concept of a high place as especially holy based on stories from the Bible. Only one person compared the significance of the mountain with any African religious belief:

> … we don't want to choose somebody's house or choose somebody's space, we are going to come here "Let's go to God's place" because … only God who is seeing that "My trees are there, my people are there and my animals are there". So when I come here I find a big snake going that side I must leave it that way. When I see where there is a hare or whatever, what

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[16] Quoted from Clifford Geertz. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books: 4-5.

> animal is around here, I must leave it like that because God has chosen it to be here.

The presence of certain animals such as a snake is reminiscent of the African belief that, for certain groups such as the Venda, Zulu and some South Nguni, the ancestors are able to appear in the form of an animal. The Zulu, particularly, associate a snake with a visiting ancestor (Hammond-Tooke 1993:154) which may be the reason that this person regards these animals as sacred and not to be disturbed.

Stories from the Old Testament validating the sacredness of the mountain abound. An interviewee explained his bond to the mountain and how it related to his faith:

> We follow everything according to the Bible but our purpose to come and pray at the mountain. We believe even from the Bible, even Moses went to the mountain … whenever they wanted to talk to God, they went to the mountain so we choose this place as the mountain, it's natural, it's got everything, trees, everything. We believe that God is going to understand us better when we are at the mountain.

This statement was repeated many times in different guises. Basically, it forms the foundation of the attachment of the prayer groups to the place where they meet and commune. The person who made the statement spoke for his group but he also spoke for others who find comfort in the times that they spend in this place.

The connection between Jesus and the wilderness was expressed by several people who used it to validate their own pilgrimage to the koppie. This was confirmed by an interviewee who used its imagery to strengthen the bond that he had both with Jesus and with the mountain on which he prayed:

> We were chosen by Jesus and we chose him. You remember that he stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, praying. He was enjoying that because he has been sent by God, by his father. We are his followers. That spirit of praying by the mountain is still on us, that's why we are here. We love this place. This place has very big Holy Spirit.

An interviewee also mentioned how Jesus prayed on the mountain on the night he was arrested before his crucifixion and found the disciples fast asleep (Mark 14:37). She said that this mountain symbolised that scene for her which reminded her of the fact that "the spirit is willing enough, but human nature is weak" (Mark 14:38). This, she said gave her "strength to keep on praying for ever and ever".

Nature plays a part in the way that people relate to the koppie and the fact that it is a sanctuary in the middle of an urban area that reminds them of God's creation is significant. One person said that when she walked on the mountain, she could "feel those trees … just feel that air around that mountain" while another interviewee described the mountain as a nature reserve, "a place … God created with his hands because he doesn't dwell in a place made by hands, people's hands. He dwells in a place where he created, where his presence is". This "realm of mediated meaning" truly finds its place among these people at this time in history and hopefully for the future.

8.2.3 Power

The concept of personal political power is not a desirable feature of Judaism and Christianity because it can lead to corruption. In fact, it is actively discouraged both in the Old Testament, "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:5), and in the New Testament, "How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. [4]Blessed are

the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance" (Matthew 5:3-4). In the Magnificat, Mary says "He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly" (Luke 1:52). These verses show the value of the traits of humility, gentleness and obedience to God which, they say, will be rewarded by the gifts of both the Kingdom of God and the earthly kingdom.

In a startling contrast, exactly the opposite was the case with many of those that I interviewed. Power, as expressed by the interviewees, in my opinion, locates their beliefs closer to the concept of the energy of life in African religious belief than in the beliefs of Christianity and Judaism, as one interviewee stated:

> Before, they didn't allow them to make a fire on the mountain but now they've allowed them to make fire because they believe in using water and fire to get their power.

This statement is reminiscent of sacrifices and offerings, the cornerstones of African Religion which are used to maintain and restore the power of life (Mageza 1997:201). Another interviewee described how he felt after a night of prayer:

> After spending the whole night in the bush, praying, tomorrow morning I feel like a born again, and again. I feel strong, I feel closer to God … I feel I can do anything from here.

The interviewees who made these two statements above, I believe, situate their understanding of power deeply within the concepts of the life force of African Religion.

Sundermeier (1998:184) describes the life force that must, in all cases, be carefully protected and nurtured because "[w]here the expressions of life are weakened, danger lies ahead. Every effort must be aimed at strengthening life, at gathering strength, so that … the course of life may continue". He explains that strength and

power are the elements that profoundly influence ethical behaviour and that an increase in personal power presupposes ethical behaviour (Sundermeier 1998:184, 189). This is in strong contrast to Judaism and Christianity that believe that personal power leads to the abuse of that power.

Both Mageza and Sundermeier say that prayer in African Religion is a means of restoring balance and unity at times when life is threatened or weakened, “demanding restoration of all that is good” (1997:195). Mageza describes prayer in African Religion as an act that emphasises the importance of relationships, including that between the visible and the invisible worlds and between the individual and the community. This is expressed by an interviewee who said:

> It is important to come to this mountain for praying because it gives us power and strength and we pray as a family.

The fact is that, for these people, there exists a strong link between the spiritual and the material worlds and, by praying, this link brings a sense of power to those who partake of it, especially when they do so as a group.

The need to acquire power from the mountain was also expressed by one interviewee who is well known for his ability to heal those who are physically or spiritually sick. This gift of healing powers, he believed, was given to him by praying on this mountain:

> I’m going to put my hands on this man’s head and pray for him … We believe when we come to this place, we receive grace. He asks me to join and pray on the mountain. We believe that if you are here, our lives are in the hands of Jesus Christ. So, if I’m here I’m seeing Madam not feel alright. I’m coming here every Sunday, I pick up. When I leave here, I’m strong, always.

8.2.4 Pathways and intersections

The interviewees who come to their Sunday services describe stages or states that they pass through, both coming to the koppie and going back home. As these people make their individual yet collective ways towards the sacred centre, their journeys "make up a crisscross pattern, not a tangle of disparities" (Victor Turner in Morinis 1992:viii) because they are all intent on the same purpose.

They express the impetus that drives them to come to their church groups on this mountain, sometimes in graphic detail. One person described this experience as a needle that prods him to go to church on the koppie, the place where he feels he belongs. The metaphor of the needle shows the strength of the feeling that he has:

> So, if I am at home, I feel that I'm missing something like somebody's got a needle make me to get out, go where you belong. I belong here. I belong here to worship God so that is very important, we feel very, very grateful with our God, to praise Him, to worship.

Another interviewee described how he feels when he comes to church and when he does not come:

> I feel relaxed, I feel like I've done something that I wanted to do … so when I go home I feel like I went to church … I feel very sad if I don't come to church, because I feel like there's something that I didn't do. So if I came as I am here today, when I go home then I feel good, comfortable.

I once asked a woman bishop whether she felt "special" when she arrived at the koppie on a Sunday. She said that when she wakes up on Sunday morning, before she gets out of bed, she holds the thought of the mountain in her heart just like she held her first born child in her arms for the first time. When she arrives at the koppie, she feels like she is coming home to her mother. She described the koppie

as if it was the breast of a woman and said that all who come here to pray are suckling from the same breast as if they were all of one mother, one family. This powerful image encapsulates the devotion of the people as they move over this land to arrive at their destinations and as they move away from the centre back to their daily lives.

One man described the journey he takes to get there:

> Sunday morning I'm different when I'm thinking that I'm coming this place. Even when I'm driving coming here. I don't even talk to my family, there's a spirit which is guiding me that now I'm going to church and when I'm here … I'm full with that loveness that I'm with God now. So … in the morning when it's Sunday we get ready ... For me, when I wake up in the morning, when I'm thinking of coming here, even if I'm down, my spiritual is down and I've got stress or anything, I wake up and if I just come here and enter the gate it feels better.

This journey towards the centre, the meetings that take place on the mountain and the dispersion of people in the late afternoon on a Sunday show that these times and this place is regarded as sacred. This is an affirmation of Turner's paradigm of paths crisscrossing each other intentionally rather than randomly, as one person said:

> Yes even as we are sitting and waiting for other people to come and get to church, our minds are too relaxed … because we know that there is nothing which is going to interrupt us here. There is no noise, no any-thing. People who are walking in here, they are going to just settle here, they are doing the same thing as we are doing here … so that's why we like it here because the minute we walk up there in the mountain, we know that now we are in a place of a good spiritual for us.

8.2.5 Healing

Pretorius and Jafta (1999:212, 222-223) say that the members describe their African Initiated Churches as *iinkonzo zoMoya* which means spiritual churches. The names of their churches show that their roots lie in early Christianity and their bishops are often regarded as charismatic and able perform miracles such as healing as they have been raised up by the Holy Spirit. These healing ceremonies may use *impepho* and candles which are also used to show the presence of the ancestors and of God. This was confirmed during my interviews by a woman who said:

> … and then you find something … very easy when we need … to heal, is here, just you dig … there are some herbs that we are using, yes … very good. Sometimes we can't go to the hospitals or to the doctor. [It] is the healing … and the praying.

The healing may be physical or spiritual and may be performed by one person who has the gift or it may be the whole group that prays together for healing for a member of their church or even for people that they do not know:

> Sometimes I find that someone drives me mad and then I make an accident. That thing is getting maybe on my mind the whole week and I can't focus on praying but when I come here and tell, start to telling people, they can just tell me no, it was just part of life, it was an accident. That thing is healing me. So most of the time when I come here, we got the main point that we are going to help each other.

This quote above explains that healing for these churches is more than just curing physical illnesses, just as Jesus cured "diseases and painful complaints of one kind or another, the possessed, epileptics, the paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them" (Matthew 4:24). In this case, the interviewee found himself in a

situation where a problem was interfering with his daily life. By sharing the problem with his group, it became clear to him that this problem was "just part of life" and that others helped him to see this.

One person, a healer himself, told me how happy he was when he was ill and his group came to pray for him at his home:

> … last week I'm not coming here because my leg was sore but I'm praying the whole day in my bed … If I'm not coming here, I'm staying in my house, I'm not feeling alright … the people from church is coming later on to come to pray [for[me … And then … is praying in my room.

Just like the woman bishop (section 8.3.4) who described the mountain as a mother suckling her children, a man compared this mountain to his relationship with his parents who were not just caregivers in the physical sense but also in the sense of taking care of him and helping him to understand the world around him:

> So this place for us is the main thing, it's like our father and mother … if you have got your mother who likes you and your father who likes you, every problem you have you are supposed to report it to him. "My father, they do this and this at school [to] me". "Who is that child?" … So this place for us is like that. We come here to report most of our problems.

I heard from an interviewee that strangers from foreign countries also came to the mountain to be healed although he was not specific about how they were healed, whether through the laying of hands, praying or the practice of rituals such as *impepho*. He believed that they were sent to this place by God who told them to come here:

> Even white people, they used to come here asking for prayers. Some they come [from] as far as Holland and England. I remember there was one old lady … they carried her here, she couldn't walk. After praying, she was able

> to walk again. We don’t know who brought them here, we thought it was God who sent them. There are a lot coming here in the time of World Cup, they say they come from England, Holland, everywhere, they come here, so we pray for us then go feeling better. So I think they are believe that these things they are doing here are from God. So that’s why they are trusting God’s power from us that if you stay, the Bible said you can cure anything.

According to Pretorius and Jafta (1999:224), these healing ceremonies are also done in order to heal the environment. Although interviewees mentioned the fact that being in nature was beneficial to them and they appreciated it, they did not mention that they would pray for the benefit of the environment.

It was also unclear whether the healing processes included material things, as one person mentioned “we can’t say to you we are going to give you money but we are pray for you for that thing [that you want]”. But some believed it would help them to achieve things in this earthly life: “Even if I don’t have a job, if I come to this place to ask God: ‘I don’t have a job’. Then next week coming few days, I’ve just got a job” and one person even mentioned that God “can even reply you same time if it’s an urgent thing”.

8.2.6 God/The Bible

The belief in God and the Bible are fundamental to these churches and are the foundation on which they are based. This was shown over and over again in the interviews that I did as people told and retold the fact that they depended on the Bible in the same way that they needed water to drink:

> Because I like Jesus’ name, I like to read the Bible, I like to listen to the people when they preach, I like the people when they do something like in Jesus’ name that’s why I always think … why the Sunday is very far? It’s too

> far. When it's Sunday, you know, I'm very happy … you know when you are thirsty you say, I'm thirsty, I must drink something … that is going to … get right in that thing that is making me thirsty.

They use the Bible to guide them in ethical and moral conduct in their daily lives "in most cases requiring, for interpretation, neither formal theological training nor commentaries" (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:224) as two interviewees said:

> The Bible is the main source, the main thing that brings us together 'cos we read each and every thing in the Bible. We don't have our own story or whatever that we practice. It is only the Bible that we go through, which brings us together and there is no, not even one day that we might come here and go without reading the Bible. The Bible comes first.

> Every situation that we go to, it's in the Bible so we got the answers, we got here and there, this and that that might correct us from the wrongdoing.

It is also clear that these prayer meetings are regarded as holy channels "through which God speaks to the people today, as in ancient times" (Pretorius & Jafta 1999:224):

> So by that we think coming here every Sunday, preaching His ways to the people. There's some other people just came here for to just hear God's words. I think we are chosen to do His job to the people because as we read the Bible it tells us there's some times which … God will come to the people and take them to heaven. So what I think our job here in the earth to do His job well and preach to the people to know about God. So, like, to help each other … to do this job … to each and every one of us.

This harks back, once more, to early Christianity and to the role of Jesus' disciples who were chosen by him to spread the Word and the way to reach the Kingdom of God. There were several interviews where the concept of being "chosen" was expressed, either in the Old Testament way where God chooses his people or in

the New Testament way where Jesus chooses his disciples. There was also an interviewee who used the word "chosen" in connection with the land itself:

> This is like a chosen place for us to praise the Almighty, to honour him and this means a lot to us because in the meantime this is the only place that we can come all together as we see there are so many people on the mountain here. So it is the place where we praise, we worship our Almighty.

Several people spoke about praying "in secret" on the mountain. There may be various reasons for this, for instance, they may have something personal that is difficult for them to share with others or they may just need a time alone away from the groups which can be noisy. I did not ask them why they did this because it would not have been appropriate to do so in front of the others but they felt that the koppie gives them that freedom to find a place that is quiet for silent prayer, as three interviewees said:

> I like to be here 'cos this place … you can do whatever you can do here. It's very quiet here, there's no disturbance even if you have to do your secret things or you want to talk to God, your God, in secret. You can come here, there are so many places which you can go and pray and no one sees you, no one can come and disturb you … so you can go and talk to your God privately and, I can say that it is very nice.

> If I'm at home, if I've got my problems which I can't maybe solve, I can come here alone to pray ... if I've got the time I can come here and pray because at home I can find that I don't have that space to pray… but if I can come here, I'll be free and I'll be alone.

> You need a quiet place where you meet your God and talk to him because like in town there the people can disturb you so this is the quiet place where you can say whatever, every secret from you to God so this place is very important … even if you have night prayers can come and pray and talk to your God. That's why this place is very important.

8.2.7 Night prayers

The issue of night prayers is fraught with problems. The code of conduct drawn up by the leaders with the help of CEO David Hirsch (Appendix B) specifically says that night prayers and vigils are not allowed on this land. This is to satisfy the neighbours who have complained about the disturbance of all-night singing and about the danger of fires. But more importantly, there are groups of people who are not part of the churches who come to the koppie at night and damage the environment by littering and setting the anthills alight. They also practice rituals which involve the slaughtering of animals. During my research, I witnessed the destruction that these groups of people wrought as well as the anxiety that this caused to the church groups who were concerned that they would be blamed for this.

Even though, technically, the churches should not be holding night prayers, they still continue to do so. It appears that these gatherings are of great importance to them:

> We do this sometimes, Friday or Saturday, when we sleep here, the whole day, the whole night we are calling Jesus' name. Tomorrow morning, you have an answer, you get an answer … everything that you want, everything that you are looking for, everything that you find, you have it because you are praying with your spirit, really, to call Jesus' name.

The church groups hold these all-night prayer meetings when they feel that there are pressing problems to be solved or that interventions are required for situations that are beyond their capabilities to solve. One person mentioned that these meetings were held to get strength to overcome evil:

> … sometimes … on Saturday night we come here to get power to fight the demons. So our spirit is to fight against the demons so we've got these angels to fight against the demons.

The all-night meetings are often combined with a fast that is believed to focus the mind on the matters at hand:

> If they want to fast, they go to the mountain because there's no disturbances. Even those who want some prayers we go to the mountain, we pray the whole night.

According to my interviewees, some of the reasons for holding these night prayers are: personal problems, to pray for the church, the unemployed, people with marital problems, people who want to marry or simply

> we sometimes come just to pray, maybe we fast and just praising. We sometimes come because it is our duty to pray for each and everyone wherever in the world. The sick in hospitals, we pray for them, those who are sick at home, we might not see, we might not meet but in prayer, we meet them ... that God might intervene and then help ... we come together and pray because our weapon is prayer, we don't have any other weapon, only praying.

My impression is that the groups would like to hold these all-night prayer meetings when they feel it is necessary but are dissuaded by the code of conduct and the Melville Koppies Management Committee who emphatically forbid them due to the danger of fires and ecological damage. Further research needs to be done on the subject of all-night prayer meetings among these prayer groups and others.

8.3 The Pragmatic

This section will cover the issues that are not connected to the practice of worship but are nevertheless important as they deal with the comfort and safety of the

groups, among other subjects. All of these issues were brought up by the interviewees.

8.3.1 Security and conservation of the land

In a personal interview with David Hirsch, CEO of the Melville Koppies West church leadership on 16th July 2013, he informed me that security patrols have been held in the past but have been suspended for the meantime although there is a movement to resume them. According to him, the City Council has promised badges giving patrollers some credibility but it has not yet supplied them. If there are security concerns, this is communicated to the prayer groups through the bi-monthly leaders' meeting.

The MK Management Committee has a conservation team which concentrates mainly on the eastern and central side of Melville Koppies but clears litter on its route for the monthly trails over Melville Koppies West twice a month. It also does weeding at the site of the cave and the kloof and organises cleaning parties whenever there is an opportunity to do so[17]. The committee of the leaders of the church groups also deals with litter which is a major problem.

There is a problem of vagrants living on the koppie but they have not caused any problems for the church groups. Mr Hirsch goes to the koppie one day a week to work on various things like clearing paths, building steps and taking care of erosion. He also said that there is a work group that is formed from time to time to take care of maintenance of the site.

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[17] Personal communication by Wendy Carstens on 12th August, 2013.

Two of the main problems that are faced are: 1) informal church groups who do not conduct their services on a circle, and 2) church groups of 100 or more people who cannot fit onto a circle. Both of these problems cause damage to the environment as the vegetation is trampled. The informal groups are offered an unused circle while negotiations are held with very large church groups to solve the problem.

8.3.2 Buildings and cost considerations

Most of the interviewees preferred to be out in the open for prayer meetings except for one group whose bishop expressed the wish for a building and the concomitant luxuries that it can bring such as running water and toilets. This is understandable because these facilities are necessary for human dignity, especially during all-night services. This group expressed regret that it was not able to rent or buy a place for its services and seemed to regard the koppies as "second best" because it meant that they were unable to afford something better "because we have nowhere to go to … but if we got something, we never come here in the bushveld, we are going to the churches, we are going to pray there". Surprisingly, this was the only group that mentioned the fact that they were unable to hold services when it rained even though this affects every group.

There were others who said that they were unable to rent a place due to financial considerations. This included the fact that some members were unemployed and they did not want to embarrass them and that some were low earners who could not afford to pay:

> Because I'm old and then we got no money to pay the rent … most of us, we work as domestics and then we got no lot of money to pay rent and the

> transport. You just walk when you come here because you are [living] here around …

One interviewee said philosophically that it was more important to know God than to have the money for a church and that his faith made him believe that his group would be taken care of:

> You know, on this earth it's not easy to build a place like a church, needs lot of money … but that … doesn't bring us down to not having money because to know the God I think it's very important than having money. Then God knows what we are doing here then I think maybe one day He can make His plan about us.

Those interviewees that favoured being outside on the koppie, and not in a building, did so for two main reasons, firstly that they would not disturb anyone with their singing and their drums, and secondly, that they would not be expected to vacate the space at a certain time:

> Also, it's nice, you know, in the open because we are not crowded or we are not in somebody's place that at a certain time we must leave but here we are free, you can do whatever you want, you can come in the morning and finish late in the afternoon, you see, so I think it's something that is in us.

It seems from their comments that, other than building a church, classrooms at schools are the alternative to being outside. A problem with the classrooms was that their time was limited which was a disadvantage for those who were not able to arrive at the exact time that was allocated to them but, more importantly, they felt that these classrooms did not have the desired ambiance, as one interviewee explained:

> In classes, when I'm praying I feel like there is something that is disturbing me so that I cannot concentrate on what I'm doing. If I'm in a class, I feel like this prayer is not going anywhere, it is just wandering around.

8.3.3 People from other countries/places

Xenophobia means "fear of strangers". This fear has been a facet of the South African landscape since the riots in 2008 and continues to foment in places where foreigners live amongst natural born citizens. The church groups on Melville Koppies do not discriminate between South African citizens and people from other countries or other places in South Africa. In fact, it was made clear to me that even colour was no barrier to membership of these groups:

> … anybody who is coming in the churches, a white or … whatever colour, if he's here, he's our brother, sister, mother, child. We don't feel say no … No, we are now one, one nation.

It was acknowledged that people who belong to these churches may be from different places and different cultures but these traits are regarded as part of the diversity of human beings rather than a divisive factor:

> Because here, we are coming from different places, different cultures. If we are together, we make just like family, friends, love … because everyone from his culture, from his land, he's got something. If we are together, we are talking, after that we are … praying, just like that.

One person described how people from other countries and other churches came onto the koppie to pray and how they were accepted into his group:

> … two months ago, one day I'm praying here, one lady from America, one from Afghanistan … two weeks is coming here … the whole day … And then I tell him that if he want to speak, ja, speak because that woman was [from] Anglican Church and Roman Catholic, they are different but they

> was here … Even the bible it say everybody when you pray, there's no difference.

There was a strong feeling that the groups were unified in the way that they accepted strangers from other places and my interviews did not uncover a single incident where people were judged by the fact that they came from other provinces or even from other countries. I felt that they were proud of this inclusive attitude that all were welcome to take part in their prayer services and share their troubles even though this may not be the case outside of this environment:

> When someone is coming from the other side, Transkei, some from Zimbabwe, all over, but if we are here we are one family. We are tending to a problem, someone's problem like we are equal because he is a church member.

> … there are many groups around the mountain, you see. Those groups are different names but we believe in one [thing]. Most of the thing we believe is one it's only that we can do it maybe differently or wear different clothing. We come from different places but the main aim is one.

> … the friendship that is being created here at the church … here there is the spirit of God, Oneness, there's togetherness so we are a family … We find each other.

One lady explained that the children who lived in the "location" were unaware of this place and what happens here and that she had fetched them from the "location" and brought them to the koppie. She described how happy they were and how they wanted to come back to the koppie because "we know in the location there are different cultures …. But when we come here no people to say you are Malawian or where, where you come from? We know we are different cultures here". Her purpose, I believe, was to teach these children that it is possible to live together with strangers as long as they shared their faith in God.

8.3.4 Sharing and caring

It appears from the interviews that these churches understand that they do not exist in isolation because "[i]n the context of Africa, peace is essentially linked with community … Peace is not possible on your own … Peace is thus not a gift, but an assignment, a social duty, a religious exercise" (Sundermeier 1998:178-179). Peace in this instance means that the groups must respect each other and, together with respect, they need to support each other as if they were kin. I believe that they do and this is confirmed by one person who said: "We are all combined, we agree on everything, we do everything connected. There's no one who takes his or her own, we do everything connected".

An interviewee described how his group unites with another group in times of sorrow to pay for a funeral for a member of the other group:

> Today … we are going somewhere, there's an invitation, there's somebody his parents died so we go there … we invite each other from other groups, you see, just to help each other with some money. As you see, when somebody dies there's lots of money. So after that thing has passed, we just gather and do something like a ceremony to help.

This shows that not only do they give money for the funeral, they also perform a ceremony for the bereaved which shows that the assistance they give to others is both material and spiritual. Not only do they unite in difficult times, they also share faith-based events and joyous times:

> … most of the important thing is that … we gather and share ideas about belief, about believing in the spirituality. So for us to gather in this place is a very important thing because we share ideas, we share everything, we share spiritual, we share love, we share everything ... maybe like now its coming to Good Friday we want to go somewhere to have maybe a

> Passover with the other churches, we gather here, we donate money, we make available transport to take us there … everything we do, we are supposed to meet here and make a plan to do it and always if we sit down and talk with that problem, we always succeed.

The feelings that were expressed regarding relationships with others either in their own groups or between groups included consolation, togetherness/closeness, love, comfort, safety and friendship as expressed by one interviewee who said:

> It seems like you are close to your best friends because we are brothers, best friends. I'm very comfortable when I am next to him because I know nothing else can happen, nothing bad can happen to me … we feel comfortable, we know in the place of praise … you feel happy, you forget about any other things, any other worries. I might pick up my worries when I'm going back home but when I am here, I don't have any worries, I'm just … just praising … that's good enough for us.

One person compared his group with his family and described how his parents would listen to him and advise him. His group, he believes, performs this function:

> If I've got the problem, I talk with all these people and they can try to help me with whatever they can do … so that's why I say that these people of the church, to me is like my father and mother because I report everything which is happening in my life.

The way that these groups interact with each other and also how they relate to each other within the group shows a depth of concern that normally would only be experienced among family members. I believe that this is how they regard each other, not simply acquaintances who meet once a week for prayer services as do many people who belong to formal church congregations but as family members who would stand by them through thick and thin. These communities have developed a communal lifestyle rather than simply a church.

8.3.5 The role of the researcher

Appendix B is a record of the minutes taken at a meeting of the leaders on 14th April 2013 at Circle 14. At this meeting, I gave a report back on the progress I have made on my thesis. I explained what I had been doing since I had last attended this meeting. Then there were questions from the leaders, some challenging, that were related to religion rather than to my thesis but it appeared that the leaders were satisfied with my answers. Hirsch thanked me and told the gathering that I was recuperating from a serious back operation which was the reason that I found it hard to climb the mountain that day. Totally unexpectedly, the leaders held a healing ceremony for me and prayers were said for my recovery. It was a very moving moment for me and I was hard-pressed to keep my composure. I understood, in that moment, how the members must feel when they share their problems with their groups. It was touching and made me feel privileged to be among people of such compassion.

My role as researcher has been surprisingly easy and I had full co-operation from the church groups who warmly welcomed me and shared their stories and knowledge with me during the interviews.

In a surprise move, during a leaders' meeting at the beginning of my research, one of the leaders challenged my personal belief system by asking me what I believed in and whether I pray. I felt that this challenge was important for him and might have meant the difference between being welcomed and being tolerated or even rejected. Happily, my answer reassured him and I was granted free access.

During the interviews, there were several times when my role as a researcher was discussed. They felt that my work was important and one person believed that I

was chosen to do this work by God. It was first mentioned in a very early interview. The leader of this group said that I had come to bring them blessings and that I should come one day "not for work" but to take part in their prayer meeting.

Two interviewees said, rather hesitatingly, that they also believed that I was sent by divine intervention. One admitted that he did not know why I had been sent to do this work but he still welcomed me:

> We don't know exactly what brings you here, it's only the Lord know why you are here. I think maybe your job what you are doing, I think … God … chose you to do this job so for doing so, as you come to us today, we are welcome you, we wish to tell you what do we think about this place.

This was reiterated by another interviewee:

> I think that what you are doing is very, very important. To me as I understand now what you are saying and maybe God chose you to do this.

David Hirsch once told me that these people who pray on this mountain have no voice and no friends in "high places". He does his best to keep this land secure for them but more is needed, as an interviewee said:

> … this place if we can have somebody who can maybe manage to keep it for us so that … nobody can throw us away from this place, it can be very, very good.

8.3.6 The future

In section 2.2, I use a quote from Mbiti that explains the concept of time in African Religion. He describes time as having "its own short future, a dynamic present, and an experienced past" (1969:22). Sundermeier (1998:25) also quotes Mbiti who drew attention to the African understanding of time "which does not grow into the future, but into the past" and that, in Bantu languages, there is little reference to

the future but many subtle meanings referring to the past. He explains that people take their bearings from events of the past and therefore seniority becomes more important than youth and people gain dignity as they "grow into the past".

I noticed that questions that I asked regarding the future seemed to be difficult for them to answer and I would have to prompt them to answer it by adding "do you see your children praying here in the future?" or "what would you like to see in the future here?". To this latter question, one reply was "No, I just tell you nothing, to prayer here", meaning that this person had nothing to say except that he wanted to pray in this place.

Another answer to this question was: "In the future as I'm looking, right now, the municipality wants this place so I don't know for now if we can get somebody like you, for example, to help us keep this place it will be a good thing for us". This person's answer, I believe, was based in the "dynamic present" and, while the person acknowledged the future, it was a "short future" rather than the Western idea of the future. When I asked a group "And how do you see your children in the future? The generations coming? Do you still see them using this place?", their answer was:

> We never know exactly but they are, they are supposed to, but if other plans, well, up to them to decide but they also coming here but if they might have the power to build a church or whatever, they can, they can. They will do that.

The answer was noncommittal as if the future would take care of itself and was not the concern of the living. The reason might be that people find it easier to relate to people who are living or have lived in the past rather than those who may come in the future.

One answer to the question “When you look into the future, what do you want to see sitting around here?” was almost ignored by the interviewee who referred to the past and the present rather than the future in his reply:

> Most of us here, if we are looking to the future, even I can look before the time I came here, I see a nice progress of the church specially even in the church members which are inside.

These answers, I believe, refer to Mbiti’s concept of time which does not grow into the future, but into the past (Sundermeier 1998:25).

I asked the interviewees how they would feel if the council decided to take this land away from them to be used for other purposes. This appeared to cause them some distress but their answers showed that they believed that they would have to abide by the decision. Nobody said that they would fight for the right to use the land even though one young person expressed anger at the suggestion of losing the land. Most of the responses, though, showed a fatalistic acceptance of the status quo as if these were forces beyond their control, reminiscent of a master/servant relationship, as four interviewees expressed at different times:

> So if we come here one day we find a notice board like our bishop said, we are not going to feel happy because we don’t have that money to pay rent … We were in other place before we came here so one day when we go there, there comes the notice that we are not allowed to be here.

> If somebody is coming to chase us … we can’t say no because it will be the law, but we’ll be crying in our hearts.

> I going to be sad but I’ll respect them as the Bible told me that I must respect the kings of that time … the chiefs, the president of the country, I must respect them.

> You know, it's very hard to us because, you know, we like to be here but the only thing that we know, we know that we have no allowed into the government to be here otherwise next time if we come here they say: next time or next when you come here we found the board here that says no-one to be here in this mountain. So we know that but we can't do anything but we can feel hurt because we … all our heart is here to say: you know I'm going to call to Jesus to say "Jesus we are here, we are your people, we are your sons so we don't know what is going to be with … we like to be here, to come and pray every Saturday and every Sunday but we know that there is a law here, the government or those people who are high in the government, they can make something, put the board there and they can say: "You gentlemen who are preaching here, this place is closed".

This attitude confirms Anderson's (2005) statement that, in the main, these churches accept the status quo and that "political elitism is still a feature of South African Pentecostalism in the 21st Century, with its roots in a marginalised and underprivileged society struggling to find dignity and identity".

8.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has exposed the heart of this study. It is the place where we need to *listen* to the words of this community and analyse impartially what we find to uncover the significance of what the interviewees intended us to hear. The data collected from the interviews has been sifted and shifted and read and reread until patterns were discerned that told the story of the people who belong to these churches. Even though patterns have been drawn from the data, it is still necessary to reiterate that the interviewees are individuals who have expressed their own opinions even though they may have been in a group.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

> "Anthropology is an academic discipline, yet it insists on learning in the dust and confusion of life" (Peacock 1986:113).

The heart of this thesis is the interviews that I was privileged to hold with the prayer groups on Melville Koppies West. They took place "in the dust and confusion of life". As we climbed this mountain, I, the stranger amongst them, discovered the richness of religious ritual and belief among the members of these African Initiated Churches, and they, comfortable in their own surroundings, taught me how it feels to be a part of this remarkable union of religion and community. This was never a meeting of equals; it was a meeting of the knowledgeable and the neophyte, those who belonged and myself, the Other, who came with open hands, asking to be let in, for a while.

The purpose of this study was to find out whether my hypothesis, that the western part of Melville Koppies is in the process of becoming a sacred space for the church groups who use it as a site for prayer meetings and that traditions are being developed there, was true or not.

In order to do that, it was necessary to follow the correct protocol to get permission to conduct a qualitative research project which consisted of semi-structured interviews with the members of the church groups. These interviews took place on the koppie at or around the times that the churches met for services. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and then read over and over again so that they could be analysed according to the methodology adopted for this thesis.

In addition to the interviews, I attended several meetings of the leaders of these churches and spoke to the convenor, Hirsh who gave me information about the history and day-to-day operations of Melville Koppies West.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament were examined to provide a background of land issues in a religious framework. The role of high places was emphasised in order to connect it to the use of Melville Koppies West as a sacred space. Land and power in Africa, and particularly South Africa, was investigated to understand why it has played such a pivotal part of the history of this country and how it has affected people such as those who pray on this mountain. African Initiated Churches, their history and the influence of South African politics on them were studied and their place in today's world was described.

The archaeology and history of this area was explored in an interview with Revil Mason who spoke about his ideas regarding the ritual use of this land through the ages. This was compared to other religious places on the landscape such as shrines and places regarded as places of power that have an effect on those who use them for ritual purposes. The invention of new traditions and the creation of institutions,

by newly-formed social groups such as those who pray on Melville Koppies, was examined using Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), among others.

The limitations that were experienced were, firstly, the question of language. Although most interviews were conducted in English, I believe that the interviews would have been easier to conduct in the vernacular as most interviewees would have been more comfortable expressing their feelings in their own languages. Secondly, I was very careful not to disrupt the services and so there were times when the leaders of the groups would choose one or more people to leave the prayer meetings to attend to my questions. While this provided me with what I had come to find, it was not ideal for those who were missing this very important part of their week. There were also limitations when the weather made it impossible to conduct interviews (and services, for that matter) and they had to be abandoned.

According to Peacock (2001:120-121), "[c]ulture is the central concept of the interpretive perspective. Culture is shared meaning. To comprehend meaning, one must see the world as others see it, to comprehend experience in terms of the other's frame of reference". This, he says, is the purpose of interpretive ethnography which is much more than just "findings" presented as fact, substantive hypotheses or generalisations, but is the vision of the interviewees' existence, interpreted through the sensibilities of the ethnographer "in order to inform and enrich the understanding of a third party" which, in this case, may be the authority who may want to use this land for purposes other than those so important to the church groups featured in this study. The ethnographer's role is not just to describe what he/she saw but to capture, through interpretation, the interplay between the subject and the object of the research (Peacock 2001:121).

Taking this all into account, I believe that my hypothesis that Melville Koppies West is in the process of becoming a sacred space for the church groups who use it as a site for prayer meetings and that traditions are being developed there that will take these groups into the future, is true. Although there are practical considerations to deal with, such as the provision of water and toilets, I heard the voices of the people that I interviewed say that this land is precious to them and that they would be devastated to lose it for the purposes of prayer and fellowship. This cannot be ignored and I hope that this research will be considered if ever there is any doubt that the churches will be able to use this land.

While this research has covered mainly the use of this land by prayer groups during the day, there appears to be a need to incorporate ways to enable people to hold night services on this land that they so value. This subject is fraught with problems as the area is very ecologically sensitive and is regarded as unsuitable for both security and ecological reasons. This may be an area of further research by both anthropologists and ecologists.

There may be many obstacles to overcome for these church groups in the future but they have overcome many hurdles in their past as South Africa has changed from an exclusive society to an inclusive one. Melville Koppies West must become a place where the rights of people and the environment are both regarded with the same degree of importance because “on the mountain Yahweh provides” (Genesis 22:14).

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

From: David Hirsch <davidhirsch@telkomsa.net>

Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2009 11:32 AM

To: Barbara Shaw

Cc: Norman Baines; Wendy Carstens; David Dickinson

Subject: Use of research

Dear Barbara Shaw

The Melville Koppies Management Committee (MKIMC) have given permission for you to conduct research, under the aegis of UNISA, among the congregations who belong to the Association of African Independent Churches at Melville Koppies (AIC), subject of course to their agreement.

The MKMC may find your research useful in our efforts to ensure benign use of Melville Koppies Nature Reserve. Accordingly, we would be grateful if you could request permission from UNISA to give the MKMC access to the research once it has been completed.

Specifically, the MKMC would like five hardcopies of your research paper, plus an electronic copy, permission to quote from your research and an undertaking to present your paper to a gathering organised by the MKMC.

Kind regards

David Hirsch

Member, MKMC (liaison with the AIC)

APPENDIX B: CODE OF CONDUCT

Voluntary Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies

Imithetho Yezivakatshi

- **Ningabasi umlilo**
- **Akuvumelekanga ukuba kelendawo ebusuku**
- **Linganqamuli izihlahla njalo lingwembi imithi**
- **Lingahlaneli egangeni,sebenzisani isiguqo sezivakatshi**
- **Ninganqamuli izihlahla njalo lingembimithi**
- **Ningabulali izilwane, nezinyoni neziduli**
- **Ningangcolisi, ninga shiyi lutho, ningathathi kumbe ukubulala omatshe ningalayithi amakhandlela, ningabulali amaglasi**
- **Wonke amabandla asebensiza lendawo kufanele bathumele ilunga elizomela isonto emhlanganweni we Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies**

Melau ya Baeti

- **O se ke wa besa mollo**
- **O se ke wa ba gona mo thabeng boseqo**
- **Dikopano di tswanetse ho sebedisa dibaka tse tshwauweng hore ke 'Sebaka sa Baeti' ho rapela.**
- **Le seke la re epa ma mehlare, leseke la rema mehlare**
- **Le seke la bola ya di phoofolo go ba di no nyana**
- **Lesekala tshilafatsa, leseke la sia letho, leseke la pa melete**
- **Le seke la namela di paeseke**

- **Dikereke di tlwaetseng ho sebedisa sebaka sena di tswanetse ho romella moemedi dipitsang tsa Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies**

Rules for Visitors

- **Do not make fires**
- **Do not stay at night**
- **Do not gather (more than two people) except on concrete Visitors Circles**
- **Do not cut trees or dig up or damage plants**
- **Do not kill or injure animals and birds or damage termite mounds**
- **Do not litter, leave things, dig holes, move rocks, make clearings, break glass or burn candles**
- **Do not ride bicycles**
- **If you belong to a group that meets here often, send a representative to the meetings of the Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies**

For more information or to report people disobeying the rules please contact:

Bishop Johnson Ncube 076-687-5078 (Chairman) or
Mr David Hirsch 011-643-3293 or 078-995-5597 (CEO) or
Mr Nhlanhla Mdluli (Secretary) 072 754 8415

These rules are authorised by the Melville Koppies Management Committee Melville Koppies Nature Reserve is owned by the City of Johannesburg and administered by Johannesburg City Parks and the Melville Koppies Management Committee
(Non-profit Organisation Registration 038-274-NPO) Chairman: Ms Wendy Carstens)

APPENDIX C: MINUTES OF MEETING 14TH APRIL 2013

The Association of African Independent Churches of Melville Koppies

Minutes of General Meeting at Circle 14 at 11 o'clock Sunday 14th April 2013

Present: Mr Cain Mpofu (circle 1), Mr Enock Nkomo (9), Mr Wilson Moyo (11), Mr Remember Ncube (21), Ms Maria Tshukudu (22), Mr Admire Ncube(23), Mr J K Mafuman, Mr L B Mkize (25), Mr Nelson Khumalo, Mr Johnson Ncube (chairman), Mr Joel Monanma (27), Mr Leson Ncube (28), Mr Godwin Ndlovu (34), Mr Vusi Zwane (35), Mr James Kodwa Mafumane (56), Mr Carlson Ncube (81), Mr Innocent Ndlovu, Mr Canaan Khumalo, (86), Mr Johnson Ndlovu (86),Mr S Moyo (87), Mr Elliot Moyo (87), Mr Nhlanhla Mdluli (88) (secretary, MKMC), Mr David Hirsch (CEO, MKMC), Ms Barbara Shaw (guest)

Prayer: The meeting opened with a prayer by Mr Enock Nkomo

Minutes: Mr Nhlanhla Mdluli read the minutes of the last meeting on Sunday 10th February 2013

Welcome to Ms Barbara Shaw: Mr Johnson Ncube welcomed Ms Barbara Shaw to the meeting. Ms Shaw has attended our church services and talked with many of our members over the past few years. In the past, she assisted Professor Revil Mason, the archaeologist whose discoveries of the remains of Stone Age and Iron Age people at the Koppies resulted in the declaration of the koppies as a heritage site.

Ms Shaw's thesis: Ms Shaw talked about the study she is making of our churches, especially about land – beginning with the Promised Land of Israel in the Old

Testament, the Kingdom of God in people's hearts in the New Testament, and the recent history of our own churches here at Melville Koppies.

She hopes it will help our churches by spreading knowledge and understanding, especially among other people who use the koppies, Johannesburg City Parks officials, city councillors, urban planners and the Melville Koppies Management Committee. She plans to complete it before the end of the year. Our members responded with questions about land and the Bible and expressed warm appreciation for her work. Mr Joel Monama led a prayer for Ms Shaw, who recently suffered a serious injury to her back.

Gathering of sangomas. Mr Vusi Zwane said on Saturday 23rd February about 23 sangomas had gathered on his circle. Members of his church tried to chase them away but they refused to leave, saying Mr Hirsch had given them permission.

Eventually they went somewhere else. Mr Mdluli said it is hard for us to chase away sangomas and also the koppies are an open place. Mr Johnson Ncube said we must change the notice so that sangomas are not allowed on our circles. He said we have no power to chase them away but they should be allocated circle that are not being used. We must not fear them because they are part of us. Mr Enock Nkomo said he is concerned about keeping the koppies clean.

The code of conduct is our protection Mr Hirsch said that one of the sangomas had phoned him to ask permission and he had explained to her that anyone may visit the koppies, *provided they obey the code of conduct*, which he read to the meeting.

He agreed that we should try to persuade people to use circles that are not being used. However, any circle can be used by anyone if the church that looks after it is not present. These rules protect our use of the koppies, which are a nature reserve and heritage site. *If too many people do not obey them, we could lose our right to worship on circles at the koppies. That is why all church members, at all times, should explain the code to people they see on the koppies.*

New churches should register their circle with our association and send two representatives to our meetings.

New notice boards and enforcement: Mr Hirsch said the Johannesburg Zoo has been combined with JCP, which will put new JCP signboards up in the Koppies. After this is done, enforcement of rules by JCP and the Metro will be much easier.

Firebreaks Mr Hirsch said he would try to get firebreaks made this year because when most of the koppies burn every year, the ground is bare when the rains come and the fine soil washes away. He said circle 86 have been making big fires at their circle.

Theft of the Cemetery Fence. Mr Hirsch said he has been working at the koppies with a helper every Thursday morning. They saw men stealing pieces of the cemetery fence and reported it to Mr Zolile Mpophoma, Project Co-ordinator at the cemetery. They all drove to the scene but the men disappeared. Mr Mpohoma said they had arrested three men before but the police have not told them what has happened to the case.

Work parties: Circle 28 organised by Mr Levison Ncube for 21st April.

Circle 2 Mr James Kodua Mafumana 5th May [this work party was later postponed].

Circles 88 and 34 organised by Mr Godwin Ndlovu, Mr Cannan Kumalo and Mr Innocent Ndlovu.

[Both work parties were well attended and did a lot of work]

Closing prayer: The meeting closed with a prayer

Next Meeting: Sunday 9th June 2013 at 11 o'clock at circle 14