

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SACRED PLACES IN THE SELECTED
INDIGENOUS CHURCHES IN EKITILAND

BY

DAVID OLADUNJOYE ALABI
B.A. HONS (Ibadan), B.Th. (UMTC, Ilorin), M.A. (Ibadan)
Matriculation No: 83946

A Thesis in the Department of Religious Studies
Submitted to the Faculty of Arts
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

of the

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

September, 2012.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this thesis has been read and approved by me as having fulfilled the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Old Testament Studies. The research was carried out by ALABI, DAVID OLADUNJOYE in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Supervisor

Dr. O.A. Dada
B.A. (Hons) Ibadan, M.A. Ph.D (Ibadan)
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Religious Studies,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to,

The LORD God Almighty, God of perfection who saw me through and fulfilled His Word, perfected His Will and accomplished Ways for my life, and

to my charming princess, my wife and companion in the vineyard, Mrs. Janet E.W Alabi (a.k.a. **Precious**) and our children.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I give all glory, honour, praises, worship strength, power and majesty to the LORD God Almighty, Father of all creation for the grace, mercy, peace, favour, divine strength, provision and journey mercies He granted me while pursuing this research. Father I say that You are good, great and gracious to me.

I am highly indebted to my academic mentor and indefatigable supervisor, Dr. O. A. Dada for his meticulous scrutiny, challenges, scholarly and excellent handling of this study. I deeply appreciate his constant interest, guidance and thorough supervision all along without whose valuable advice and criticism I could not have achieved this success. Your untiring supports and academic contributions have made this thesis a reality. May God bless you and your family members in Jesus' blessed name. Amen.

I equally express my profound appreciation to my co-partner, companion and helpmeet in the vineyard, my wife, Mrs. J.E.W. Alabi (a.k.a. **Precious**) for her precious contributions, supports, prayers, faithfulness and commitment while I was carrying out this research. Indeed, you are a faithful and loving wife. Also, I wholeheartedly appreciate my children Emmanuel O. Alabi, Elisha O. Alabi, Enoch O. Alabi and Esther O. Alabi for their understanding, endurance and contributions toward the success of this work. Children, I sincerely pray that you will succeed in life with great anointing and ease.

I sincerely thank also Dr. J.K. Ayantayo, the current acting Head of Department of Religious Studies and all the academic staff members of the Department for their interest in my research. Their invaluable assistance, criticism and guidance are greatly appreciated. The administrative staff members of the Department are also appreciated.

I must appreciate my spiritual father and mother, Pastor and Mrs. Elijah H. L. Olusheye, the immediate past president of Christ Apostolic Church Worldwide and a trustee of the church for their prayers, financial contributions and support for the success of this project. Daddy, you are a father indeed and mummy you are a mother in Israel.

I commend the efforts, supports and contributions of Dr. Akin Odebunmi, the Sub-Dean, Postgraduate School of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, toward the success of this research. It is a thing of joy for me to come across people like Prof. O. A. Oyesile and Dr. F. N. Ofor of the Department of Philosophy, University of Ibadan. I appreciate their supports and contributions.

The following Pastors J.G. Miller, P.O. Alokan, S.F. Babalola, Sam Awoniyi, J.O.A. Magbagbeola, J.O. Babalola, and J.B. Minari, members of the Guild of Chaplains of Joseph Ayo Babalola University Chapel are appreciated for their prayer supports. Also, the contributions of Dr. A.C. Ariri-Chidomere, A. O. Abodunrin, Pastors Kunle Afolabi, Eke Uduma, Mrs. Adebola Otemuyiwa, Dr. Owoeye in the College of Humanities of Joseph Ayo Babalola University are sincerely appreciated.

The contributions of Prof. C.O. Oshun, the pioneer Vice Chancellor of Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Barr. Wale Aderibigbe the pioneer Registrar of Joseph Ayo Babalola University, and Dr. Ayo Fatubarin are deeply appreciated.

My Brother, Blessing Olagundoye, indeed you are a brother. Your efforts, sleepless nights and contribution in the time of computer needs have truly led to the successful completion of this project. I say thank you. I equally appreciate your parents for allowing you to come and assist me when in need of your computer literacy and service. The supports and contributions of Taiwo Abegunde, Deji Aiyesimoju, Bose Afolabi, Beatrice Adesanya, Fisayo Sangogboye, Evangelist Peter Adedara, Mrs. Esther Imousen, Mrs. Blessing T. Oyewole and are commended.

Members of Christ Apostolic Church Mount Olivet, Akure, Ondo State are also commended and appreciated for their endurance, prayers and contributions. Elders Olu Akomolafe, M.T. Adedayo, Tokunbo Ayibiowu, Mrs. Adediwura Aluko, Pastors E.T.O. Alwolodu and Isaac Owoyemi are also appreciated.

Finally, I appreciate those who spared their time to grant me interviews and gave me needed information for this thesis. Those whose books were consulted are also appreciated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Certification	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Abbreviations	ix
Appendices and List of Plates	x
Abstract	xi

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1	Background to the Study	1
1.2	Statement of the Problem	6
1.3	Purpose of Study	9
1.4	Scope and the Limitation of the Study	11
1.5	Research Methodology	13
1.6	Theoretical Framework	14
1.7	Significance of the Study	16

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Sacralization and Sacredness of Places in Nature and Religions	19
2.2	The Concepts of the Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Religion	30
2.3	Sacred Places in African Traditional Religion	33
2.4	Sacred Places in Selected Indigenous Churches	36

CHAPTER THREE: SACRED PLACES IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE LITURGY

3.1	The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Concept of Sacred Places	39
3.2	The Veneration of Sacred Places in Canaanite Religion	44
3.2.1	<i>El</i> and Sacred Places in Canaanite Religion	50
3.2.2	<i>Baal's</i> Mountain in <i>Zaphon</i> as Sacred Place in Canaanite Religion	52
3.2.3	<i>Baal's</i> Consort, <i>Anat's</i> Dwelling on a Sacred Place in Canaanite Religion	55
3.3	Sacred Places During the Patriarchal Periods in Ancient Israel	56
3.4	Sacred Places in the Mosaic Traditions in the Pentateuchal Narratives	63
3.4.1	The Ark as a Sacred Object in a Sacred Place in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	66
3.4.2	Tent of Meeting as a Sacred Place in Mosaic Tradition	70
3.4.3	Tabernacle as Sacred Place in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	72

CHAPTER FOUR: THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF SACRED PLACES IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE LITURGY

4.1	The Nature of Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	75
4.2	Altars as Sacred Places of Meeting God in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	82
4.3	Mountains as Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	85
4.4	The Functions of Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	90
4.4.1	Sacred Places of Meeting Places with Divinities in Canaanite Religion and God in Ancient Israelite Religion	90
4.4.2	Sacred Cultic Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	93
4.4.3	Sacred Places of Invocations in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	99
4.4.4	Sacred Places of Communion Activities in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	106
4.4.5	Sacred Places of Oracular Activities in Ancient Israelite Liturgy	111
4.4.6	Sacred Places of Cutting and Renewal of Covenant	118
4.4.7	Sacred Places of Blessings and Imprecatory Activities	122

CHAPTER FIVE: THE BELIEFS IN SACRED PLACES IN SELECTED INDIGENOUS CHURCHES IN EKITILAND

5.1	The Influence of Beliefs in Sacred Places in African Traditional Religion on Selected Indigenous Churches in Ekitiland	128
5.2	The Beliefs in and Patronage of Sacred Places in the Selected Indigenous Churches in Ekitiland	141
5.3	Peculiar Sacred Places to Christ Apostolic Church in Ekitiland and their Significance	148
5.3.1	<i>Ori Òkè-Ìségún</i> (Mount of Victory) at Efon Alaaye Ekiti	148
5.3.2	<i>Ori Òkè-Àánú</i> (Mount of Mercy) at Erio-Ekiti	153
5.3.3	<i>Ori-Òkè Ìyanu</i> (Mount of Miracles) at Ido-Ile Ekiti	156
5.4	<i>Ilè Agbára and Ilè Babalolá</i> (Power Ground and Babalola Ground) at Ido-Ile Ekiti	163
5.5	Sacred Waters in Christ Apostolic Church and their Significance	164
5.5.1	<i>Omi-Òní</i> at Efon-Alaaye Ekiti	164
5.5.2	<i>Omi-Olúwánífise</i> at Erio-Ekiti	167
5.5.3	<i>Omi-Babalolá</i> at Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare) Ekiti	170
5.6	Sacred Places and Waters in African Apostolic Church and their Significance	173
5.6.1	<i>Igbó-Àjàlù</i> Now <i>Òkè Àjàyè</i> as a Sacred Place in African Apostolic Church	177
5.6.2	<i>Òkè-Àjàyè</i> Sacred Prayer Mountain at Ajaye Ekiti	178
5.6.3	<i>Ilè-Agbára</i> (Power Ground) as a Sacred Place in African Apostolic Church	179
5.6.4	<i>Ilè-Àánú</i> (Land of Mercy) as a Sacred Place in African Apostolic Church	181
5.6.5	<i>Odò-Jórídáni</i> (River Jordan) as a Sacred Water and Its	

Religious Functions	186
5.6.6 <i>Omi-Amúbíiná</i> as a Sacred Water and Its Spiritual Significance	188
5.6.7 <i>Omi-Olútokín</i> and Its Religious Significance in African Apostolic Church	191
5.6.8 <i>Omi-Ìbùkún</i> (River of Blessing) and Its Blessing Invoking Power	194
5.6.9 <i>Omi-Aráròmi</i> (River of Comfort) and Its Fertility Functions	195

CHAPTER SIX: THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS EFFECTS OF THE BELIEFS IN AND PATRONAGE OF SACRED PLACES

6.1 The Socio-Religious Effects of Patronage of Sacred Places	198
6.2 Other Christian Perception of Sacred Places in Non-Indigenous Churches	211
6.3 The Effects of Urbanization and Industrialization on Sacred Places	218
6.4 The Theological Effects of Sacred Places as the Dwelling Places of God	
6.5 The Health Implications of the Patronage of Sacred Waters and Places	225
6.6 The Implications of Beliefs in Sacred Places for Christians in the Light of the New Testament	232

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, DATA ASSESMENT, RECOMMENDATION AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the Study	240
7.2 Data Analysis	254
7.3 Findings and Contributions to Knowledge	270
7.4 General Conclusion	276
Bibliography	278
Appendices and List of Plates	283
Glossary	311

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAC	Christ Apostolic Church
AAC	African Apostolic Church
A	Agree
DA	Disagree
NR	No Response
YHWH	The tetragrammaton letters in Hebrew language, standing for
Yahweh, God	
HRM	His Royal Majesty
et al.	et aliti, and others

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

APPENDICES AND LIST OF PLATES

Appendix 1: Structured Interview	283
Appendix 2: Research Statements	284
Appendix 3: Respondents' Personal Data	285
Appendix 4: List of Interviewed Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in Christ Apostolic Church	287
Appendix 5: List of Interviewed Members of Christ Apostolic Church	288
Appendix 6: List of Interviewed Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in African Apostolic Church	289
Appendix 7: List of Interviewed Members of African Apostolic Church	290
Appendix 8: A sample of Attendance Register on the Sacred Place in <i>Orí Òkè-Ìyanu</i> at Ido-Ile Ekiti	291

LISTS OF PLATES

Appendix 1: Ekiti State Map Showing the Research Covering Local Government Areas	292
Appendix 2: Ekiti State Map Showing Some Locations of the Research	293
Appendix 3: Picture of Late Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church	294
Appendix 4: Picture of Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde of the African Apostolic Church	295
Appendix 5: Sacred Places in Christ Apostolic Church in Ekiti land	296
Appendix 6: Pictures of the Sacred Places <i>Orí Òkè-Àánú</i> (Mount of Mercy) at Erio-Ekiti	297
Appendix 7: Pictures of the Sacred Places <i>Orí Òkè-Ìyanu</i> (Mount of Miracles) at Ido-Ile Ekiti	298
Appendix 8: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Omi-Òni</i> at Efon Alaaye Ekiti	299
Appendix 9: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Omi-Olúwánifise</i> at Erio-Ekiti	300
Appendix 10: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Omi-Babalola</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Ìyanu</i> at Ido-Ile Ekiti	301
Appendix 11: Sacred Places and Waters in African Apostolic Church	302
Appendix 12: Pictures of the Sacred Ground <i>Ilè-Agbàra</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Àjàyè</i> at Ajaye Ekiti	303
Appendix 13: Pictures of the Sacred Ground <i>Ilè-Àánú</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Àjàyè</i> at Ajaye Ekiti	304
Appendix 14: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Odò Jórídánì</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Àjàyè</i> at Ajaye Ekiti	305
Appendix 15: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Omi Amúbìiná</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Àjàyè</i> at Ajaye Ekiti	306
Appendix 16: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Omi Olútokín</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Àjàyè</i> at Ajaye Ekiti	307
Appendix 17: Pictures of the Sacred Water <i>Omi Aráròmí</i> in <i>Orí Òkè-Àjàyè</i> at Ajaye Ekiti	308
Appendix 18: Pictures of sacred sites in <i>Orí Òkè-Àánú</i> at Erio-Ekiti	309
Appendix 19: Picture of a unique rock in Ilawe-Ekiti	310

ABSTRACT

Sacred places are non-homogenous sites where the mysteries of nature, the incorporeal and supra sensible essence are encountered. Previous studies recognised the existence of these places in ancient Israel, and examined the socio-religious dimensions of the places, but they have not considered the recognition and patronage of similar places in indigenous churches especially in Ekitiland, whose topography enhances the patronage of sacred places. This study, therefore, examined the functions of sacred waters, grounds and mountains in ancient Israel with reference to the practices of selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland, with a view to highlighting their socio-religious significance.

The study was premised on Intercultural Hermeneutic Theory, which accommodates African socio-religious realities in the study of the Bible. Ten assembles each from Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), and African Apostolic Church (AAC), which patronise sacred places, were purposively selected. In-depth interviews were conducted with 150 purposively selected respondents, comprising 20 church leaders, 20 heads of groups and 35 members from both churches in Ajaye, Efon, Erio, Ido-Ile and Ikole communities which host these sacred sites, covering three Local Government areas. Participant observation was also made at 12 worship sessions at purposively selected sacred places. The data collected were subjected to content analysis.

Sacred waters, grounds and mountains functioned as worship and healing centres in Israel during the pre-Temple age. River Jordan was reputed for its healing virtues, which was confirmed by the healing of Naman. In Ekitiland, sacred waters, such as *Omi-Babalolá*, *Omi-Òni* and *Omi-Olúwánifise*-CAC served fertility, healing and deliverance purposes; *Omi-Aráròmi* and *Omi-Amúbíiná*-A.A.C. were patronised for the healing of festering sores and provision of male children. Theophanic experiences of Jacob, Moses and Joshua at Bethel, Sinai and Jericho grounds, made these sacred grounds patronised worship centres in Israel. Similarly, prayers offered on sacred grounds, such as *Ilè-Agbára* reportedly engendered spiritual empowerment, *Ilè-Babalolá* inspired spiritual visions for the C.A.C.; *Ilè-Agbára* was trusted for rain-making and *Ilè-Áánú* for divine mercy in the AAC. Mount Sinai, in ancient Israel, attained sacred status owing to supernatural manifestations which culminated in the revelation of the Torah. Similarly, mountains such as *Òkè-Ìségún*, *Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Òkè-Áánú* patronised by the C.A.C. were known for overcoming evils, confirmation of pastoral calling and fertility, *Òkè-Àjàyè* in the A.A.C. was popular for divine communication with God and inducing business patronage. All the mountains were believed by both CAC and AAC to be helpful in terms of church resolutions, prophetic revelations, visa procurement, contract awards and security. Consequently, civil servants and businessmen patronised *Òkè-Áánú* for promotion; politicians visited *Òkè-Ìségún* for electoral victory; and pastors and sick people frequented *Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Omi-Amúbíiná* for power and healings. However, noticeable abuses of prophetic gifts, sales of olive oil and extortion, common in Eli's days, were prevalent.

Sacred places performed essentially the same spiritual, economic and social functions in selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland and ancient Israelite liturgies. This shows the link between the doctrines of Christ Apostolic Church, African Apostolic Church and ancient Israelite religion.

Key words: Sacred places, Liturgy, Indigenous churches, Ekitiland, Spiritual healing.

Word count: 488

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The religious notions of the existence of sacred places have been inherent in the nature of religion. Mbiti¹ submits that man lives in a religious universe, so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. The world of nature is not all that separated from gods, divinities and other spiritual beings. The imprints of gods and other spirit beings are seen in nature and they are believed to be their manifestations in unique ways which are religiously interpreted. Nature is viewed from the spiritual angles and where there are unusual experiences, they are separated and considered to be special and man reveres them. Hence it is pertinent for man to interpret his environments in a religious sense and deduce some in-depths and religious thoughts. As man interprets his environments in a religious way, he relates with it in his daily experiences. As a result, man classifies his environment into segments as physical and spiritual, good and bad, clean and unclean, sacred and profane.

The study of sacred places in religion is an exciting enterprise but complex. These two sides of the same coin are due to the fact that the mysteries surrounding the sacred places impinge on the inherent nature of religion in human life and culture. Man is a religious being despite the fact that some claim atheism. The religious faculty in man permeates all facets of his life and endeavours and more evidently on his cultural values. Many religious adherents tenaciously hold the view that the universe was created by the Supreme Being. The heavens sphere are full of some heavenly bodies like sun, moon, stars, galaxies and other constellations while the earthly realm is full of waters, rivers streams, rocks, hills, mountains and other places. It is believed that God could leave His heavenly abode and dwell in places like waters, streams, forest, grooves, trees, rocks, hills and especially mountains. At the same time, God can choose any place to manifest Himself or supersensible acts in these places which are religiously regarded as sacred places. This may be due to the religious belief in and thought on His immanence. As He wants to display His splendors, He has to manifest Himself in so many ways and forms using many media. Some elemental objects and forces in nature are associated with His immanence and some are regarded as His manifestations and reflections. These elemental

¹Mbiti. J. S. 1969. *African religion and philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books. 48.

places especially mountains are also considered to be media of manifestations of the supersensible beings. Mbiti² also observes that outstanding mountains and hills are generally regarded as sacred and are given religious meaning. It may be said that Africans have not thought of any sacred place or sacred mountain as God but they believe He can be living or manifesting in places like streams, rivers, waters, hills and rocks perceived to be sacred.

Nowadays, some religious specialists and adherents of faiths are fond of going to places, purported to be sacred and revered for different religious reasons. This trend cuts across races and nations. These religious custodians and adherents cherish what a modern man will refer to as religious bigotry, that is, the patronage of sacred places. The attachment of sacredness to places is a common phenomenon in many religions. Witcombe³ is of the view that sacred or holy places are found in different cultures, past and present, all over the world. In order to show that the places or objects are sacred, they are sometimes marked and beautified with some artistic designs. At times the shapes of the objects are considered to be unique, different from others and as a result, they are considered to be potent and living as sacred places.

Religious activities as phenomena are conceived as being sacred, especially when one considers the cultic places where they are being perpetrated with their in-depths in man's religious thought. The mystery, union, communion, divine grants of requests with attendant super sensible power evidently displayed at these places before man leads him to conclude that these places are not homogeneous. One would imagine and ask what makes a man to repeat a visit to a cultic or sacred place in another week, month or year if he has gained nothing from the previous visit? The attraction of man to a sacred place for any reason shows that the place has something to offer him. Eliade paints the picture clearly by submitting that the one unique and irreducible element in these activities not to be missed is the element of the sacred.⁴

In finding means of religious expressions, man has come into contact with some mysteries of nature at places consecrated as being sacred. These places have become points of religious attractions through all the ages. The sacrality of these places is preserved from generation to generation through myths, sacrificial rituals, prayers, and

²Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African religion and philosophy*. 55.

³See L.C.E. Witcombe, *Sacredness* Retrieved on Mar. 10, 2008, from <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredness.html>.

⁴Eliade, M. 1968. *Patterns in comparative religions*. trans. Trask, W.R. New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book, xiii.

patronage of these sacred places. We find something in common to many religions and that is, the sacred revelation of some in-depth experience to a religious man or a religious man experiencing the sacred in a mysterious way. The place marked as a spot of the revelation is considered to be sacred and the objects there are no longer ordinary as far as the man is concerned. Waters, streams, grounds, and rocks, shrine under the trees, a consecrated place inside a room, temples, churches, shrines, hills and especially mountains occupy major positions among the sacred places in many religions.

Religious man has come to the conclusion of a partition in the world in terms of “the sacred” and “the profane”, “the clean” and “the unclean”, “the holy” and “the unholy”. It is true that man came to this conclusion after the super sensible after the experience he had with these places. It is believed that nature has some wonders of life that can only be revealed and interpreted religiously or as Eliade argues that “something sacred revealed itself to us”⁵ through trees and stones in nature and as a result they are not ordinary. These dual views of places have cosmic relevance to a religious man. Places where some religious experience has taken place become holy and separated from others. These places are sacred while others are profane; they are clean while others are unclean; they are holy while others are unholy. These sacred places open up a line of communication with the divine beings. It is through them that man enters into a communal relationship with divine beings and his desires are met.

Evidently, the dual cosmological views of a religious man argue in favour of this division in the world as a reality. Sacred places fall into the category of places with religious significance which is marked with religious artifacts and cultic designs to show their sacrality. The religious significance of these places to adherents of faiths also makes them sacred and the way these places influence the thoughts and expressions of a religious man cannot be underestimated. Both the sacred personages and the laity lay claim to the fact that sacred places enhance their beliefs when they patronize them. It is a belief of some that sacred places make room for individual devotion unlike when someone is under the tutelage of an individual religious custodian. Also, they hold the opinion that sacred places encourage individual persons to search for a union with the Ultimate Being and thereby achieve their heart felt desires. As a result, these places are

⁵Eliade, M. 1957. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. Trans. Trask, W.R. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 11. Also see the submission of Eliade, M. 1958. *Patterns in comparative religion*, trans. Sheed, R. New York: World, 7ff. He argues that the sacred manifest itself to man through elements like stones and trees in the profane world yet these objects are not venerated on their own but the sacred is worshipped through them.

considered as “pastures new”, that is, they are considered to be “spiritual green pastures” when it comes to worship and vibrant options of meeting their innate desires.

Ancient Israelite religion and liturgical practices could not do without the idea of sacred places as revealed to us in the pages of the Old Testament. Riggren⁶ submits that the Jewish view about God’s abode on sacred places and mountains has the background of Canaanite religious beliefs on sacrality of places and gods dwelling on them. Despite the fact that Israel has a monotheistic theology and practices, the influence of Canaanite sacrality of places could not be ruled out in her religious practices.

Today, we find in our religious pluralistic society that people and religious sects are proud of being associated with one sacred place or the other. Different titles and descriptive names are being used as labels to “tie” their gods or God down to a particular sacred abode in order to revere the place as being sacred. The indigenous, African traditionalists, long time ago had settled with the concept of sacred places. The sacred places that are found in African religion include: grounds, lakes, ponds, brooks, streams, rivers, forests, cultic shrines, trees, altars, natural monuments, groves, rocks, hills and mountains. Ritualistic prayers and offertories are being made to appease the gods and ancestors they believe that inhabit these places. Preserved and generational legends, mythical stories and acts, music, songs, folktales, folksongs, drama enactments, and various oral traditions are used to conceal and disseminate the knowledge of these places from one generation to another.

According to Awolalu,⁷ people annually go to the sacred places for blessings, solutions, healing and fertility. Any vows made at these places are bound to be fulfilled in appreciation of the benevolence of the God or gods who has met their dire needs at these places. On the contrary, invocations against one’s enemies are believed to be more potent and effective when carried out at a spot that is believed to be sacred. This practice was an ancient one and it was also found in ancient Israelite religious practices. For instance, “And Moses commanded the people on the same day; saying... and these shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse....” (Deut.27:11, 13).

All this shows that sacred places exist for various religious reasons which could either be for blessings, fertility, success, vengeance and curses.

⁶Riggren, H. 1966. *Israelite religion*. Trans. Green, D. London: S.P.C.K., 46.

⁷Awolalu, J.O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. Essex: Longman Group Ltd., 46-47.

The advent of the indigenous Churches especially in Yorubaland witnessed the resurgence of beliefs in and patronage of sacred places for spiritual reasons. This could not be divulged from the cultural background from which this movement emerged. Today, people find it easy to say, *mò ñ lo sí Ori-Òkè*, meaning, “I am going to the (sacred) mountain”; or *e jé ká lo sí Ori-Òkè*, meaning, “Let us go to the (sacred) mountain”; *e jé kí á lo sí orí ilè mímó*, meaning, “Let us go to the holy ground” and so on. They have the religious view that certain sacred places exist for certain realities of life. If any member of a Church has a peculiar need or problem, the prayers offered in the Church auditorium is not believed to be potent enough to bring about the solution needed in time until they get to any of these sacred places. They take their bath in some waters, streams and rivers believed to be sacred and drink from them. They even bottle some quantity for sprinkling in their rooms, places of work, market places to ward off evil and keep the remaining as a symbol of the presence of the divinities, God or His power in their rooms.

Different activities are carried out on these sacred places. Just as African traditionalists believe that certain brooks, streams, water, rocks, hills and mountains are unique and go beyond ordinary, the indigenous church founders and members also view some of the places to be full of power beyond their physical nature and appearance in their minds. As a result, they are viewed as sacred and they patronize them. It is apparent that something underlies the religious notion of sacrality of these places, which attracts men to them. It is certain that the notion of sacrality of places existed from the primeval period to modern time. Also, sacred place is not limited to any tribe or race; it cuts across nations and tongues. From Adam till now, men have been attracted to sacred spots, shrines, altars, mountains and the likes as means of reaching the objects of their faith. This shows that there are some religious in-depths and mysteries that are underlying the religious notions of sacrality of these places, which have been attracting men to them.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Childs is of a strong view that “mythical place is non-homogenous in character”.⁸ That is, certain places are more potent than the other in nature. He is also of the opinion that “the quality ascribed to a spatial reality is conditioned by the immediate contact of the individual with it”.⁹ For instance, the call of Moses was associated with a sacred place, “holy ground” and a sacred mountain, Mount *Horeb* in Pentateuchal traditions. *Then He said, “Do not draw near this place where you stand is holy ground (Exo. 3:5).* Sacred ground and mountains are also associated with him in the receipt of the law and communicating them to Israelites. The beauty of nature as observed and expressed by mankind is not taken for granted. It is certain that man reads God, gods and sacrality into them and interpretes them in a religious sense. The problems of the existence of certain places with higher qualities and unique personality, which distinguished them from others, have been from antiquity and there are reflections of these in Ancient Israelite religion. A problem was created here: the approach of Childs is a general application to the sacred places in religion. When the place started to be non-homogenous was not revealed to us whether it was as soon a religious man had encounter with it or it has been before the contact.

Also, Cross,¹⁰ Riggren,¹¹ Albright,¹² and Clifford¹³ among others hold the view that Canaanite religion includes the belief in sacred places and mountains. Inanimate objects were given animated features. Certain spots were revered and believed to be the abode of their local and national gods like *El, Baal, Anat, Asherah, Ashtoreth, and Mot* the terrible goddess-Death, divinities, and other supersensible beings. As a result, men could consult the object of their faith at these spots, purported to be sacred and offer their offerings. The Pentateuchal traditions also claimed that there were designated places regarded to be sacred where the Israelite liturgies and offerings could be accepted. Any other place from these designated and chosen places was regarded to be *inferior, profane* and *unholy*. As a result, Yahweh would not accept other offerings offered at these places. Scholarly works on Israelite history have revealed that the Canaanites among whom Ancient Israelites lived and whose territory was occupied also had the belief in the

⁸Childs, B.S. 1960. *Myth and reality in the Old Testament*. London: SCM Press, 83.

⁹Childs, B.S. 1960. *Myth and reality in the Old Testament*. 83.

¹⁰Cross, F.M. 1973. *Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 113ff.

¹¹Riggren, H. 1966. *Israelite Religion* trans. Green, D. London: S.P. C.K., 22-53.

¹²Albright, W.F. 1968. *Yahweh and the gods of Canaan* New York: Doubleday, 116-118.

¹³Clifford, R.J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 57-78.

sacrality of places, waters, grounds, rocks, hills, altars, and especially mountains. *Baal* was regarded as a sky god and believed to be dwelling on mountains, especially Mount *Zaphon*. The extent to which these religious-cultural beliefs of the Canaanites influenced the Ancient Israelite's conception and adoption of sacrality of places, Yahweh's presence on mountain and manifestations in sacred places could not be determined.

Eliade,¹⁴ Cox,¹⁵ and Cunningham et al.¹⁶ on the same hand are of the opinions that sacred places are special places where the incorporeal and supra sensible experiences are encountered. They all agree that sacred places are common to all religions and they are located where the numinous manifest to the religious men. The sacred practitioners according to Eliade and Cox are the prophets, Shamanistic and priestly types and the holy person. As for the Shaman, he engages certain techniques of ecstasy in order to gain mystic entrance into the spiritual so that he functions as an agent of healing, divination, clairvoyance and qualified personage of rituals and sacrifice in a particular religion. It should be noted that shamans are found in Arctic regions of Asia, North America, Greenland, Iceland and Europe and in some sub-Arctic regions of Asia and North America and not peculiar to African religious and cultural practices.

With all these submissions, it was clear to us that all the approaches of these great scholars were Eurocentric and not Afrocentric. Similar existing sacred places in African lands were not considered, especially in Ekitiland which is our area of focus. Ekitiland "was an independent state prior to the British conquest. It was one of the many Yoruba states in what is today Nigeria".¹⁷ Ekiti as a nation and districts of Yoruba race had her progeny in Oduduwa, which was the father and progenitor of Yoruba race. She has her origin from Ile-Ife (the cradle land of the Yoruba) through Olofin, one of the sons of Oduduwa. According to oral traditions, Olofin had sixteen (16) children and in the means of searching for the new land to develop, they all journeyed out of Ile-Ife as they walked through the *Iwò-Elérú* (cave) near Akure and had stop over at a place called *Igbó-Aka* (forest of termites) closer to Ile-Oluji. The Olofin, the sixteen children and some other beloved people continued with their journey. Two of the children, *Owa-Obokun* of Ijesa land and *Orangun* of Ila settled in their present cities in the present Osun state. The

¹⁴Eliade, M. 1957. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask, New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book. 20-160.

¹⁵Cox, J. L. 1996. *Expressing the sacred: an introduction to the phenomenology of religion*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications. 83-149.

¹⁶Cunningham, L.S., Kelsay, J. et al. 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. 34.

¹⁷Adetola, A. 2008. *Ekiti State*. Retrieved on Jan. 9, 2009, from [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekiti State](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekiti_State).

remaining fourteen (14) children continued with the journey and later settled in the present day of Ekitiland. “They discovered that there were many hills in the place and they said in their mother's language that this is *Ile Olokiti*, meaning, the land of hills. Therefore the *Okiti* later blended to Ekiti. So Ekiti derived her name through hills”.¹⁸ Indeed, there are many notable valleys, hills, rocks, and mountains in Ekitiland that are venerated.

Efon Alaaye in Efon Local government area, Oke-Imesi, Ajaye and Aramoko in Ekiti West local government area, Ikole in Ikole local government area and Erio-Ekiti environs are full of hills, rocks and mountains. Besides, there are sacred ponds, streams, rivers and waters that are revered and patronized. The geography of the State is mainly an upland zone, rising over 250 meters above sea level. It is generally characterized with a landscape that consists of hills and rocks in major parts of the State such as Efon-Alaaye, in Efon Alaaye Local government on the western boundary with Ijesa people, Ikere-Ekiti in the southern part and Ado-Ekiti Hills in the centre, Aramoko and Okemesi-Ekiti in Ekiti West Local government. The State is dotted with rugged hills, notable ones being Ikere-Ekiti Hills in the south, Efon-Alaaye Hills on the western boundary and Ado-Ekiti Hills in the centre. The State experiences two seasons in her tropical climate: rainy season, beginning from April to October and dry season, from November till March. This influences the beliefs in and veneration of uncommon places in the areas. Due to the topography of these places, the aborigines saw the religious and cultural value of these places and patronized them.

Existing studies have shown much interest in the sacred places in ancient Israel and Western world as demonstrated by various scholars. But attention has not been devoted to similar places in African land among the indigenous churches especially in Ekitiland and its topography. The topography of Ekitiland is religiously rich. It welcomes and enhances the religious notions of sacred places. *Olosunta* mountain in Ikere Ekiti; *Oke Elèjù* and *Oke-Eléhin-’Die* both in Erio-Ekiti are good examples that people revered a foretime and perhaps till date. These places still attract various religious ceremonies, festivals, veneration and pilgrimage. It is observed that there was a practice of sacred place patronage, water cults, Earth cults and mountain cults in Africa especially in Yorubaland before the emergence of the indigenous churches. Africans believed that sacred places existed for various spiritual, social, cultural and economic reasons. They are

¹⁸Adetola, A. 2008. *Ekiti State*. Retrieved on Jan. 9, 2009, from [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekiti State](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekiti_State).

preserved to maintain the social, cultural and religious values of the society; they give sacred backing to some of the traditions of the land.

They exist so that people would be able to consult the divinities dwelling there in times of peace, wars, distress, and outbreak of sickness in the community. Also, part of the reasons was for the masquerade dress-up, because they dress in the groves and they serve as provisions of abode for the gods in the groves. The ecological preservations of sacred places in traditional ways could not be ruled out. The simplest way of doing this was to appeal to religious psyche of man and say: our gods and divinities are close to us and they dwell around us in these places or these places are abode of our gods because they are close to us. These spots served as cultic shrines and temples for them.

The emergence of indigenous Churches brought changes to these spots. The religious attachments of sacrality to these sacred places serve as another major feature of indigenous Churches which distinguished them from the mainline churches. They were taken over and converted to prayer and revival centers but the idea of their sacredness and sacrality was not dropped. The adherents of the selected churches believed that sacred places as they are found in the Judeo-Christian traditions and practices performed certain functions and have socio-religious significance for their liturgy.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In this research, we intended to look at the religious conceptions of sacred place in Ancient Israel. As a nation, Israel did not emerge out of vacuum and her religion did not reach a peak in a day. We wanted to see how the neighbouring nations especially the Canaanites and their religion influenced the Ancient Israelite conception of God manifesting and speaking from sacred places. Also, we want to see why He chose to have His abode on some sacred places and how the ancient Israelite God *became* God of a sacred place and *mountain-God* in ancient Israelite liturgy.

One reality we have observed among human beings was that people serve their gods according to the world of nature closer to them. The riverine people would not have stones as their totemic gods but riverine supersensible beings. So also people living in hilly and mountainous areas would definitely see their gods in the lights of mountains around them. It is agreed upon that the topography of Palestine was hilly and mountainous. Ekitiland also shares this similar topography with ancient Israel. We intend

to bring out in bold terms how the topographical terrain of Palestine has influenced the Ancient Israelites about the idea of sacred places including mountains and how the indigenous church fathers equally used the Ekiti topography around them to enhance their gospel and evangelistic revivals, bearing in mind the Judeo-Christian traditions and practices, by so doing, they contextualized Christianity.

It has been the belief of man from antiquity that sacred places performed certain functions in order to solve spirit related issues within the ambits of social and religious life of the people. Principally, it was our aim in this thesis to examine the functions of sacred places such as grounds, waters and mountains that are venerated and patronized among the selected indigenous Churches-Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church- in Ekitiland. The spiritual, socio-cultural and economic significance of these places would be concentrated upon. This was done in order to demonstrate to us the cogent reasons responsible for the persistent patronage of these places among the adherents of these indigenous churches.

The African traditional beliefs on sacred places and mountains cult were examined. This was done for seeing their influence on the selected indigenous Churches. Among the Yoruba, in particular Ekitiland in which indigenous Churches thrived; especially the ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde, the belief in the sacralization of places were well established. There are mountain cults in Ekitiland such as the *Olosunta* of Ikere Ekiti and *Oloke* festival¹⁹ in Ikole Ekiti. We would want to establish which one between the Ancient Israelite traditions and African Traditional beliefs on sacred places influenced the indigenous Churches most or the origin of sacred places patronage in the selected indigenous Churches. The factors that led to the taking over of some of these mountains that once served as temples and shrines for the traditionalists by indigenous Churches serving as their sacred mountains will also be a focus in this research.

It seemed to us that the Judeo-Christian traditions on the beliefs and patronage of sacred places provided the theoretical and theological backgrounds for the founding fathers of these churches while the topography of Ekitiland provided the practical reality of such uncommon places and similar topography to sacred places in ancient Israel. As a result, they contextualized Christianity with the available geography and topography around them.

¹⁹Awolalu, J.O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. Essex: Longman Group Limited. 165.

The propagation and patronage of sacred places are at alarming rate in our society nowadays. And people begin to put or fix their faith on these particular places that the adherents might get the desired solutions to their needs. Some believe that unless the adherents touch these holy grounds and other sacred places, take their bath in streams and rivers believed to be special and powerful, the adherents may not achieve success in their endeavours. We would want to examine the psychological and religious effects of this thinking system on people.

Moreover, this research secured the society's views and reactions to the patronage of sacred places in the milieu of religious practice of indigenous Churches. This was carried out in order to determine the extent to which different sects of Christianity in the society have belief in, encourage, accept and disapprove these movements in the areas where people observe the patronage of sacred places in Nigerian context. The theological response to the beliefs and patronage of sacred places from biblical perspectives was not overlooked in this thesis.

1.4 Scope and the Limitation of the Study

This research would focus on the religious conceptions and beliefs in the existence of sacred places in ancient Israel as biblical background and in the two selected indigenous Churches in Ekitiland. This is not a work that would cover the whole spectrum of sacred places in Ancient Near East but limited to Ancient Israel from the patriarchal period to the Mosaic era and the pre-Temple age. Reference was only made to other existent practices in the ancient world where necessary to support our main focus in this study. Some texts that were relevant to the purpose of this study were cited and examined using historical-critical study methodology within the context of the Ancient Near Eastern background of the Canaanite religion.

Sacred places that received attention in this work were grounds, waters, streams, rivers and mountains that are believed to be sacred and revered in Ekitiland within the selected indigenous Churches. All these sacred places were limited to the two Churches, which are our major focus-Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church. The cities or towns that received attention are in Ekitiland. This was because these two denominations have their branches all over Ekitiland. The research did not cover every town in the Ekitiland due to geographical expanse, financial involvements and challenges or risks imposed by the wideness of the towns in Ekitiland. However, prominent towns such as Efon-Alaaye, Erio-Ekiti, Ido-Ile Ekiti (formerly Ido-Ajinare), and Ajaye-Ekiti

where prominent sacred places such as grounds, waters, streams and mountains belonging to these two denominations received serious attention in this research.

However, there were limitations that we encountered in the course of carrying out this research. The death of the aborigines or custodians of some of these sacred places, that is, the traditionalists before and after the advents of Christianity limited the adequate information we could have derived from them. This also confined us to second hand information. The research also suffered insufficient data from the record of these places. Since most of the activities that went on these places were not adequately documented before the advents of Babalola's revival and Omotunde's evangelistic campaigns, we suffered insufficient information due to lack of up to date records from the traditionalists. Besides, some of the traditional rulers of these areas are now professed Christians. As a result, they are not keenly interested in things regarded as *primitive* or as *demonic* and there were limited information about what these places used to be before they were taken over by Christians or revivalistic campaigns of Babalola and other evangelistic campaigns. For instance, the *Elerio of Erio* Ekiti, Oba Benjamin Adesoba Adetoyinbo, *Afinbiokin Okinbaloye II* and Oba Augustine A. Obaleye, the *Otutubiosun II*, the *Olojudo of Ido* are now committed Christian kings of Christ Apostolic Church and Catholic Church members. They are now keenly interested in Christian matters and not *fetish* things.

For instance, we suffered disdain when we were at Ikole-Ekiti, in Ikole Local government area, when we tried to interview some people. It was considered as a sacrilege and strange idea to subject these age long revered sacred places, grounds, waters, streams, hills and mountains to academic scrutiny and critical study. People looked at this as strange enterprise and violations of the religious traditions and beliefs they had not doubted for once in their lifetime. This was never given a good treatment but treated with utmost disgust and religious fearfulness of going contrary to the beliefs of the town and the traditions when we tried this during our field works. The people were afraid that there might be bad repercussions if they speak on what they believed as sacred within academic circle. They had the feelings of revealing the cultic secrets of these sacred places. But the few ones who could dare to speak with us did so. The over spirituality of the people about the beliefs and practices of sacred places and the regards they have been having for years for them gave us a setback to certain information we ought to have received from them.

1.5 Research Methodology

A research like this should not be limited to a single research approach. In the light of this, the work adopted multidimensional perspectives. This was because taking a variety of methodological approaches would enhance the richness of the work. The work was not supposed to be an approached from theological angle alone. To do this means setting a limitation to our submission in the work and it would not open more grounds for further scholastic investigations and shed new lights and understanding on sacred places in the selected indigenous Churches in Nigeria. An examination of the religious background of the conceptions of sacred places in the light of the cultural and historical milieu in Ancient Israelite liturgy received attention. The ancient Israelite conceptions of spiritual in-depths and traditions on sacred places were examined using the historical and critical method, tracing the Ancient Near Eastern and the Canaanite religious backgrounds in order to get to the root of the beliefs in her liturgy.

Since this research is a biblical-historical study, focusing on the religio-cultural value of the Yoruba, especially the Ekiti people, intercultural hermeneutic and historical methods were employed. Historical research attempts a description of events of the past in order to give a clearer picture of the present base on the understanding of the past according to Ogunbiyi.²⁰ The importance of this approach would enable us to see how traditions in history about certain places have also affected the religious beliefs and practices of the selected indigenous churches on beliefs in the sacred places.

Also, interview and participatory observation methods were used. Oral interview was also conducted with the people of these areas. The participatory observation technique will be used in order to see how regular and consistent people patronize these sacred places and see the religious reverence that people have for these sacred places. Purposeful interviews were conducted among the adherents who patronized sacred places in order to gather pieces of information from the people. The society's views on the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places were sought in order to know their mind and religious feelings on sacred places especially those Christians outside the indigenous Churches. The data collected was analyzed with the use of simple percentage and the results were presented, using the frequency table and cross tabulation.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

²⁰Ogunbiyi, M. 1992. *Understanding research in the social science*. Ibadan: University Press. 41.

The theoretical framework of this research was based on “Intercultural Hermeneutic Theory”. David T. Adamo in his scholarly submission opines that “African cultural hermeneutic in biblical studies is an approach to biblical interpretation that makes African social cultural context a subject of interpretation”.²¹ This biblical approach accommodates African socio-cultural values and realities, beliefs and practices in the study and interpretation of the Bible. This implies that African cultural hermeneutics is done with African context and is made for the purpose of African appreciation of its environments and cultural value in the garb of biblical text. The history of biblical hermeneutics betrays the fact that any interpretation of the sacred text is subject to social and cultural lenses of the interpreter. This is well appreciated by Mulrain when he submits that “a casual glance at the history of hermeneutic will reveal that there has never been an interpretation that has been without references to or independent of a particular cultural code, thought patterns or social location of the interpreter”.²² As a result, African Hermeneutics is “cultural hermeneutics”.²³ According to Adamo, “it means that African cultural hermeneutic, like any other Third World hermeneutic, is contextual hermeneutic since its interpretation is always done in a particular context”.²⁴ The central focus of this special method of interpretation is to liberate African scholars’ way of interpreting the Bible from conventional Eurocentric way of biblical hermeneutics and be culturally sensitive to their environment.

According to Sugirtharajah, “what it does is that it uses liberation as a crucial hermeneutics and mobilizes indigenous cultural material for theological enterprise”.²⁵ Most of the biblical interpretations done in the past have been Eurocentric and many African scholars received their training in Eurocentric theological circles. These are also carried to many Bible Colleges, Seminaries and even on the pulpits in African lands. This is what Chris Manus refers to as “cultural invasion African has suffered”.²⁶ But this Eurocentric way of interpretation fails to meet certain challenges of the Africans’

²¹ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Explorations in african biblical studies*. Justice Jeco Press and Publishers. 9.

²² Mulrain, G. 1999. “Hermeneutics within a Caribbean context”. In *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah. Sheffeld: Sheffeld Academy Press. 166-132. See Adamo, D.T. 1998. *Africa and the Africans in the Old Testament*. San Francisco. Christian University Press. Adamo, D.T. 2002. *Africa and Africans in the New Testament*. Valley Forge: Judson Press.

²³ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Rereading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous churches*. Benin: Justice Jeco Press and Publishers, 46-47.

²⁴ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Rereading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous churches*. Benin: Justice Jeco Press and Publishers. 46-47.

²⁵ Sugirtharajah, R.S. 1999. “Vernacular Resurrections: an introduction”. In *Vernacular Hermeneutics*, ed. 11.

²⁶ Manus, U.C. 2003. *Intercultural hermeneutics in Africa: methods and approaches*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers. 9.

experience. Succinctly catching this, Adamo and Ukpong submit that “it is therefore very remarkable that African biblical scholars have tried to forge a biblical interpretation strategy that is significantly different from that of the western interpretation”.²⁷ The cry is that Africans must read the Bible from their own “eye”, which is Afrocentric rather than Eurocentric which has been the conventional system from time immemorial.²⁸ Adamo lays strong emphasis on this when he writes, “African cultural hermeneutics is rereading the scripture from a premeditatedly Afrocentric perspective”.²⁹ According to him, “this is a methodology that reappraises ancient biblical tradition and African worldview, culture and life experience....”³⁰

One major area that Africans have been able to majorly utilize this hermeneutical tool is in the area of the interpretation of Psalm within African context.³¹ This has been used to solve many African peculiar problems like infertility, spirits-related diseases and sickness, as protective measures and the likes. Also, taken this into recognition, the indigenous church fathers did not see anything wrong in the African topography by incorporating it to their religious practices like ancient Israel. The Ekiti topography such as unique grounds, waters, hills and especially mountains were sufficiently used by the selected church founding fathers. The places were consecrated, sanctified and separated for prayers, spiritual retreats, places of spiritual communion with God and places of rest from the surging crowd that came to their revivals. Waters were engaged in their spiritual health delivery and hydrotherapy through massaging with African background was also utilized.

²⁷ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Explorations in African biblical studies*, 3; and Ukpong, J.S. 1999. “Can African Old Testament Scholarship Escape the Historical Critical Approach?” In *Newsletter on African Old Testament Scholarship*. Knut Holter edited. 2.

²⁸ Manus, U.C. 2003. *Intercultural Hermeneutics in Africa: Methods and Approaches*. Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1-2.

²⁹ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Explorations in African biblical studies*. 9-10.

³⁰ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Explorations in African biblical studies*. 9-10.

³¹ Adamo, D.T. 2005. *Rereading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous churches*. 49-108. According to Adamo, African culture has ways of dealing with spirit related problems and cases that defy western medical competence and knowledge. Unfortunately, the western missionaries tagged these as *fetish* and evil, yet they could not provide alternative solutions to the painful experience and problems as found in the Bible. The indigenous Christians later found passages in the Bible handed over to them by these missionaries something akin to incantation and potent words they have used to especially in the Book of Psalm. They started using them and there have been results. This was the indigenous way they found and believed that it was hidden from them by the missionaries. Though not blaming the missionaries, they have been able to read the Bible from their worldviews and culture and applied it in their own cultural means of interpretations.

1.7. The Significance of the Study

The selected indigenous Churches have been forces to reckon with within the Christian sects in Nigeria. Their contributions from the early 20th century AD till date have been established. Nevertheless, owing to the sheer fact that there are rooms for further investigations on this peculiar feature of belief in and patronage of sacred places among the selected indigenous Churches in Ekitiland calls for this research. This research provided detailed information on the idea of sacrality of places in indigenous Churches especially Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church in Ekitiland. They were chosen because they rank among the oldest indigenous Churches in Nigeria. Besides, these two Churches share the same features of beliefs in and patronage of sacred places.

Another reason for the justification of this research was the fact that scholastic work on patronage of sacred places especially in an area where Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church and Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde of African Apostolic Church carried out most of their evangelistic campaigns has been scanty. Most individuals who wrote on Babalola's life and ministry only mentioned the belief in and patronage of sacred places in the ministry of Babalola in passing. Besides, most of the stories surrounding the belief in and patronage of sacred places in Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church exist much in oral traditions. The indigenous writers, especially members of the two churches in focus did not go in detail, tracing the origins and spiritual functions of these places to their liturgy, why people continue to patronize them and their significance, much less their documentations. Till this present moment there is Babalola's festival in Efon-Alaaye, Erio-Ekiti, Ido-Ile Ekiti and other parts of Ekiti towns, which is being celebrated annually on sacred places, grounds and mountains where there were claims that Babalola used to pray with natural and architectural designs to mark them. Little has been said or written about Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde's patronage of sacred places during his revivalistic campaigns where as he ranked among the men of God with higher spiritual charisma during the era of Joseph Ayo Babalola.

This research pioneered the academic work on the origins of the sacred places in the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. Both the Western and national authors who have written about the ministries of Babalola and Omotunde only mentioned these places in passing. Even E.H.L. Olusheye, who was the last secretary to Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola wrote many books on the revivals and the person of Babalola, but sacred places established by Babalola did not receive detailed attention in any of his written books.

This research was also significant in the sense that it provided informative investigations to the society, other Christian sects and scholarship on the benefits inherent in spiritual sensitivity to one's culture and relating it to Christianity where it has spiritual agreements. Sacred places existed from ancient days and they were not limited to only one culture. Ekitiland is very rich in culture and it is full of traditional sacred places like River *Elémi* cult in Igede-Ekiti, *Olósùnta* Mountain cult in Ikere-Ekiti, *Olókè* mountain cult in Ikole-Ekiti among others. These places turned to be sacred places as far as the settlement of the people was concerned in the aforesaid times. The fact that there is a need to explore the cultural value of one's environment for religious purposes within the context of the activities of the indigenous Churches in this area necessitates this work. As a result, this justifies this research to do more work in beliefs in the sacred places in the selected indigenous Churches in Ekitiland.

Further justification of this research could be deduced from the fact that the two pioneers of these indigenous Churches lived mostly in Ekitiland during their lifetime. In actual fact, Babalola lived in Efon-Alaaye Ekiti from 1930 till 1959, the year he rested in the Lord. Ekitiland witnessed a good percentage of his evangelistic campaigns at the early stage and Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde was an indigene of Aramoko Ekiti and he was fondly called *Wòlìí Àjàyè*, meaning "the Prophet from Ajaye", a town very close to Aramoko Ekiti. Sacred places such as grounds, rivers, stream, waters and mountains peculiar to these two denominations are mainly in these areas of Yorubaland. Most religious places and mountains, which Christians from all walks of life, nooks and crannies of the country are patronizing in Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church such as *Ori-Òkè Ìségún* at Efon, *Ori-Òkè Àánú* at Erio Ekiti, *Ori-Òkè Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare), *Ori-Òkè Àjàyè*, *Ilè-Àánú*, *Ilè-Ìyanu*, *Ilè-Agbára*, *Omi-Òni*, *Omi Ìyanu* and *Omi Babalolá*, *Odò Jordani*, *Odò Amúbíiná*, *Olútokín Stream* and *Omi Ìbùkún* among others are fully concentrated in Ekitiland. This research provided an academic documentation of these places.

This study was significant to the world of scholarship, as it would provide an indigenous background to the beliefs in sacred places in the selected indigenous Churches like Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church in Nigeria. It would also help us to see how the indigenous Church leaders were able to contextualize Christianity within the traditional and cultural milieu of the environment they found themselves. It would also open more doors for scholarly research on the beliefs in and practices of sacred places in indigenous Churches in Africa at large. It also gave an opportunity for

determining the overall spiritual blessings pertinent to indigenous Christianity in Yorubaland through the beliefs in sacred places. In the same vein, it provided a curative balm for the religious biases from adherents of other Christian sects who ignore the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places and the blessings attached to these places.

In conclusion, in this chapter, we have been able to trace the background to the study. There, it was highlighted that the issue of veneration of places could not be divulged from religious thoughts of man from time immemorial. Man conceived God, gods, divinities, spirits and ancestors to be closed to them and they have their abodes in unique places around. How far this was true could only be subject to academic debate.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Sacralization and Sacredness of Places in Nature and Religions

The ideas of holy, holiness and sacredness were not far from both ancient and modern religious sects. In the ancient Israelite religion, the Old Testament contains instructions as regards a holy day called Sabbath day, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (cf. Exo. 20:8). Yahweh, God of Israel is holy therefore, His people must be holy (Lev. 11:43-44). To give the holiness of God a befitting emphasis and vividness, they expressed this idea of sacredness and holiness three times as we have it in the vision of prophet Isaiah “holy, holy, holy is the Lord of host...” (cf. Isa. 6:4). The land in which they lived, especially Jerusalem was regarded as holy. In short, everything around the ancient Israel was viewed with the concepts of sacredness and holiness. This is openly displayed on the pages of both the Old and New Testaments.

Mircea Eliade’s work on the sacred could be regarded as the most comprehensive and brilliant submission on the subject matter. Sacred space is a category of scholarly work from the workbench of the phenomenologist of religions and Eliade was a phenomenologist of religion. In his book, titled, *The Sacred and the Profane*, he gives a definition of the sacred as: *the first possible definition of the sacred is that it is the opposition of the profane*.¹ He goes further to submit that “man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane”.² As a result, he gives a term, *hieroglyphy*, from its etymological root, meaning, to show that the sacred shows itself to man and that it is different from the world of man. The objects chosen as media of revelation or manifestation are natural objects like trees, stones and waters among others in the profane world without necessarily participating in the profanity. He further opines that “what is involved is not a veneration of the stone in itself, a cult of the tree in itself. The sacred tree, the sacred stone are not adored as stone or tree; they are worshipped precisely because they are *hieroglyphies*, because they show something that is no longer stone or tree but the sacred, the *ganz andere*”.³

¹ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. Trans. Trask. W.R. New York: A Harvest/HBJ Book, 10.

² Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 11.

³ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 12.

Tracing this further, he cites the religious psychology of man, who believes in non-homogeneity of space. The religious man tried to live in the presence of the sacred because he desired access to the ultimate reality and to the power of the sacred. He appeals to the experience of Moses in Exodus 3 to show that man at times experiences interruptions in nature in order to show that some parts of space are qualitatively different from others. This interruption shows that there is sacred space and others are *profane*. The interruptions do two things according to Eliade: one, it reveals to man that space is non-homogenous; some are of higher quality than others thereby revealing an absolute fixed point, a (religious) center. Two,

when the sacred manifests itself in any *hieroglyphy*, there is also revelation of an absolute reality. It is through this experience that man is able to locate his world, which makes it possible to obtain a fixed point and hence to acquire orientation in the chaos of homogeneity...and to live in the real sense.⁴

Eliade claims that, whereas for non-religious man the spatial aspect of the world is basically experienced as uniformly neutral and homogenous but for religious man it was experienced as non-homogenous. The world is partly sacred and partly profane. The non religious man sees, experiences and utilizes the world as place of his birth, native land, place of schooling, residence, the scenes of his first love, or where he lives and earns his living and hope to live in till death comes and takes him away from there. He sees the world as certain place he visited in youthful days and personal associations and so on. Therefore, there is no particular space that has the absolute power to act as the center. Non-religious individuals may experience “privileged places”, but only as a centre of personal meaning for their private lives-not as centers of meaning for others let alone for the entire cosmos. Therefore, the recognition and cherishing of such places is “crypto-religious behavior” as far as the non-religious man is concerned.⁵ Man still relates with the remaining space around with meaningful interactions. Having appreciated Eliade’s demarcation of space, he fails to tell us that the profane space is with meanings and useful for man.

According to Eliade, theophanies and signs are peculiar to show non-homogeneity of nature. Anywhere there is a theophany; there is an indication that the place is holy or sacred. Man has different theophanic experiences to show that he is living in a religious

⁴ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 23.

⁵ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 24.

universe. After man has experienced theophanies and signs, a line of communication is open with the gods and the super sensible world. "In the sacred enclosure, communication with the gods is made possible; hence there must be a door to the world above..."⁶ According to Eliade, other certain signs could be used to show the interruption of nature, demarcating it from others. These include unusual signs like the *marabout* that founded El-Hamel at the end of the sixteen century. He planted his stick on the ground, overnight it had grown and budded. The *marabout* considered this as a sign from God that He wanted him to dwell there and he finally settled down there.⁷ Another sign is invocation. Where there is no sign, it is *provoked* at times.⁸ In other cases, animals are used, shoes are removed, altars are erected, libations are poured, trees are planted and places are deliberately consecrated. According to Eliade, the means of demarcating sacred place are: theophany, like the example of the Jacob's dream; any unusual sign like the stick of the Arab and ritual evocation, such as the setting loose of animals to reveal the sacred place where a sacrifice is made or a building is constructed.

It is true that the manifestation of the sacred through natural objects like trees and stones do occur. Man also experiences this in other objects like plain grounds, lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, lagoons, seas and oceans. But the idea that the sacred manifests itself through some objects in the profane world and yet they remain not venerated is limited in submission. The argument could not be substantiated in the midst of water cults, tree cults, mountain cults and the worship of Mother Earth in certain culture. In particular, Africans venerated these objects as well as worshipping the spirits behind them; though it may be regarded as a religious aberration but it occurs in the religious parlance in African lands, including Ekiti. Eliade has not shown to us the reason man must provoke, or invoke or evoke certain places in the search for a sacred place if there is non-homogeneity of space in the first instance.

The motive for consecrating a place as sacred is the desire to escape the relativity and uncertainty of profane existence. Religious man assumes that he lives in cosmos and anything outside it is regarded as "other world", chaotic world, peopled by ghosts and demons. What led to the cosmos where man lived was because it was firstly consecrated, so that it could be in communication with the world of the gods. He cited for instance, in ancient India the construction of a fire altar to the god *Agni* occurred in the center of

⁶ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 26.

⁷ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 27.

⁸ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 27.

newly claimed territory. This is a means of establishing man in the cosmos by consecrating it before settlement. Either the place is regarded as sacred from the beginning of time or else the act of its consecration mimics or replays the work of the gods in creating cosmos: consecrating a territory is a cosmogonic act.

If there is no consecration, there is no living. He demonstrates the dangerous effects of losing “the close connection between *cosmicization* and consecration”⁹ in the story of the Achilpa clan of the Arunta tribe of Australian aborigines in a mythical form. Their divine founder had fashioned and anointed a sacred pole, which the tribe carried with them on their wanderings. Its bending told the direction in which to travel and its very presence ensured that wherever they were they had cosmos, their world around them. At the same time, the pole links them with their founder, above them in heaven. He interpreted the pole as an *axis mundi*, so when it is broken, their life has no center and no direction. The world for them reverts to chaos and the clan resigns itself to death.¹⁰

It should be noted that all these submissions are Eurocentric and myths according to the function of the Australian aboriginal mythology. This is not concrete in African experience. There are various reasons people conquered their environments and established them and they are not only in mythical figures and experiences. The sacred places in many African lands go beyond myths by their efficiency and potency. The world is habitable according to Judeo-Christian traditions; and it is not until it is consecrated through enactment of the cosmogony that man can dwell in it. The origins of sacred places in Eliade’s submission are over generalized and they do not apply to all other cultures. The Australian phenomenon of the return of the ‘Dreamtime concepts’ and their applications to other cultures are *universalization* and over generalization in nature. Sacred places in African experience are practical and pragmatic in nature. Myths may be used to express them, but they are practical, potent and pragmatic according to African daily experience.

In Eliade’s work, sacred places in Yorubaland, especially in Ekitiland were not mentioned, as a result it makes his write up partial and Eurocentric. The patronage of the sacred places in African experience involves seeking power believed to be residing in these places for the solutions to problems confronting them and it is not a repetition of the

⁹ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 24.

¹⁰ Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 28-36.

myth enactments. Africans believe in the potency of sacred places with super sensible powers and residual powers there. This has been tested, proven and trusted in their day to day experience. According to Awolalu, “the sacred places are where the worship is conducted”.¹¹ Annual circle of festivals performed at sacred places by the Africans center mainly on the worship accorded to the gods, divinities, and spirits believed to be residing there. Worshippers perform rituals and sacrifice there as means of fulfilments of their vows; they also offer petitions, supplications and appeasements at these places. Sacred places go beyond myths in African religious and cultural practices and this is an omission in Eliade’s submission on the sacred places.

Further still, Eliade does not mention nor consider the similar beliefs in and patronage of sacred places in the indigenous churches in Africa, much less in Ekitiland. This is an omission. As at the time the book was written, indigenous churches have become factors to reckon with in African Christianity despite all the efforts of the Colonial masters and western missionaries to suppress the indigenous *Aladura* movement. The patronage of sacred places has become part of the liturgical practices of the indigenous churches. The sacralization of sacred places in the selected indigenous churches did not originate in myths but prophetic in nature with African background and influence.¹² For instance, Moses Tunolase Orimolade,¹³ Joseph Ayo Babalola,¹⁴ Josiah Oluwalowo Oshitelu¹⁵ and Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde¹⁶ have established various sacred places such as rivers, streams, waters, grounds, hilltops and mountains for prayers and spiritual retreats as instructed by the Spirit. Members of these indigenous churches had started patronizing the places for spiritual reasons as at the time he wrote the book.

Another scholar that writes on the notion of sacredness in religion is Lawrence S. Cunningham. Cunningham is of the view that “in various cultures around the world, we find notions of the sacred”.¹⁷ He goes further to quote from Jewish Scripture,

¹¹Awolalu, J.O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*, 114ff.

¹²Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great revivalist*. Texas: Omega Publishers, 249-261.

¹³Omoyajowo, A. 1982. *Cherubim and Seraphim: the history of an African independent church*. New York: NOK Publishers International, 16-161; Olu E. Famodimu, 1990. *Moses Orimolade Tunolase: Supreme Founder of Cherubim and Seraphim Worldwide*. Kaduna: Abibcom Nigeria Limited, 23.

¹⁴Adediran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile*. Ile-Ife: Timade Ventures, 50-57.

¹⁵Ayegboyin, D. and Ishola, S.A. 1997. *African indigenous churches*. Ibadan: Greater Heights Publications, 90-95.

¹⁶Idowu, M.O. 2012. *The portrait of a legend: the history of Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde*. Lagos: Artillery Christian Ministries, 59-82.

¹⁷Cunningham, L.S., Kelsay, J. et al., 1991, *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 34.

Hinduism's "Song of the Lord", Buddhist discourse on "the Nature of Nirvana" and Islamic passages which all dwell on the idea of sacredness in their religions. He submits that the concept of sacred reality brings to limelight the idea of "distinct from" the profane. He is of the opinion that the Hebrew word *kadosh* as it was used in Hebrew Scripture referred to God and things set apart by God's choice. The Latin word *sanctus* refers to something separated or set apart from other things, as do the related terms from Greek *hagios*.¹⁸ He highlights that the Hebrew Bible uses *Kadosh* to describe God, things set apart by God's choice, the people of Israel, the land they live in, and types of their food and the modes of human relations. All these are to show that sacredness has peculiarity to things revolving around God.

He gives four qualities of the sacred by saying that, one, the sacred is something "specially distinctive",¹⁹ by this he means somehow different and set apart from everything else in the world. Using the word *transcendence*, he opines that the sacred show its distinction of the sacredness from the world. Quoting Judaism, Christianity and Islamic religions, he submits that these are regarded as religions of transcendence. This is said in order to show that they present the ideas that the sacred is "going beyond" ordinary and corporeal experience. Two, the quality of the sacred is that "to some extent, beyond the volitional control of human beings".²⁰ Citing the case of Uzzah in second Samuel chapter 6 and the Ark, he demonstrates "the other worldly" nature of the sacred and that the sacred is not subject to human control. This was the error of Uzzah by touching the Ark and he paid dearly for it.

Three, he gives the quality of the sacred that the sacred is "specially prominent with respect to human welfare".²¹ This is a novel score because the relevance of any sacred place that worth its name must enhance human standards of living. The fourth feature is that the sacred is "properly determinative of various aspects of human existence".²² He expatiates on this factor by saying that man is expected not to live for himself but live a life that is in conformity with the sacred. The ways to do this according to Nirvana, which he dwells much on are through "the cultivation of right views, right

¹⁸Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al. 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 35.

¹⁹Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al. 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 37-41.

²⁰Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al. 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 41-44.

²¹Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al. 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion* 44-45.

²²Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al. 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 46-47.

intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration”.²³

In a right parlance, we agreed with Cunningham to some extent that the sacred is “specially distinct”, but he fails to call our attention to how man came about this idea of special distinct of the sacred. If the sacred is an intrusion to the universe in the origin, it cannot remain purely “specially distinct” again as it has contact with man. The fact that the sacred shared from the things in this world could not make it entirely distinctly different without any touch in world. The mediating roles of man in the sacred are connecting factors that could not be denied and Africans do not think of transcendence of God alone, but in concrete terms, His immanence and interventions in their daily affairs. They take God, gods, divinities and spirits as personal and intimate beings close to them. In actual fact, in African religious and cultural beliefs, the divinities were ancestors and departed members of the families or tribes, though spiritual now because of their death-spiritual positions. They were not regarded as “specially distinct” in African conceptions. After all, they are sacred personages dwelling in the sacred places around them and freely accessible at all times. This suggests that Cunningham is not fully aware of the idea of the sacred in other culture like African cultural and religious beliefs and practices.

Another gap in Cunningham’s submission is that man cannot control the sacred. If truly man cannot control the sacred, why do people invoke the spirits and divinities at sacred places and there would be response? The sacred could still be influenced like the case of Hezekiah in Isaiah 38; the Sacred *changed* His mind because there was prayer influence. Like Yoruba traditionalists who would go to *Ojúbo*, a place of worship, a sacred place of worship; *Ojú Egúngún*, or *Ojú Orórì*, a place of worship of ancestor; *Ojú Òrìsà*, a place of worship of a divinity, *Igbó Orò*, a place or grove dedicated for worship or *Igbódù*,²⁴ a place of worship of *Ifá* divinity with a horn of an animal and potent words or incantations, magical demonstrations and invoke powers for certain occurrence and there will be results. It certainly betrays the fact that Cunningham is not aware of some religious and cultural practices in Africa, the way sacred places and their patronage operate especially among the Yoruba in Ekitiland in which the research is focusing on.

Or the *Aladura*, who engage in serious fasting and prayers for certain results and miracles. They believe that the Sacred could be influenced when they are armed with

²³Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al., 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 46.

²⁴Awolalu, J.O.1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 114

certain Psalms, fasting, abstinence from sex, food and other conventional routines, and go to sacred places and pray for certain things to come to pass and there would be results. Having agreed with the distinctive nature of the sacred, there are many interactions between the sacred and man on daily basis. The case of Uzzah could be regarded as an extreme *distinction* of the sacred and besides, Uzzah was not a Levite who the Law allowed to bear the Ark of the Lord (I Sam. 6:1-11; I Chr. 15:1-16:6).

Another that should be borne in mind is the fact that religion is not only God-ward; it is also man-ward. After all, it is man that built many sacred places, constructed altars on the hills, rocks, and mountains, patronise the sea shores and placed the images of gods and divinities at places regarded to be sacred. If man does not dedicate some places as sacred and patronize these places, annually perform some rituals there, the places would go into extinction. Man was attracted to spatial realities through some numinous and supra sensible experiences. Such places cannot but attract man for higher reasons and be treated as sacred. Men treat certain places as different from others and revered them as harbingers of supersensible occurrences and manifestations. Besides, we also discover that Ekitiland with its cultural and religious practices of veneration of sacred places was not mentioned in the submission of Cunningham.

Nevertheless, critical looks at these submissions call to mind certain questions: Did God really create these “specially distinct” places different from other conventional places? Was there a sacred day in which God created them in order to make them special from others? Was there any specific power given to these spots that made them to be special? Were these places regarded to be sacred not once as “common” as other places before people started to regard them as sacred? These are questions for academic debate.

One appreciated fact was that a time came when there were classifications of places into sacred and profane in nature with religious biases. This was as a result of the religious experiences of man. As Cunningham rightly observes, “this issue of classification of places is the basic quality of the sacred places”.²⁵ This religious distinction carries the conception of setting a place apart from others for hierarchical religious reasons. It differentiates the “distinct” places from other places which are regarded as common or *profane*. At the same time, Cunningham fails to recognise the fact

²⁵Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al., 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 37.

that the distinction of a place or an object in one's geographical location as "higher object" or as "sacred object" does not make it the same in another land or culture and religious experience. Also, he has not told us the cultural influence on religion in dedicating some objects as sacred since religion and culture influence each other.

Furthermore, Cunningham tried to identify the appearance of the sacred after attempting the nature of the sacred. He used the common term, *hierophanies*, as Eliade did in order to show the ways in which the sacred is considered to be manifest in the world of human experience. He gave four specific media of the appearance of the sacred: *the sacred persons, the sacred objects, the sacred time and the sacred space*. He went into the experience of people in religions wherein sacred personages were associated with certain religions. They either functioned as the founders of religious movements or key figures of religious sects.²⁶ Anything associated with them was associated with the religious communities they represented. They were spokesmen of the sacred realities. Making concrete examples for this, he saw in Moses an epitome of prophetic movement; Buddha represents the mystical aspect of the sacred reality and Jesus Christ the sacramental dimensions of the manifestation of the sacred.

The sacred objects he mentions are the texts or books written for a particular religion, statues, and relics of the founding fathers and foods like the preparation and drinking of tea in Zen Buddhism. These objects are held high with profound religious respects. They are regarded as the vehicles of the sacred reality. The sacred objects become instruments of sacred manifestations. For instance, sacred books are sources of faith and authority; they are rigorously studied; they are recited and memorized. It is believed that they enhance concentrations in religion. In Christianity, there are material elements of means of grace.

It is agreed that there are sacred objects, serving as media of sacred realities but it is difficult to determine the extent of their inspiration because some fall into category of traditions, myths and speeches, especially books. Some sacred objects like trees, rocks, waters and animals were originally totemic objects of various tribes. A time came that they assumed the status of divinity and veneration in religion and men began to venerate them.

James L. Cox quoting Ninian Smart, defines the objects towards which the phenomena point by the term "focus of faith and that each religious tradition expresses

²⁶Cunningham L.S., Kelsay, J. et al., 1991. *The sacred quest: an invitation to the study of religion*. 61-64.

faith in the focus".²⁷ It is through this faith that man is able to apprehend the sacred and recognize its manifestations. But he fails to inform us that man can place his faith in a wrong object which is inanimate as a mere object in nature and be guilty of animism in the sight of the monotheistic Supreme Being. One thing about the sacred object is that it imposes the idea of awesomeness, bewilderment, wonderment and frightening experiences on man.

The manifestations of something considered to be sacred could be associated with many religions, beginning from their elementary states to the final forms with various elemental objects. These objects could be found in rivers, stones, trees, grooves, rocks, water, hills and mountains and they are all regarded as sacred because they once served as totemic objects for either a race or clan in their religious experience and worship. Hence we have sacred trees at certain junctions in major towns till date at certain spots especially markets, T-junctions, besides palaces and other strategic locations in the cities around us. For instance, an imposing tree was found at Ikole Ekiti, around the palace. We may submit that intuitively, man became aware of the presence of something higher than himself around him in the world. The fact that man experienced another power beyond his understanding and outside his own contributions from these places conveyed the idea of sacredness of these places to him. Thus, he seeks for a contact with the divinities believed to be residing there.

Roderich,²⁸ is another scholar that writes on sacred places especially mountains. He asserts that there are mountains with personality. Personality consists in the power to influence others. If these qualities are present in a sacred place, it is recognized as a vessel of cosmic power and called sacred mountain. What can be regarded as the personality of a sacred mountain is more than its mere physical features or shapes. Its personality involves the inspiration men derive from it and the influence exacted on man, which made him to regard it as sacred. However, it may be remarked whether man is not projecting living features into non-living things like streams, rivers, hills and mountains for his own purpose or gains. If personality is to influence, Roderich has not informed us why inanimate object such as mountain should be the medium of religious influence to man. The natural objects like rivers, streams, waters, trees, ground and the likes are expected to

²⁷Cox, J. L. 1996. *Expressing the sacred: an introduction to the phenomenology of religion*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 137.

²⁸Roderich, M. *Sacred Mountain*. Retrieved June 28, 2010, from http://snobear.Colorado.edu/mark/mountain/07/sacred/mtn_geog_sacred_mts.ppt..

aid man in his existence; whether they were created to influence man is a debate. Also, Roderich has not informed us why mountains should be exhibiting powerful influences on man even to the point of becoming objects of worship to man.

Citing mountain as one of the objects of sacredness in nature, Eliade mentions the components of sacred mountains which can be itemized as: the mountain is a sacred center of the world; mountains are places of revelation, mountains as gods in some culture and mountains as places of life and death.²⁹ He is also of the view that sacred mountain as the center of the world, stands as a meeting point between heaven and earth; and a line of communication has been made open either upward (the divine world) or downward (the underworld, the world of the dead).³⁰ The ladder of Jacob in Genesis 28 calls to mind the ancient belief in the mountain as point of contact or connection between heaven and earth.

Sacred mountains are regarded as places of receiving supersensible visions, dreams, prophecies and revelation in antiquity. To this effect, religious mountaineering is very important to those who hold such beliefs in sacred mountains. Mountain ascension is considered to be spiritual, formidable and capable of transforming experience and facilitating spiritual encounters. For instance, Moses encountered Yahweh in the burning bush on Mount Horeb, *Elohists* Tradition, and received a revelation and was mandated to go and lead Israelites out of Egypt in Exodus 3: 1-2a: “And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush....”

Ancient people usually received revelations from gods on sacred places, especially mountainous places. The reason behind this was the belief that gods dwell on the mountains and they speak from their abode. We can explicitly say that the fact that man could have communion with divinities and receive revelation from the mountains was a major point of attraction to religious men to the awesomeness of the sacred mountains and other places. The mountaineering is usually associated with the receipt of spiritual insights and insights by religious men. Nevertheless, one fallacy attached to this dogma is the fact that God can speak from anywhere and at any point to His creatures without necessary attachment to any place-mountain or plane.

On the issue of manifestation of the sacred through elemental objects, Cox³¹ and Eliade³² agreed on the same function of the sacred manifestations in all religion and for

²⁹Eliade, M. 1959. *Patterns in comparative religion*. New York: Sheed and Ward. 7.

³⁰_____ 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 36.

³¹Cox, J. L. 1996. *Expressing the sacred: an introduction to the phenomenology of religion*. 141.

the same purpose. In each case, we are confronted by the same mysterious act-manifestations of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural “profane” world. The sacred manifests itself in the objects that are near us in the world of nature. They are manifested in trees, waters, streams, rocks, stones, hills and mountains. They may appear as ordinary objects to non-religious person, but to a religious man, to whom they have revealed themselves they become sacred. One question that needs to be raised about all these conceptions is: why should monotheistic Being of Judeo-Christian belief choose inanimate objects like waters, streams, hills, rocks and mountains to mention a few as means of His manifestation to man? Could there not be a misplacement of object of faith when man encounters mountains in a theophanic manner? Why should man be held responsible for worshipping animistic and totemic objects like rivers, hills and mountains in the early era if he had in-depth encounters with these elements? Man should not have been held guilty of worshipping these elemental objects since he had religious encounters with them.

For instance, Clifford,³³ Houston,³⁴ Albright³⁵ and Douglas³⁶ agreed that mountains were cosmic, sacred and viewed as life givers because man had encounters with them. Besides, they supplied waterfalls to man in the ancient world. They were also regarded as places of fertility. The linkage of source of water with mountains as givers of life could not be divorced from the belief of the ancient world in the preciousness of water. In the primitive era, when water was scarce and there was no modern mechanical equipment for digging wells and it was difficult to dig one, water could not but be held with certain in-depths and with all sense of preciousness and as a means of living. In the aforesaid, the sources of water supply could be limited to rainfall, wells and waterfalls from the mountains. If there was no water, there was no life; if there was no water, no fertility. Hence mountains must be life givers if they could supply water and must be sacred, and viewed with a sense of sacrality in the primitive era.

³²Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 11.

³³Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and Old Testament*. 51.

³⁴Houston, J. M. “Mount, Mountain”. In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. Douglas, J. D. et al. 779-800.

³⁵Albright, W. F. 1953. *Archaeology and the religion of Israel* 3rd ed. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 72, 194.

³⁶Van Buren, E. D. *Flowing vase and the God with streams of water*, Berlin: H. Schoetz, Also, see the author’s treatise in *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian art*, 1945. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 124-125.

2.2 The Concepts of the Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Religion

One thing that was very important in the ancient Israelite liturgy was the influence of sacralized places. After all, her promised and occupied land was land full of sacred places such as altars, trees, rivers, hill and mountains. The Old Testament testifies to this: *As the mountains surround Jerusalem...* (Psa. 125:2). The idea of sacralization of places was present in their liturgy. The Jewish cosmological view also involved sacralized places as they were seen as points of contact between God and man. From the time of the patriarchs in Israel to the settled life in Canaan, sacred places played major roles in the liturgy of ancient Israel. Spiritual aesthetics of the places and mountains were brought to the forefront in the religious lifestyles of the Jews. This could be verified in the experience of Jacob at Luz, one of their patriarchs and other figures in their history.

Gerhard³⁷, Speiser³⁸, Wiseman³⁹ and Gunkel⁴⁰ agreed that for adequate understanding and interpretation of Jacob's dream and experience at Luz, now called Bethel, the influence of Mesopotamian *ziggurat*, a sacred tower connecting the worshippers with the deity, must be considered. The ancient world had the idea of "Gate of Heaven", that is, there must have been a way, a gate that connected the divinities with man on earth.

Wiseman⁴¹, speaking further on this, commented that the earliest reference to the *ziggurat* was in Babylon, named in Sumerian word *Etemenanki*, meaning, "the building of the foundation", or "platform of heaven and earth" whose top reaches to heaven. The purpose of such sacred edifice was to afford man reaching gods. Man had thought that heaven was too far for him to reach easily. Since he needed the assistance of gods whose abode was far away in heaven, he needed stairways. On the side of gods, they needed ramps or stairways in order to reach man who lived down below on earth. The ancient men built some temples as *ziggurat* as points of contacts where the gods were thought to pass through or descend for relationship with mankind. If heaven was far above and man was below here on earth, a *ziggurat* must be provided in order to link the two.

Jacob's dream of a ladder, a holy place at Bethel and a gate of heaven in Genesis 28:11-18 have been associated with a *ziggurat* of the kind once built at Babel. In the ancient world, people built a temple tower-*ziggurat* that was supposed to be a sacred place

³⁷Von Rad, G. 1961. *Genesis*, trans. Mark, J. F. Philadelphia: Westminster. 279.

³⁸Speiser, E.A. 1964. "Genesis". In *Anchor Bible*. New York: Garden City. 218-220.

³⁹Wiseman, D. J. "Babel". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. 110.

⁴⁰Gunkel, H. 1963. *Genesis* 6th ed. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht. 318.

⁴¹Wiseman, D. J. "Babel". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. 111.

and a point of connection with their gods. Noth⁴² submits that there had been a sacred sanctuary at Bethel before the arrival of Jacob at the place. Also, he opines that at Bethel, the holiness of the place was unexpectedly revealed to him at night in a great theophany. After this experience, he goes further to say that Jacob erected there a *masseba* and an altar.⁴³ Due to Jacob's encounter at this site, it was concluded that it was a holy place, awesome place and "gate of heaven". The Genesis Narrator reports: "And he was afraid and said, how awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen.28:17).

Millard⁴⁴ submits that for Jacob, Bethel was a sacred place, the starting point of his realization of God, who is for him God of Bethel. Clifford⁴⁵ submits that the "gate of heaven" of Jacob finds a ready parallel in the folk etymology of Babylon— *bab-ilim*, meaning, gate of the god (*Marduk*) and Babylonian *ziqqurat*, a staircase which the god ascends and descends. Tracing the origin of Jacob's dream, he submits that the story explicitly tells of the origin and ideology of a Canaanite shrine, the pre-Israelite holy place at Bethel. He links this Canaanite shrine with the shrine of *El*, the head of the Canaanite pantheon. The cosmic function of the Canaanite ladder or stairway between heaven and earth is to bring cosmic harmony and facilitate relationship between man and the high *god* of the shrine. He concludes that Bethel story tells of the origin of an important *El* shrine in Canaan and in so doing, tells how a Canaanite shrine operates in Mesopotamian world in the formative period of Israelite history.⁴⁶

As a result of his vision of Yahweh, Jacob named the place, "house of God" and set up a pillar, in Hebrew, *masseba*.⁴⁷ Throughout the history of Israelite liturgy, Bethel became a prominent place, a sacred place and it hosted a sanctuary for their cultic worship. The influence of Jacob's dream at Bethel changed the status of the place. Even though he had not inherited the place, because he was on his way to Padan Aram, he could change the name of the city from Luz to Bethel, the house of God. As a result of the dream of Jacob, subsequent generations in Israel found in this place a point of cultic worship with their God. The altar erected there became a sacred object and a place of sacrifice. Doubtless, Bethel was originally a Canaanite city but during the conquest and settlement

⁴²Noth, M. 1972. *A history of pentateuchal traditions*. 80.

⁴³Noth, M. 1972. *A history of pentateuchal traditions*. 80.

⁴⁴Millard, A. R. 1982. "Bethel". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd Edition. Ed. J. D. Douglas et al. 133-134.

⁴⁵Clifford, R. J. *The cosmic mountains in Canaan and Old Testament*. 98-107.

⁴⁶Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountains in Canaan and Old Testament*. 107.

⁴⁷Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountains in Canaan and Old Testament*. 106.

in the Promised Land, it was the portion of the tribe of Joseph who conquered the city⁴⁸ (cf. Jud. 1:22-26; 1Chr. 7:28).

While it may be agreed upon that there was a Canaanite shrine in Bethel before the arrival of Jacob as Noth⁴⁹ observes; and there was a cult of *El* as Clifford⁵⁰ submits, but the extent of the influence of this shrine on Jacob who had just arrived there on an impromptu trip and on his dream could not be determined. There was neither the evidence that Jacob was aware of the sacredness of the place nor any shrine in Luz before. The intimacy of Jacob with people he met in a day journey could not have suddenly transferred itself to his dream.

Nevertheless, there are pertinent questions that we need to ask if a parallel was found in the ladder of Jacob and the Babylonian stairways: would Yahweh be in need of staircase like *Baal* before He could communicate with the mortal? Was Yahweh a winged God like *El* and *Baal* of the Canaanites that would fly on staircases? Certainly, the Hebrews did not think of their God as *winged* God who would need stair cases to ascend or descend like the Canaanite pantheon. Did God appear to Jacob in order to make the place a sacred center of worship in the subsequent years? In Israelite liturgy, was it the particular spot he slept upon that turned to be the “house of God” or the whole Canaanite city? What had the stone headrest got to do with the covenant of Abraham and Isaac over Jacob? Did God make Bethel His house in the dream of Jacob in order to change the name and status of the city in the nearest future? Was the narrator conscious of the influence of the Canaanite sanctuary over this Jacob’s narrative? These are the questions for biblical scholarship that demand answers. It may be said that the Jacob saga postulated the fact that a sacred place existed in Israelite tradition from the patriarchal period. The calmness of the place was associated with a manifestation of God in a unique way to demarcate the place from other place.

After the dream, he was afraid and concluded that this is the house of God. In Israelite liturgy, did the new title given by Jacob-“Bethel”, meaning, “house of God” change the entire city to be house of God? The story has it that he took a stone that has been a pillow overnight, and set it up as a monument and poured oil on the top of it as a sacred object Yesterday night headrest stone has become a sacred stone, a sacralized

⁴⁸Millard, A. R. 1982. “Bethel”. In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd Edition. et al. 133.

⁴⁹Noth, M. 1972. *A history of pentateuchal traditions*, 80.

⁵⁰Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountains in Canaan and Old Testament*. 104-105.

monument on the following day. What made this stone to be different from all other stones around him with which he erected a pillar to God?

One thing that was sure was that the Israelite religion did not arise out of vacuum but grew up in a religious environment where they could borrow some elements from their neighbours with whom they shared some religious similarities and cultural traditions in order to buttress the views of their God. The transfers of the Canaanite cult elements to Israelite liturgy show that they shared some cultural and religious views in common with the Canaanites, yet the monotheistic features of their religion were still maintained.

2.3 Sacred Places in African Traditional Religion

Mbiti observes that African cosmological view is a religious world and “man lives in a religious universe”.⁵¹ Elemental forces and objects do not only exist, they bear testimony to God. Africans “read” sacredness, spiritual forces and God into various natural objects and phenomena. Awolalu⁵² notes that sacred places where worship is being conducted exist in African and Yoruba beliefs. All these places are given various names to denote their purposes and categories. The general name given to them in Yoruba belief is *Ojúbo*, meaning, “the place of worship” or “worship place” or simple “shrine”. When they are dedicated to divinities, they are called *Ojúbo Òrìsà*, meaning, “a place dedicated to the divinities”; if it is for ancestral shrine it is referred to as *Ojúbo Baba* or *Ojú Oróri* meaning, “ancestors worship place” or “shrine”. These sacred shrines and places can also be in the forest or groves for the worship of masquerade or *Ifá* worship, hence they are called *Igbó Orò* or *Igbó Igbàlè*, *Igbó Odù* for *Ifá* worship. Also, the office of the sacred people like the *Ifá* priests, cultic functionaries and so on in the traditional religion of Africans enhances certain sacred places. All these sorts of names exist in order to demarcate the particular locations of these sacred places and to show that they serve different spiritual purposes.

One thing that was noted about the submission of Awolalu, as he referred to African cultural and religious practices was that there are sacred places in African traditional religion. These sacred places were inherited from the ancestors by their posterity and they are guided by oral traditions but we were not told about the origins of the places. We are not informed about the encounters that people had with these divinities in the aforesaid times; whether people suffered any calamity from the hands of these divinities

⁵¹Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann 48.

⁵²Awolalu, J. O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. Essex: Longman Group. 114.

or they rendered certain benevolence to the people, like the cases of *Olosunta* and *Olumo* Rock legends, which resulted into worshipping them at dedicated sacred places. It is generally held that there are sacred places as culture and religion permit. The influence of culture over the beliefs of someone on sacred place was not given to us in the submission of Awolalu. Some places were termed as being sacred after a long experience of people about the places and religious traditions transmitted from one generation to the other. There are sayings, myths, legend, folklores and stories that are told from generation to generations to guide these sacred places in African traditional settings. The belief that tribal gods dwell in some places and mountains regarded to be sacred is well rested in African religion and Yoruba culture, especially in some towns that have groves and divinized mountains in Yorubaland. One of such sacred mountains is the sacred *Olosunta* mountain at Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State; *Oke 'Danre* in Idanre, Ondo state in southwest, Nigeria.

The life span of the mountain is another crucial aspect that influences the beliefs in the sacred mountains in Yoruba religion. It is a common saying among the Yoruba that, *koko o ko, ni ara ota n le, ota ki i ku*, meaning, rock neither falls sick nor dies. It is believed that he who serves the gods of the rock will not fall sick or dies prematurely but live long. The Yoruba read strength, sound health, longevity and durability to the mountains and believe that if they are served and worshipped these blessings could be metaphysically tapped and transferred to the worshippers. Mbiti⁵³ notes that the stability of the mountains makes the souls, or spirits inhabiting them permanent without leaving the place as far as the worshippers are concerned. Since the mountains are fixed and are around the territory of the people, it is the belief of the people that the spirits in them are in the same geographical region with men. The belief that natural objects and elements are inhabited by spiritual beings are not doubted but religiously believed by the Yoruba. Each sacred rock, mountain, hill, stream, river, ocean and other sacred places are believed in African Traditional Religion to have their resident souls hence, they must be revered and honoured through worship. How far this is true belongs to the metaphysical exercise.

Sacred places are liturgical places or shrines or spiritual places of worship to the Africans. They serve as temples to the traditionalists from where they carry out their religious activities. In the pre-scientific era, the size and topography of places like Ido-Ajinare, Efon-Alaaye, Erio-Ekiti, Oke-Imesi, Ikere-Ekiti, Ikole Ekiti and Aramoko-Ekiti,

⁵³Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books. 48.

all in Ekiti State in the southwest of Nigeria would have brought the idea of awesomeness and fear into the hearts of men. The conclusion could not but be the conceptions of the indwelling of gods in them.

The sacredness of these mountains may be predicated on the features such as elevation, stability, durability, immutability, insurmountability of the mountains and the thickness of vegetation surrounding them. Most sacred mountains are situated in far distance places with the groves around them. Natural phenomena like heavy rainfalls, lightning, thunder bolts, disturbing winds and fearful storms that are associated with them might warrant their divinization as men had no other alternative but to worship them and enjoy any blessings they have for the worshippers. Since man is religious, he is bound to interpret all the elemental forces in theological lights of his perceptions and experience with his environment. If all these elemental forces are associated with mountains and they are higher than what men can ordinarily interpret, they are deemed to be divinized or sacralized. They are deemed fit to be where man can ascribe to his god and place it there. As places of worship, no ordinary man would want to go there.

Hence, the religious mysteries associated with religious places would be kept away from the uninitiated. But one should wonder if truly the divinized places actually harbour any numinous or gods in the real sense of it rather than they are part of beauty of nature. One reality that could not be denied was the fact that there are water cults, tree cults and mountain cults in African traditional religion. Africans believed inanimate objects like mountains, hills, rocks, and other places were sacred and must be revered. Judeo-Christian views about these places could not but be idolatrous in nature and practices. Suffice it to conclude that there are sacred places in African religion and they influence the indigenous churches in their liturgical practices.

2.4 Sacred Places in the Selected Indigenous Churches

The advent of indigenous churches started in the early part of the twentieth century as prophetic movement. In actual fact, the African indigenous churches were nick named *Ìjo Aládùrà* (praying church) because according to them, they devote quite a substantial time to prayers and their constant theme is the power of prayer according to Aiyegboyin⁵⁴ and most of their prayer activities are carried out on sacred places, beginning from the inner sanctuary inside the church auditoria to other places. The emergence of the African

⁵⁴Aiyegboyin, D. and Ishola, S. A. 1997. *African indigenous churches: an historical perspective*. Lagos: Greater Heights Publications. 16.

indigenous churches in Nigeria especially led to a resurgence of the belief in sacred places and mountains. Oshitelu⁵⁵ submits that the *Aladura* churches (indigenous) evolved from a cultural setting among the Yoruba. It is a well noted belief among Africans that the abodes of spirits, divinities, spiritual beings and gods are found in streams, rivers, hills, in the outstanding and elevated rocks and mountains among other sacred places. Hence great mountains are revered, sacralized and divinized in African traditional religion.

Olusheye,⁵⁶ writing on the establishment of sacred places by Babalola, is of the view that these places were established by Babalola for prayers and spiritual retreats. Also he recounted how Babalola encouraged him to embark on marathon fasting and prayers. Unfortunately, he did not tell us the prophetic backgrounds of these places before they were established by Babalola. At the same time, Ojo⁵⁷ writes about the sacred places in the ministry of Babalola, where he used to pray for more spiritual power from God. He affirms that Babalola patronised sacred places for spiritual reasons, but he could not trace the origins of these places in Babalola ministry.

Alokan,⁵⁸ a great church historian in Christ Apostolic Church, also writes on the ministry of Babalola and Omotunde in Ekitiland. Sacred places are mentioned in his books as places of prayers in their ministry. Also, he does not inform us the influence of Ekiti topography on the establishment of sacred places and the impact they have in the ministry of these giants of the gospel and adherents of the churches. Olowe⁵⁹ chronicles sacred places in the ministry of Babalola. He mentions prominent sacred places in Christ Apostolic Church in Ekitiland. Biblical backgrounds of patronage of sacred places are outlined in his writing and the faith people have in them. He asserts that people patronise them today for various reasons ranging from physical to the spiritual. Olowe, as good as his submissions are, he fails to tell us the origins of these places. He out rightly omitted the ministry of Emmanuel Omotunde and sacred places in Ajaye territory.

Olowe does not specifically inform us the social and religious significance of these sacred places and the impacts they have on the liturgy of these selected churches. Besides, it appears that Olowe is only aware of sacred mountains in Christ Apostolic Church and

⁵⁵Oshitelu, G. A. 2007. *A History of the Aladura (Independent) Churches-1918-1940: an interpretation*. Ibadan: Hope Publications, 107.

⁵⁶Olusheye, E. H. L. 2006. *Who is this Babalola?* Ibadan: Gideon Global Pres.15.

⁵⁷Ojo, J. O. 2008. *The history and ministry of some past leaders of Christ Apostolic Church*. Ile-Ife: Timade Ventures. 5, 25.

⁵⁸Alokan, J. A. 2010. *Christ Apostolic Church at 90: 1918-2008*. Ile-Ife: Timade Ventures. 131-145; also see Alokan, J. A. 1991. *The Christ Apostolic Church: 1928-1988*. Lagos: Ibunkunola Printers Nigeria. 93-101.

⁵⁹Olowe, A2007. *Great revivals, great revivalist: Joseph Ayo Babalola*. Texas: Omega Publishers. 249-261.

one sacred water, *Omi-Òni* in Efon Alaaye Ekiti. Other sacred streams and waters are unconsciously omitted in his book and this is a great omission. However, it should be appreciated that Olowe attempts the documentation of sacred places in the ministry of Joseph Ayo Babalola in Ekitiland and their patronage by adherents of Christ Apostolic Church and others from other denominations.

If there is one outstanding way the Yoruba cultural beliefs have contributed so immensely to Christianity in Nigeria, it is in the area of beliefs in and patronage of sacred places. *Aladura* churches, especially Christ Apostolic Church through the ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde thrived mostly in mountainous areas in Ekitiland in the early 1930s and 1940s. The adherents of the new faith were known for the practice of going to the mountains and other sacred spots for prayers and for other spiritual reasons. Majority of the local assemblies of these two indigenous churches are prefixed with the word *Òkè*, meaning, mountain. For example, Christ Apostolic Church *Òkè-Ayò* (Mount of Joy), *Òkè-Ìgbàlà* (Mount of Salvation), *Òkè-Ìségún* (Mount of Victory) and so on. Olusheye⁶⁰ who was the last secretary to Apostle Ayo Babalola submits that Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola created many top hills (sacred mountains) all over Southwestern parts in Nigeria. He enumerated some as *Orí Òkè-Àánú* at Erio, *Orí Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaye, *Orí-Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ajinare among others.⁶¹ Olowe⁶² recognizes the creation of sacred places and mountains to be some of the legacies left behind by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola.

One fact that should be noted was that some of the sacred places, especially mountains regarded as sacred today by the indigenous churches had once served as shrines to African traditional believers before the era of Christianity. The concept that God lives in high heaven and He is above all human beings led to the idea that if mountains are elevated above all other things, it must be the abode of gods who are believed to be intermediaries between God and Man. It was due to the influence of Christianity that they turned to sacred places of prayers and were taken over by the Christians. A typical example is the prayer mountain belonging to Christ Apostolic Church at Aramoko-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The place used to be a shrine of a major divinity of the ancient people in the town. The origin of the change of events on the mountain and how Christ Apostolic Church as a denomination took over could be traced to the ministry of Prophet Abraham

⁶⁰Olusheye, E. H. L. 2006. *The story of my life*. Ibadan: Gideon Global Press. 31.

⁶¹Olusheye, E. H. L. 2006. *Who is this Joseph Ayo Babalola?* Ibadan: Gideon Global Press. 15.

⁶²Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great revivalist*. Texas: Omega Publications. 249.

O. Omotoso, an associate and contemporary of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. Today the mountain belongs to Christ Apostolic Church and it is known as *Ori-Òkè-Ìyanu*, meaning, Mountain of Miracles, Aramoko-Ekiti, Ekiti State. This may further shed light to the contributions of African traditional religion to Christianity in Ekitiland in particular. However, it should be appreciated that indigenous Churches could incorporate what obtains in their environment to the Christian faith for people around them to embrace without much ado. By incorporating existent African features and culture into Christianity, they need to be commended for this.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 SACRED PLACES IN CANAANITE RELIGION AND ANCIENT ISRAELITE LITURGY

3.1 The Ancient Near Eastern Background of the Concepts of Sacred Places

Man in antiquity laid many foundations for modern men to build upon. These ranged from socio-cultural practices, agriculture, and politics to religious conceptions. One of the religious conceptions inherited from ancient men was the idea of sacred places, where they believed their gods were placed or lived. Ancient men conceived the religious ideas that the numinous or gods lived in supra sensible places that were special. They on the other hand built some places and placed their gods there. This could be out of reverence for the gods.

In the Ancient Near East, sacred places abound though in their crude and primitive forms. The places considered to be sacred included special grounds, altars, uncommon stones and trees such as Oak, Mamre, rocks, hills, waters and mostly mountains. This could not be divulged from the features associated with mountain in the ancient world as water-giving entity. The influence or power of mountain over climate to give water served as the paramount force to view mountains as sacred even as gods in the Ancient Near East.

This chapter looked at the sacred places in the Canaanite religion and the ancient Israelite liturgy. The sacred places during the patriarchal periods and sacred objects in Mosaic era, that is, in the pre-Temple age in ancient Israel were examined. The influence of one over the other was highlighted since no faith is fixed but bound to undergo changes. A reading through the pages of the Old Testament will tempt us to believe that the religious in-depths on the concept of sacred places began in history with the Hebrews. It should be stated clearly that due to recent discoveries by biblical scholars and archaeologists, horizons of the concept of sacred places, be it in form of sea, rivers, waters, grounds, temples, hills, altars, trees or especially mountains have been amazingly widened than this concept. These discoveries have revealed to us series of earlier cultures before the patriarchal periods and the occupation of Israelites of the Promised Land. The Hebrews could be regarded as late-comers on history's stage because all across the Bible lands, cultures had come to birth, assumed classical form and run their courses for hundreds and even thousands of years before Abraham was born.¹

¹Bright, J. 1981. *A history of Israel* 3rd ed., London: SCM. 24.

As Kenyon² and Bright³ have rightly observed the cultural and religious foundations for subsequent generations were believed to have been laid by Neolithic Jericho dwellers. The Neolithic period witnessed the transition from early Palaeolithic (old stone) age, when man was solely living on hunting and foraging and living in caves to higher cultural lifestyles. In the Neolithic era, man moved toward a food producing economy⁴ instead of foraging. During this era, man moved from living in the caves to sedentary life in the community. They transited from food-gathering to food producing communities. They began to build permanent villages with mud bricks. The house floors and walls were plastered and polished and they used reed mats to cover the floors.

This age did not only give agricultural and social backgrounds to the subsequent progenitors and the subsequent neighbours, they also provided religious foundations. Sacred figurines made of clay found in this era showed that the people who lived in this era practised religion and worshipped pantheons of gods. There were small clay figurines of women and also of domestic animals which suggest the practice of fertility cult.⁵ Certain statues of clay on reed frames representing their gods were also found. Groups of human skulls separated from their bodies with the features modelled in clay and with shells for eyes were also found during these periods.⁶ Further figurines of women often displayed in the position of a woman in childbirth may argue for the cult of mother goddess and the places they were displayed presupposed the existence of sacred places in their religion. The myriads of skulls found may have served certain cultic purpose especially the ancestor worship. The conclusion that we may deduce from the above paragraph is that there were sacred objects during this era. These sacred objects were kept as a rule on places revered as sacred places.

Besides this, the ancient people also achieved a great feat in their sacral monumental buildings especially series of temples, built at sacred places for their religious worship. Mud-brick temples were built on platforms that were above the level of the flood waters in order to prevent them from destruction. Bright points out that the example of such great temple complex was found in Warka (Erech) which is a shining example and

²See Kenyon, K. M. 1957. *Digging up Jericho*. London: Ernest Benin, 74ff for the treatise on the first settlement in this region.

³Bright, J. 1981. *A history of Israel* 3rd edition, 25.

⁴Ehrich, R. W. ed. 1965. *Chronologies in old world Archaeology ed.*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 84.

⁵Bright, J. 1981. *A history of Israel* 3rd edition. London: SMC. 25.

⁶Lechevallier, F. M. and Perrot, J. 1973. *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol.23, 107ff.

series of such were found at Eridu.⁷ Such temples served various purposes including being revered as sacred places to the people in their social, political and religious life.

These temples became sacred places for the ancient people for certain reasons and purposes. The religious liturgies of the ancient people centred on their sacred places such as these temples. They became meeting places for the people. Thus the economic and social life of the community was centred around these sacred temples also. The characteristic organisation of the city-state was therefore structured around the shrines and sacred places. The land was divided into small city-state with different names and the form of government of the city-state was theocracy, ruled by god.⁸ The city and all its surrounding lands were regarded as the god's property or estate and therefore sacred. In the midst of each city-state were series of temples where they placed a group of seated figurines, probably regarded as gods. For instance, an eight pointed-star, animal figures, various figurines, and the like which probably served some cultic and sacred purposes. These objects were placed in certain places treated and regarded as sacred places.⁹

It may be argued that men in antiquity started having the notion of sacredness by epitomising their beliefs and gods through these various figurines. Also, certain places such as Temples and mud-built altars became sacred places to them by placing their gods on them and they worshipped from there. The temples became the houses for gods and city-state territory they inhabited became sacred city. The people living in the city-state of each of the gods were gods' people, regarded to be workers in his estate and inhabitants. There was a sense of regency on behalf of the gods in each city-state as their governmental system. This is to say, any ruling king is ruling on behalf of the gods. There was a priest in the local temple that conducted the activities of the local temple and ruled as an ambassador of the gods. Whoever was the king in the city-state did not hold absolute power over the people. Power was given by gods to the earthly kings who were regarded as regents for the gods of each city-state. This was so because it was held that kingship came from heaven and appointment from gods through divine approval. Jacobson and Bright argue that kingship developed out of this, first as an emergency measure, subsequently as a permanent institution.¹⁰ This primitive practice was as a result of the fear of the super sensible world that man believed that surrounded him. The awesomeness

⁷Bright, J. 1981. *A history of Israel 3rd edition*. 30.

⁸Frankfort, H. 1951. *The birth of civilization in the Ancient Near East*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. 100-111.

⁹Bright, J. 1981. *A history of Israel 3rd edition*, 31.

¹⁰See Bright, J. 1981, *A history of Israel 3rd edition*, 30-35; see also Jacobson, T. 1976. *Treasures of darkness: a history of Mesopotamian religion*. Connecticut: Yale University Press.

of the elemental forces from the world of nature around men and the belief that they constitute the expressions of the anger of the gods made them believed they were subject of the gods and that final authority came from them.

The sacred places of the ancient world also existed in numerous temples and palaces purportedly built for the gods and the regents of gods. Evidently there were scribal schools around the temples that produced a vast body of literature. Majority of the epic tales and myths which we later on learned about were probably produced during this period. Any city-state that hosted the cult of a particular god was conceived to be his seat of power. Any city-state that occupied the head of the pantheon enjoyed special treatments. Anywhere gods were seated in the city-state was considered as sacred. There were votive offerings, which were offerings brought to fulfil certain vows before the gods and to show the people's appreciation before the gods. The ancient people received instructions from the gods and any victory over another city-state during war was regarded to be given by their gods. This victory of one city-state over another was believed to be the endorsement of its claims by the head of the pantheons. The gods were not regarded to be local gods but they were thought of as cosmic in functions. As a result, the gods were believed to manifest themselves from any sacred place and may choose to dwell in any sacred place.

The existence of sacred places in the ancient Near East could be argued to have also existed in forms of sacred grounds and local shrines where the gods of the land inhabited; as a result, the gods become personal or tribal gods. The city-states became sacred as a result of the governmental function of gods in the city-state. According to Jacobson, wherever the head of the pantheon dwelt became the headquarters of gods.¹¹ The sacred places also existed in forms of sacred seats upon which the figurines of these gods were placed. Such seats were regarded to be sacred seats as a result of the contact with the figurines of the gods with them. Gods were not to sit on anything not specially made for them.

Another form of sacred places that existed in the ancient world was mortuary temples. These were places where the bodies of great men, warriors, high chiefs and kings were buried for memorial purposes. The human skull of these corpses was modelled in clay and with shells for eyes.¹² The reason why they retained these corpses inside

¹¹Jacobsen, T. 1943, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia". In *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, III, 159-172.

¹²Lechevallier, M. and Perrot J. *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 23, 107f.

mortuary temples could be argued to be for spiritual reasons. These places might have served some cultic purpose and it might serve some form of ancestor worship. The posterity probably preserved the bodies of their ancestors in order to preserve their link with the fathers. The antiquities have the religious conceptions about the dead that they attain more power and become more potent after their contact with the world beyond. They could be of help to them in time of need. The similar link was preserved in Jewish burial rites. All the fathers are gathered together in the same vicinity to provide a link with the living. They might do so in order to protect their lineage and also to be able to lay claim to the ancestry of the town, the inheritance and the privileges accruing to them. The influence of this notion could be seen in the importance of mortuary graves in Israel as seen in the cry of Nehemiah at Susan during the Babylonian captivity (cf. Nehemiah 1: 1-4). The ancient buried their dead with food and utensils beside them. Apart from the fact that this act instanced a belief in a future existence or afterlife; it might provide another cultic purpose of contact with the dead. Objects such as an eight-pointed star, a bird, various geometric figures and many clay figurines of animals and of women portrayed in the manner of childbirth supported that some objects were venerated and regarded to be sacred objects in antiquity.

From the aforementioned factors, it is apparent that ancient people conceived the notion of sacredness and sacred places through the religious in-depths in them. The relationship they had with gods made them represent their gods in figurines and images. These figurines were kept in temples, corners in the houses and some on altars. These altars were built on stones or mud-clay for durability purposes. The mortuary temples also served as sacred places to them simply for the sheer reason that they served as ancestral worship centres. Objects such as figurines of women in child birth position argue for a possibility of the existence of cult of mother goddesses. These objects were dedicated for cultic reasons and were venerated at sacred places.

The concept of sacred places could be argued to have started from spiritual sensibilities in the mind or spirit of the ancient people. These led them to consecrate certain places to be abodes of gods and dead ancestors and represented them with sacred objects. These places served various purposes, ranging from religious, political, economic purposes as well as judicial purposes. It all started from open plains to corners of houses, to sacred grounds, altars and temples. When these sacred places metamorphosed from inner rooms and mud-built temples (small in nature) to other places such as stones, trees,

hills and mountains could not be categorically stated. One fact that could not be denied was that there were conceptions of sacred places in the Ancient Near East.

3.2 The Veneration of Sacred Places in Canaanite Religion

The Canaanites were very religious with unique characteristics. They also had an extensive pantheon, headed by *El* but more prominent in practice was *Baal* with his Consort, *Anat*.¹³ One unique characteristic in the Canaanite religion is the notion of sacrality. There were various sacred places including streams, waters, green trees, grounds, altars, hills and mountains. There were sacred marriage and sacral prostitution in their religion, which according to Ringgren¹⁴ were believed to promote fertility.

Biblical scholars are yet to agree on the etymological meaning of the name Canaan.¹⁵ One certain thing is the fact that Canaan is first used as a name of a person, as a name of a nation and as descendants of coming generation (Gen. 9:18, 24; 10:15; Exo. 3:17; 6:6). These descendants had encounters with Israelite nation right from the Patriarchal periods to the conquest and monarchical era. Two things that gave Canaanite nations prominence in the Ancient Near East were their religio-cultural practices and merchandise prowess. Harrison argues that the culture of the Canaanite city-states reached back to the third millennium and because of the strategic position of Palestine, it was able to influence many other nations for centuries.¹⁶

Canaanite cosmological view involved sacrality of nature and places around them. These places served various cultic purposes. Inasmuch as the Canaanites were polytheistic in religious practices, many places must be provided for their local and national gods. In their religion, certain places are labelled to be abodes of gods. As a result, they were given religious veneration. This religious veneration of sacred places was not ordinary but surrounded with various mythical beliefs about them. For an instance, hills and mountains were believed to be sacred places in Canaanite religion. Ringgren¹⁷ argues that there is a

¹³Kitchen, K. A. 1982. "Canaan". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. Leicester, Intervarsity Press. 166.

¹⁴See Ringgren, H. 1970. *Israelite religion*. trans by Green, D. London: S.P.C.K. 43.; W.F. Albright, 1961. "The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilization". In *The Bible and the Ancient Near East Essays for W.F. Albright*. 328-362;

¹⁵Harrison, R. K. 1974. *Old Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 162; Kitchen, K. A. 1983. "Canaan". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. 166; also see Albright, W. F. 1961. "The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilization". In *The Bible and the Ancient Near East Essays*. 328-362.

¹⁶Harrison, R. K. 1974. *Old Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing. 162; Kitchen, K. A. 1982. "Canaan". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. 166; W.F. Albright, 1961. "The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilization". In *The Bible and the Ancient Near East Essays*. 328-362.

¹⁷Ringgren, H. 1970. *Israelite religion*. trans. by Green, D. London: S.P.C.K. 43.

mythological conception found in the Ras-Shamra texts and elsewhere that the gods live on hills and mountains especially Mount *Zaphon*. It was the belief of the ancient Canaanites that gods meet on mountains and carry out certain functions from there. These mountains were regarded to be the ground of conflicting natural forces, the meeting place of heaven and earth, the place where effective decrees are issued.¹⁸ Mountains regarded to be sacred in the Canaanite cosmological perspectives were not mere elevated plateau in nature or topographical uplift or geographical elevation. They were regarded to be *living* and *active* in their daily experience. To the Canaanites, they were places of real and life encounters.

A phenomenologist of religion, W. Wrede Kristensen¹⁹ argues that sacred mountain is the place where the life of the earth becomes the most intense and tangible. The Mesopotamian world had the belief that mountains were places of greatness, splendour and the scenes of religious experience. In the mythological expression of the ancient Canaanites, mountains can be a force or symbol of productivity or fertility, due to its life giving water. They were cosmic that is, they were religiously active and having to do with universe and laws governing it.²⁰ This was so because the gods who created the earth were living there and from there issuing decrees governing the earth. The religious activities of gods on the mountains as it was believed by the Canaanites made these mountains to be sacred. There were various theogonies which took place on divinized mountains in Hittite land. Clifford²¹ also cited a myth which he believed to be Canaanite in origin concerning *Ishtar* and mount *Pisaisa*. According to the myth, the mountain sleeps with *Ishtar*, contrary to her will. *Ishtar* becomes angry and the mountain falls down before her to beg for mercy. Guterbock²² also published a Canaanite myth concerning a conflict between *El-Kinirsha*, *Ashertu* and the storm-god. A reference was made to the victory of the storm-god over the unruly sea in the myth. Many local and state gods were mythically portrayed by the ancient Mesopotamians as standing on divinized mountains and other places. The state gods, that is, the heads of the pantheons in different locations were equipped as

¹⁸Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 3-4.

¹⁹Kristensen, W. W. 1960. *The Meaning of Religion*. trans. by Carman, J. B. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 106ff.

²⁰Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 3-4.

²¹Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 30.

²²Guterbock, G. H. 1961. *Hittite Mythology, Mythologies of the Ancient World*. ed. S.N. Kramer Garden City: Double Day. 168-169. See Guterbock, H. G. 1946. *Kumarbi*. New York: Europa-Verlag, 142.

warriors of the city-states. In the mythology, the gods could be travelling with a wagon, especially the head of the pantheons with bulls yoked to the wagon, over divinized mountains, bending under the heavy load. The bulls in the ancient world were symbols of strength and fertility and they prominently featured in the Canaanite mythologies. They also served as the symbols of storm-god of the Canaanites-*Baal* and *Hadad* the storm god of the Syrians. The wagon of gods could not be anything other than the atmospheric thunders, which was interpreted to be the “rumblings of gods” as they travel. The gods could be looking for one of them on the mountain as a result of a lost battle and when the gods was defeated. Guterbock cited a myth in memory of a battle with a monster at *Hazzi*, (*Zaphon*). *Teshub* and his brother *Tashmishu* go looking for the stone monster. They are joined by their sister *Ishtar*. All three ascend *Hazzi* to find the monster.²³ As a result of these mythical theogonies; many mountains were regarded to be sacred in Canaanite religion.

In a land where they were surrounded by various hills and mountains, the Canaanites could not but conclude that their gods lived on the mountains around them. The topographical plateau and grandeur of these mountains could attract the people to them and making them sacred as a result of the perceived activities of gods on them. One thing to be noted is the fact that people serve their gods according to the world of nature closer to them. The riverine people will not serve gods of the mountain but river gods and goddesses because that is not their cosmological peculiarity. The Canaanites would naturally view their environment and religiously interpret them to suit their gods. They would see their gods living on the mountains surrounding them and regard them as sacred.

Another major reason which could be deduced to be responsible for the sacrality of the places was the need for survival. In a climate condition where there was a real need for water for survival and they believed that water comes from the mountains, they must be viewed from super sensible perspective. Certain mountains served as sources of life to the Canaanites and they appealed to gods for agricultural fertility and help in harsh climate. Any mountain bringing relief in terms of rainfall or waters could not but be regarded as sacred. In an era where people were looking for meanings of their life and in- depth quest in them in order to understand the mysteries surrounding them, these places could not but be regarded as places with unique features as sacred. Since the gods cared for their living by giving those waters, rains, the giver must be higher than receiver and the places where

²³Guterbock, G. H. 1961. *Hittite Mythology, Mythologies of the Ancient World*. ed. S.N. Kramer. Garden City: Double Day. 168-169. See Guterbock, H. G. 1946. *Kumarbi*. New York: Europa-Verlag. 142.

they come from must be sacred. Anything coming from the supposed dwelling of the gods must have elements of sacredness.

The veneration of sacred places in Canaanites religion also extended to the invocation of gods for magical purposes. When the gods were fighting, and there was a need for assistance of another god, invocations were usually made. Harrison points out an example of the Ugaritic legend of *Baal* and *Anat*, where the sea serpent *Tannin* was invoked for magical purposes.²⁴ The place where extra power came for help in the time of trouble could not be counted less but as sacred. These invocations were also for the purpose of taking a revenge on the enemies. Gordon cites a legend of *Aqt*, where King *Danel* invoked blindness upon the town where his son was murdered and said, “woe unto thee, city of Mourners, near which Aqt the Hero was smitten! May Baal make thee one-eyed from now and unto eternity....”²⁵ These invocations were conjured at places where they believed it would be unhindered and effective. The efficacy of the curse was attached to the sacred mountains they revered.

The Canaanites were fluid in their religious practices. It was, in fact, an extraordinarily debasing form of paganism, specifically of the fertility cult as Bright²⁶ concludes. Harrison also remarks on the Canaanite religion as a crude and debased form of ritual polytheism. It was associated with sensuous fertility-cult worship of a particularly lewd and orgiastic kind....²⁷ These may be *Western conclusions* about them. The Canaanites could not conceive a better way of serving their gods than offering their bodies to the gods they believe that created them. As a result of the fluidity of the Canaanite religion, many cultic places became sacred places in the land for certain reasons. These places started as shrines and meeting places of worship and later on regarded as sacred for the sake of cultic activities carried out there with sacred personages attached to them. Many of these places were referred to as “high places” in the Old Testament. These places were doubtlessly regarded as sacred places because they served as cultic centres and meeting places with gods. Many of them were in the open space, grounds, and upon round hills. Albright also has offered another opinion by suggesting the word, *bama*, plural *bamot* “high places” seems to mean “funerary mound”; and it is possible that ancestor

²⁴Harrison, R. K. 1974. *Old Testament Time..* Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing. 165.

²⁵Gordon, C. H. 1949. *Ugaritic Literature*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 99.

²⁶Bright, J. 1981. *A History of Israel* 3rd edition, London: SCM, 118.

²⁷Harrison, R. K. 1974. *Old Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing. 167.

worship was occasionally practised at these sites.²⁸ If this hypothesis is accepted, it connotes that the burial grounds of ancestors, especially the kings and chief warriors of the Canaanite city-states would also be sacred. On the other hand, some of these high places may be dedicated to the deceased of the land. After their demise, the living ones would go to them and pour libation on them and make sacrifice to them as their marks of honour.

A typical high place in Canaanite religion consisted religiously of three major things as far as we can deduce. The first thing was an altar for sacrifice. The second was stone pillar commonly called *massebahs*. Stone pillar was a common religious object in Canaanite religion. It functioned as a symbol of the masculine divinity. This could be inferred from the images of *Baal*, the storm god of the Canaanites, standing on a lofty mountain, hurling stones, which could be a figurative epitome of thunder bolts in nature. The third object was a wooden post (*asherah*). This wooden post was symbol of the mother-goddess of fertility. De Vaux linguistically points out that this name *asherah* corresponds to the Amorite and Canaanite goddess *Ashirtu* or *Athirat* who was regarded as a mother-goddess²⁹ on a sacred place.

The Canaanite sacred places were filled with the assemblage of stone pillars, (*massebahs*), wooden posts (*asera*) and the other cultic images and figurines as funerary shrines. Old Testament, especially the Deuteronomistic books and the prophets laid bare before us the usage of assemblage of *asherahs* and figurine *massebahs* on high places. These high places were Canaanite sacred places of worship. It shows that some high places served as ancestral cultic worship centres in Canaanite religion. A cross reference to the legend of Absalom in 2 Samuel Chapter 18:18 corroborates the notion of using of pillar or a *massebah* as a funerary monument. Every place it stood was regarded to be sacred. The question needs to be asked: "What is the relevance of stone pillars and wooden posts erected"? It could be opinionated that the belief in the figure representation or symbolism was ancient. Also, the belief of self replacement through monument and that the spirit lives on is symbolized through these monuments. It is believed that contacts could be made with the personages represented through these monuments. Albright has argued in favour of the high places as cultic-sacred places of ancestral cult among the Canaanites.³⁰ The prophets and Deuteronomistic historians did not spare the Israelites

²⁸Albright, W. F. 1957. "The High Places in ancient Palestine". In *Supplementus to Vetus Testamentum*, Vol. IV, 242.

²⁹De Vaux, R. 1961. *Ancient Israel*. trans. McHugh, J. New York: McGraw-Hill, 284.

³⁰Albright, W. F. 1957. "The High Places in Ancient Palestine". In *Supplementus to Vetus Testamentum*, 243-244.

when they copied these acts from the Canaanites in their liturgical practices. Nevertheless, one fact remains that high places filled with figurines, *massabahs*, *asherah* images and stone pillars were sacred objects in sacred places in Canaanite religion.

The veneration of sacred places in Canaanite religion also included sacred trees. It would be admitted that the land of Canaan could not have been a land thickly filled with vegetation of trees, due to the climate of the place. Nevertheless, there were some trees peculiar to certain geographical locations in the land. Lebanon was a vital source of timber and the cedar of Lebanon was common in Old Testament passages. Roses of Sharon were also frequently mentioned (cf. Song 2:1; 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Kgs. 5:6-10; 2 Kgs. 14:9; Song. 3:9). Also, there were various uses of the trees that grew in the land. Cedar trees were notable for the building purposes and some such as apple produced edible fruits and food. Some provided good shade for the people living in a hot and unbearable climatic weather. The perfumes and fragrance when burnt produced by some trees made them points of attraction (cf. Lev. 14:4-6, 49-52; Num. 19:6). Trees formed part of the materials used for musical instrument in the ancient world (cf. 2 Sam. 6:5) and for ship building (cf. Eze. 27:5). An Oak was as useful a tree for shade as for rest (cf. 1 Kgs. 13:14) and it could serve as burial place for the dead as we see in the case of Jacob who buried Rachel under an Oak tree. (cf. Gen. 35:8; 1 Chr. 10:12).

One prominent feature of tree, which was durability, could attract the ancient Canaanites to make it an art and symbol of their gods. There was tree cult among the Canaanites. A green tree was a symbol of life and fertility as witnessed in the book of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut. 16:21-22). Prophet Hosea specifically mentions tree cult and sacrifice being made under trees in Israel: "They sacrifice... under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good" (Hos. 4:13).

The Canaanites evidently worshipped under the green trees as sacred places for them. Some trees served as sacred shrines for the Canaanites in their religious worship. (cf. Exo. 34:13). These sacred trees or wooden shrines were located in the purported idolatrous "grove" or a "high place" according to the Deuteronomistic writers but they were part of the sacred places to the Canaanites (cf. 2 Kgs. 17:16). These sacred trees also have oracular functions as pointed out by Ringgren.³¹ In a nutshell, these trees were symbols of life and fertility to the Canaanites and they were part of sacred places in their religious view and practices. When Israelites adopted these same practices, the prophets

³¹Ringgren, H. 1970. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. David Green, London: S.P.C.K.. 158.

saw the Canaanite cultic backgrounds in them as places of worship of Canaanite gods contrary to true Yahweh worship. Hence, they castigated and denounced Israelites for their adoption.

3.2.1 *El* and Sacred Places in Canaanite Religion

Cross,³² Huffmon,³³ Pope³⁴ and Gelb³⁵ among other scholars have demonstrated to a large extent that *El* was a proper name of a deity among East and Northwest Semitic people. He was regarded as the head of the pantheon. It is a divine name of a god who stands as a patron, creator and father of all other gods. According to Gelb as quoted by F.M. Cross,³⁶ opines that the very common use of the element *El* in Akkadian theophorous names, indicates that the god *El* was the chief divinity of the Mesopotamian Semites in the pre-Sargonic period. With the discovery of *Ras Shamra* texts, more lights have been shed on the Semitic people's religion, more importantly the Canaanite religion. At the head of the pantheon of the Canaanites stood the god *El* with different epithet as father, the creator, king and Bull.³⁷ Bull is used here to show fertility power of *El* just as *Baal* is also another fertility god in Canaanite religion. Pope³⁸ has argued that the dwelling place of *El*, the head of Canaanite pantheon is on the mountain to which all other gods are summoned to hasten up.

El's abode has mountainous and aqueous features; it gives water of life to the living. The sons of gods constitute an assembly on the mountain. The term "the assembly of the sons of *El*" as suggested by Clifford³⁹ reflects the belief that *El* is the progenitor of all the gods. This assembly is commonly referred to as "the assembly of the gods", "the assembly of the sons of gods" and "the assembly of the sons of *El*". It is a place where the presidency of *El* is recognized. All other gods hold meeting under his supremacy for decision taking. Every other god comes to him seeking his permission relating to kingship. "The assembly of gods" sits on the mountain where *El* dwells and there he exercises

³²Cross, F. M. 1973. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 4, 13.

³³Huffmon, H. 1965. *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 165.

³⁴Pope, M. 1955. "El in Ugaritic Text". In *Suppliments to Vetus Testamentum II*, Leiden: Brill, 61-72. See also Helmer Riggren, 1970. *Israelite Religion*, 21.

³⁵Gelp, I. J. 1961. *Old Akkadian Writing and Grammar*. Chicago: 6.

³⁶Cross, F. M. 1973. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 4.

³⁷Cross, F. M. 1973. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 4; Pope, M. 1955, "El in Ugaritic Text". In *Suppliments to Vetus Testamentum II*, Leiden: Brill. 61-72.

³⁸Pope, M. 1955. "El in Ugaritic Text". In *Suppliments to Vetus Testamentum II*, Leiden: Brill. 61-72.

³⁹Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 45-48.

decisions over the gods concerning the issue of enthronement among the gods. As the head of the pantheon, *El* is placed on a sacred mountain in Canaanite religion which is described with ancient paradisiacal motifs.⁴⁰ In other words, he dwells in paradise, the source of life giving and sacred water. A reflection on the mythically historicized story of Eden in biblical narrative of creation in Genesis portrays Eden as the source of life-giving water. Also, Prophet Ezekiel prophesies that the sacred mountain of God is another source of sacred water (cf. Gen. 2; Eze. 47:1-12; Zec. 13:8; Joel 4:8). A careful reading of these passages betrays the Canaanite influence on Israel's conceptions in these passages.

The name *El* features prominently in Israelites religion. We come across *El* as a compound name with other theophoric names in the patriarchal narratives. For example, *El' elyon*, God Most High (Gen. 14:18), *El Roi*, God of seeing (Gen. 16:13); *El Bethel*, God of Bethel (Gen. 31:13; 28); *El olam* the Everlasting God (Gen. 21:33) and lastly *El Sadday* which is mentioned five times in *Shaddai* Genesis tradition (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3). The etymology of the meaning of the name *El Sadday* has not been agreed upon among scholars but Albright is of the opinion that most probably the root of the name *El Sadday* can be derived from Akkadian word *Sadu*, meaning mountain. If it is anything to go by, the name would mean "god of the mountain" Jacob is of the view that the name *Shaday* exists with other proper names in antiquity such as *Zurishaddai* and *Ammishaddai*.⁴¹ Riggren also submits that the gods are called "mountain" or "rock" in both Israelites and Sumero-Babylonia religions.⁴² It could be submitted that *El* is a theophoric name that Semitic people are familiar with as the highest god of the Canaanites who dwells on sacred place such as mountain and surrounded with every sense of sacrality. The patriarchal narratives and identification of the God of the fathers apparently reflect a merger of the gods of the fathers with the great Canaanite god *El* who dwells on a sacred place. After all, great god like *El* cannot be dwelling in any location less than a sacred place. In the case of Canaanite *El* dwelling on sacred place like mountain has cosmic mythological significance in their religion. But the emphasis in the case of Yahweh is symbolically portrayed as epitome of strength, strongness, protection and security, provided by the God of Israel which can only be derived from a sacred place.

⁴⁰Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 48-51. Also, see the article of Albright, W. F. 1935. "The Names Shadai and Abram". In *Journal of Biblical Literature* LIV. 173-204.

⁴¹Jacob, E. 1958. *Theology of Old Testament*. trans. Heathcote A. W. and Allcock, P. J. New York: Harper. 46.

⁴²Riggren, H.1970. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. David Green, 22.

3.2.2 *Baal's Mountain in Zaphon as a Sacred Place in Canaanite Religion*

Baal, the fertility god of the Canaanites was another after *El* in biblical narratives. He is better known to us in Old Testament by his title *Baal*. He is the Bull of the Canaanites, the storm war god and at the same time god of fertility. *Baal* who is god of vegetation and fertility in Canaanite religion dies and comes back to life as personification of nature, which is to represent the agricultural seasons of the land. He is purportedly believed to be having his dwelling place on Mount *Zaphon*.

As Clifford maintains, *Zaphon* in Ugaritic Language can have four distinctive meanings:

- a. The mountain today called *Jebel 'et Aqra*, which is about 50 kilometres north of *Ras Shamra* at the mouth of the Orontes.
- b. The mountain dwelling of the god *Baal*, especially in the mythic texts.
- c. The deified (sacralized, divinized) mountain *Zaphon* especially in the liturgical texts and in proper names.
- d. Part of the epithet *Baal Saphon*.⁴³

Baal is also associated with phenomenological natural elements such as cloud, wind, rain, lightnings and thunders as his entourage. The dwelling place of *Baal* is believed to bring fertility to the vegetation of the people. The construction of a palace for *Baal* on Mount *Zaphon* symbolized his kingship. The dwelling place of *Baal* is believed to bring fertility to the vegetation of the people. The construction of a palace for *Baal* on Mount *Zaphon* symbolized his kingship among other gods and it will be the official sources of fertility. As god of fertility, he dwells on the mountain within which is concentrated the mysterious powers of life, the source of life-giving water.⁴⁴

Ras Shamra text points to several sacralized places which were regarded as the abodes of Canaanite gods especially *Baal* on Saphan.⁴⁵ These gods were worshipped and they received sacrificial offerings for other sons of gods on these cultic sites. Besides, other activities take place on the sacred dwelling place of *Baal*. There are cultic feasts celebrated in honour of *Baal* after the completion of his palace and as a result of his victory over unruly and chaotic sea goddess-*Yamm*. The dwelling place of *Baal* on Mount *Zaphon* is also oracular in nature. The great Smith and Craftsman god, *Koshar-was-Khasis*

⁴³Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 45.

⁴⁴Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*, 68.

⁴⁵Kapelrud, A. S. 1965. *The Ras Shamra Discoveries and the Old Testament*. Trans. Anderson, G. W. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 2, 35, 45, 48, 51, 71, 78.

built the palace for *Baal* after his victory in battle over against *Yamm* and he used to bring oracular message to *Baal* on Mount *Zaphon*.

The dwelling place of *Baal* is believed to bring fertility to the vegetation of the people. The construction of a palace for *Baal* on Mount *Zaphon* symbolized his kingship among other gods. As Clifford observes, it is regarded as the office which mediated fertility and cosmic harmony.⁴⁶ Cosmic harmony in the sense that Mount *Zaphon* as abode of *Baal*, with the temple built on the mountain serves as a symbol of reconciliation between heaven and earth. It is regarded as the official cultic and sacred source of fertility. As the god of fertility, he dwells on the mountain within which is concentrated the mysterious power of life to the source of life-giving water.⁴⁷

One thing that should be noted on this submission is the reality that in the ancient world, mountains were viewed beyond their topographical and aesthetic features. The geographical heights of mountains went beyond the imaginations of the people to be more real than ordinary. They were viewed to be spiritual realities and have roles to play in their existence. More importantly is the fact that dew descends on them first before they touch human beings. Also, the animistic elements in nearly all religions found their origins in the mythologies and epics of the religion of the ancient people among who were the Canaanites. Their towering to the sky and firmament could easily attract man and make him conclude that they are abodes of gods. As man cannot easily access them, they must be for transcendent divinities. The sacred places were viewed to be living and cosmic.⁴⁸ They are cosmic in the sense that they are regarded to be centre of fertility; they are capable of bestowing a livelihood on human. The examples are found in the mountain cults in Yorubaland. During the festival, barren women especially seek the assistance of the divinities that are believed to inhabit these mountains and make vow to be fulfilled if the requests are granted. For instance, the *Oke-Ibadan* festival in Ibadan, Oyo State, Western Nigeria is a good example of mountain cult as cult of fertility.⁴⁹ The same view of sacred mountain as a centre of fertility is laid bare in *Oloke* festival in Ikole- Ekiti, Ekiti State, in Western Nigeria.⁵⁰ The mountains are regarded as the meeting places of gods and places where gods meet man and vice-versa. Further, the climatic condition of the people in a desert area such as Palestine necessitated the notion of water as sources of life. If

⁴⁶Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 68.

⁴⁷Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 69.

⁴⁸Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 69.

⁴⁹Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 5.

⁵⁰Ifamapowa, F. the 16th Aboke of Oke-Badan Cult and Festival. Oral Interview granted on 24th December, 2009.

water could come from mountains viewed to sacred, it is connected with gods dwelling on sacred places. *Baal* is associated with natural element or phenomenological forces such as cloud, wind, rain. Lightly and thunders as his entourage. *Baal* is god of the sky and he dwells on Mount *Zaphon*. From there he sends lighting and thunder, he rides in the cloud and sends fire. It has been pointed out that *Baal* built a palace or temple on Mount *Zaphon* after his victory over *Yamm*, the unruly Sea goddess and *Mot*, the Death goddess. The sons of gods who approach to worship *Baal* see the bricks under his feet as clear as the very heavens for clearness.

Yahweh of Israel has been given atmospheric features in His descent and theophany in Israelite religious traditions. A careful look at the *Sinaitic traditions* in Exodus and Zion Traditions in other poetic hymns, especially in Psalm in the ancient Israelite narratives, show that there are similarities in Canaanite epics about their gods and Israelite claims for Yahweh. One cannot say categorically when the two blended together but it is sure that atmospheric forces such as clouds, winds, thunder, lighting, storms, thunders and rain are associated with Yahweh as with Canaanite *Baal*. Obviously both Yahweh of Israel and *Baal* of the Canaanites were deities associated with atmospheric phenomena.⁵¹ As Cassuto observes, the sound of the horn in the Sinai periscope is perhaps a liturgical imitation of thunders by Israelites.⁵²

Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu who approached Yahweh on Mount Sinai in the Exodus Traditions may stand for *sons of gods* in Ugaritic picture of “assembly of gods” or “assembly of sons of gods” (Exo. 19:24; 24:1-2). Moses and other seventy elders that went to the mountain ate and drink, like a feast on the mountain as given by *Baal* and *El*. Yahweh gave Moses authoritative decrees in terms of Ten Commandments and others just as *El* gave decrees to the sons of gods, which portray the fact that the Exodus traditions of Mount Sinai and giving of the law was patterned by the writer according to the Canaanite religious tradition of theophany in a mythological milieu. The writer only historicized the Canaanite myth in Exodus traditions. Also, the theophanic languages of Ugaritic religion associated with *Baal* were later on transferred to God of Israel. For example, *Baal* is regarded as the “rider of the clouds” (cf. Psa. 68:4; 104:39), “one who sits on a throne on the mountain or heaven” (cf. Psa. 2:4; 103:19), and “hurls down lightning and thunder bolts” (cf. Psa. 18:13; 77:18; 114:6). Such parallels with Hebrew poetic descriptions of

⁵¹Higgren, H. 1970 *Israelite Religion*. 43.

⁵²Cassuto, U. 1967. *A Commentary on the book of Exodus*. trans. Abrahams, I. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press. 232.

God definitely betray Canaanites influence and origin. Such may not be considered to be difficult if one sees the fluidity of religion and its adaptability in the ancient world and Israelite religion cannot be exempted from this as a historical and living religion.

Mowinckel⁵³ and Weiser⁵⁴ note that the latter years of Israelite liturgy also borrowed the Sinaitic traditions to legitimize the Jerusalem cult as a sacred place as. He seems clear, therefore that the writer of Exodus traditions on Mount Sinai borrows their traditions associated with the idea of sacred mountain in Canaan especially *Baal's* mountain, Mount *Zaphon* as a sacred place or abode of Yahweh.

3.3.3 *Baal's* Consort, *Anat's* dwelling on a Sacred Place in Canaanite Religion

At Ugarit, the cosmological structure consisted of three regions. The first was the highest realm, followed by the middle and the depth. The highest realm was assigned to *El*, the highest and head of pantheon; the middle realm was supposedly the earth, a realm of *Baal*, *Anat* and *Asherah*, the gods and goddesses of nature and fertility. The depth was the dreaded and sacred realm of *Mot*, the goddess of Death. It is certain that all the activities of the three realms focused on the middle realm, the earth with *Baal* and *Anat* his consort who symbolizes the fertile earth. The Ugarit were fond of pairing their gods, hence we see *El* and his consort, *Asherah*, *Baal* and his consort, *Anat*. In the *Baal* and *Anat* myth or cult, *Anat* has major features as goddess of love, sexual lust, fecundity or fertility and she is a goddess of war.

We see her principally in the myth of *Baal's* death and resurrection, which is a metaphorical expression of winter and spring in agricultural seasons of the Canaanites. It also symbolizes the ceasing of agricultural growth. It is in the area of *Baal's* death and resurrection that we know the power of *Anat*. Though she is an epitome of ferocity, sexual attraction, bloodthirsty, and lustful goddess, she is equally protective, supportive and warlike goddess who went to the depth, the region of *Mot*, Death, in order to bring her husband *Baal* back to life. The coming to life of *Baal* portrays the rainfall and fertility on earth. In the climate of Syria-Palestine where survival depends on rains, the weather god cult would always take prominence. *Anat* and her consort are in charge of rainfall and giving of water. The water given by *Baal* and *Anat* is divine and sacred. Riggren has argued that the Old Testament word *ephod* has its etymological connotation which refers

⁵³Mowinckel, S. 1967. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. trans. Ap-Thomas, D. R. New York: Abingdon, Vol. 1. 156-158.

⁵⁴Weiser, A. 1962. *The Psalms*. trans. Hartwell, H. Philadelphia: Westminster. 393-395.

to a garment. He does this by pointing to the Ugaritic texts where the word *ipd* is the garment worn by the goddess *Anat*.⁵⁵ This shows that *Anat* is a queen among goddesses. She also receives honour, sacrifices and worship from other gods.⁵⁵ *Anat* occupies a unique position among the Canaanite gods and goddesses.

It is glaring that *Anat* also lives on sacred space especially sacral mountain in Canaanite religion as Clifford rightly demonstrated. He shows this by citing a case when messengers from *El* and *Baal* came to her on a sacred mountain to tell her to call off war and pour peace on earth.⁵⁶ *Anat*'s mountain is far away from *El*'s mountain but she demonstrated her swiftness through her wings as she flew ahead of the sons of gods, messengers of *El* to his mountain to request for a temple or palace for *Baal*. The Canaanites has pantheon of gods and each of them dwells on sacred places. They paired their gods with a consort, a tendency Israelites wanted to copy but refuted by the Yahwists and prophets.

3.3 Sacred Places during the Patriarchal Periods in Ancient Israel

The Jewish tradition on sacred places is quite appealing and attracting through the written presentation of the history of the beginning of Israel. It presents three key personages to us as their patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Later on we are introduced to twelve sons of Jacob who later on were portrayed as the leaders or progenitors of the tribes of Israelite nation. The first patriarch, Abraham heard the voice of one strange God contrary to the gods he was familiar with. He has been familiar with the moon cult and the whole family of Abraham had once been devotees of *Sin*.⁵⁷ The next phases of his life: departure, travels, encounters, trials and religious relationship through covenant and sacrifices are presented to us on the pages of Jewish scriptures. How much could we trust those pieces as historical events? It is glaring that the patriarchal narratives have come down to us through centuries of oral traditions as saga and legends before they are committed into literary forms by biblical writers and redactors. The extreme views of the pan-Babylonian school, which interpreted the patriarchs as figures out of astral mythology are, rejected today by many scholars.⁵⁸

⁵⁵Riggren, H. 1970. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, .D. London: S.P.C.K.. 206.

⁵⁶Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 89.

⁵⁷Bright, J. 1981. *A History of Israel 3rd ed*. 101.

⁵⁸See Bright, J. 1980. *History of Israel 3rd ed*. London: SCM. 87-103 and Riggren, H. 1970. *Israelite Religion*. trans. Green, D. London: SPCK. 18ff.

Having regarded the patriarchs as historical figures, we must equally point out that they were religious people, especially Abraham. This raises a number of pertinent questions: who was their Deity? Where did they worship Him? How did they worship Him? Scholars⁵⁹ have submitted various schools of thoughts on this. The Deity they believed in was worshipped under different names such as “God”, *Elohim*; *El Shaddai* (cf: Exo. 6:3; Gen. 17:1; 43:14); *El “Elyon* (Gen. 14:18-24); (Gen. 21:33); *El Roi* (Gen. 16:13); *Yahweh Yireh* (Gen. 22:14); *El Bethel* (Gen. 31:13; 35:7). It is not an understatement to affirm that the patriarchs worship this Deity as a clan God or patron God of their tribe, under different names as peculiar to them at the initial and developmental stages of their religion and worship.

Like any other religion, it could be argued that the oriental and Ancient Near Eastern people and Canaanites worshipped personal gods. The patriarchs would have seen *Elohim* as their own Deity in a special way, having abandoned the old tribal god worshipped in Ur of the Chaldeans. The evolution of things from the lowest rank to the highest form could not but happened to the ways in which the patriarchs worshipped *Elohim* until it gained peak in the time of Moses and during the subsequent progenitors. After all, the Yahwistic writer of some chapters in Genesis especially chapter 12 mentions this God who called Abraham with the promises made to him. He also indicated that from time immemorial he had been worshipped by men (cf. Gen. 4:12) but He partially revealed His name to them until the time of Moses (cf. Exo. 6:2f).

How he was worshipped was what we could not accurately give the account, but where He was worshipped are our major concerns. This is what we want to infer from the pages of the Jewish scripture and some available extra biblical data. It is glaring that as Abraham moved on in his journey, he has a consciousness of making contact with this Deity that has called him. We learnt that *he built an altar to the Lord and called on the name of Lord.* (cf. Gen. 12:8). The narrator gives us the first destination that Abraham got to in the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 12:5-6). A contact with the Canaanites in his journey probably exposed Abraham to the way and manner of worship in the land. The Canaanites had myriads of sacred altars in the open fields and under the green trees as sacred places

⁵⁹Further details on this issue can be read in Alt, A. 1969. “The God of the fathers”. In *Essays on Old Testament history and Religion* Eng. trans. Oxford: Blackwell, 1-77 and Bright, J. 1981. *History of Israel* 3rd ed. London: SCM. 96-102.

of meeting their divinities. In the pre-Israelite era, Mitchell⁶⁰ has submitted that Temples of the Late Bronze Age containing altars of similar type have been found at Lachish, Beth-Shean and Hazor. At Megiddo and Nahariyeh great platforms of sacred stones which were probably used as places of sacrifice were uncovered.⁶¹ Some altars discovered there by archaeologists have some unique features similar to the ones found in Israel. At each end of the four corners of the altar a projection or horn, making four horns were found. It could be argued that this may symbolize a honour for the gods of fertility of the Canaanites, *Baal* because a Bull with mighty horn was his symbol. The projection through a symbol of horn may be a mythical belief for more productivity and fertility as they sacrificed to him on the altar. The original purpose of the horns is not known but it could be symbols of safety as we later found out in Israelite cultic practice⁶² (cf. 1 Kgs. 1:50-53; 2:28-34).

Naturally, Abraham could have followed the pattern of the Canaanites by adopting an altar as a sacred place for his own God. Taking altars as sacred places of worship dated back to the time of Noah when it was first mention in the Bible (cf. Gen. 8:20). The altars remained sacred places throughout the ancient Jewish history. It is certain that altars as sacred places were in use among the Canaanites in the patriarchal age in the Promised Land. Abraham built some (cf. Gen. 12:8; 13:18; 21:33; 22:9); Isaac built one (cf. Gen. 26:25) Jacob also built one (Gen. 33:20; 35:7). They remained as sacred places throughout the ancient Jewish history in their religious contact with their tribal God. The Patriarchs could have naturally and religiously taken altars as sacred objects and places for meeting their own patron God in their liturgical practices after the pattern of the Canaanites by adopting altars as sacred places for contacts with Yahweh. After all, Abraham met the Canaanites in the Promised Land when he arrived there. Such influence upon his religious in-depths should be admitted because he worshipped Yahweh on the altar he built and other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob followed suit. It is evident that it was a primitive way of general worship in the land to build altars for gods and regard them as sacred places. But the Sinaitic revelation rejected the fashion and usage of altars after the order of the Canaanite religious practices but countenanced its use in Israelite liturgy in another way and Moses was instructed to build one for Yahweh (cf. Exo. 20:22-26).

⁶⁰Mitchell, T. C. 1982. "Altars". In *New Bible Dictionary* 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press, 27. Also, see Cleveland, H. Z. 1987. "Altar". In *New International Bible Dictionary*, ed. Douglas, J. D. et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 36-38.

⁶¹Cleveland, H. Z. 1987. "Altar". In *New International Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas, J. D. et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 36-38.

⁶²Bright, J. 1981. *A History of Israel 3rd edition*. 96-102.

It is quite interesting to note that sacred places and objects during the patriarchal periods included the sacred trees and the shades of such trees. When Abraham arrived in Canaan, the first place that played significance roles in his destination was Shechem, which boasted of a *terebinth tree of Moreh*. Shechem has been cited by scholars to have been a cultic site with a shrine of *Baal-berith*, that is, *Baal* of the Covenant among the Canaanites (cf. Jud. 9:4). Even the Ark of God was stationed there for some time during the periods of Judges. When he was dwelling under this cultic tree Abraham experienced another theophanic manifestation of the God who spoke to him and called him out of his father's house. Yahweh also made a covenant with him that his descendants would inherit the Land. Then he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him. This legend may be taken as the covenant making roles of *Baal-berith*, *Baal* of the covenant of the Canaanites by the Israelite historian and converted it to Abraham legend and legitimizing the earliest worship of Yahweh under sacred trees as acceptable to Him. It was a period that worship was without a priest and a *specific place* of worship as demanded later on in Israel. Another reference shows that when Abraham was under *terebinth trees of Mamre*, the Lord appeared to him (cf. Gen. 18:1). He also planted one popular tree during his time called *tamarisk* at Beersheba. He also called on the name of *El 'Olam*, the Everlasting God (cf. Gen. 21:33). When he moved on his journey, at Hebron, he dwelt by the *terebinth trees of Mamre* (cf. Gen. 13:18; 14:13; 18:1). It was possible for him to have considered these places as sacred places, the dwelling places of God who spoke to him. These places would have been taken as theophanic sacred places of his God. Dwelling or staying under such trees would have given him the sense of security and protection from his God against any external attack.

In Jacob saga, certain trees played some essential roles for both economic and religious reasons. The poplar trees appeared to be sacred trees of fertility, (cf. Gen. 30:37-43). Also, all the "foreign gods" he collected from his family members were hidden under "the terebinth tree" (cf. Gen. 35:4) at Shechem. In a desertic land like Canaan virtually devoid of green trees, a green tree was apparently regarded as a symbol of fertility and life. It is clear that the Canaanites practiced fertility rites under green trees as betrayed by the prophets (cf. Jer. 2:20; 3:6; 1 Kgs.14:23; 2 Kgs.17:10; Hos. 4:13; Eze. 6:13; Isa. 57:5). Sacred trees were familiar with the Pre-Islamic Bedouins of Arabia as expressed by

Noth.⁶³ Such trees in the modern times in Palestine are dressed with articles of clothes as sacrificial emblems and offerings. In ancient Canaan these trees served as holy trees for religious purposes. There was nothing uncommon in them to declare that these sacred trees existed also in the time of the patriarchs as sacred places. We see them building altars under them for worship; they experienced the manifestation of Yahweh under them. This shows that oracular communication transpired at these cultic tree sites. Later on, the Canaanite cultic background of such places, the objects of worship found in the places and their adoption by the Israelites led the prophets to denounce them. They were seen as symptoms of a corrupt and syncretic cult of the Canaanites in ancient Israel. The prophets saw in these trees symbols of the Canaanite fertility cult;⁶⁴ as a result, they received strong polemics as syncretic and discountenanced by Yahwists.

The sacred places during the patriarchs also manifested in stones. Three times we read that Jacob had encounters with Yahweh and stones were mentioned. He either set up a stone to represent God or to mark a place of His manifestation. He used one stone pillar for funerary reason over the grave of Rachel (cf. Gen. 35:20). The second one was the one he set up as a pillar in contractual act with Laban. The stones were gathered until they became a heap (Gen. 31:45-55). A critical look at this event reveals that stones were used by ancient people for some cultic and sacral purposes. The third episode was the popular Bethel story with its Canaanite influence. Jacob set up a stone and called it the house of God (cf. Gen. 28:10-22). In a dream, Jacob saw God with His angels who identified Himself as God of his fathers, Abraham and Isaac. He confirmed His covenant with Jacob and promised him a protection in his journey. In the morning, Jacob took the stone he had used as his pillow and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called the name of the place *Bethel*, meaning, *the house of God*, contrary to the former name of the place, which was Luz. He vowed that “the stone” shall be “the house of God”. A similar account in another legend at Bethel is found in Genesis 35:9-15 where Jacob also *set up a stone pillar and he poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it*.

The Canaanite influence on this Bethel story could not be denied. We know that ancient Canaanites used such stone pillars or *massebahs* as sacred objects and where they were set up became sacred sites. They were positioned in pairs, one would be taller and the other would be shorter. These were popularly referred to as *massebahs* and *asherah* on

⁶³Noth, M. 1969. *The History of Israel*. trans. Godman, S. et al. 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row, 104ff; Smith, W. R. *The Religion of the Semites* 3rd ed., New York: Macmillan, 185.

⁶⁴Riggren, H. 1970. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. 157-158.

the pages of the Bible. Evidently, the *asherah* in Canaanite religion represented the female divinity; the *massebah* beside it served as a symbol of the presence of the male god. These sacred stones were smeared with blood and other sacrificial offerings and kissed by the worshipper. That a stone pillar, *massebah*, was used as a symbol of masculine divinity was present in the Canaanite religious practices. There were sacred stones used as holy symbols in certain cultic sites in Canaanites religious practices. The Bethel story was to give a liturgical support for the shrine in Bethel in latter Israelite liturgy as ancient as the time of Jacob.

Ringgren⁶⁵ observes that the use of sacred pillars or stones as holy symbols was also ancient in practice. Quoting a parallel Arabic phenomenon beside the Canaanite influence, he cites a practice among the people. The Pre-Islamic-Bedouins had stones set up at their cultic sites... and worshipped them in a manner similar to that of the Canaanites. The idea of setting up stones as holy symbols as sacred objects on sacred places was based on the legends of theophanies experienced by the patriarchs or other personages. Gilgal was another remarkable place that witnessed a holy site of heap of stones during the time of Joshua after crossing Jordan (cf. Jos. 4:20). A reference to the time of Samuel portrays the fact that people used stones for cultic reason in both Canaanite and Israelite liturgical practices (cf. 1Sam. 7: 1-11).

It could be submitted that stone pillars were used as sacred and holy symbols during the time of the patriarchs could be as a result of religio-cultural affinity with Canaanite, Hebrews and Arab ancestry. That is, it happened when the people shared the same religio-cultural value. It calls our attention to a time when sacred stones were being worshipped with a definite reference to a deity or to a nameless deity. The time of Joshua calls our attention to a further religious development in Israel that stones regarded to be *living* were used as symbols of God and witnesses to the living (cf. Jos. 24:27). The ancient people believed in the animation of these inanimate objects and they were revered to have a degree of sacredness. Later on, the prophets in Israel condemned this religion of stone images as warned by the Law (cf. Deut. 7:5; 12:3; 16:23; Hos. 10:1-2; Mic. 5:13; Jer. 43:13). They received the instruction to write the laws on stones but not to worship them or use them as representation of Yahweh. (cf. Deut. 27:5ff).

The elemental representations of religious worship of Israelite Deity show that the religion of Israel started with animistic features or has animistic characteristics like any

⁶⁵Ringgren, H. 1970. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. 24-25.

other religion. It had encounters with nature and it was an era when the worship of Yahweh who revealed Himself to the patriarchs was personal as a tribal patron or deity. They did not take offence to identify Him to where they experienced His manifestations, be either under trees, stones or grounds. As we have demonstrated above, the sacredness of such sites and objects in Israelite liturgy is based on the legends of theophanic manifestations experienced by the patriarchs. Many of the patriarchal narratives are religiously intended to explain and justify the sacredness of the sacred places and the objects found there as inherited by the Israelite posterity.

Hence, these sites attract worship offered to Yahweh; they became sacred places for the progenitors. The contacts that the patriarchal personages had with these places conveyed the idea of their sacredness to the future generation in Israel. They erected altars for liturgical reasons, on these sites. They made sacrifice to their patron Deity. Abraham planted *terebinth* and *tamarisk* trees on some of these sacred sites (Gen. 21:33). They called on the name of Yahweh who revealed Himself in various forms and under different names. The super sensible dream of Jacob at Luz made the city, “the city of God” and the stone set up there became a symbol of the God who appeared to him. It is not a doubt that the sacredness of these places was due to theophanies that took place there. Also, the Israelite patriarchs and subsequent generations religiously took over Canaanite shrines and worshipped Yahweh there. The aboriginal Canaanites worshipped on them and the occupying Israelites took over these sacred sites from them, regarding their god as “idols” or *worthless things*. Inasmuch as the monuments remained in the land, during the Canaanite era, they became sacred to the patriarchs and the subsequent generations.

Besides, the totemic nature of every religion at the early stage as archaeologists have revealed does not exclude Israelite religion. The use of erected stones, trees, pillars and other *massebahs* as symbols of the presence of Yahweh by the patriarchs were as a result of the general practices of their days. When Abraham planted a tamarisk tree, he called on the name of Lord God there. When Jacob erected a stone, he called it the *house of God*. As far as he was concerned, his God has been “boxed” and “stationed” and personified in the stone. Yahweh did not reject this as Canaanite in origin but accepted to be represented in an object such as stone. The stone did not remain as ordinary stone anymore but the house of God if not God Himself symbolized as far as Jacob was concerned.

The use of stones as sacred objects in Canaanite religion symbolized the presence of a male god. Jacob would want to actualize the presence of his God and he adopted the

stone worship of the land and found nothing strange to use the object of the day to symbolize the presence of Yahweh. But why Yahweh accepted inanimate object as His object representation during the patriarchal periods remains a question that demands an answer.

3.4 Sacred Places in the Mosaic Traditions in the Pentateuchal Narratives

The Pentateuchal traditions also show some places as divinized places. These places are associated with a key figure and personage commonly referred to as Moses. It is good to attempt a study of Moses and the roles he played in the religion of Israel. Noth reflects on the figure of Moses in the Pentateuchal materials and admits his presence in all the different traditions. Inasmuch these traditions belong to different origins, separate and peculiar to the respective tribal leagues, he concludes that the person of Moses must have been brought in at a later period. He opines that the figure of Moses was brought in the colour of the elaboration and compilation of the Pentateuchal narrative.⁶⁶ It is the view of Noth that in the historical consciousness of Israel, Moses never attained the significance given him in the Pentateuch because outside the Pentateuchal traditions, his name is scarcely mentioned. He points to a number of passages outside the Pentateuch which regards Moses as the great formulator of the authoritative divine law (cf. Deut. 5:1ff; 28:69; 31:26; Ezr. 6:18; Neh. 9:6ff; Psa. 105:26; 106; Isa. 63:11; Dan. 9:11-13; Mal. 3:22).⁶⁷ The conclusions drawn by Noth is predicated on the fact that Moses plays a negligible role in the Old Testament tradition and concluded that Moses did not have, in general and from the very beginning, the encompassing historical significance which he came to acquire with the evolving Pentateuchal tradition. In the same vein, he admitted that a Mosaic material in Pentateuchal history connects him with Egypt especially through his name and he is rooted in the guidance in the wilderness by means of individual narrative elements. Parts of these individual narrative elements connected with Moses are the stories of the thirst, hunger, enemies in the wilderness, and particularly strongly rooted in the stories of sacred mountain. As a prevailing view, it connects Moses with the revelation at Sinai.⁶⁸

He goes further to submit in his analysis of Israelite history that the figure of Moses is not especially firmly rooted in the “Sinai theme”, and he “had no historical

⁶⁶Noth, M. 1972. *A history of Pentateuchal traditions*. trans. Anderson, B.W. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 156.

⁶⁷Noth, M. 1972. *A history of Pentateuchal traditions*. trans. Anderson, B.W. 157.

⁶⁸Noth, M. 1972. *A history of Pentateuchal traditions*. trans. Anderson, B.W. 159.

connection with the event which took place on Sinai.⁶⁹ Quoting Von Rad, he supports his position with the formulations of “the short historical credo” where it is argued that the name of Moses is completely lacking.⁷⁰

Certain conclusions drawn by Noth call for attention and indelible remarks. The historical figure of Moses and the roles he played in the history of Israel as contained in the Pentateuchal narratives could not be denied in the midst of many testimonies. Moses did not only belong to the “Israel in Egypt”, “guidance in the wilderness” and “revelation at Sinai” themes according to the faith of Israel. “All the traditions”, as contained in the Pentateuchal narratives, speak of Moses which could also be interpreted as meaning that he was so universally known and recognized in all the Exodus traditions and Sinaitic episode. As Ringgren has rightly observed, the unanimity of Israelite tradition with respect to the person of Moses has particular significance in her history and religion.⁷¹ If the personage of Moses was brought in after the patriarchal narratives in Israel’s history as a legendary figure, as claimed by Noth, he could not have had such a great influence on Israel and her religion till date. In the light of historical and archaeological evidence, historicity of Mosaic traditions in the Pentateuch and historical figure of Moses could no longer be denied. The events in Exodus traditions and Sinai story are so pressing that they demand a great personage behind them as a mediator or key person behind them. Bright rightly concludes that a great faith as unique as Israel’s demands a founder as surely as does Christianity.⁷²

The first recorded encounter of Moses with the God of the fathers was in the land of the Midianites. There, he encountered a numinous that the narrator called “the Angel of the Lord”. Later on in the narrative, it turned out to be the Lord or God Himself and the God of the fathers-“God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob” (cf. Gen. 3:2, 3:6). The reason for this gradual revelation could be as a result of theological thought of the narrator or Israelite notion on the transcendence of Yahweh in order to show that Yahweh could not just be accessed but He manifested Himself through angelic representatives. This Angel of the Lord turned out to be the extension of His personality and He eventually came to show that He was in the Angel. In the same vein, it could be argued that it showed the religious reverence for Yahweh in the Israelite nation, transferred back into the pre-

⁶⁹Noth, M. 1972. *The history of Israel*. Trans. Godman, S. et al. 2nd ed., 136.

⁷⁰For detailed treatment on the missing name of Moses and independent Sinaitic Tradition see Von Rad, G. 1966. “The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch”. In *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* Eng. Trans. New York: MacGraw-Hill, 1-78.

⁷¹Ringgren, H. 1970. *Israelite religion* trans. 31.

⁷²Bright, J. 1981. *A history of Israel* 3rd ed., 127.

Israelite era in the Mosaic traditions that Yahweh used intermediary in order to reveal Himself.

In any case, the God of the fathers revealed Himself to Moses at Mount Horeb, the mountain of God, while Moses was standing on the ground with the flock of his in-law, Jethro, the priest of the Midianites. Yahweh appeared to him in “a flame of fire”.⁷³ Yahweh revealed Himself through elemental fire to show His awesomeness and fierceness. The ancient people especially the Canaanites were aware of the association of fire through lightning with their gods especially *Aliyn Baal*, the storm god of fertility. The association of fire with the revelation of Yahweh may be as a result of the religious idea of people when gods were aligned with elemental fire in nature in order to show their awesomeness and how terrifying they were in theophanies.

Moses was standing before a Holy God. Since God chose to reveal Himself from such a holy site it could not be but holy. The theophany that took place from there led to its demarcation and spatial non-homogeneity as sacred place from other grounds. Gordon as quoted by Pritchard submits that the ground was holy (sacred) because of what was transpiring, not because of previous associations and no man is allowed to enter into the realm with stains or dirt, not even with one's shoe or sandals. Yahweh told Moses to remove his sandals while standing before Him. This ancient practice of sandal removal was to give honour to the gods that appeared to his worshippers. Man is not allowed to bring anything ritualistic and ceremonially unclear before his gods. He is not even allowed to look up to the face of his gods, just as Moses did as a result of “holy fear”.

As usual, God spoke with Moses on this holy site. He mentioned His name and traced the history of His relationship with the forebears of Moses in a summarized manner- “God of your fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob” with a settled knowledge that Moses was familiar with the patriarchs. The events at this holy ground show to us what usually transpire on such sacred grounds. The encounters that man has with his God usually take place in a remote place; this could be in the desert, a grove, plain ground, on a hill or mountain. The manifestation of the God on such place makes it sacred as man objectively interprets the phenomenon. Man also gains some secret knowledge of the gods that appears to him. For instance, he knows the antecedents of this

⁷³According to Mitchel, it is certain that the production of fire by artificial means was a skill known to man from Stone Age times. It is likely that man first got the idea of fire as a result of lightning in nature and later on invented ways to use it. See Mitchell, T. C. 1982. “Fire”. In *New Bible Dictionary 2nd edition*, ed. Douglas, J.D. et al. 377; Thopson, J.A. 1965. *The Bible and Archaeology*. Grand Rapids: William b. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 56.

God in history especially through his dealings with his ancestors. Moses received a great assignment to be carried out on behalf of this God without option. One could say that the reason for terrifying manifestations was to provoke the *terribleness* of God in spirit of the recipient of the theophany, stir up courage and demonstrate the potency of the Deity. The aftermath of the theophany on sacred ground was to produce future worship.

As a result, Moses became a sacred personage in the sense of a priestly type and intermediary. Streng defines this type of a sacred priest as one “who loses his individual identity and speaks in the name of his God”.⁷⁴ At the same time, Moses also became a prophetic type of sacred personage as he was given a mediating role and the duty of the release of his people. According to the submission of Cox,⁷⁵ Moses would fit to occupy this position by receiving and delivering a message from the Sacred Reality which the people need to hear and to which a response is demanded.

3.4.1 The Ark as a Sacred Object in a Sacred Place in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

Israel was prohibited from worshipping any other god alongside with her God and more so, Yahweh has no image. She was forbidden from making any image in heaven, standing for the firmament or expanse of space above or any of the luminaries. Neither should she fashion anything as an image of her God from the creature seen on earth to any aquatic mammals. The imageless religion of Israel serves as the most outstanding features of her cultus. On the other hand, this does not mean that Israelites did not recognize other images representing gods or Yahweh. We could not submit with definiteness whether there was a similar religion in ancient Semitic world that has imageless religion from which Israel copied this or she is the originator of imageless worship. But as Riggren has rightly opined, we agree that this prohibition points to a spiritualized conception of God in Israel.⁷⁶ Von Rad, pointing to this categorically affirms that it should be that God is not to be worshipped as man and that His worship is a matter of the heart rather than of the eye, and that man must learn to accept the invisible as really invisible.⁷⁷

On the other hand, if Yahweh cannot be fashioned in an image, His presence in the midst of His people can be symbolized as Israelites conceived Him in the wilderness. This

⁷⁴Streng, F.J. 1985. *Understanding religious life*. Belmont: Wadsworth. 57.

⁷⁵Cox, J. L. 1966. *Expressing the Sacred*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications. 98.

⁷⁶Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. London: S.P.C.K., 39.

⁷⁷Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. trans. Stalker, D.M.G. London: SCM. 213.

gave rise to the making of an Ark in the wilderness experience. Morgenstern⁷⁸ has submitted an influential opinion about probable origin of the Ark or its similar existence. He affirms that among the pre-Islamic Arabs were found portable shrines. It is argued that there is an evidence for portable shrine that they carried along in their journeys. Von Rad⁷⁹ argues for the pre-Palestinian existence of sacral Ark in the wilderness period of Israel (cf. Num. 10:35). During the crossing of the Jordan River, it was borne by the priests for Israelites to cross over. In the time of Joshua, it played prominent roles in the religious thought forms of ancient Israelites (cf. Jos. 3-6). During the time of covenant renewal in the time of Joshua, the Ark was brought in (cf. Jos. 8:30-35). A reference to the amphictyony, it was a special sacred object; even leading them in war or giving them the assurance of victory during war (cf. 1 Sam. 1-5). David brought it to Jerusalem during his time because it was a great concern to him that it was not “housed” as it was religiously conceived to be the “house” or “dwelling place of Yahweh” (cf. 2 Sam. 6). When Solomon built the temple, it was finally placed there in the Holy of Holies (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:1-13).

This raises peculiar questions: Where did the ancient Israelites get the idea of the Ark when there have been a similar practice around them as Moses claimed divine instruction to build one for Yahweh? If they got theirs as a result of the instruction of Yahweh to Moses, how did Ancient Israel conceive the idea of the Ark in their religious experience and practice? Evidently, it was conceived to belong to a special class of cultic objects⁸⁰ as Von Rad argues. In ancient Israelite conceptions, it was “the throne of Yahweh” among them. It is believed that the Ark assures the presence of Yahweh for where ever the Ark was placed, Yahweh was present and enthroned. During the wandering in the wilderness, when the Ark was taken up, Yahweh was ready to go forward and lead His physical host, the Israelites to the Promised Land. Whenever and wherever it was placed, there Yahweh would sit on His throne. As a result, there are cultic personages to bear it for indirectly they bear Yahweh up through His Ark.

After the conquest, during the time of Judges and Samuel, it became the sacral focus of the tribal leagues. The shrine in Shiloh housed the Ark, the throne of Yahweh. As a result, the tribal leagues come there yearly to offer their sacrifice to Yahweh inasmuch

⁷⁸Morgenstern, S. J. 1942/43. “The Ark, the Ephod and the Tent of Meeting”. In *Hebrew Union College Annual XVII*, 153.

⁷⁹Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology*. Vol. I. 235-236.

⁸⁰Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. I*. 234-236. See Morgenstern, S.J. 1942/43. “The Ark, the Ephod and the Tent of Meeting”. In *Hebrew Union College Annual XVII*, 153.

that was the place where His throne was placed (cf. 1 Sam. 3:3-6). The bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem according to Jerusalem theology is transferring the throne of Yahweh from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem where He has chosen to dwell permanently (2 Sam. 6). The Israelite conception of the Ark was as a sacred object. The reason for this was because it was the throne of Yahweh. This became prominent when it dealt a dead blow against the Philistines and their gods outside Israelite territory.

Its sacredness came to more limelight when the Israelites did not follow the priestly order it took to carry it. Its sacredness abhorred any undue familiarity which can cause untimely death as in the case of Uzzah. Sacred personages were the custodians of the Ark. It principally functioned as the throne of the God of the fathers. It definitely marked the presence of this Deity in their midst. The presence of this Deity was capable of ensuring victory in war, right direction or paths to follow in their journeys and bestowal of good fortunes. Distance was to be kept between the Ark and the people in their journey because they did not know the way but the Ark, which was the throne of their tribal God, who led them. How to reconcile the throne of God of Solomon after the building of the temple with the Ark as His domicile raises a theological enquiry. The heaven of heavens was believed to be too small for this Deity, yet He was confined to a small box or casket in the name of Ark. One religious notion among the ancient Israelites which could not be denied was the fact that the Ark enthroned Yahweh in their midst at all times. It equally ensured His presence as sacred object. This made the gathering sacred and its placement sacred.

There are various notions or theologies connected with the Ark. First, it was connected with guidance of the people in the desert lest the people wander away from the right path to the Promised Land; the Ark was to guide them. The Ark symbolized direction and guidance of Yahweh to His people. An eagle eye look at Number 10:35 shows that the Ark is connected with invocation of Yahweh to do exploit on behalf of the wandering Israel. The reason for this was whenever the Ark set out, Moses would invocatively say, "Arise, Yahweh and let your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate you flee before you". It follows that the Ark was seen as the throne and abode of Yahweh. As a result, it represented His ever abiding presence in their midst. It directed the movement of Yahweh in their midst because when it was carried Yahweh was "carried" and ready to arise and move before the people He has redeemed from Egypt. When the Ark rested, Moses would say, "Return, oh God to the ten thousand of Israel".

As a sacred object at sacred place during Mosaic period and up to the time of Samuel, it was the central shrine of the Israelites tribal league. The Ark was found at various locations in the times of Joshua and others. Joshua chapter 4:19 and 7:6 connected the Ark with Gilgal, a site that served as a cultic centre and shrine in Israelite liturgy. Joshua chapter 8:33 located it at Shechem and Joshua 20:27 connected it with Bethel. In the time of Samuel in 1 Samuel 3:3 the Ark was connected with Shiloh, a popular sacred centred in Israel. Later on, it was found at various locations even in the camp of the uncircumcised Philistines (cf. 1 Sam. 4-5). The Ark was also viewed as object of war as well as giving the assurance of victory of the war to Israel. For when the Ark was brought to the camp of Israel at Aphek during a military campaign against the Philistines, they remarked and said, "the gods have come into the camp". The Philistines as well as the Israelites saw it as sacred symbol of the presence of Yahweh even when it was brought by David to Jerusalem. A critical look at Psalm 24:7ff undoubtedly connects the bringing in of the Ark to the various sanctuaries of Yahweh at cultic sites such as Gilgal, Shiloh and Bethel with the ideology of Yahweh's kingship and enthronement. As ancient as this idea may be in Israel, it may be due to the influence of the Canaanite tradition and practices. The Ark was taken to these sites because they were considered as sacred sites.

Some issues come to be raised. For how long did Israel continue to "box" her God in the Ark? If the Canaanites gods were portable, was Yahweh too, portable like other gods of the land? When the Ark was captured by the uncircumcised Philistines, was Yahweh of Israel captured, and His throne taken away? One submission that should be made is the fact that as the ancient Canaanites believed in the dwelling place of their gods on high hills and mountains, so also did they believe in their presence through sacred and portable objects around them. Also, as ancient Israelites believed in the transcendence of Yahweh so they believed Him to be immanent God whose presence could be symbolized. The religious influence of art and symbol should be read to the making of Ark in the wilderness. Arts and symbols are believed to represent the living souls and spirits of the divinities they represent. Israelites would be satisfied with the presence of Yahweh, symbolized in the Ark in their midst. So, the Ark was Yahweh's presence symbolized. As a result, the Ark was a sacred object and all the locations it was placed eventually became sacred places in Israelite liturgy. The Ark represents the dwelling place and throne of Yahweh theology in Israel. This served and satisfied them in the time of dire need in the wilderness and after the settlement. And this shows to us one major reason why man believes in sacred place to serve them in the time of need.

3.5.2 Tent of Meeting as a Sacred Place in Mosaic Traditions

Basically, tent is a collapsible structure made of cloth or skins of animals, supported on poles and upheld by cords, pegs or stakes and fixed inside the ground. Evidently, man's history witnessed the inventions of tents as the first dwellings of man. Tents were among the earliest habitations made by man himself. They were regarded to be the normal dwelling of both nomadic and semi-nomadic people. The Jewish scriptures witness to it that early men dwelt in tents as well as the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 4:20; 9:21; 18:1; 6:9-10). The women folks sometimes are shown living in their own tents: Sarah Genesis 24:67; Leah and Rachel, Genesis 31:33. During the journeys in the wilderness from Egypt to Canaan, Israel lived in the tents (cf. Exo. 16:16; Num. 16:26; 19:14). These few examples show that tents have a long history in human life. They have also sheltered human beings as a domicile.

Von Rad⁸¹ has traced the history of tent as a sacred object in Israelite history and religion. He is of the opinion that the holy tent already existed in the pre-Palestinian period. He is also of the view that according to the priestly tradition, it was a place where the Ark of the Lord was kept as early as the desert period.⁸² Riggren has historically submitted that there is evidence of portable sanctuaries in the form of tents both among the pre-Islamic Arabs and the Bedouins.⁸³ A mention of *qubbah* is made by them as a small tent of red leather in which the stone images of the tribal gods were carried with the tribe when travelling. During the religious ceremonies and military effrontery, it was being transported on the back of an animal especially a camel. Whenever they had a stopover, it was set up beside their chief's or sheik's tents. It served them as an oracular sanctuary in their journey. R. De Vaux also postulates that among the modern Bedouins, there is a similar tent for religious reasons. This tent sanctuary is called '*utfah* or *markab*'. Whenever they travel, it is transported by camel.⁸⁴

In ancient Israelite traditions, it was given various names such as "the tent of meeting", or "the tent of witness" or "dwelling place of witness" (cf. Exo. 27:21; 28:43; 29:4; 39:32). It was called the "tent of meeting" because there Yahweh came down and met with Moses and the people. The place where it was stationed was sacred and oracular in nature. That the tent of meeting is oracular is indicated by the activities going on there. According to Exodus 33:7, it is stated,

⁸¹Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker. 235.

⁸²Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker. 16.

⁸³Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker. 236.

⁸⁴De Vaux, R. 1969. *Ancient Israel*. Trans. McHugh, J. New York: McGraw-Hill, 296-297.

Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp... and called it the tabernacle of meeting. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out to the tabernacle of meeting which was outside the camp.

It was from there Yahweh spoke to Moses face to face. As a result, Moses became the mediator of divine messages and instructions. The coming of Yahweh is signalled by meteorological features. Yahweh would come in a thick cloud. The cloud would cover the tent and Moses would sense the presence of Yahweh. Von Rad postulates that the glory of Yahweh over the tent is not occasional, but is also thought of as being present constantly in the tent of meeting (cf. Exo. 40:34).⁸⁵

The Exodus traditions on the tent of meeting are fluid. One, in Exodus 25:10-22, it was a command given to Moses that led to the Ark but the construction of Tent of meeting was Moses' initiative (cf. Exo. 33:8). On the side of Israel, according to Exodus 32, they have offended against Yahweh on the issue of golden calf. So, Yahweh was no longer in their midst. Yahweh would destroy them if He should move along with physical glory of Yahweh and at the same time the question of Yahweh's presence as escort was needed as they requested in the journey (cf. Exo. 33:5). In another end, Moses coveted the presence of Yahweh or without which, Israel would not go forward in her journey. In response, Yahweh sent His angel but Moses set up the holy tent, physical one, and through that he established a connection with Yahweh for no one will see Him and live. With the coming of "the cloud", which was the symbol of the glory and presence of Yahweh, His abiding presence was physically integrated in their midst.

The tent of meeting in ancient Israelite liturgy served as a place where Yahweh manifested Himself and not His dwelling place like the Ark. It was a meeting point, the place of encounter and passage of instructions between Yahweh and Moses. Any time Israel wanted to get directions from God, or Yahweh wanted to give instructions to the people, He signalled His presence by the cloud which would settle by "the door of the tent". After the settlement, the tent of meeting played little roles in the ancient Israelite liturgy especially after the building of the temple. One thing that is certain about the Tent of meeting as a sacred object in Mosaic tradition was that it was erected by Moses and God accepted it as a place of His manifestation. God manifested His glory with

⁸⁵Von Rad, G. 1953. *Studies in Deuteronomy*. trans. Stalker, D. M. G. London: SCM, 33f.

atmospheric feature of the cloud on the Tent of meeting like the Canaanite *Baal* who rides *on the cloud of the sky*.

It was a place where the oracles were being sought and given in Israelite liturgy. Like the ancient practice among the pre-Islamic Arabs, it was pitched outside the camp perhaps very close to the tent of Moses in the wilderness for nearness and accessibility sake. The sacredness of this cultic object was subject to the resting or the departure of the cloud on it (cf. Num. 9:15). As far as the people were concerned, tent of meeting stood for manifestation theology of Yahweh in the wilderness in the ancient Israelite liturgy.

3.5.3 Tabernacle as a Sacred Place in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

In the ancient world, gods were epitomized or symbolized with images and figurines. This seemed to them to make their gods at their disposal at every time. The representation of gods of the ancient Canaanites with images made their gods seem much more vividly present in their midst. As a result, they might therefore seem more easily susceptible to human influences as rightly submitted by Riggren.⁸⁶ In as much many of these figurines were made of clay and wood, they would need a “house” or “tent” where to keep them. Also, they were movable images as the people were nomads.

Morgenstern has called our attention to the existence of portable sanctuary and shrines among the pre-Islamic Arabs.⁸⁷ Quoting M. Dibelius and W. Beyerlin, Riggren has observed that there are many indications that, tents of meeting, portable shrines and sanctuaries made their first appearance in Canaan and he is of the opinion that it is more likely that portable shrines acquired new significance in Canaan.⁸⁸ Some scholars have doubted the historicity of tabernacle among the Israelites in the desert and alleged that the building of the tabernacle was in parts impracticable, and thus evidently the work of an idealist as noted by Gooding.⁸⁹ Harrison has argued positively in the favour of historical tabernacle by citing a practice in the pre-Islamic times. The *qubbah* or miniature red leather tent with a dome-shaped top was used for carrying the idols and cultic objects of the tribe.⁹⁰ It was the belief of the people that such mobile tents were guarded enough with

⁸⁶Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. 39.

⁸⁷Morgenstern, J. 1942/43 “The Ark, the Ephod and the ‘Tent of Meeting’”. In *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XVII, 153.

⁸⁸Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. 39.

⁸⁹Gooding, D. W. “Tabernacle”. In *New Dictionary Bible* 2nd ed. Douglas et al. 1159.

⁹⁰Harrison, R. K. 1970. *Introduction to the Old Testament*. 430.

the power of guiding the tribe in its journeys, and in the times of war were able to offer the needed protection and victory.

At Sinai Moses was given a divine revelation as regards the nature, construction and furnishings of a portable sacred sanctuary, variously referred to as “Tabernacle” or “Tent” of meeting. It was the “throne” of the God of the fathers who was leading their children-Israelites to the Promised Land in the wilderness. It was a sacral tent which Moses pitched without the camp in the wilderness during Israelites journey. At times, it is called *miskan YHWH*-dwelling of Yahweh (Lev. 17:4); *miskan*-dwelling (Exo. 25:9); *'ohel mo'ed*- tent of meeting or *miskan ha'edut*-dwelling place of witness or dwelling of testimony because it housed the covenant tablets (Exo. 38:21). It is called *bayit YHWH*-house of Yahweh (Exo. 34:26). As this was pitched outside the camp, the cloud coming on it signalled the presence of Yahweh. Moses the sacral intermediary would come to receive from God. As the name entails, Von Rad argues that the tent is not the last the place where Yahweh dwells on earth, as was the case later with for instance, the temple of Solomon, it is merely the point of meeting, the place of encounter between Yahweh and Moses.⁹¹

The descriptions for the construction of the Tabernacle were vividly given to Moses in Exodus 35-38. This shows that God was particular about this sacred sanctuary in Israelite liturgy. The rituals to be carried out at this cultic place were well spelt out. One could ask, if God is the highest, why did He choose to live in wooden place such as the Tabernacle? Why choosing a place to be sacred for His abode among the nomadic Israelites in the wilderness? Why should ancient Israel conceive her God as dwelling in a Tent such as Tabernacle? Another point to be raised is: why is this God mobile like the nomads in the wilderness? One could infer that no matter the manifestations of God among the ancient Israel, they were not satisfied with super-sensible manifestations. They needed something concrete in their midst to give the assurance of their Deity in their midst. We could say that God has no choice than to show His presence in their midst always through the weapons of symbolism of the Ark, Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The Ark was thought of as the throne of God in their midst. The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was sacral box of divine protection, leading and giving an assurance of victories over against the enemies. The Tent of meeting was not the place of sacrifice but the place of theophany and oracular activities. There Yahweh spoke to Moses *face to face* like friends. He received instructions on behalf of the people. But the

⁹¹Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker, 235.

Tabernacle was a place of sacrifices with elaborate guidelines for them. It was certain the throne idea of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord and the manifestation theology of the Tent of meeting were combined in the sacrificial cultus of the Tabernacle. All were regarded as the sacral objects in Israel. They were placed at the sacred places in honour of Yahweh's worship.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF SACRED PLACES IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE LITURGY

4.1 The Nature of Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

The existence of sacred places was not peculiar to the ancient Israelite liturgy alone. One could say that major cultic sites that were regarded as sacred places were traditionally, religiously and historically inherited by the ancient Israelites. The Canaanite aborigines had laid the ground for the new Israelite occupants. It may therefore, be difficult to describe vividly the nature of some of these sacred places since their origins were beclouded in historical maze. Even the earliest saga and legends of Israel did not reflect pointedly the religious milieu of the time of their origins but later reinterpreted by traditions. F.M. Cross is of the view that “by oral transmission over gulfs of time more or less, uncontrolled by written sources they (altars, trees, mountains, grounds River Jordan), were shaped even before precipitation into literary forms”¹ by historical experience of the nation.

Biblical and extra biblical evidence, especially archaeological discoveries, bring into light the relics of sacred places in ancient Israelite liturgy from which their nature could be deduced. Many sacred shrines and sites had existed among the Canaanites; inherited by ancient Israelites that existed as dwellings of their gods and goddesses. As a result, the sites revealed a vivid picture of the people’s piety and its relationship to the cult. The sites attracted people to the worship going on there. Sacred places enhanced the beliefs in the manifestations of gods at sacred sites. It could be said that these places originally existed as “the most elementary hierophany” as Eliade succinctly submits.² They were cultic sites of the manifestation of the elements of sacredness. The elements of sacredness could be some natural objects like stones, trees, streams, ground, mountains, hills and others. As people experienced the manifestations of “higher power” than they themselves, through these cultic sites, and saw themselves in need of the assistance of these powers and objects behind the manifestations, they perceived them to be of higher reasons for their existence.

¹Cross, F. M. 1973. *Canaanite myth and Hebrew epic: essays in the history of the religion of Israel*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 3.

²Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. trans. Trask, W. R. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 11.

It could be said that certain objects and images were chosen to express some religious roles and express notions in the psychological and religious mind of the people in antiquity. These sacred places also play the roles of symbolism and cultic signs. The places indicate symbolic and religious marks of differentiation between the holy and religious sites and other immediate environments. The sacred places were regarded as of higher value than others. The places were inhabited by the “Gods of the fathers” who chose them as people of His covenant. The places would “bring” the divine presence of their tribal God down at any time they need His attention, or anytime the tribal God has anything to say, He would come down to them either through phenomenological elements like cloud, fire, thick darkness, thunder and lightning as in Exodus traditions (Exodus 19:10-22). He could come down through the extension of His personality like angels in human form, who could wash their feet, take their rest, eat human food, and drink elemental water like man in the case of Abraham saga (cf. Gen. 18:4-8).

The sacred places are vehicles of passage from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from unholy to the holy, and the profane to the sacred. In Israelite liturgy sacred places were places of symbolism. They represented the dwellings of the tribal God of the fathers. Any time the fathers moved from one place to another, the guardian Deity also shifted. When this tribal God of the fathers became the God of the children of the patriarchs, He manifested Himself to them at various local places (Gen. 12:7; 13:4). He also chose some places of His manifestation and presence. Ancient people used to go to cultic places for many reasons, part of which was to have a communion with their gods or to communicate with them.

Sacred places in Ancient Israelite liturgy were vehicles of communication between Yahweh and His people. The people would go there in order to receive from God. Various cultic actions were attached to these sacred places in Ancient Israelite liturgy. Prominent among these was holy distance that must be maintained between the object of manifestation and the people. This may be due to the notion that the gods inhabiting the place was awesome and holier than the mortal men. This awesomeness commanded sacral holiness from the worshippers. Sacred places were regarded as images of an opening³ to a higher world. They opened up a means of relationship, fellowship and communication with the God of the fathers. The sacred places were regarded to be doors to the unseen

³Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. trans. Trask, W. R. 26.

world of gods and places, which served as ladder, by which gods could descend to earth and man can symbolically ascend to heaven during ritualistic sacrifice and ceremony.

The ancient people arrived at the non-homogeneity of places through many techniques, and the places that revealed extra qualities were considered sacred. Eliade stresses that “every sacred space (place) implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different”.⁴ In some cases, he stresses, it was the theophany as experienced by a religious man that made the place sacred.⁵ The experience of Jacob at Luz, a territory in Haran, could illustrate this. He saw a ladder touching heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it. He heard the voice of one God who introduced Himself as God of his father, “I am the Lord God of Abraham”. He woke up and was fearful and he shouted “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!” (cf. Gen. 28:12-19). As a result of the theophanic experience of Jacob, Bethel became a theophanic and sacred site; hence, it was regarded as a sacred place. This showed that it was not a natural thing to consecrate a place as a sacred place, but after an incorporeal experience.

Some places became sacred in Israelite liturgy as a result of the altars built by the forebears of the Israelites. Abraham in his journey to the Land of Promise built a certain number of altars and called on Yahweh from there. He built one altar on the west of Ai, on the eastern part of Bethel. He later on visited the place and called on the name of the Lord (cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 13:4). He erected another at Hebron and worshipped the Lord there (cf. Gen. 13:18); on Mount Moriah, Abraham also built an altar (Gen. 22:9). Isaac built an altar after a theophany and made a covenant with God of Abraham who appeared to him and promised him great blessings (Gen. 26:24). The contact of patriarchal personages with these places was enough to make them sacred in ancient Israelite religion. The fact that the patriarchal personages of Israel had contact with some places, made them to be sacred as later interpreted by following generations. These places were later on regarded as ancestral heritage to future generations and regarded as sacred.

Ancient Israelites worshipped God, and they declared His inherent nature as the holy, for He says, “you shall be holy for I AM holy” (Exo. 3: 4-5; 19:10:28:36; Leviticus 11:44-45; 22:33). The theophany of this God as revealed in Mosaic and Sinaitic traditions originated from this holy conception (cf. Ex. 3:5; 19:10-24). All the Priestly Code centre

⁴Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. trans. Trask, W. R. 26.

⁵Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. trans. Trask, W. R. 26.

on this idea. The patriarchal traditions on encounters with the “Gods of the fathers” also contain these sacral in-depths. Martin Noth, citing the example of the Jacob saga, observes that “at Bethel the holiness of the place is unexpectedly revealed to him at night in a great theophany (Gen. 28:11-22 (JE); cf. Gen. 35:9-13,15 (P)).⁶ It is a common feature of the Semitic religion from which ancient Israelite religion shared some common affinities that certain places are holy. It is not only the exact spots that are holy but also a certain space around the spot. Take for instance, an erection of an altar dedicated to gods; the space around the altar is also regarded as being holy. De Vaux⁷ supports this view by citing certain examples of temples, sacred courts and altars built on court yards of 100 by 70 yards or more up to 200 to 400 yards. In actual facts, these temples occupied less half of these yards. The whole yards are regarded as sacred space, territory and ground. It is not only mountain Sinai that was holy, the space around it, was equally holy. When Yahweh appeared to ancient Israel at Mount Sinai, the people were given warnings not to gaze through nor come near the mountain because of its holy character (Exo. 19:20-24).

Sacred places in ancient Israel exhibited the idea of divine choice. It was not for man to choose a place as sacred place. It was within the prerogative of God. This He does through divine apparitions, that is, through theophanies. It was divine theophanies that determined where the patriarchs worshipped. For instance, it is said “then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “to your descendants I will give this land, and there he built an altars to the Lord, who had appeared to him” (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:14-18). This gives us a glimpse of the origins of sacred places in ancient Israel. One, there must be a theophany, then the promise or divine message of giving the land and the worship, the cultus⁸ in honour of the God who has revealed Himself. This was so because after the theophany and promise, the patriarchs built altars and “called on the name of the Lord” (cf. Gen. 13:4 18; 21:33; 26:24-25; 28:12-22).

The nature of sacred places in ancient Israel at times could be indicated through the planting of trees. In a desert land like ancient Israel where there was no constant rainfall, trees were venerated and regarded as sacred. De Vaux opines that they were never worshipped but marked places of worship. The imposing sight of big trees in a dry land might lead the people to see these trees as being sacred. Throughout the Ancient Near East, certain trees were venerated and given religious undertones, especially in Canaanite

⁶Noth, M. 1992. *A history of pentateuch traditions Vol.1.* trans. G.D.M. Stalker, 80.

⁷De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*, Darton, Longman & Tedd Ltd., 274.

⁸De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions.* 274.

religion.⁹ The influence of planting some trees by Abraham could not be separated from the Canaanite religion and its influence, who worshipped their gods under some green trees. Trees such as “Oak of Mambre”, “*terebinth* trees of Moreh” and the likes were planted at specific places like Shechem, Bethel and Beersheba. Later on these places became sacred sanctuaries in Israel. (Gen. 12:6-7; 13:18; 18:4, 8). The foundations of these places as cultic sites were laid by the patriarchs, who planted trees, erected altars and set up stones there. This is a reflection of the animistic nature of religion at its primitive stage in Israelite religion as social anthropologists have revealed.

A spot on which trees were by any of the patriarchs was interpreted to be a sacred spot. The tree also was regarded as being sacred. Trees are often mentioned in the Bible for more than three hundred times. Certain references show that trees were venerated by the Canaanites and some other people who believed that gods inhabited them. The coolness, shades and protection that some trees provided were capable of eliciting worship. Sacrifices were often offered to gods under trees (cf. Deut. 12:2; 1 Kgs. 14:23; 2 Kgs. 17:9; Hos. 4:13). While Israelite were commanded to cut off some trees, some were permitted to exist and even regarded as human, having life in themselves (cf. Exo. 24:13; 34:13; Deut. 20:19). Trees were taken to be source of food and living sustenance. Trees were believed to transmit some in-depth messages by the ancient people due to their life span, strength and durability in spite of the weather. For example, Witcombe submits that, “in Egypt, the evergreen palm tree was a sacred tree and a palm branch was a symbol of the god *Heh*, a personification of eternity”.¹⁰ Due to their rarity in the Ancient Near East, trees were used to symbolize longevity, strength, pride, source of wisdom and symbols of renewal.

Any place where the patriarchs planted a tree became a sacred place. Bethel, Hebron and Beersheba to mention a few became cultic sites and were regarded to be sacred later on in Israel (cf. Gen. 13:18; 21:33). Some places like grounds, mountains, hills, waters, and objects like pillars on mound and green trees were regarded to be sacred in ancient Israelite liturgy. This was so as a result of the ancient belief that gods inhabited them. They were regarded to be “the house of God”. This became so as a result of the belief in the nearness of gods to the people. These places were also given names as one could see in the case of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (cf. Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 21; 33; 26:25;

⁹De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and Institutions*. 278.

¹⁰C.L.C.E. Witcombe, C.L.C.E. “Sacred Trees”. *Sacredness, Art and Architecture*. Retrieved Aug. 18, 2011, from <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/saredplaces/sacredness.html>.

28:19). It is apparently clear that planting of trees with sacred associations was considered legitimate during the early stage of Israelite history and religion.

The Canaanite influence on the planting of trees as sacred symbols could not be denied during the patriarchal period as the biblical narrator of Genesis shows: “Abram passed through the land to the place Shechem, as far as the *terebinth* tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land” (Gen. 12:6). Tree planting was associated with the service of God, served as cultic objects, and were given sacred reverence in Israelite liturgy. Abraham planted one and worshipped Yahweh there (Gen. 21:33). Later on, there were trees in the sanctuary of the Lord at Shechem and in the Temple. While the planting of sacred trees existed for some time, they were eventually forbidden by the official religion of Israel at the time one could suggest her religion had undergone some purification and when there was a serious battle for “Yahweh alone” worship. The Deuteronomistic historian in the book of Deuteronomy most likely bans objects of this type from sanctuaries of the Lord because they were associated with Canaanite deities of fertility with its attendant prostitution and might eventually have led the Israelites to blur the distinctions between the Israelite and Canaanite religions.

It should be noted that sacred places in Israelite liturgy existed and ranged from grounds, trees planted with sacred associations, stones, pillars on mound, hills, mountains to a mobile *box*, commonly called “Ark of the Lord” and Tabernacle. Sometimes, these places were considered to be the “house of God” (Gen. 28:17-22; 33:20). Names were given to these places as designates of God. The purpose of these designates may be to provoke invocations. The ancient people believed that knowing one’s name or the name of a divinity was to know his ability, strength and authority and be able to harness such in time of need. Abraham called on the name of the LORD, ‘*el Olam*-Everlasting God- after he had planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba (cf. Gen. 21:33). Jacob changed the name of Luz to *Bethel* to mark the place as “the house of God”; the stone was chosen to be the house of God (Gen. 28:17).

With all these in mind, it is glaring that there was a time that religion, during the patriarchal era, was totemic in nature. Certain objects were considered to be sacred and at the same time capable of representing the tribal God. The people did not see the difference between inanimate nature of those objects and the manifestation of God through them. Due to what Eliade refers to as “hierophany”, that is, the manifestation of something sacred showing itself to people, these elemental objects were revered and considered to be representatives of God or the extension of the personality of God.

From all that has been said above, places and objects were adjudged to be sacred as a result of the influence of the neighbouring people, especially the Canaanites around the time of the patriarchs. As the patriarchs had contact with the religious practices of these people, some elements of their religion were incorporated into the worship of their tribal God. It was a period when some objects like stones and trees were used to represent gods among the Semites and the Canaanites. Because trees are rooted in the earth and reach toward the heaven, many ancient people worshipped them and revered them as sacred entities. They were also considered to be the abode of spirits, so their tribal gods and divinities could also inhabit them and manifest through them.

A particular tree could be distinguished, due to its special features like pleasant coolness, heavy shade and ability to withstand unfriendly heat and long dry spells, and therefore deemed sacred like the one Abraham planted. In a dry climate, where water was scarce and there was scanty vegetation in the land, veneration of trees could be a welcome notion. According to Nahum Sarna “a tree might be viewed as the “tree of life” and at same time “cosmic”.¹¹ Since the stumps of a tree are rooted in the “womb” of the earth, thus symbolising the “navel of the earth” and its top representing heaven, it is believed to be a bridge between the human and divine spheres. Thus, it provides platform for divine-human relationship, a sacral medium of oracles and theophanic manifestation.

All these patriarchal legends are told purposely to justify the sacredness of these locations as inherited by Israelites. These sacral locations and the legendary stories surrounding them provide religious justifications for worshipping there by future Israelites. These sacred spots, as places of cultic activities in ancient Israel, enhance and encourage the piety of the Israelite community as a whole as well as that of an individual. Inasmuch as the fathers erected altars there, planted trees and set up trees as places they could call on their tribal God, Yahweh later manifested Himself to them on these spots. The Israelite posterity could also have contacts with the God of the fathers on these sites and still maintain contact with the God of their fathers. In the same vein, this trend reveals that without these places, Israelites could not call on their God and there would be no worship to Yahweh. In some cases, these sacred places served as unifying spots for the Israelite nation in the early era. As the tribal leagues were scattered over the land that was full of hills, mountains and valleys, the unity of the tribes was a task, especially during the

¹¹Sarna, N. M. 1989. “Commentary: “Genesis”. In *Jewish Publication Society of America*, Philadelphia, 91.

time of Judges. The unifying factor was found in the sacred places where they could come and worship Yahweh and renew their covenant as a nation.

Besides, these sacred places served as abode for their God, who could be met at anytime. They reminded the Israelites in their religious life about the presence of the God of their fathers in their midst as long as they believed that those places were meant to be His “house”. These conceptual ideas developed in ancient Israelite liturgy to the extent that Yahweh could not be worshipped outside Bethel shrine and later during monarchy, outside Jerusalem (cf. Amos 5:5; Psa. 48; 68:24-29; 87).

4.2 Altars as Sacred Places of Meeting God in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

The Hebrew word *mizbeah* has been a constant word translated to mean “altar” which means “a place of sacrifice”, having been derived from the word *zabab*, meaning “to slaughter for sacrifice”.¹² These etymological terms describe the purpose of the altars in ancient world but further readings have shown that other reasons like burning of incense was another factor for their erection (cf. Exo. 30:1); some were places of memorials (cf. Exo. 17:15-16; Jos. 22:26-27) and the like.

Archaeological discoveries and studies of Canaanite religion have revealed a crucial factor that erection of altars was not peculiar to the Israelite religion only and in actual fact, biblical records and usage of altars in Israel have Canaanite origin (cf. Gen. 12:6-7). Mitchell has rightly observed that in the Middle Bronze Age Megiddo, two temples were found containing rectangular altars, one made of mud bricks and the other of lime-plastered stones. He goes further and submits that temples of the late Bronze Age containing altars of similar type have been found at Lachish, Beth-Shean and Hazor.¹³ These were cities that existed during biblical days. An example of Canaanite altar was found at Canaanite Megiddo, which was made of hewn stones with a projection of horns at the upper corners. The feature of projected horns attached to the altars in the Canaanite altars was also found in Israelite altars. The purpose for this could be for safety and security. On the contrary, Cleveland has objected to this with the biblical examples of Adonijah and Joab (cf. 1 Kgs. 1:50-53; 2:28-34).¹⁴

It is apparent that altars were in religious usage among the Canaanites in the Promised Land in the prehistoric era, patriarchal periods, wilderness sojourn and

¹²See Mitchell, T. C. 1982. “Altar”. In *New Bible Dictionary 2nd edition*. 26.

¹³See Mitchell, T. C. 1982. “Altar”. In *New Bible Dictionary 2nd edition* 27.

¹⁴Cleveland, H. C. 1987. “Altar”. In *New International Bible Dictionary*. Ed. Douglas, J. D. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 36.

settlement in the Promised Land. In the pre Israelite occupation of Palestine, there have been various altars for various religious reasons. Being a rocky and hilly terrain, several altars could be natural surface of a rock as providence would have it. Some could have been hewn out into a befitting shape for domestic and spiritual intentions while some could be made for artistic reasons. It could be adjudged that not all these altars served cultic purposes but some might be erected to assist mankind.

Supporting this position, De Vaux opines that “it would be an exaggeration to say that every one (altar) has some connection with worship. The majority of them could have served a profane purpose”,¹⁵ (Since many of the Semites were nomads, some altar-stone standing beside the wells or a cistern might serve as troughs for animals to drink from; while some that were big enough might serve laundry purposes. This example could still be found in riverine banks till date, where the villagers go to and do their washing. In the course of wine press, some altar-stones could probably serve as wine press stone for the people or of making oil.

Altars played major roles in the ancient Israelite liturgy. It is a crucial feature of sanctuaries in ancient Israelite liturgy. The foundation of sanctuary that is traceable to the patriarchs started with the erection of altars (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:18; 26:25; 33:20). The altars raised by the patriarchs on certain cultic sites such as Shechem, Beersheba and Bethel later on became sanctuaries of worship for their progenitors (Jos. 24:26; Jud. 9:6; 37; etc). Due to the fact that the patriarchs were roving nomads, their places of worship of their tribal God were not fixed. Any where they had encounter with their tribal God, an altar was usually raised there to demarcate the place as theophanic spot.

However, the commonest usage of altars in the antiquity was in connection with cultic and sacrificial offerings. The experience of ancient Israelites in the desert showed that the use of altars was a command from Yahweh who had met His people on Mount Sinai and entered into a covenant with them (Exo. 19-20:1ff). The law guiding the erection of altars in Israel was given in Exodus 20:24-26. The altar must be of unhewn stone, not touched with any iron. It must be as natural as possible, before it could be accepted to Yahweh. This is also repeated in Deuteronomy 27:5, “And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them”.

¹⁵De Vaux, R. 199. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions* trans. McHugh, J. London: Darton, Longman and Todd. 406.

According to Exodus 20:24-26, any tool that is used on the altar desecrates it.

Also, De Vaux opines that the meaning is that “things should be used for the service of God only in their natural condition before they have been interfered with in any way by man (cf. Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3-4; 1Sam. 6:7)”.¹⁶ Equally, going up to the altars of the Lord must not be by ladder or steps lest the nakedness of the priests are exposed. But there is another law regarding the construction of altar in Exodus 28:42-43 which gives room for the use of steps: the priest had been expected to put on a pair of trousers.

Moses was first of all found to follow this commandment as he raised an altar to the Lord in Exo. 24:4-6. Thus, it became a place of meeting with Yahweh. The covenant was cut there and sealed with the blood. Joshua also followed the prescription in Joshua 8:30-31. The altar on its own represented God and at the same time signified His presence. The people were not expecting a physical Being. Yahweh only spoke from heaven without any image but he was represented by the altar (Exo. 20:22-24). The blood of the animal was poured on the altar as a way of consecrating it to the Lord or to make atonement for the sin of the people (Exo. 29:12; 30:10; Lev. 4; 8:15; 9:9, 16:18). The altar of holocausts or Burnt offering as described in Exodus 27:1-8 and 38:1-7 betrays another function of the altar as used in the desert by the ancient Israelites as meeting points. The offerings on altars are seasoned with fire. It is “an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord” (Lev.1:17); there Yahweh perceived the “sweet aroma” as His people met him with a burnt offering. Also, there was the altar of incense or perfumes in the desert as described in Exodus 30:1-5, and Exodus 37:25-28.

The religious significance of altar in the patriarchal age was a commemoration of the manifestations of God of the fathers (Gen. 12:7; 26; 24-25). Some were given specific names in order to remind the people of the benevolence of God who had met them and done them well (cf. Gen. 35:7; Exo. 17:15). Thus, altars became meeting points between God and the patriarchs. Later on, through some offerings that were brought to Yahweh on the altar, His presence was signified and ancient Israelites who brought the offering saw the spots of the altars as places of meeting with Yahweh. Von Rad is of the view that “the participants knew Yahweh to be invisibly present as the guest of honour”¹⁷ at the altar places in times of disasters, covenant renewal and need for protection (1 Kgs. 2:28). On the Day of Atonement (Exo. 29:36-37; 30:10; Lev. 8:15; 16), the altar played roles of meeting Yahweh in ancient Israelite liturgy, and its holiness was specified.

¹⁶De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*. Trans. McHugh. J. 408.

¹⁷Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. trans. by Stalker, D.M.G. London: SCM Press, 257.

4.3 Mountains as Sacred Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

The Hebrew word for the mountain is either *gib'a* or *har*. Its basic meaning is either “a hill” or “a mountain”, which refers to an elevated site, slope or ascent. There are many of such hills and mountains in Palestine. They were not dramatically elevated alone, as conceived by ancient Israel; there were also religiously venerated.

Mountains played diverse roles in the religious conceptions of the Ancient Near Eastern religions. There are many myths and mythic motifs attached to the religious ideas surrounding mountains in the Mesopotamian world. The Ugaritic tablets found at *Ras Shamra* since 1929 has shed more light on the religious beliefs of the people of ancient Palestine on the sacred mountains, both in the Canaanite and Israelite religions. As a result, the Canaanite conceptions and their influence on mountains like Mount Sinai and Mount Zion in Israelite religion have been exposed. The powerful and storm-god, *Baal* of the Canaanite, was believed to be living on mount *Zaphon*; the influence of this sacred mountain in Israelite mount Zion has been noted.

In ancient Israel, mountains were “cosmic mountains”,¹⁸ that is, they were full of activities affecting mankind just as the ideas reigned in the Canaanite religion. Mountain was a scene of battle among the gods, a place where the gods have their abode; a place where *El*, the head of the Canaanite pantheon, sent his laws or decrees, the source of life-giving water, the meeting point between heaven and earth and from where the god *Baal* exercised his kingship in Canaanite religion. All the ideas were reflected on the ancient Israelite religion.¹⁹

G. Van Der Leeuw sees the mountain as a “primal and permanent element of the world: he contends that out of the waters of chaos rose the primeval hill from which rose all life.”²⁰ The religious notion that life comes from the mountains has been the ancient conception on the significance of mountain in the world of nature. One first of all encounters a sacred mountain in the ancient Israelite tradition at “Mount *Horeb*, the mountain of God” (Exo. 3:1-5; 19:1-2, 18ff). This mountain has a fluid name: it is called Sinai in the Yahwist (J) and Priestly (P) narratives while it is called Horeb in the Elohist (E) and Deuteronomistic (D) traditions. In the Elohist tradition, the genitive case is used to show the peculiarity of this mountain. It is called the mountain of God. Wright observed

¹⁸Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 3-4.

¹⁹Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 4.

²⁰Leeuw, G. V. *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, trans. Turner, J. E. London: Allen and Unwin, 55.

that the exact location of this mountain cannot be established with certainty.²¹ Whether the territorial name was Sinai or a definite mountain was Sinai or Horeb, it is glaring that the name “Mount Sinai” plays major roles in the history of the ancient Israelite liturgy. Horeb may stand for where Moses received his first call and commission while Mount Sinai could stand for a place where Israel entered into a covenant with Yahweh and received the Laws. Mount Sinai played the role of a place of giving of the Law and theophany of the God of the fathers of Israel. Moses ascended the mountain and received an order that Yahweh would visit His people on the third day. So, there should be cultic purifications of abstinence from sex, washing of the clothes and cultic distance must be maintained from the mountain. Having followed these instructions, Moses brought the people to meet God. The coming of God was attended with atmospheric elements of fire, smoke, thick cloud, sound of thunders, and the sounds of trumpets. All these provoked fear in the people but they saw no image; they only heard the voice of the speaker, who claimed to be God. Through all these elements, the ultimate goal of manifesting, which was the glory of God, covered the mountain. This showed to them that He had His abode on the top of the mountain or He manifested Himself there.

The manner of the theophany on Mount Sinai has been attested to in the Ugaritic myth. The gods, especially *Baal*, disclosed himself in thunder and lightning. Just as clouds accompanied the theophany of Yahweh on Mount Sinai, clouds accompanied *Baal* who was designated and often called the “rider of the clouds”. Cassuto has rightly observed that “the sound of the horn in the Sinai periscope is perhaps a liturgical imitation of the sound of the wind blowing among the mountains”.²² In other words, the sound of the trumpet may be an imitation of thunders from the mountains. It is evident that ancient Israel has demythologized the Canaanite myth about the *Baal* theophany.

One should wonder why the theophany of Yahweh on the mountain was in the manner of Canaanite gods. Could the theophany of Yahweh not pose a danger of religious mix-up to the new Israelite generation for taking Him as *Baal* or any other gods prevalent in the contemporary environment then? But one can say that the theophanic formula of Yahweh; I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob “as well as the often repeated formula: I am the LORD God that brought you out of the land of Egypt” would be sufficient to differentiate between this God and other gods.

²¹Wright, E. G. 1962. “Sinai, Mount”. In *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. New York: Abingdon. 376-378.

²²Casuto, U. 1967. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*. trans. Abrahams, I. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press. 232.

One could see the religious acculturation here in the way the ancient Israelites adopted similarities and attributes they felt could help to express their belief in God. On the other hand, it was possible that Yahweh was using what could easily pass His self identity and personality to Israel, or adopting a manner that ancient Israel could easily access and were already familiar with. On the other hand, one cannot rule out the possibility of the religious thought of ancient Israelites about the veneration of mountains as being sacred and as the dwellings of gods or Yahweh as the Canaanites already expressed.

The mountains, as the dwellings of the gods have been in antiquity. It was an age when there was no scientific proof of the existence of God or His dwelling place. People saw expanse of the firmament without any indication of what lay behind it. The abstract thought of heavens as dwelling places of gods could not be appealing to the ancient people than the topographical mountains seen around them. As other people conceived of the sacred mountains as dwelling places of their gods, ancient Israelites could easily be tempted to adopt such idea. And the fact that Yahweh manifested Himself on the Mount Sinai to Israel could actually confirm the religious conception of mountains as the dwelling places of gods (Exo. 3:1-5; 19:10-22). Besides, the influence of the Canaanite traditions on Mount Sinai narratives could not be denied. Some of the major features that have been attached to the Mount Sinai appear to have been borrowed from the traditions revolving around the mount dwelling of Canaanite pantheons, especially *El* or *Baal*. The use of Canaanite themes for Sinai traditions in ancient Israelite liturgy may be indices that long time before the settlement, Israel has been working out her monotheistic faith in Yahweh contrary to Canaanite polytheism.

Ancient Israel believed that God revealed Himself on the mountains. This He first of all demonstrated to Moses and later to the generality of the twelve tribes. Mountains were places Yahweh manifested His glory. Ancient Israel received her cherished tablets of laws from the mountain through the cultic intermediary of Moses. The people regarded mountains to be places of meeting with Yahweh and receiving instructions from Him. So, it was a place of revelation where God spoke to the people with theophanic phenomena (Exo. 3:1-6; 19:1-20). Another important issue attached to mountain was the issue of covenant. Mountains served as places of covenant-cutting with Yahweh. This we see in Exodus traditions in Exodus chapter 24.

Albright,²³ Marvin Pope²⁴ and Douglas Van Buren²⁵ have demonstrated to us that *El's* mountain was aqueous mountain and that the waters of *El's* rivers are life giving waters. In Canaanite religion, *El* lived on sacred mountain which has been associated with life-giving water, which could quench the thirst of people in a dry land. One issue that stares us at the face was the episode we read Exodus 17:1-6, where the Israelites cried for water and Yahweh led Moses to a rock (mountain) so that water could be produced. It means that ancient Israel believed that mountains are capable of giving water in the time of need. Ancient Israel believed in the mountains as places of abode of gods or Yahweh. The water-giving potency of the rock (mountain) was now expected to be demonstrated by Yahweh. Another case was in Numbers 20:1-13, where water was expected from the mountain. What served as a myth in Canaanite religion was historicised in the ancient Israelite religion.

Whether ancient Israel believed in the activities of the gods on the mountains like the battle ground of conflicting natural forces and battles among gods, one cannot say. But the way in which a battle ensued between Israel and the Amalekites; and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the mountain instead of the battle front show some religious imports about the activities of gods on the mountain. Surely, it betrayed the belief of the ancient Israel on the magical potency of divinized mountains.

By going to the top of the hill or mountain with the rod of God in the hand of Moses, this conveyed the idea that Moses wanted to be nearer to God to invoke His power from the mountain. Yahweh could fight from the mountain on behalf of His people. It was also believed that some mountains have magical power to ensure victory or certain powers belonging to Yahweh could only be drawn for victory sake on behalf of His people from the mountain. It could not be ruled out that ancient Israel had belief in the invocations of certain mountains for victory sake or that some mountains were believed to be victory invoking and capable of bestowing such on people of God (Deut. 32:1ff; Mic. 6:1-2).

In order to invoke the power of victory residing on these sacred mountains, some symbolic actions must be demonstrated. Moses must lift up his hands with the rod lifted, pointing to heavens and to Yahweh. It is our belief that such actions were not dramatic and were not considered to be mere illustrative, but they should be thought to be magically

²³Albright, W. F. *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel 3rd ed.* Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press. 72ff, 124ff.

²⁴Pope, M. 1955. "El in Ugaritic Texts". In *Suppliments to Vetus Testamentum II*, Leiden: Brill. 61-72.

²⁵Van Buren, E. D. 1945. *Symbols of the Gods in Mesopotamian Art.* Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute. 124-125.

efficacious in creating reality. After this, Israel won the battle over against the Amalekites. So, one can see that divinized mountains in ancient Israel were conceived to be places of battle, victory and magical potencies. Victory could be provoked through some symbolic actions like lifting of hands, or raising a super-sensible object like rod and stones up with the support of some cultic personages on these sacred mountains. The ancient practices of going to some places believed to be sacred for invocation of victory while in distress still exist till date.

Furthermore, the ancient belief that blessings in all its ramifications come from the mountains and hills was also found in the liturgy of ancient Israel (Psa. 121:1f). The Canaanites looked up to the mountains for rain, water, fertility and the like. Some mountains were venerated for the sake of their blessing bestowal. We also find in Deuteronomy 11:29 where Moses instructed Israelites to put the blessing inscriptions on a mountain, *Mount Gerizim*. Evidently, *Mount Gerizim* would be one of the sacred mountains in ancient Israelite liturgy. The blessings were to be pronounced from *Mount Gerizim*. It looks as if the power to support the “words of blessings” would be supported by the “resident powers” on this sacred mountain. So, to the ancient Israel, *Mount Gerizim* was a mountain of blessing or a symbol of blessing. Later on, it became sanctuary for the Samaritans who built a temple there. The blessing conferring power of *Mount Gerizim* was not without a liturgical and cultic reason. E. Russel is of the view that “it is conjectured that *Mount Gerizim* was selected for the blessing because, it faced the eastward, it would be on the “right” or “fortunate side”.²⁶ Here, the transference of blessings was a liturgical act tied to the apron of obedience to the Law. But the power of a sacred mountain, *Gerizim* must be invoked. He who followed the Law was “right” and “fortunate” and due for blessings of God of Israel.

The same thing went for the belief in curse imposing power of sacred places like *Mount Ebal*. Certainly, *Mount Ebal* was opposite of *mount Gerizim*. It was a sacred mountain with power to curse and inflict injuries on any disobedient fellow to the Law in ancient Israel. *Mount Ebal* was the mountain of the curse. The issuance of curses on this mountain was also cultic and liturgical in nature. First, sacred stones were to be selected and set up on *Mount Ebal*. Two, the Law must be inscribed on them for placement and permanence. Three, an altar of unhewn stones must be erected and certain sacrifices must be made on the altar. Perhaps this was for invocation of Yahweh and His power to attest to

²⁶Russel, E. 1982. “Gerizim”. In *New International Bible Dictionary* ed. Douglas, J. D. et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 384.

the efficacy of the curses to be issued. (cf. Deut. 20:1-8). Four, half of the tribes of Israel six in number must stand on the mountain while the Levites pronounce the curses on the erring ones. Fifth, the people must say “Amen”. By this response, the people were showing that they condemn disobedience to the Law openly.

It is apparent that the religion of the ancient Israel in the wilderness gave allowance to the animistic and totemic objects. Also, the religion in the wilderness allowed Yahweh who has revealed Himself to them to be affiliated with the Canaanite religious notions and mountains were seen as places where He could manifest Himself. Thus far, we see reasons for the veneration of sacred mountains in Israelite religion and the roles they played in her liturgy. The influence of mountains on higher rainfalls made them to be symbols of fertility in the Canaanite religion, but it was a religious temptation to the Israelite nation. Mountains are symbols of eternal continuance in the song of Moses (Deut. 33:15). They are the scenes of various theophanies to Moses and Israel. They have power to bestow victory during war. They confer blessings as well as curses on the obedient and the disobedient respectively.

4.4 The Functions of Sacred Place in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

4.4.1 Sacred Places as Meeting Places with Divinities in Canaanite Religion and God in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

It is apparent that the god of fertility of the Canaanites, *Baal* and the head of the Pantheon, *El* live on sacred places like mountains—Mount *Zaphon* and mount of *El*. Undoubtedly, the mountains of *El* and *Baal* are far from where other gods or sons of gods live but Clifford has published a command issued by *El* to other gods to come and meet him: “Hurry! Hasten! Rush! To me let your feet run, to me let your legs hasten, toward mount...mount of k-s”²⁷

The command is to summon the sons of gods to the feet of their head, the creator and king of all other gods, who was *El*. The simply reason for this is that the mountain of *El* is where the decrees are issued. No one can do anything without the permission of the head of pantheon, who is *El*. He also continues to give the obedience of the sons of gods to the decrees of *El*: “Then they set face, toward the Mount of El, toward the meeting of the (divine) council, then the gods were sitting to eat, the Holy ones to dine....”²⁸

²⁷Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaanite and the Old Testament*. 36.

²⁸Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaanite and the Old Testament*. 43.

The assembly of gods are gathered under the supremacy and headship of *El*, the meeting of gods is for a crucial purpose of decision makings. The assembly of gods in the Canaanite religion has some religious undertones. The coming together of gods is to recognize the belief that *El* is the father of all other gods. They are summoned to offer sacrifice to *El*, their head. They are summoned to the sacred mountain where *El* dwells. The decrees are handed over to them to rule and judge the earth.

The meeting of the divine council also involves eating and drinking and sacrifice making to the head of the pantheon. One can deduce from the above submissions that in Canaanite religion, sacred places where their gods dwell, are meeting points. The mountain of *El*, where the Canaanite chief god resides, and the mountain of *Baal*, god of fertility, are places where determinant decisions are made. The decrees for the ruling of the sons of gods are handed over to them for judging the earth. Various elemental forces and phenomenological features are attached to the theophany of *Baal*. He rides on the clouds of the sky, spits fire in terms of lightings and thunder bolts and the like. The permission to build a temple for him is decreed by *El* after he has overcome *Tammu*, the unruly Sea.

In the ancient Israelite religion, sacred places are displayed and apparently held in common with the Canaanite conceptions. But the theogony of the Canaanite religion is historicized in Hebrew religion. Yahweh is also placed on sacred places like mountain as in Canaanite religion. He appears in a theophany associated with phenomenological characteristics like cloud, lightning thunders, thick darkness and smoke. Moses, Aaron, Hur and others played the “sons of gods” in Israelite history; they also are given feast to eat at the feet of Yahweh. Certain decrees, commandments are handed over to them to deliver to the Israelites (cf. Exo. 19:10-22; 32:1ff).

Several theophanies and calls are made to Moses and Aaron especially to meet Yahweh at sacred places in Israelite history and liturgy. The first example is at Mount Horeb, which is traditionally called the “mountain of God”. Riggren opines that “the southern tradition calls it Mount Sinai, the Northern calls it Horeb”.²⁹ Moses meets God on this mountain or rather God meets him. Henceforth, it appears ancient Israelites also begin to place her God-Yahweh in places divinized as she continues her journey in the wilderness and had encounter with her Canaanite neighbours. Having observed the religious conceptions of the neighbouring people around her, she places her God in places

²⁹Riggren, H. 1970. *The Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. London: S.P.C.K. 30.

revered to be abode of gods. The sacred places shifted from mountains to plain ground, and several altars, Tent of meeting, Ark and Tabernacle.

The encounter of Jacob with Yahweh at *El Bethel*, calls to mind the fact that Yahweh met him on the ground he slept. The stone he used as his pillow was later on converted and dedicated to be the “house of God”. We can postulate from this that the choice of meeting with the Deity does not lie with man but with Deity who chooses to manifest Himself. Besides, the sacred places are fluid in the sense that it could be under trees, plain grounds or any other place (Gen. 12:7-8; 28: 11-22; Exo. 3:1-5; 19:10-22, 24; Jos. 5:13-15). Moses also had encounter with Yahweh who introduced Himself as “God of your fathers: In this case, it was not in a night dream or vision but in a broad daylight. He used fire and a burning bush to arrest the attention of the nomadic Moses in a Midianite region. Moses was not permitted to look at Him nor the vision unlike Jacob who saw the angels ascending and descending on it and God standing on top. Before Yahweh could speak to him, he has to remove his shoe which might have been dirty because of his wandering and regarded as a symbol of unholy or profane before a Holy Being in a holy place.

Certain features manifest on sacred sites as Yahweh manifests himself in Israelite liturgy. The man who encounters this would not be expecting such when it would break out to him. It is usually a sudden experience as in the case of Jacob and Moses. Also, it is the initiative of the Being-Yahweh to manifest Himself. In the theophanies, it is God coming down to man to show who He is. This may not be so in all cases as when He is purposely invoked through the erection of altars and other sacred monuments. There is also a sense of fear which the recipient cannot run away from. In the course of meeting with the Being, a sense of his filthiness is conveyed to him in a holy and sacred place and before a holy Being. The unholy state of man must first of all be revealed to him in comparison with where he is standing before any divine meeting or encounter can ensue, then comes the revelation of the personality, revealing Himself. To show that it is a meeting point between the Divine and human, the Deity introduces Himself and links it with the ancestry of the man like the case of Isaac, Jacob and Moses (Gen. 26:1-5; 28: 12-15; Exo. 3:1-6).

One is tempted to ask whether Jacob and Moses did not know this God before; hence a need to introduce Himself. It is sure that Moses who was raised in Pharaoh’s palace might have partial knowledge of this God amidst many divinities or gods in the land. Whatever the case may be, there was need to meet man from above at a sacred place.

Altars that were raised in the name of Yahweh were for the purpose of meeting with Yahweh (Gen. 24: 4ff; Exo. 30:6; 40:5, 26; Jos. 8:30-31). Some were raised in order to sacrifice to Him. It is glaring that man believes that certain places can be meeting places between the Deity and man. He is given those places in order to ensure His abiding presence, constant touch, intervention and easy accessibility. They are called “house of God”, they are named after Him in a peculiar way so that when His name is called or rather “invoked” there, He will answer and meet their needs (Gen. 28:19; 33:20; Exo. 17:15). Knowing the name of God or gods and giving this name to a particular sacred place, is for the purpose of knowing the ability, strengths and what he can do for the people. As a result, sacred places become the sacral focus of life in the ancient Israel liturgy. They also become the points where man’s intercourse with Yahweh took place in their religious practices.

4.4.2 Sacred Places As Cultic Places in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

To designate the sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy as cultic places, we mean places where the sacrificial worship could legally be performed³⁰ both in the patriarchal ages and Mosaic era. If there is no worship, there is no religion. Religion is carried out through its worship activities. It is indeed an essential ingredient and constitutive nature or feature of a religion. Cult gives an outlet and outward expression to the nature and spiritual embodiments of any religion. As an organism, we could say that it has its own antecedents with a considerable age in human history and passed through its own evolutionary stages. As we can see in all religions, they did not attain the highest forms they have today from antiquity. How to carry out any cultic worship in any religion depends on what is essential, fundamental and focal point to the religion and its adherents.

Expressing his view on cult, Mowinckel is of the opinion that “cult or ritual may be defined as the socially established and regulated holy acts and words in which the encounter and communion of the Deity with the congregation is established, developed and brought to its ultimate goal”.³¹ Going by this opinion, it behoves that cult is a place where the corporeal and incorporeal meet and have religious intercourse. It is only a place where spiritual intercourse between the two can take place. It is also guided by “holy acts and words”. This suggests that coming to a sacred place for cultic activities is not

³⁰De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*. Trans. McHugh, J. London: Darton, Longman and Todd. 334.

³¹Mowinckel, S. 1962. *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas, D. R. Vol. 1 Oxford: Basil Blackwell. 15.

conventional; it is guided by holy rules and actions for certain achievements. But Mowinckel has not told us how the relationship has been established and how man came into awareness of a need of relationship with the Deity through cult. It is taken for granted that it has been an imprint in the heart of man to seek for a relationship with the Deity at sacred sites. Nevertheless, it is evident that both the Deity and man seek for a cult for many purposes.

De Vaux,³² Albright³³ Gray³⁴ and Mowinckel³⁵ have suggested that the origin of cult in Israel could be traced to the Canaanite background. Given a common society with a common field of culture like the Ancient Near East, where people have lived together for years and shared common practices in politics, marriage, family, kinship and culture; sharing religious connections in the area of cult would be the same which both texts and archaeological discoveries have approved.

Our primary source of information about the cultic life of the ancient Israelite liturgy could be summarized into two. First, the regulations on her cultus in Pentateuchal narratives and two, the liturgy found in Psalms. Our concentration would dwell much on the Pentateuchal traditions with few references to other passages where applicable. If anyone wants to understand the liturgy of ancient Israel, let him study her cults and the activities attached to them in the wilderness.

The liturgy of the ancient Israel could well be appreciated when one considers her activities surrounding the cultus. Every event around her cult was for Yahweh and in the name of Yahweh. Every sacrifice was to remember the “God of the fathers” or Yahweh. Beginning from Abraham, cultic sites began by erecting an altar and calling on the name of Yahweh. The manner in which he raised the altar could not be ascertained because our primary source did not inform us. But we can postulate that it was raised according to the order of the Canaanites in the land when Abraham got there. He might have watched their numerous altars and how they worshipped their pantheon of gods. Abraham could not have raised an altar to God if he had not observed the way the Canaanite aborigines worshipped their gods. After all, altars as sacred places of worship in the ancient Near East were common phenomena.

³²De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*. trans by. John McHugh. 285.

³³Albright, W. F. *Archaeological and the religion of Israel 4th ed.* Baltimore: John Hopkins. 70ff, 90ff.

³⁴Gray, J. “Cultic Affinities between Israel and Ras Shamra”. in *Zeitschrift fur die Alt Testamentliche Wissenschaft LXII*. 207ff.

³⁵Mowinckel, S. 1962. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. 15-16.

The patriarchs established certain places and regarded them to be sacred and worshipped from there. Altars were built, trees were planted, and stones were raised and massaged with oil. It was a period that Yahweh worship required no cultic personages like priests and Levitical order or rigorous Levitical regulations as we have it in the Priestly Code. There were no specific animals regarded to be “clean” or “unclean” requirements during this era. What determined the cultic sites were buildings of altars, planting of trees, theophany of Yahweh either in the dream or night vision or oracular instructions to any of the patriarchs (cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 13:18; 21:33; 22:9); covenant made by Yahweh as a means of reassurance (cf. Gen. 26:25; 28:18); vow made to Yahweh that a house would be built for Him and monetary gains would be His compensations to the tune of the tithes of the whole gains and blessings received.

Another feature of the cult during the age of the patriarchs was calling on the name of the LORD God attached to the God who manifests Himself on the cultic sites. As soon as Abraham built an altar to the Lord, the writer adds, that he called on the name of the Lord (cf. Gen. 12:8; 13:4). Isaac also built an altar and called on the name of the Lord (cf. Gen. 26:25). Concerning Jacob, he did not call on the name of the Lord but he gave a name attached with God to the place. We are not informed how they got “the name of the Lord” they called upon. Neither are we informed what the name actually was. It could be inferred that the patriarchs followed the Canaanite patterns of given names to every shrine of their worship since various local divinities were worshipped by the Canaanites with various theophorous names during this period.

At Shechem, when Abraham first of all stopped and pitched his tent, we are told that there was a shrine dedicated to *Baal-berith*, “Baal of the covenant” (cf. Gen. 12: 7; Jud. 9:4). Riggren postulates that “*El ‘elyon* which was mentioned once in the patriarchal narrative is believed to be a deity of Salem, worshipped by Melchizedek.³⁶ The name *El-Olam*, *El-Everlasting*, is connected with a cultic site at Beersheba. Von Rad postulates that *El-Roi*, “a god who manifests Himself” (cf. Gen. 16:13) is connected with a shrine in the extreme south”.³⁷ *El-Shadday* is another name of a deity who is probably identified with mountain, meaning “god of the mountain”. The topographical plateau of the Canaanite territory could not make this a difficulty to identify any of their gods as “god of the mountain”. Jacob’s saga with *El Bethel*, “god of Bethel” betrays a local Canaanite shrine at the place. The fact remains that, all the names mentioned and associated with patriarchal

³⁶Riggren, H. 1974. *The Israelite Religion*. trans by Green, D. London: S.P.C.K., 21.

³⁷Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament*, Vol. 1. trans. Stalker, G. D. M. 22.

worship obviously betray a merger or identification of the God of the fathers with the great Canaanite gods and their shrines in the ancient Israelite liturgy.

On the contrary, Eissfeldt is of the opinion that “there is a distinction between Canaanite *El* and the God of the fathers”.³⁸ It is certain that originally, the patriarchal stories of these cultic and sacred sites are told in order to establish their sanctity or sacredness as sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy, which had been in existence from the time of their ancestors. They are told in order to legitimize the subsequent cultic festivals being practised there by their progenitors.

Another important thing on the name attached to cultic practices of the ancient Israel was to show how Yahweh has given Himself away to the people He has chosen for Himself. In this regards the personality of Yahweh was committed to Israel alone. Through His name, Yahweh’s abiding presence, His immanence at all times and interventions in times of crises are guaranteed. Von Rad argues for the holy character of this name as well as its potency to the advantages of Israel. He postulates that giving the name of Yahweh to the Israelites,” this means that it belonged to the realm of the cult, and it can indeed be designated as the very heart of the cult of ancient Israel. And it is in this light that the calling on the name of the Lord by the patriarchs has cultic significance and implication. When other Canaanite cults were preoccupied with cultic images, the Israelite cultus was preoccupied with the name of their God”.³⁹

During the patriarchal period, the cultus and its activities were simple. The rationality for their sacralisation was theophanies and the building of sacred monuments such as pillars, stones and planting of trees. The belief in the presence of an awesome God, who revealed Himself made the place sacred and it was worthy of being worshipped from the sites of manifestation. The cultic materials included animals of any kind without regulation or restriction. The animals were offered with fire in order to bring out the aroma or sweetness. This is to invoke the presence of Yahweh as a special Guest and to make Him glad by salivation and smelling of the aroma of the sacrifice.

The numerous altars raised by the patriarchs raise some enquiries. If the “God of the fathers” is one, why did patriarchs raise many altars? Why many locations of cultus or worship? It is glaring that the patriarchs raised many altars according to the patterns of the Canaanites. Von Rad is of the view that “there are various forms or manifestations of *Baal*. It appears as if wherever a special mystery of nature was experienced, there was a

³⁸Eissfeldt, O. 1965. “El and Yahweh”. In *Journal of Semitic Studies* Vol. 1. 135.

³⁹Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament*, Vol. 1. 183.

fresh revelation of *Baal*⁴⁰ according to the practice of the Canaanites. This idea was also practised by the patriarchs, wherever they experienced Yahweh in a new form in a theophany, there they raised an altar for Yahweh and be given a name.

Mosaic period also witnessed cultic activities around cultic sites such as altars, ground, Sinai territory and mountains. It was Yahweh who chose to reveal Himself to Moses, as God of his fathers and demanded the release of His people from bondage in Egypt. The purpose was clearly stated: to bring the Israelites to the land He has promised their fathers and on their part, that they should worship Him. So, Yahweh demanded a cultic relationship with them (Exo. 3:1-2). After their deliverance, the first encounter Israel had with Yahweh was at the Sinai territory. The events started with elaborate cultic preparations for the theophany of Yahweh. Sex was forbidden for some days, clothes were to be washed and certain distance was to be observed. All this may show how the ancient people treated the holy sanctuary before they worshipped there. It shows their notions about the holy place and cultic necessity for the theophany. Israel must undergo a process of self sanctification (Exo. 19:2, 10-14), that is, a kind of cultic purification before the theophany; and the appearance of God is depicted in terms of a traditional cultic theophany.⁴¹

After the divine will had been committed to Israel, they entered into an elaborate cultic festival with Yahweh and they made a covenant with Him and sealed it with the blood of an animal. As a result, Israel became a cultic community as long as she participated in the offering and sacrifice of Yahweh in total obedience to the covenant made with her by Yahweh. The altar that Moses erected in Exodus 24 became a sacred one. It was sprinkled with blood as well as the people. Thereby, the people entered into cultic covenant with Yahweh as His people. The altar represented Yahweh on His side and the people stood as the witnesses to the covenant. The use of blood in cultic setting has been ancient because of its life impacting properties. Through various sacrifices, Yahweh was seen as a special Guest at the cult for the sacrifice. He was seen to be invisibly present but represented by the sacred object during the sacrifice.

The cultic life of ancient Israel was characterized with many features as we could see. The sacred places of the ancient Israel revolved around altars, sacred trees, stones, sacred grounds, and the base of a mountain, hills and mountains. As a result, the cultus was carried out at these sacred places during the patriarchal age. The sacred objects

⁴⁰Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament*, Vol. 1. 227.

⁴¹Riggren, H.1974. *The Israelite Religion*. 35.

included sacred stone as in the story of Jacob, *terraphim* and figurines. They were either regarded as oracular objects or tribal images of gods. One could wonder how these “images of gods” in its theological meanings and interpretations could represent Yahweh? How could Yahweh be reduced to stone and wooden images? If *terraphim* were actually “small female figurines” and functioned as amulets as some scholars insist, why did Yahweh accept these “pagan” images as His objects during the time of Jacob?

Jacob had had encounters with Yahweh, who introduced Himself as God of Abraham, and God of Isaac. How then did Jacob view this God? Did he view this God as multiple and as a result, accept *teraphim*, images of many gods as His representations or did he view Him as one but only seek for physical symbol to represent Him? One could say that patriarchal age represents “old clan” religion in the ancient Israelite history and religion when images were accepted for the worship of God. These religious sacred materials at sacred places were religiously accepted to “hold” the faith of the patriarchs at the early period of the Israelite history.

The same happened during the Mosaic era when “the Ark” or “the Ark of the Lord of Host”, “Tent of Meeting” and “Tabernacle” were variously thought to be the symbols of the presence of God, the throne of God and house of God religiously. The cultic life in the wilderness surrounded the Ark, “the Tent of the Testimony” and the Tabernacle. The people and Moses in particular who was the cultic mediator between God and people met with Yahweh there. Various cultic sites such as where ever the atmospheric theophany of Yahweh rested in the wilderness (Num. 9:15-23); Gilgal after crossing the Red sea (Jos. 5:10); Shiloh (Jos. 18:1; 1 Sam. 3:3); the Philistine camp after the defeat at Aphek in Ashdod (1 Sam. 4:11; 5:1-2); Beth-Shemesh (1 Sam. 6:12); Kirjath-Jearim (1 Sam. 7:1) and Jerusalem by David (1 Sam. 6) have served as the houses of the Ark of the Lord. Except the camp of the Philistine, all other places were regarded as cultic sites in the Israelite liturgy. The sacredness of these places was based on the contact they had with the Ark of God and the cultic activities that took place there (Jos. 8:33; Num. 9:1-14; Jos. 5:10; 2:5; Jud. 6:24).

4.4.3 Sacred Place as a Place of Invocations in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

One astonishing thing that one could deduce as part of the activities at sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy was the invocations that took place in these sacred places. Many of the narratives, especially those dealing with patriarchal ages, showed that invocations occurred at sacred places. The sacred places, without doubt, were treated as

cults of the “God(s) of the ancestors”, where this particular God was invoked. When Abraham first got to the Promised Land, he quickly built an altar and “called on the name of the Lord”. The idea of calling on the name of the Lord suggested that he invoked this God for reasons which are not stated in the passage (Gen. 12:5-8; 13:3-4). One could suggest that he did this in order to tie or bind the name and personality of this God to the place. Besides, he could do this in order to secure power from this God for his inheritance as promised. Or there was the probability that calling the name of this God would bring His power to reality in the life of Abraham and enable him to gain prowess and upper hand on the Canaanites who were many in the land while Abraham and his new nomadic crew were few in their midst.

The invocations during the patriarchal ages started with the calling of holy name. This may have magical possibilities, in the sense that calling the names of gods in ancient world meant gaining their power, favour and blessings. The narrator of Genesis unquestionably displayed that this particular “God” who entered into a relationship with the Patriarchs appeared as their tribal God and on the side of the patriarchs; they gave Him different names as they encountered Him. However, John Gray asserts that “His common name is *El*, “God”,⁴² and this is compounded with other designates like *El-Elyon*, “God Most High” (Gen. 14:18). Perhaps this was to depict His sovereignty and supremacy over all things, thereby denoting the supremacy of the future of the Israelite nation over the land. Another one is “*El ‘Roi*, “God of seeing” as interpreted by Riggren⁴³ but Von Rad translates it to mean “God who manifests Himself”⁴⁴ (Gen. 16:13).

Another name the patriarchs especially Abraham invoked was *El-Sadday*, variously interpreted as “God Almighty”. Albright has argued that *El-Sadday* or *Sadday* has its etymological root from the Akkadian word *Sadu*, meaning “mountain” and *El-Sadday* would mean something like “god of the mountain”.⁴⁵ *El-Olam*, meaning, “the everlasting God” (Gen. 21:33) came after Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at a cultic site and called this name. This may have an invocative power and magical mechanics that, just as the tree in nature has long years, may his life and that of the children who would come from him as a result of Yahweh’s covenant live long on the land. Finally, we come to *El-Bethel*, God of Bethel or “House of God”. Instead of God, moving about in the land, Jacob invoked His name with a definite fixation represented by a stone.

⁴²Gray, J. 1953. “The God Yw in the Religion of Canaan”. In *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 278ff.

⁴³Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. David Green, 19.

⁴⁴Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament, Vol. 1*. Trans. G.D.M. Stalker, 22.

⁴⁵Albright, W. F. “The Names Shaddai and Abram”. In *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LIV, 173-204.

The fact that these names are invocative in nature and have “magical releases” to the patriarchs could not be doubted. The Canaanite influence on those names could not be denied too. The primitive understanding of God by the patriarch could limit them to the calling of His name in an invocative manner. Identifying this God with the sky, mountains, grounds, trees and other forces of nature may be ways of invoking His attributes and powers and setting these properties on the land for the blessings of their posterity. In as much as these patriarchs are the progenitors of the future Israelites, they were invoking these attributes of the tribal God as means of blessing bestowal on the land and their posterity. After all, the sky is higher than any object on earth; the mountains have attributes of immutability, strength and longevity; the trees have long life span and the like. These attributes were believed to be ascribed to Yahweh and they come from Him. Inasmuch as God was looked upon as the tribal God, He was believed to be in charge of the fortunes of the chosen Israelite race. These objects were also used as symbols and as means of transferring their inherent properties to realities in the land and for the future posterity. The conditions needed by the patriarchs before all these could be transferred to them were the building of altars, planting of durable trees, erection of sacred pillars, the *messebahs* and theophany if there was any. Altars were built to represent Yahweh or His presence; sacrifices were made at meeting points to show their appreciation to Him or as means of invitation, inducements; after that His name was invocatively called.

Another occasion of invocation attached to the name of Yahweh in a cultic circle was when there was covenant making between Laban and Jacob. Yahweh was identified with certain personages as “the God of Nahor” and “the God of Abraham”. Undoubtedly, He was seen as personal or tribal God of these custodians. The “God of Nahor” and “the God of Abraham” were invoked as witnesses and set over against each other if anyone would betray each other. Other names such as “the Fear of Isaac” and “the Mighty One of Jacob” came into this category as ancient divine designations and they were invoked to watch over the agreement (Gen. 31:53; 31:42). Speiser has called our attention to “the invocations of gods on the sacred mountain when there was a treaty between *Mursilis* and *Duppi-Jessub* of *Amurru*. The divinized mountains as well as the gods were invoked as witnesses over the treaty”.⁴⁶ Donner as quoted by Clifford has pointed to the idea of invocations of gods among the Ugarit. “The assembly of gods are treated as a divine entity

⁴⁶Speiser, E. A. 1969. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*. Princeton: Princeton University. 29.

during invocations. *Byblus* is invoked after the triad of *El*, *Baal Shamem*, and *Baalat*, to lengthen the days of *Yehimilk*.⁴⁷ This shows a correlation between the tradition among the Amorites and the patriarchs. The ancient Israelites could have followed these trends while at sacred places, invoking their God for various blessings.

It is evident that certain cultic practices were needed to bring about invocations at sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy. During the patriarchal ages, altars, planting of *magical trees*, raising of pillars and anointing a stone as evident in the story of Jacob would be required. This showed that the presence of God must be imitated or symbolized with sacred objects. After this, God was called upon through His name which was personally revealed and known to them. Wright is of the opinion that the peculiarity of the “name of the LORD” formed the “clan religion”⁴⁸ of the patriarchs since we were not informed of how they carried out their cultic activities at these sacred places. In the Mosaic period, we see God willingly giving the methodology of this invocation to the ancient Israelites especially when they were in crises. This time, it was invocative trumpets which would bring Yahweh to their camp and fight for them (Num. 10:9). What power lies in these trumpets we were not told but it was certain that it was meant for invocation. A pointer to the time of Judges, during Gideon’s military campaign against the Midianites and Amalekites showed that it was a means of invocation in Israel (Jud. 7:18-22).

The invocation at sacred place may involve some potent or magical words as in the case of Joshua who called on God to act at Gilgal. People in the ancient world had believed in the potency of words and they engaged these words at times in need. What Joshua said at Gilgal could be regarded as potent words of invocation. The elemental force of nature, the sun was invoked in favour of the ancient Israelites against their enemies. For he said in the sight of Israel: Sun, stand still over Gibeon; “And Moon, in the valley of Aijalon” (Jos. 10:12).

It was followed that the sun stood still and the moon stopped. This happened at another cultic and sacred place, Gilgal. Gilgal has been a prominent cultic place in the time of Joshua with the Ark of God stationed there (Jos. 4:19; 7:6; 11:15; 15:21). The invocation of elemental forces in nature has been ancient in human history.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament*. 45.

⁴⁸For detail on this see Wright, G. E. 1960. “Modern Issues in Biblical Studies: History and the Patriarchs”. In *The Expository Times*, LXXI July, 292-296.

⁴⁹For details on this stand see Olukoya, D. K. 1999. *Drawers of Powers from the Heavenlies*. Yaba: The Battle Cry Christian Ministries. 9-13.

In the time of Samuel, we see another method of invocations. In this case, water was involved. Libation was poured before God and this was symbolic. In the Ancient Near Eastern religion, water was poured in order to produce rain.⁵⁰ This has been called “sympathetic magic” performed by Samuel but Kitchen has argued against this theory. Rather he opines that “it is a symbol of human frailty and impermanence and that Samuel’s action may be interpreted as a sign of abasement and humiliation”.⁵¹ Anyway, water libation was poured and a sacrifice-burnt offering was offered to provoke Yahweh into action. All these events took place at another sacred place at Mizpah (1 Sam. 7: 1-8).

It was apparent that ancient Israel invoked both the presence and power of her Deity through His name. A curious look at the Israelite history as far as one could see on the pages of the Old Testament, Yahweh’s names appeared to be the property of Israel alone. The names were cultic bestowal given to her and special to her alone. The patriarchs “called on the name of the LORD” in instance that was very crucial to them for divine response from Him. What they understood their environments to be, and their neighbours’ understandings of their local divinities were assimilated to their own God who has partially revealed His name to them (Exo. 6:3).

With all these acts of invocations, it was glaring that at times some cultic actions needed to be displayed before the actual invocation. The sacrifice must be made, the name of Yahweh was called upon, trumpets were blown, and libation was poured at another time and so on. One needs to ask, what impacts or influence these actions have on Yahweh. Can Yahweh, the Supreme Being of Israel be invoked and provoked to actions by human beings? How come that the combination of elemental forces and cultic objects in religious circle could influence the actions of Yahweh? Doubtlessly, the ancient Israelite liturgy also involved the idea that their God could be induced or influenced through some cultic actions. They related to Yahweh in sacred places in the manner they thought could produce quick results. Blaiklock is of the view that “this practice was similar in concept to the cult of *Baal* but the sympathetic magic or its likeness was fiercely castigated by the prophets for the obscene thing it was”.⁵²

When Moses was called to go and deliver the Israelites in bondage, he too asked for the name of the God of the fathers who was calling him. God gave His name as “I AM THAT I AM” without further definition, interpretation or completion and claimed that this

⁵⁰Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. trans. David Green. 190.

⁵¹Kitchen, K. A. 1987. “Magic and Sorcery” in *New Bible Dictionary 2nd ed.* J.D. Douglas et. al. 724.

⁵²Blaiklock, E. B. 1987. “Magic”. In *New International Bible Dictionary* ed. by Douglas, J. D. et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 613.

is His memorial for all generations (Exo. 3:11-14). In this manner, God was hiding many features of His personality which would be unfolded to the ancient Israelites very soon. The ancient religious and cultural beliefs about name were brought into a play here. Gaining the knowledge of the names of gods as the people believed was gaining access to their power and ability to invoke and control them by man. Whether this was the reason why Yahweh revealed part of His identity to Moses, one could not affirm but one could hold the opinion that Yahweh could not be controlled like Canaanite gods if at all His name was known to the ancient Israelites. The knowledge of the name of any divinity in the cultic life of the people of the Ancient Near East conveyed the nature of the gods and the power attached to them.

They were also aware that human life was mysteriously surrounded and determined by divine powers which they could only be gained from the gods and their names. Von Rad rightly submits that “therefore, one was bound to be disturbed, when he did not know the name of the divinity he was dealing with. When he did not know his name, it means there was no possibility of invoking it and gaining his interest for himself and his need”.⁵³ The gods must first of all make his name known and “cause it to be remembered for the possibility of invocation. Without the knowledge of the gods, there would be no cult and invocation in times of needs. The forces of names of the gods make the figures to stay or appear at sacred sites and guarantee that man always finds it again. Van der Leeuw as quoted by Von Rad argues that “the theophany at Peniel to Jacob displays this same craving about gaining cultic access to the name of God. Jacob wanted to bind God captive to the place by asking for His name but God declined”.⁵⁴ He only blessed Jacob. The Manoah’s example in Judges 13:11-17 similarly showed the same ancient belief in cultic secret about name of a divinity. Manoah was eager to gain knowledge of the heavenly visitor’s name and tie him to himself by means of a private cultic relationship. So, he asked for his name but he also declined, perhaps, not to be worshipped in the manner of the Canaanite cultic relationship with their gods.

So, Moses’ request of the name of this God carried a theological and cultic significance. Moses further gained more access to the secret of the name of God after the failure of Pharaoh to let Israel go. What the fathers of Moses- Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know about this God was revealed to Moses: “And God spoke to Moses,

⁵³Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament, Vol. 1.* Trans. G.D.M. Stalker, 182.

⁵⁴Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament, Vol. 1.* 182.

and said to him, I am the LORD, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty but by My name LORD, I was not known to them” (Ex.6:2-3).

Through this, one could say that God had given Himself, the secret of His name through which He could be “called upon” and “invoked” away. It was a secret committed to ancient Israel in trust alone in her liturgy. The patriarchs only knew His name partially, but now the full secret and personality of this God have been revealed. He could be “invoked” and there would be divine responses. It was now a medium and weapon that guaranteed God’s immanence, readiness and ability to help. In the time of Samuel, He was called upon and He answered (cf. 1 Sam. 7:8-9). And the Psalmist prophetically affirms: “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high because he has known My name”(Ps.91:14).

In another passage, he says, “And those who know Your name, will put their trust in You” (Psa. 9:10). It appeared the influence of name and its invocation also affected Yahweh during the ancient Israelite liturgies. It was no doubt that the ancient Israel came to know this name in a magical and invocative senses as the ancient people in extreme cases used divine names in magic. In the ancient Israelite cultus, the divine name was used by Israel in sacrifice, prayers, blessing and cursing and during holy wars against their enemies. The Priests blessed other tribes in the name of God (Deut. 10:8); the king too blessed the people in the name of the Lord (2 Sam. 6:18; Num. 6:23-26); the priests would put the name of God on Israel (Num. 6:27). Every oath was to be followed by the invocation of God (Lev. 19:12) and His name was attached with oaths and imprecations even against the enemies (Deut. 6:13; Psa. 44:5; 118:10). All these showed that God’s name was invoked during cultic activities. The nature of God’s name to the ancient Israelites was holy. That was why it was attached to their cultic activities and must not be used for sinister purposes.

Whether the ancient Israelites copied the art of name-invocation of her God from the religious life of their neighbours could not be categorically affirmed but the idea of magical use of names in the ancient Israel was a reality that could not be denied. Nevertheless, there are theological issues to settle. Why did Yahweh shy away from revelation of His full name to the patriarchs? Must He wait until the time of Israel in bondage and the time of Moses before He could reveal other parts of His name? Does knowledge of His name influence and provoke Him to cultic and divine responses like other gods in the land? It is sure that divine responses of Israelite God were partially

attached to calling or invoking His name. It could be argued that He restrained the ancient Israelites from magical use of His name as it was the common practice in the land. That was why His name must not be called in vain (Exo. 20:7; Lev. 19:12). Calling His name could be linked with singing His praise chants. He has emotion; He could be angry, annoyed and provoked to anger. So also, He could be joyous, glad at His people and arise for their help. Since He has revealed His name at certain sacred places, this must include the invocation of the name at the realm of the cult and it can indeed be designated as the very heart of the cult of ancient Israel. The idea of calling on the name of YHWH as Von Rad postulates is “originally a cultic term and means to invoke YHWH by the cultic image”.⁵⁵

4.4.4 Sacred Place as a Place of Communion Activities

Sacred places existed in religious circles for many reasons. One of such was the communion purpose. Many of the festivals and ceremonies that took place at these sacred places were for the purpose of communion. When man enters into a “sacred world” through revelation of the mystery of nature and the like, and a sacred place was detected, he sought a union with higher gods or Supreme Being. This was as a result of the religious notion that man shared from his environment as he tried to understand it better. According to Eliade, “in the ritual building of the human habitation”⁵⁶ and integration in the environment, what are regarded to be naturally physiological to human existence, may be read spiritually and culturally interpreted. They “can become means of sacrament, that is, a communion with the sacred”.⁵⁷

In the ancient Israelite liturgy, communion with Yahweh took place. This was so because the ancient Israel sought to open and keep a communion with Yahweh. We agree with Riggren in his opinion that “the significance of the cult for the religion of Israel in general and for individual is to provoke spiritual piety and communion”.⁵⁸ The Sinai periscope was an evidence for this purpose where the ritualistic sacrifices to Yahweh were given to the people. The sacrifices surrounding ancient Israelite sacred places were to give room for a sacred communion with Yahweh. As far as the ancient Israelites were concerned, cultic ceremonies at sacred places provided cultic means of entering into communion with the God of the fathers. This communion was both national and

⁵⁵Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. Trans. G.D.M. Stalker. 182-184.

⁵⁶Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 14.

⁵⁷Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane: the nature of religion*. 14.

⁵⁸Riggren, H. 1963. *The faith of the Psalmist*. Philadelphia: Fortress. 18ff.

individual in nature in ancient Israelite liturgy. The cultic activities and festal ceremonies of Israel show the piety of the nation. But Quell as quoted by Riggren has sought to separate the activities of the cult from the individual piety, a view which Riggren tagged “exaggerated dichotomy”⁵⁹ and submits that “individual piety in Israel cannot be separated from the cult”, because according to him, “the cult nourishes and encourages the piety of the individual”.⁶⁰

The sacred places secured and established by the patriarchs at Shechem, Beersheba and Bethel with the sacred altars and sacred trees planted there, later on became sacred places of communion for the ancient Israelites. Hence, during the early institution of monarchy and subsequent periods, these places became communion shrines for ancient Israel. Gilgal became a sacred place as a result of Joshua’s instruction to set stones taken from the river Jordan up there. There are enough evidence from passages like 1 Samuel 3:20; 8:16 and Amos 5:5 that these were sacred places in Israel through which the ancient Israelites had communion with Yahweh.

Other holy sites such as Shiloh, where the Ark of the Lord was located for a while before it was destroyed during the battle with Philistines at Aphek, Shechem with the cult of “*Baal of the Covenant*” according to Judges 9:4 and many sacred sites commonly called “high places” were places with sacred altars where Israel carried out festal ceremonies in communion with God. It could be stressed again, that the central focus at these sacred places was the altars erected there. They were raised in honour of Yahweh, to represent His presence; they were massaged or anointed with oil, the stone set up by Jacob at the holy site of Bethel was called the “house of God” and eventually used as a symbol of God (Gen. 28:10-32; 31:45; 35:20). These sacral objects symbolized the presence of God and the demarcated places from others as sacred place of sacrificial worship and communion with Him.

During the patriarchal ages and Mosaic era, up to the end of the period of Judges, sacred altars and stones provided centres for communion with Yahweh. Even when the Israelite nation became a monarchical state, these sacred places with their sacred altars, pillars, stones and the like did not stop being sacral focus of life in the ancient Israelite liturgy. They were points where ancient Israel had spiritual communion with her Deity. Both the individuals and the nation at large sought spiritual intercourse and communion with Yahweh which usually took place at the sacred sites. Event though it could be

⁵⁹Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. 153.

⁶⁰Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. 153.

submitted that ancient Israelites very often took over Canaanites shrines and converted them to their use in their worship, the narrator of Exodus 20:24-25 religiously differentiated between altars of Yahweh from the prevalent altars in the land. The altar of Yahweh must be altar of stone, natural stone and not hewn stone; for any tool touching it would profane it. (cf. Jos. 8:30-31).

The altars of communion in Israel have the characteristic of blood, unhewn stones, wood to produce fire, fire to season out the flavour and aroma of the sacrifice for God to smell and water. The ancient Israelite conception of these sacred places and the sacred representations there, though symbolic was that they were abode of Yahweh or signifying the presence of Yahweh. They are the focal point of all religious devotion and aspiration. It was a religious conception that the ancient Israelites held that true service and devotion to Yahweh must be held in sacred places with all sense of commitment at the places divinely prescribed. They represented the presence of God whom they could contact and have communion with at the set dates of festal ceremonies.

Another major way ancient Israelites entered into communion with her Deity was through the sacrifice and offerings presented to Him as stipulated in the Priestly Code. These offerings occupied a great portion in the Pentateuch and ancient Israelite liturgy. In the Priestly Code, we are not given any theory of sacrifice or justification of the sacrificial cult. It was just assumed to be a cardinal point in the liturgy of the ancient Israel, taking place at sacred places with elaborate prescriptions.⁶¹

The root of the word sacrifice could be traced to a Latin compound word: *sacar* meaning “holy” and *facere*, “to make”, which form the word *sacrificium* to denote “sacrifice”. It is a gift presented or offered by a lesser being to supreme beings or a gift from a vassal to his lord or the Supreme Being. The religious idea and practice of sacrifice are as old as man himself. We can postulate that it originated from the sense of nature in man as instilled by God in the heart of man.

Tracing the origin of sacrifice in ancient Israelite liturgy, Dussaud, quoted by Riggren is of the view that “Israelite sacrificial system could find its foundations in the Canaanite sacrifice on the basis of Punic sacrifice lists”.⁶² Herbert Spencer is also of the view that “there is anthropological origin of sacrifice in human history which he located in

⁶¹Riggren, H. 1962. *Sacrifice in the Bible*. London: Lutterworth, 13.

⁶²Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. 167.

the ancestral worship of the pre-historic people".⁶³ He suggests that some food particles and drink were left at the graves for the spirits of the dead who had been deified to take for their satisfactions and refreshment. Jevons postulates "totemic origin of sacrifice where the pre-historic society entered into blood covenant with an animal family or species".⁶⁴ As a religious society, the animal chosen was projected to super-human figure of the society. As the society established a relationship with this species of animals, sacrifices were constantly made. The value of such sacrifice was to partake in the super-sensible properties of the animal for their benefits and there by dispense any evil around them.

Abe postulates that "the origin of sacrifice in Israel is traceable to the universal prevalence of sacrifice among the early ancient nations especially the Semites among whom the patriarchs sojourned".⁶⁵ The Priestly Code of Israel locates the origin of her sacrificial system and practices in the mosaic traditions of Exodus. It claims it was a practice received from God on Sinai periscope without minding its antecedence in the contemporary society and patriarchal examples of sacrifice. We can say that the origin of sacrifice comes from "conscious awareness" of man to maintain a peaceful relationship with the divinities or Supreme Being. As James submits, "sacrifice involves the destruction of a victim for the purpose of maintaining or restoring a right relationship of man to the sacred order".⁶⁶ We can say that it is written in the heart of man to seek after a higher Being through presentation of sacrifices.

Abe,⁶⁷ Rowley,⁶⁸ Riggren,⁶⁹ Von Rad⁷⁰ and Snaith⁷¹ among other scholars have located four characteristic purposes of sacrifices: One, human means of feeding the divine beings; two the sacrifice as a gift; three, the sacrifice as means of effecting sacred communion with the divine beings and lastly, the idea of atonement for sins. These purposes of sacrifice are apparently grounded in the ancient Israelite liturgy at sacred places. Our concern is the communion aspect of sacrifice in the liturgy of ancient Israel. It was possible to conceive the idea of sacrifice as food for feeding the gods by the ancient

⁶³Spencer, H. 1958. "Sacrifice". In *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by Hastings, J. et al. XI New York: T and T Clark. 1ff.

⁶⁴Jevons, F. B. "Introduction to the History of Religion". In *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 96ff.

⁶⁵Abe, G. O. 1986. "Sacrificial Rites in Israelite Religion and the Ancient Near East". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XVIII Vol. 1* June. 18.

⁶⁶James, E. O. 1933. *Sacrifice and Sacrament* London: John Murray. 13.

⁶⁷Abe, G. O. 1986. "Sacrificial Rites in Israelite Religion and the Ancient Near East". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal Religious Studies*. 20.

⁶⁸Rowley, H. H. 1950, "The Meaning of Sacrifice in the Old Testament". In *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library XXXIII*, 54ff.

⁶⁹Riggren, H. 1962. *Sacrifice in the Bible*. London: 27.

⁷⁰Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol.1*. Trans. Stalker, G.D.M. 255-257.

⁷¹Snaith, N. H. 1957. "Sacrifice in the Old Testament". In *Suppliments Vetus Testamentum*, VII, 1, 54.

people. This may arise from ascribing to the gods some anthropomorphical features, whereby gods assumed human appetites and wants. They were subjected to hunger and thirst as humans. So, any food offered to them would be to quench their thirst; if not man would be in danger. In Leviticus 21:6, 8, 17; and 22:25 we have sacrifices as “the bread of God”. Specifically, in Numbers 28:2, it says, “Command the children of Israel, and say to them, ‘My offering, My food, for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to me, You shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time’”.

It follows that even in the ancient Israelite liturgy sacrifices were seen as feeding God. After all, nearly all the Old Testament sacrificial materials were all edible and dining materials. The idea of communion between God and Israel at sacred places in her liturgy was represented by the offering commonly referred to as “Peace offering”. Tracing what informed this conclusion, Riggren points to the root of the word “sa^{lem}” in Hebrew from the use of the adjective and postulates that in such an expression as “his heart was sa^{lem}, that is, in complete harmony with God”.⁷² When the peace offering is made, the whole offering victim is not offered to Yahweh at the sacred altar. Only the blood and fat of the animal are offered to God. The rest are to be shared by the groups of worshippers. Reference to Deuteronomy 12:18; Exodus 32:6 and Zephaniah 1:7 suggest that guests were to be invited to the meal in order to eat and drink before God. Von Rad suggests that “at the sacrificial meal, the expressions on the worshippers was joy and gladness triggered by the mystical awareness that Yahweh was present”.⁷³ The animals were slaughtered at the sanctuaries on high places and it was considered to be a sacral act and this led Stephen to conclude on the use of the word “zebah”, meaning “to slaughter”.⁷⁴

Von Rad postulates that “this is the sacrifice which, more than any other came in to the category of a communion sacrifice as other guests were invited, God was invited”.⁷⁵ The participants mystically knew that God was invisibly present, as a special Guest of honour. The union with Him was dramatized as the physical participants commune, dine and wine together. There were also cultic interactions between Yahweh and the worshippers.

Our attention is drawn to some theological issues raised by sacrifice in ancient Israelite liturgy. If man wants to enter into communion with Supreme Being, must there

⁷²Riggren, H. 1962. *Sacrifice in the Bible*. London: Lutterworth. 27.

⁷³Stephen, W. B. 1950, “Hebrew ‘Olah and Zebah Sacrifices”. In *Festschrift Fur Alfred Berholet*, Turbingen: Mohr. 492ff

⁷⁴Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. Trans. Stalker, D.M.G. 257.

⁷⁵Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. Trans. Stalker, D.M.G. 260.

by physical presentation in terms of sacrifice? If physical materials are needed, where does the efficacy of such sacrifice lie? In the materials provided or the obedience to the command? Every material is mystically cultic and spiritually symbolic, just as oil symbolizes ease and appeasement. If agreed, do the materials have any influence on Yahweh who is ultimate? Or can God be influenced at all by human sacrificial objects? This is a mystery in religion. This would remain unsolved for sometime that elemental materials can influence God in a cultic circle. The ancient people in pre-literate era had the religious notion that rituals, sacrifices and offerings do influence gods. If other gods of the land were treated with anthropomorphic elements like hunger, thirsts, cravings and can be angry if not given food, will Yahweh be hungry and angry if not given food? It is evident that Yahweh demands food from Israel in her liturgy and this should be brought to the cultic sites, sacred places appointed or where God puts His name. In the earliest period in Israel, sacrificial meals and offerings were considered highest forms of religion and means of entering to communion with God. The animals were slaughtered as a sacred order and act and offered to Yahweh. It was then man could enter into a mystical communion with the Supreme Being.

The sacrifice provides a means of communication with God for the nation, as well as spiritual communion. Von Rad opines that “through the sacrificial cult, God has ordained an instrument which opened up to her, Israel; a continuous relationship with Him... here Israel was granted fellowship (communion) with Him in the sacred meal”.⁷⁶ Riggren is of the opinion that “the laws of the Priestly Code do not conceive of sacrifice as something enabling man to exercise control over the will of Yahweh, they are rather a means provided by Yahweh in order that man may enter into communion with Him”.⁷⁷ During the sacrifice, the divine presence was sought in symbolic enactment where a relationship was established between the natural and the super sensible, between the human and the superhuman Being.

4.4.5 Sacred Places as Places of Oracular Activities in Ancient Israelite Liturgy

The fact that oracular activities took place on the sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgical practices could be dated back to the time of the patriarchs. The first attention would be directed to the tree worship or tree cult during the patriarchal age. In

⁷⁶Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker, 257.

⁷⁷Riggren, H. 1962. *Sacrifice in the Bible*. 42.

the Old Testament, trees are identified with the ancient Canaanite religion. Principally, it is a cult devoted to the worship of the consort of *El*, *Asherah* the mother goddess. It was a cult of fertility that was being celebrated in high places, on tops of hills, mountains and under green trees. In ancient Canaan, the green trees served as a symbol of fertility and fertility rites were performed under them (cf. Jer. 2:20; 3:6; Eze. 6:13). Smith is of the view that “the pre-Islamic Bedouins of Arabia were familiar with sacred tree”.⁷⁸ In a land like Palestine, almost devoid of green trees, any green tree sprouting up could not but be viewed as a symbol of life. They have their tree-cult shrine in the grove or under a green tree. It is believed that such tree has oracular purposes in the Canaanite religion.

Tree planting and liturgical activities under them are traceable to Abraham and Jacob. At Shechem for example, Abraham planted a tree commonly called “an oracle-terebinth” or “teachers of *terebinth*” in Genesis 12:6 and diviners *terebinth* in Judges 9:37. At Hebron, Abraham dwelt under the *terebinth* tree of Mamre according to the traditions (cf. Gen. 13:18; 14:13; 18:1). At Beersheba, he planted a tree there and called on the name of *El Olam*, everlasting God (Gen. 21:33). This may be due to a belief in tree personification, the personification of eternity. The employment of the forces of poplar trees, peeled by Jacob during his enterprise in Laban’s house may further establish the idea of tree as symbol of fertility (Gen. 30:37-43). It was possible that the foreign gods and earrings that Jacob collected from his family members were hidden under the *terebinth* tree that Abraham planted at Shechem (Gen. 35:4). If not so, it is evidently suggested that *terebinth* tree in the patriarchal era and religion occupied special cultic corner and served sacred purposes. Quoting Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich, Riggren submits that “up till our modern days, sacred trees in Palestine are festooned with articles of clothing or rags as sacrificial offerings”.⁷⁹ Our visit to Ikole Ekiti also confirmed this when we saw one *Ose* (Boaba) tree beside the palace with a white cloth wrapped around it indicating its sacredness and veneration.

All the sites that the patriarchs had contact with were later on converted as sacred places in ancient Israelite liturgy. Shechem and Bethel played vital roles later on in the ancient Israelite liturgy. What could be said about the religion of this patriarchal type is that it was an acceptable maxim to the God who appeared to the patriarchs to worship Him with the general norm of their contemporary world. The narrator may be telling us that the

⁷⁸Smith, R. W. 1927. *The Religion of the Semites 3rd ed.* New York: Macmillan. 185ff.

⁷⁹Riggren, H. 1972. *Israelite religion.* Trans. Green. D. 25. Further details on this opinion can be derived from the article of Trever, J. C. “Oak” in *International Dictionary of the Bible* III and “Terebinth” IV., 574.

relationship of the patriarchs with God was of a special kind. It was a unique era in the saving history of Israel. It was a period when cumbersome liturgical order was not required, the revelation of priestly holiness was absent, no cultic personages like priests and God could still speak and instruct them at any point in their wandering life.⁸⁰ But later on in history, tree cult was condemned by the Deuteronomistic historian and the prophets as a form of syncretic worship of Yahweh.

Johnson has observed that *terraphim* is another oracular object in ancient Israelite liturgy.⁸¹ According to the Laban-Leah-Rachel legends, they are called “my gods” by Laban which suggests that they are images of gods. Gordon⁸² has called our attention to more understanding of the Genesis 31 periscope by pointing to the culture of the Nuzi. *Terraphim* have been a certificate of adoption by the Nuzi. The adopted son or the first born must divide the legacy of the head-father with any other son born later on while he must be given the *terraphim* of the family. This presupposed that by stealing the *terraphim*, Rachel laid claim to the right of inheritance or claiming it for Jacob her husband. But Greenberg has considered a contrary view on this. He opines that “possession of household gods at Nuzi indicated family headship. Such a privilege was given to the adopted son and not forcefully or secretly stolen or seized.”⁸³

The Old Testament passages connect *terraphim* with seeking oracles in ancient Israel liturgy. Judges 17:5 points to Micah who had a shrine with *terraphim* and Hosea 3:4 also points to *terraphim* as oracular objects (cf. Zec. 10:2; Eze. 21:21,26). Whenever, *terraphim* is mentioned in the Israelite liturgical context, it is usually associated with divination and peered with ephod another oracular object in Israel. In the Micah’s cultus, it is associated with ephod (Jud. 17:6). It is associated with divinations by arrows and hepascopy, divination through livers of animals in Ezekiel 21:21 and with the spiritist practices of Mannaseh era in 2 Kings 21:6, which Josiah destroyed in 2 Kings 23:24. Even though they were later on condemned by the prophets in Israel, we could see that *terraphim* served oracular purposes in ancient Israelite liturgy as pointed out (cf. Eze. 21:21,26; Zec. 10:12; Jud. 17:6; 2 Kgs. 21:6; 23:24). Albright insists that *terraphim* in

⁸⁰Von Rad has demonstrated that the nature of the religion of the patriarchs as they perceived God was fluid and was different from the time ancient Israelites entered into a covenant with Yahweh through Moses. For detail on this see Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. 173-177.

⁸¹Johnson, A. R. 1962. *The cultic Prophets in ancient Israel 2nd ed.* Cardiff: University of Wales, p. 32.

⁸²Gordon, C. 1940. *Biblical Archaeology III* 1ff.

⁸³M. Greenbag, M. 1962. “Another Look at Rachel’s Theft of the Terraphim”. In *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXI, 239-248.

cognizance of the “etymology of the word show them to be small figurines and functioned as amulets”⁸⁴ perhaps for oracular purposes at cultic place.

Various origins have been postulated by scholars on the origin of the Ark.⁸⁵ Cassuto⁸⁶ has demonstrated that the Tent of Meeting in Israel had divine origin as instructed by Yahweh. He argues that the similarity in form between the earthly dwelling of the god and its heavenly prototype brings about the presence of the deity. Clifford strongly argues his view on the divine origin of the tent that “the tent that Moses had built is a copy of the heavenly tent in accordance with the ancient religious principle, ‘like is like’”.⁸⁷ Albright⁸⁸ on the other hand demonstrates his position by comparing Arabic institutions, especially the *qubbah*, in the pre-Islamic era tent used in processions, oracles and war making. Quoting from Ras Shamra texts, Schaeffer has also pointed out the similarities between the Canaanite tent and Tent of Meeting of Israel. The tent of Canaanites is to be made by divinely commissioned and gifted craftman—god *Koshar-wa-Khasis*. *El* issued his decree (oracle) from his tent. The Old Testament texts speak of the Tent of Meeting as an oracular tent as it has been shown above.⁸⁹

We are of the opinion that the existence of the Ark in the wilderness during the sojourn cannot be doubted. The earliest tradition refers to this sacred object as “the Ark of the Lord”. It functioned as the throne of Yahweh in the ancient Israelite camp. During the settlement in Palestine, it was the sacral focus of the tribal leagues of the twelve tribes as 1 Samuel 1-4 demonstrates. Whether oracular activities took place around the Ark we could not ascertain. Unlike the Ark, the Tent of Meeting was set up for certain cultic purposes. The tradition of Exodus 33:7-11 reveals to us that Moses pitched this sacral Tent outside the camp and served as a sacred place to seek oracles from God, hence its name “Tent of Meeting”. It has been demonstrated above that the pre-Islamic Arabs and also among the modern Bedouins, there is a cultic practice of taking portable sanctuaries in form of tent on a camel, pitched beside the Sheikh’s tent and served as an oracle sanctuary. In all probability, ancient Israelites would have imitated a religious practise of this nature around them.

⁸⁴Albright, W. F. 1957. *From the Stone Age to Christianity 2nd ed.* garden city: Double Day, 31.

⁸⁵Morgenstern, S. G. 1942/1943. “The Ark, the Ephod and the Tent of Meeting”. In *Hebrew Union College Annual, XVII* 153ff.

⁸⁶Cassuto, U. 1961. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus Vol. 1* trans. Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem: The Magnes Press. 322.

⁸⁷Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The cosmic Mountain in Canaan and Old Testament*, 123.

⁸⁸Albright, W. F. 1947. *The biblical Archaeologist*, 10, 45-68.

⁸⁹Schaeffer, C. F. A. 1939. *The Cuineform Texts of Ras Shamra-Ugarit* London: Oxford. 66f.

As the name indicates, Tent of Meeting was an oracle sanctuary for Israel in the wilderness. It was not the throne of God on earth as Von Rad argues but it is a point of meeting, the place of (oracular) encounter between Jehovah and Moses. God shows Himself or makes His appearance from heaven through atmospheric cloud, “in the cloud”, which settles “by the door of the Tent” (cf. Exo. 33:7; 29:43). As a result, the name “tent of meeting” from Hebrew *Niphal* verb “to meet with”, or to make an appointment with” was given to this sacred object. Moreover, the account of Exodus 33:7-11 states that Moses had his tent outside the camp. He gave a name to this tent, calling it the “Tent of Meeting” and because it was Moses who did this, everyone who “sought” the Lord went after the tent.

The theological import of this could be inferred. Moses was regarded as the intermediary between God and the people; whatever he did could not be less than divine. Pitching his tent outside the camp may be for the reason to make it different from others. But where has been his dwelling before this time? It may be for people to see him afar and come to him there for judgement. He gave a name to this tent, “Tent of Meeting” and Yahweh accepted it as a place He was bound to meet Moses or manifest Himself among the people there. Yahweh gave His approval of the place as sacred place for oracular activities by signalling His coming and arrival with atmospheric cloud. The meeting was a secret one between Yahweh and Moses. It was exclusive in nature and no one was permitted to see, hear or know what transpired between the two of them. It was cultically secret, that is why it reads: “And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tabernacle, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle and the Lord talked with Moses” (Exo. 33:09).

It was the cloud that actually served as the lock of the Tent of Meeting; it closed the entrance so that others did not see inside. This shows the secret dimension of cultus in Israel. Joshua was just a gatekeeper; it was the cloud which actually locked the tent when God came from heaven or from the Ark to the Tent. There God and Moses talked or had a discussion as friends, “So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend....” Ex.33:11.

The experience here shows what God had told Moses when he asked for His name. But God did not declare His name there by telling Moses, you cannot control me but I will be available whenever you need me. This necessitated the Tent of Meeting in the camp. The cloud represented the glory of God as well as His presence. The essential nature of God is holiness which the cloud represents. It appeared on the tent outside the camp. This

would definitely have some theological reasons for the Tent to be pitched outside the camp. One, it conveys the fact that God must be worshipped from afar. Also, the holiness of God must appear in a way that it would not destroy the people in the wilderness. Another essential question that should be raised is why the tent? It appears that the paraphernalia of religion as at then was physical. The idea could be borrowed from Israelite's neighbours. More so, they were nomads, wandering from one place to another. The type of their journey demanded the type of shrine they would need, a mobile one like tent of meeting would suit their situation.

The cloud at the door was used by God to signal the sacredness of the Tent of Meeting to the people. It is a symbol of safety, warning the people that too much proximity to the Tent of Meeting portrays dangers to the people except Moses. God appearing in the form of cloud and "spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend" also bring about a theological differentiation. It shows that Mosaic oracle was not oracle of dream, vision or through charismatic spirit. Moses was granted a special privilege to "see" Yahweh and live. He was given the privilege of "direct contact" with God (cf. Num. 12:1-5). He had the opportunity of audiovisual oracle; he saw what he proclaimed to the people through visual oracle.

One thing that is evident about the Tent of Meeting in Israel as in the Canaanite practice is the oracular activities surrounding the sacred place like Tent of Meeting. There were receipts of revelation, visual oracles and divine instructions at Tent of Meeting in Israel. Yahweh manifested in the Tent of Meeting as His sanctuary and from there He revealed Himself to the people through Moses. In the earliest period of existence of Tent of Meeting, the giving of oracles was apparently one of the most important reasons for its construction. The only person that has the direct intercourse with Yahweh was Moses. Others like the priests could make use of the oracular aid such as *Ephod*, the *Urim* and *Thummim*.

Ephod was another oracular object used in securing oracular words from Yahweh in ancient Israelite liturgy in a sacred place. It has been observed that the etymology of the word suggests that it originally referred to a garment worn by goddess *Anat* in the Ugarit texts. Such a garment was used to dress a divine image and used to obtain oracles.⁹⁰ May

⁹⁰Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. 206.

has argued that the word “Ephod” has many meanings with different hypothesis, but refers to a cultic object in a sacred place”.⁹¹

Ancient tradition in Israel puts it as linen garment worn by the priests with two sacred stones bearing the names of Israel, six in each (Exo. 28:5-14; 29:5; 39:2-7; Lev. 8:7; 1 Sam. 2:18; 22:18). It is evident that *ephod* was used as an oracular object in a sacred place for oracular consultations at sacred places in Israel (Jud. 8:27; 17:5; 18:14; 1 Sam. 2:28; 14:3; 23:6, 9; 30:7). Since its association with images of gods in Judges 18:14, 17 and 20 would be against image worship in Israel and against the worship of Yahweh, the garment tradition remained as the priestly vestment. Also its original association with oracles was preserved even till the monarchical age in Israel (1 Sam. 14:3; 23:6,9; 30:7). It is sure that in the technique of consulting oracle, Israel used *ephod* at sacred places. It may be said that she went to the same school with the Canaanites on the use of oracular object like *ephod* at sacred place but rejected its identification with gods’ images.

Haldar argues that at the sacred altars in ancient Israel, oracles took place. He also cites a verse from Psalm 27:4: “That I may dwell in the house of Yahweh, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Yahweh and to inquire in his temple”.

“To inquire” according to him, has oracular undertones.⁹² “The house of Yahweh” which could be any of the sacred altars, sacred trees, and stone set up by Jacob and Ark were places of receiving oracular messages. Casting of lots was later introduced for oracular purposes in Israel at sacred places. Before a military onslaught in the time of judges, Yahweh’s will was consulted through divination or oracle at a sacred place at Bethel (Jud. 20:18-23) Saul the first king in Israel was chosen in this sacral fashion at another sacred place at Mizpah (1 Sam. 10:12-24).

In all these, we have been able to show that oracular activities took place at sacred places in ancient Israel liturgy. Unfortunately, we are not informed how the people got the answers to all that they requested from Yahweh. How Yahweh answered them we are not informed on the pages of the Old Testament texts. That the use of cultic objects like *Ephod*, casting of lot for *Urim* and *Thummim* were employed in Israel to secure oracles from Yahweh with their “magical” elements shows the liturgy of ancient Israel was also “primitive” at the beginning. It also passed through some evolutionary stages before final stage. They were allowed under the providence of God for giving divine guidance to His

⁹¹May, G. H. 1939. “Ephod and Ariel”. In *American Journal of Semitic Language and Literature* LVI, 44ff.

⁹²Haldar, A. 1945. *Associations of Cult Prophets among the ancient Semites*. Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell. 102.

people (Deut. 33:8-10). The Ark was given to the people in order to ensure the presence of Yahweh. The Tent of Meeting was given for the purpose of manifestation of Yahweh and oracular reasons. *Ephod* was part of the oracular equipment of the priests and it was used to secure oracles from Yahweh. Casting of lot was attached to *Urim* and *Thummim*. But the mystery surrounding its disappearance from the national religious life of Israel in the early monarchical life remains unravelled. It later surfaced up during post exilic era (Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65). The Jewish distinction of using these oracular objects as modes of seeking divine direction was appropriate for the religious milieu of the era, not minding their Canaanite affinity.

4.4.6 Sacred Places as Places of Cutting and Renewal of Covenant

One of the major aspects of life in ancient Israelite nation was her relationship with Yahweh. This bond was upon the bedrock of covenant. According to Ehrlich “the narrators of Genesis undoubtedly considered that the God who spoke to and dealt with the patriarchs was Yahweh”.⁹³ He started with series of promise in form of covenant with him.

Nielsen⁹⁴ has attempted the etymology of the word by comparing Akkadian word “*birtu*”, meaning “middle, midst” and “*ina birit*” meaning “between”. Biblical Archaeologist, Albright compares the Hebrew word “*karat berit*” to an Akkadian expression “to cut”, *a beritu*, deriving *beritu* from “*biritu*”, which means “chain” or “bond”.⁹⁵ Von Rad submits that while the word covenant is “a makeshift rendering of Hebrew word”, he argues that it is “a designation of the agreement itself and its attendant ceremony, which shows a communion between two parties”.⁹⁶ He notes that the covenant is often between two unequal parties, the superior and the inferior. The initiative to enter into a covenant with a lesser party lies with the superior party while the inferior party is only a recipient of the benevolence through his obedience to the terms of the agreement.⁹⁷ Begrich⁹⁸ in his argument on covenant lays emphasis in the unequal parties involved in a covenant and that the covenant is to be understood and interpreted as a relationship

⁹³Ehrlich, E. L. 1962. *A Concise History of Israel*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd. 6ff.

⁹⁴Nielsen, E. 1955. *Shechem*, Copenhagen: Gad, 110ff.

⁹⁵Albright, W. F. 1951. “The Hebrew Expression for ‘Making a Covenant’”. In *Pre-Israelite Documents BASOR CXXI*, 21f.

⁹⁶Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker. 129.

⁹⁷Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker. 129.

⁹⁸Begrich, J. 1944. “Berith” *Zeitschrift Fur Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft LX*, 1ff.

between two parties of unequal status. The natural arrangement of the covenant is on the expectation that the lesser party will surely not disobey the terms of the covenant.

Usually in antiquity, covenant was entered upon as the platform of relationship for peaceful communion. It was accompanied by a solemn ceremony, invocation of divinities as witnesses, as sacral food shared by the parties and the calling down of blessings and curses (Gen. 21:22-32; 31:43-54; 26:30).⁹⁹ Von Rad has rightly pointed out the end focus of any covenant, to be “peace”. He rightfully submits that, “the relationship guaranteed by a covenant is commonly designated by the word “shalom”, the unimpairedness, wholeness of a relationship of communion, and so a state of harmonious equilibrium, the balancing of all claims and needs between the two parties”.¹⁰⁰

The concept of covenant involved the initiative of a deity coming to the vassal for a covenant. This was what God did when He called Abraham and made a covenant with him and thereby entered into covenant with his posterity (Gen. 12:1-6). God’s covenant with Abraham centred on the giving and possession of the land of the Canaanites in Palestine, blessing, defence and protection. It could be argued that possessing an expanse of land to Abraham may demand a great faith and trust in God that called him. This he demonstrated through series of sacrifices and sacred altars raised in honour of this God. These sacrifices could be said to integrate the trust of Abraham in God and as a memorial of the promise of Yahweh to him. At every instance of reiteration of the covenant, the patriarchs would raise an altar and “called on the name of LORD” (cf. Gen. 12:7-9; 13:14-18; 15; 26:23-25; 28:13-22). It shows that sacred places in the patriarchal era were places of cutting and renewal of covenant.

In the antiquity, it was an inconceivable thought to enter into a relationship or covenant with a god without a readiness to accept the binding obligations attached to the covenant. God bore witness to the obedience of Abraham as the narrators of Genesis inform us (Gen. 12:4; 26:5). The central point of God’s relationship which was covenant was celebrated with cultic ceremonies at sacred places. The sacrifices offered by Isaac and Jacob were to the “God of Abraham”, their father, a common term of introduction by God. Every sacrifice on the altar was a cultic connection to this covenant by the patriarchs. Upon the whole, our attention should be directed to an issue: the sign of the covenant to Abraham which was to be cultically performed, which was circumcision (Gen. 15). Such

⁹⁹For detailed features of covenant in Ancient Near East, see G.E. Mendenhall, G. E. *Law and Covenant*, Pittsburgh: Biblical Colloquium.

¹⁰⁰Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament, Vol. 1*. Trans. D.M.G. Stalker, 129-130.

sign was to serve as a reminder to him as divine provision for his welfare and his posterity.

If the narration of Genesis account on the covenant with the patriarch was any thing to write about, one theological point should be raised. Was the call of Abraham from Ur among many people not a divine particularism? Why such a provincialism and singularity with blessings to Abraham in the name of a covenant? God chose Abraham in His infinite mercy without being responsible to anyone. The cosmic dimension of the covenant was rooted in the ancient Israelite nation which was to come out of the body of Abraham. This was part of the covenant to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3; 12:18. Isaac and Jacob were also given this assurance in Genesis 26:4; 28:14.

For the future generation of Abraham, God initiated a “new covenant” in order to fulfil the “old covenant” made with the patriarchs. At Sinai,¹⁰¹ Yahweh established a new cult for Israel through a covenant after He had delivered them from Egyptian bondage (cf. Exo. 19:1-5; 24:1-7). The basis of this covenant was predicated on the faithfulness of Yahweh to the covenant He made with the fathers and the salvation He wrought for them. God initiated the covenant and the people cultically entered into it. They prepared to enter into the covenant through cultic purifications. The washing of the clothes, abstinence from sexual intercourse with their spouses and a sacral distance from the holy sites were the elements of their sanctification before they could enter into covenant with Yahweh (Gen. 19: 10-22). Taking this covenant at Sinai at its face value, all that was needed for this cutting of covenant was prescribed and proclaimed by Yahweh. The altar with unhewn stone, sacrifices, priests to minister at the cultus, types of animals to offer, other cultic materials according to this tradition were prescribed by Yahweh. Actually, it was advancement over the patriarchal religion. The meal prepared at Sinai displays the religious in depths of antiquity on sacred places. It was the belief of the ancient people that the deity was present as an unseen guest and participant in the meal. The ritual meal after the end of the covenant bound the parties together.

The terms of the covenant were delivered to the people in a form which could be summarized as the Decalogue. It formed the mid-point and climax of a very solemn event during the renewal of the covenant at Shechem by the tribes in Israel.¹⁰² This covenant

¹⁰¹For detail study on Sinaitic Traditions, see Noth, M. 1962. *Exodus* trans. Bowden, J.S. London: SCM, 11ff. Some scholars are of the view that Sinai tradition was a later interpolation in the Pentateuch as there are not points to it in the ancient tradition in Israelite liturgy. See Von Rad, G. *The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch.*, 5-38.

¹⁰²Von Rad, G. 1975. *Theology of Old Testament, Vol. 1.* Trans. D.M.G. Stalker, 192.

renewal took place every seven years. For the covenant, allusions have been made to Deuteronomy 31:10- at the Feast of the Booths. Joshua 24 bears witness to a covenant renewal at sacred place at Shechem where he assembled the people and appealed to them to put away foreign gods and serve Yahweh alone. Israel was a covenant community married to Yahweh through obedience to the covenant obligations and sacrifice. While the Decalogue addressed their secular bond with one another, the covenant addressed their spiritual marriage to Yahweh. This she was expected to renew at stipulated years. Riggren has argued that “the renewal of covenant at sacred places is specifically Israelite”.¹⁰³ Unlike treaties in the Hittites covenant, Youngblood argues that “the covenant lasted an average of two years each”.¹⁰⁴

At least on two or three occasions did Moses endeavoured to make Israel “re-experienced” the covenant made by Yahweh with the people. In Deuteronomy, we are told that Moses said to the people: “The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive” Deut.5:2-4. The currency and contemporariness of the covenant was displayed before the young generation to experience the past event at sacred place, Horeb. At the plain of Moabites the same covenant renewal was repeated (Deut. 29:10-12). It is certain that cultic ceremonies are attached to the covenant renewal and memorial in ancient Israelite liturgy.

On the strength of Deuteronomy 31:10b-11, we can argue that the covenant renewal in ancient Israel took place during the holy pilgrimage and feast of Tabernacles. Or Feast of Booths was the feast to which the community came on pilgrimage for the covenant renewal. It is also married with the reading of the “Book of the Law”. It is a conceivable idea that the festival of renewal of the covenant between Yahweh and the people took place during this occasion.¹⁰⁵ The making of the covenant is re-experienced and renewed at a sacred place. The theological motivation for this covenant renewal was to accept and proclaim Yahweh’s sole ownership over Israel. Through the ceremony, Yahweh re-enacts His Lordship over Israel. The assembly acknowledges the title and ownership which God has established in His commandment; they enter into the covenant and thereby become His holy people, God’s own possession.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. David Green. 206.

¹⁰⁴Youngblood, R. 1971. *The Heart of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 42.

¹⁰⁵Von Rad, G. *The Problem of the Hexateuch*, 35.

¹⁰⁶Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. I*. Trans. Stalker, D.M.G. 193.

Further theological import of the covenant renewal was to spiritually reproduce the act of salvation of Yahweh for the people. It was a means of reminding the people that they were saved and elected people of Yahweh; while on the other side of the coin, to warn them of the impending danger of not following the terms of the covenant. Through the covenant renewal, Israelite nation would be “renewed”; communion and relationship with Yahweh were renewed and strengthened. Moreover, it was to depict the “all involving” nature of the covenant. The fathers, mothers, children and strangers in Israel were under the covenant. For in this cultic celebration (of covenant renewal), Israel gave expression to the fact that the event which took place at Sinai had an undiminished importance for each age. It was renewed upon each succeeding generation: it was for all of them “contemporary”. It then appears that the relationship of the ancient Israel in continuity with Yahweh rested solely on covenant renewal at the sacred place. Yahweh would continue to be the LORD of Israel as long as she renews her covenant at the sacred place appointed by Yahweh. This was also to sustain the patronage of the holy sanctuaries in the ancient Israelite liturgy. Cult life could not be celebrated if there was no binding force-covenant. Covenant would go into extinction if on the other hand there was no sacred place. Covenant renewal strengthened the cultus at sacred places in Israel while sacred places sustained the covenant.

4.4.7 Sacred Places as Places of Blessing And Imprecatory Activities

Among the features of ancient covenant making or treaties were formulas of blessing and curses. Youngblood argues that “this particular feature appears less frequently and in various orders in other contemporary treaty documents”.¹⁰⁷ Blessings and curses are attached to the sacred liturgy of the ancient Israel. The Old Testament word *beraka* is generally interpreted as “blessing”. Its idea involves the conferment and bestowal of good, and it is conceived of as material need ranging from fruit of the womb, fruit of the land, such as grain, new wine, oil, fertility, increase in the livestock, absence of sickness and victory over the enemies (Exo. 23:25-26; Deut. 7:12-16; 11:26). Sigmund Mowinckel opines that “the material concept of the blessing in the widest sense of the word ranges from the fundamental human need such as rain, sun, fertility, continuation of the tribe... up to the spiritual, religious and ethical values that are life blood of the

¹⁰⁷Youngblood, R. 1971. *The Heart of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 52.

society”.¹⁰⁸ Pederson is of the view that Israelites summed all these up by the word “blessing”.¹⁰⁹ Often, blessing is contrasted with a curse and many times it is used of the formula of words which are embodiments of a blessing.

The examples of Isaac, Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27:12, 36, 38, 41); and when Moses blessed Israel when he almost had a contact with the world beyond (Deuteronomy 33:1) serve us better. Blessing is rooted in the religious conceptions of the ancient Israel. Hence we see God blessing the creation (Gen. 1:22); mankind (Gen. 1:28); the Sabbath (Gen. 2:3), Noah and his generation (Gen. 9:1-7). The religious notions of blessing and curses in ancient Israelite liturgy started with the covenant that God made with Abraham saying, “I will make you a great nation, I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you” (Gen.12:2-3b).

This shows the two unique nature of the covenant of God with Abraham. The forces of blessings and curses were involved in His promises with Abraham. The middle personage of blessings and curses from Abraham while the recipient of the either would be any one who chooses any of the two options, blessing or curses. The first person to experience these blessings was Abraham. This was demonstrated in his life time because certain texts bear witness that he was a rich man in live stocks, gold and silver (Gen. 13:2); a wealthy man with over three hundred servants (Gen. 14:14); and he was rich enough to reject a king’s offer (Gen. 14:21-23). It appears that by the pronouncements of Yahweh to Abraham, he had to change anything former in Abraham’s life. This ranges from his former name-Abram to Abraham, interpreted as “father of a multitude or nation”. Later on, the promises of blessings were transferred to his posterity.

These blessings promised to Abraham also have theological imports. Abraham was blessed to be the great progenitor of Israel, hence Israel was considered to be the “seed of Abraham”. God identified His theophanic name and self-revelation with the name Abraham – “the God of Abraham” when he revealed His name to Moses. Up to the New Testament period, Abraham was a “sacred” personage to the Israelites as their ancestor (Acts 13:26). The hope in Messiah was linked with him (Mat. 1:11) as well as Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:5). He was so revered to the extent that his bosom-“Abraham’s bosom”- is an epitome of gaining entrance into paradise (Lk. 16:22-23). To sit in “Abraham’s bosom” in Talmudic language was to enter paradise (cf. 4 Macc.13:17).

¹⁰⁸Mowinckel, S. 1962. *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. 17.

¹⁰⁹Pedersen, J. 1959. *Israel, Life and Culture I-II*, London: Oxford. 182f.

It is possible for one to see the call of Abraham with the promises of Yahweh to him as “divine partiality”. One can raise a question, if God is for all and sundry and universal, why did He show such a singularity to a man from Ur of Chaldeans and decided to wipe some away? How can we reconcile such a focus on a single man with his universal rule? Why not a man from a nation in order to make His rule spread quickly and the promises fulfilled with a number of people rather than a man? These are theological nuances to be raised on the blessings conferred on Abraham.

We have seen God demonstrating such a sense of particularity in history. Between Esau and Jacob, He chose Jacob as His “favourite” (Gen. 25:23); among the twelve tribes of Jacob, He chose Judah, the fourth (Gen. 49:8-12); among the houses in Judah, God chose the house of Jesse and among the children of Jesse, He chose David (1 Sam. 16:1-13). Youngblood is of the view that “it probably shows that God was clearly overruling the ancient law of primogeniture in all these cases and to demonstrate His sovereignty”.¹¹⁰ The call of Abraham was personal, national and global in nature. Christians have laid emphasis on the global nature of the blessings of Abraham. It is their claim that “Abraham’ blessings” manifest through the coming of Jesus Christ and the gospel of salvation preached to all mankind.

Ancient Israel saw her election and covenant with Yahweh as a “blessing”, not from economical arena alone but in all facets of life. This was repeated to Isaac and Jacob at every instance they had encounter with Yahweh at sacred places. Ancient Israel saw blessing as something “holy and sacred”, with creative powers. As a result, it was tied to her liturgy and cultic practises. It was viewed as connected with Yahweh the Giver of all things and ultimate source of all things.

Ancient Israel saw her God as the Power behind all blessings, which was a point of contention with the later generation when they yielded to *Baal* worship (1 Kgs. 18: 17ff). If Yahweh was the Source of blessings, where He lived could not be less than house of blessings. Yahweh lived in sacred places such as altars erected, stones heaped up, on the mountains, sanctuary sites and the like. Hence, the people come to His abode for blessings.

It is not a surprise to see in the ancient Israelite liturgy that food or sacrifices could provoke or invoke the blessings of Yahweh. “The ancient practise of offering food to the

¹¹⁰Youngblood, R. 1971. *The Heart of the Old Testament*, 33.

gods in order to receive their blessings was also displayed in Israel”.¹¹¹ The story of Isaac demanding for food from Esau before blessing him was a pointer in that not only the divine asked for food before pronouncing their blessings on the recipients. (Gen. 27:1-4): The intention for the food was declared to be for blessing bestowal. There are traces in Jewish scripture that point to the provision of food for Yahweh. God too, actually calls those sacrifices as “My food, for My offerings by fire” (Lev. 1:5ff). Whether we should understand this figuratively or not is a question. We all know that God is Spirit-Being who cannot eat edible food like man, but He demanded “food” or rather sacrifices from His people in order to bless them. If the sacrifice would be made, it would be at the sacred places. They were regarded as gifts in exchange of His blessings. We see that it was after the sacrifices were presented to Yahweh that His emissaries blessed the people (cf. Lev. 9:18-23).

The efficacy of the blessing was tied to the sacred places like a sacred altar. Von Rad has pointed to later tradition at sacred place practised in ancient Israel. He is of the view that “blessing was a major feature of the liturgy of Israel in a sacred place”.¹¹² Pedersen helpfully submits that “the essence of the existence of sacred places, temple service in Israel was to produce, secure and increase blessings”.¹¹³ It follows that all the activities on the sacred places in ancient Israel were aimed at obedience to Yahweh and security of His blessings; which to them was a life renewal and life supporting. The sacred places, the pilgrimage to the sites and the ceremonies carried out there were targeted on procurement and securing Yahweh’s blessings.

God has promised to bless His people wherever there would be an altar as a sacred place for Himself and as a result, He gave them His name:

“An altar of earth you shall make for me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings, and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name, I will come to you, and I will bless you” (Exo. 20:24).

The cultic personages, the priests were custodians of this name and they were to bless Israel in the name of God (Lev. 9:22-23; Num. 6:23-27; Deut. 10:8). This shows that the name of God was given to Israel to bless her at sacred places during her offerings before God. The efficacy of such pronouncement depended on the sacral order of the person pronouncing it, if he belonged to the priesthood. At the same time, the power of the

¹¹¹Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. 149.

¹¹²Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology* Vol. 1. Trans. Stalker, D.M.G. 45.

¹¹³Pedersen, J. 1959. *Israel, Life and Culture I-II*, 229.

blessing would come from God. Blessing was seen as an agent of Yahweh's favour sent to the midst of His people. There it was Yahweh who blessed His people:

“The LORD bless you and keep you, the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you; and give you peace” (Num.6:24-26).

The blessing and its pronouncement could require the presence of the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD and its carriage by the Levites could be symbolic and blessing invoking (cf. Deut. 10:8). We can submit that there was a strong connection between cultic acts at sacred places and the blessing conferment through obedience to the Law. In order to provoke the blessings, there must be obedience to the Law. Blessing was not viewed as “gift” from Yahweh alone, it has ethical dimension. When Moses placed before Israel the options of obedience and disobedience, she was to choose blessings or its opposite. In keeping the Law there is a reward. The blessings of obedience were to be pronounced on Mount Gerizim. Mount Gerizim remained a sacred mountain in the ancient Israelite liturgy and a Mountain of blessings because there the blessings for obedience to the Law were pronounced at the solemn assembly of Israel as commanded by Moses (Deut. 11:29; 27:12; Jos. 8:33).

In summary, blessings in Israel were procured, provoked, secured and increased at the sacred places through cultic acts and employment of potent words by the priests. To secure the blessings from God, obedience to the Law was primal. The ancient Israelite liturgy has shown to us that there was blessing invoking food and sacrifices, which must be presented at the sacred places. The cultic activities must be followed as in the case of raising unhewn stones as altars to Yahweh, if not, His wrath would be released. And there would be no blessing conferment. The knowledge of Yahweh's name, its placement at sacred places, its invocation and mentioning guaranteed blessings in the ancient Israelite liturgy. The roles of the priests as the intermediaries between Yahweh and His people were not the least. Whether Israelites saw the food presented at sacred places as magically invoking and blessing eliciting remains an issue to be unravelled. Whether the tie of the name of her God to sacred places for blessing bestowal and its invocation should be considered as mechanical in nature one could not tell. But it is sure that blessing conferment does not guarantee blessing receipt. If the recipient was not worthy, even if he were to be among the congregation, the blessing may not be his, because blessing in Israel also has ethical demand, which is obedience to the Law.

In God's dealing with the ancient Israel, life was duality. Life was divided into two: clean and unclean, holy and profane, life and death, blessing and curse. The second dimension hidden in God's presentation before ancient Israel was curse. Simply put, curse is the opposite of blessing. A person who is not blessed is cursed. The common Hebrew word for curse is *'arah or qalal*, the reverse of "to bless". For a man to issue a curse is to wish someone an evil, a hurt, or a disaster. Hebrew conception shows that for God to issue a curse is to impose a punishment or judgement of sin on the fellow. In the oriental mind the curse was not just mere words on the lips but potent and living. The curse issued carried its own potent power of execution.

It is surprising that curses were to be issued at a sacred place in the ancient Israelite liturgy. In this case, it was Mount Ebal that would be the standing place upon which six tribes of Israel would stand (Deut. 11: 29; 27:13-26) to issue the curses and the congregations would say "Amen" to them as instructed by God. Imprecatory activities were known in the ancient Israel. The potency of the curses issued depended on two paramount factors: disobedience to the Law and wrong lifestyles in the Israelite community.

With all these submissions, it was glaring that sacred places in the ancient Israelite religion functions in peculiar manner as people saw their environment, experienced their God and the instructions given them. Altars, grounds, waters and mountains played prominent roles in the liturgy of the ancient Israel. The theophanic experiences of the patriarchs, Moses and Israel in the wilderness and Canaanite land buttressed the theology of the ancient Israel in the sacred places. These sacred spots functions according to both the revelations received and the influence of her neighbouring nations.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 THE BELIEFS IN SACRED PLACES IN SELECTED INDIGENOUS CHURCHES IN EKITILAND

5.1 The Influence of Beliefs in Sacred Places in African Traditional Religion on Selected Indigenous Churches in Ekitiland

African traditional religion was the first religion before the advent of Christianity and Islam in African land. It was the religion of the aborigines and the religion Africans were familiar with before Christianity or Islam. Though, it has suffered many religious attacks from these two religions, yet it is still being practised by the aborigines. One of the beliefs of the aborigines of this religion was the faith in sacred places and their patronage. As a result, there were many designated places regarded to be sacred and abodes of gods, divinities and spirits in African land. Such places include unique lakes, ponds, streams, waters, lagoons, seas, oceans, grounds, monuments, trees, rocks, hills and mountains.

As a result, there are water cults, tree cults, earth cults and mountain cults in Africa which individuals belong to till date. There are priests and priestesses who are sacred personages attached to these cults. They function as intermediaries between gods and the adherents who patronise these places. The potency and efficacies of the sacred places are major reasons people patronise them. Till date, there are spots both in the rural and urban areas that show that they are sacred places in spite of the influence of urbanization.

This chapter focused on the beliefs in sacred places and their patronage in African traditional religion and selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. The cultural and religious practices of the Africans from day to day involve visitations to where they believe they would meet their gods. It also examined this belief and its influence on the indigenous churches as could be seen in their liturgical practices.

African cosmological views are permeated with the world of the gods, spirits, divinities, departed souls and ancestors. Also, supernatural forces, personages and powers are firmly believed to be in control of the universe. Idowu opines that “these (the spirits and divinities etc), according to the indigenous belief of the Yoruba, serve the will of *Olo’dùmarè* (the God of the Yoruba) in the creation and theocratic government of the world”.¹ The fact that they were saddled with the duties of serving the will of *Olo’dùmarè* on earth did not connote the powerlessness, inability and remoteness of *Olo’dùmarè* to govern what He has created. The Yoruba did not bother themselves about their origins and creation than to affirm that they were created or came from *Olo’dùmarè*, the Origin,

¹Idowu, E. B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* revised edition. Ikeja: Longman Nigerian. 54.

Source, Creator of all things who Himself was not created.² In a nutshell, according to Farrow, these gods, spirits and divinities were given name like *Orisa*, whose etymology is obscured but could be rendered as emanating from the ultimate/original source, who is *Olodumare*.³ *Imole* is another compound designate given to these pantheon or gods, spirits and divinities in Yoruba belief. Bolaji Idowu has rendered this as “a contraction of *Eemo-ti n-be-nile*- the supernatural beings on the earth”,⁴ this could be in order to show their no nonsense character and fearfulness. As Rudolf Otto expresses the features of the holy of the sacred, “these express their element of awefulness, (*tremendum*), or overpoweringness (*majestas*) in the way it is kindled and manifested ... like a hidden force of nature, like stored up electricity, discharging itself upon anyone who comes too near. It is incalculable and arbitrary”,⁵ yet, this experience is still fascinating and attracting to a religious man. Idowu catches the glimpse as a Yoruba by submitting that:

Imole was the designation for the dreadful ones whose habitations were the thick, dark groves and the unusual places; those who walk the world of men at night and prowl the place at noonday; the very thought of whom was hair raising; to pass by whose groves was blood curdling; with whom man feels compelled to make terms for his own safety; more propitiated out of fear than worshipped in reverence.⁶

It is this sacred instinct of appeasement and according worship to these sacred beings that draw men to them. The elemental objects with super sensible and ambiguous features such as trees, plants, lakes, lagoon, ponds, streams, rivers, grounds, stones, rocks, hills and awe striking mountains were considered to be super ordinary in traditional African setting. The mystery of nature experienced during the pre-historic and historical eras have led the progenitors to consider them as being sacred. It could be said that there was a time in the history of religion when physical and symbolic representations of the invisible, incorporeal and spiritual beings were considered and allowed. These objects and natural elements serve the purpose of these representations.

Up till date according to Awolalu, “the Yoruba believe in the existence of a number of spirits, which are associated with natural phenomenal such as the earth, rivers, mountains, trees and wind”.⁷ The Yoruba also believe that every animate and inanimate

²Besides the Bible Creation Story, the Yoruba have their own creation story. For detail on this see Idowu, E. B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* revised ed. Ikeja: Longman Nigerian. 17-53.

³Farrow, S. S. 1926. *Faith, Fancies and Fetish*, London: SPCK, 34ff. Also, see Lucas, J. O. 1948. *The Religion of the Yoruba*. Lagos: CMS Bookshop. 58ff.

⁴Idowu, E. B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* revised edition. 58.

⁵Otto, R. 1957. *The Idea of the Holy*. London: Oxford University Press. 18.

⁶Idowu, E. B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief* revised edition. 58.

⁷Awolalu, J.O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. Essex: Longman group Ltd. 45.

object has his peculiar name. It is believed that calling those names during worship and incantations would bring about quick response and solutions desired.

According to the Yoruba, every object is animated and therefore personified. These objects are regarded as being sacred due to the encounters that the progenitors had with them. As a result, many hills and mountains are deified and considered being sacred. For instance, there is “*Olumo rock*” in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. As Parrinder opines, “*Olumo cave*”, was “a shrine where the people hid during the Dahomean slave raiding”.⁸ There is *Oke ‘badan* cult also in Ibadan, the capital of Oyo state with *Aboke*, its chief priest who “performs worship every five days and leads the annual festival of the town, going from house to house, blessing the people....”⁹ Idanre is another noted town with mountain cult in Yorubaland and religion. The annual festival called *Odun Orosun*, meaning the festival of *Orosun* leads to the climbing of the mountain and the ceremonies carried out there.

As far as Africans are concerned, religion permeates every facet of life and nature. Corroborating this Mbiti opines that “according to African peoples, man lives in a religious universe so that natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God”.¹⁰ Many praise chants and songs, intrinsic attributes of God and anthropomorphic characteristics attributed to God in African culture and religion are taken from the world of nature. Simply put, it is because “man lives in a religious universe” and “God is read to it”.¹¹

Some animals such as turtledoves, pigeons, snails, and the rests are regarded as sacred animals. Certain trees such as *Iroko*, *Ose* and *araba* among others are regarded to be sacred by Yoruba people. They are worshipped for religious and spiritual reasons and offerings are made to them. There are trees commonly called *Igi Ogún*, meaning *Ogun* (god of iron) trees in various town in Ekitiland. They are found in major streets, even when construction are made, they are spared based on the sheer fact that they are traditionally regarded to be sacred. These sacred trees are also decorated and demarcated with clothes; the custodians would tie clothes usually white around these trees as marks of honour and differentiation on them. At times, instead of white clothes, yellowish palm fronds and *Peregun (Dracanea)* are used for the same purposes. Supporting this view, Fatubarin opines that “shrines are common features of many parts in Nigerian before the advent of Christian and Moslem religions. And a common feature of such shrines is the

⁸Parrinder, G. 1949. *West African Religion*. London: Epworth Press. 55.

⁹Parrinder, G. 1953. *Religion in an African City*, Oxford: university Press. 11f.

¹⁰Mbiti, J.S. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*, London: Heinemann Press. 48.

¹¹Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 50-57.

special plants that are grown in the vicinity of the shrines to surround and protect the spots used for worship and sacrifices”.¹²

Also, there are groves (*Igbo Igbele*) full of trees uncut and untouched. These are used by religious personages and custodians for spiritual and religious purposes. This is because forests and groves play major roles in African and Yoruba mythologies. Corroborating this position, Laird is of the view that “forests are the subjects of a great deal of myths, legend and folklore”¹³ in human societies. Societies most entwined with forests tend to regard them with a healthy respect, awe at their splendour and majesty. Sometimes the people feared and dreaded the spirits that are believed to inhabit in them. In the same vein, Laird opines that “ancestors often find their resting places in forests, many wandering in various states of unease and spitefulness”.¹⁴ These ancestors and spirits are always contacted in the groves and forests when man is in need. People also accord them due worship and offer sacrifices to them during the annual festive period or after divination.

Some plants are also regarded as being sacred in Yoruba cultural and religious beliefs. Fronds and plants such as palm fronds, *peregun*, (*dracaena*) and weeds which are used as parts of *Egungun* regalia, and when performing rituals, sacrifices and prayers are regarded as sacred plants. Many shrines are decorated with these trees, plants, fronds and grasses. Until these shrines and sacred places are decorated with these plants, fronds and grasses, rituals and sacrifice would not take place. The sheer reason is that these plants, fronds, and grasses are adjudged as part of ritual materials and they are regalia or “garment” of certain ancestral cults and offertory materials of the tutelary gods, spirits and divinities. For instance, *Ogun* shrine is always decorated with palm fronds, especially the tender yellowish ones. Also, there is a particular masquerade popularly called *kiloogun* in Akure and Ekiti environs. It is being decorated with different grasses and fronds that are greenish in nature. These are part of its decorations anytime there would be festival of this particular masquerade.

Further, some mountains are regarded as sacred mountains in African religion. For example Mbiti recalls that Mount Kenya and others are sacred mountains in Kenya,

which the people believed to be sacred and to be the dwellings of God when He visits the earth. Mount Agoro is the one used

¹²Fatubarin, A. 2010. “The Special Indicator Species in Nigerian Vegetation”. In *Many Species, One Planet, One Future*, ed. by Ofoezie, O. O. et al. Vol. 3 Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife: Institute of Ecology and Environmental Studies. 135.

¹³Laird, S. *Cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity*. ITDG Publications, Southampton Row, London: WC1B 4HH, UK.. 103.

¹⁴Laird, S. *Cultural and spiritual values of biodiversity*. 104.

for their spiritual pilgrimage. Mogongojo Mugwe, the mountain of God is believed to be the mountain that houses some of their national founders and religious leader dwell. People of these tribes face these mountains while making their petitions and visit the places for spiritual reasons and in time of needs.¹⁵

So, the patronage of outstanding and exceptional rocks, hills and mountains have been part of African culture and religion before the era of Christianity.

In Yorubaland, there are outstanding mountains and hills that have been marked as sacred. Examples are *Olumo* rock in Abeokuta, *Oke-'badan* in Ibadan, *Oke-Idanre*, *Olosunta* in Ikere-Ekiti all in the South West of Nigeria. Efon-Alaaye, Oke-Imesi and Erio Ekiti in Ekiti state are towns that are virtually surrounded by hills and mountains. There are also mountain cults in Yorubaland where people worship these mountains and rocks as their tribal gods. This is because nature is a living entity in African and Yoruba culture. Ascribing life to the world of nature and regarding them as animated objects are also features of Jewish cosmological and religious conceptions. Heaven and earth can be called in as witnesses (Deut. 4:26; 30:19); heavens and earth could hear because they have "ears" (Deut. 32:1-3); stones could hear and testify (Jos. 24:26-27); seas could clap and mountains could rejoice because they have "hands" and "emotions" (Psa. 96:11-12; 97:1). Lands could shout because they have "mouth" (Psa. 100:1) and the earth could "tremble" (Psa. 96:9; 99:1).

There are certain waters that are regarded as sacred in African and Yoruba religion and culture. Myths and legends abound about the roles some of these ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, oceans, and seas played in the folklore and primeval era. They had been once cosmic, that is, affecting man in religious, political, social and historical arena. For instance, River *Esinminrin* was contacted by Moremi when the Ugbo people were raiding Ile-Ife, the traditional Yoruba origin. Moremi made a vow that if the water goddess inhabiting River *Esinminrin* could assist her and she conquer the Ugbo people and deliver her people from their incessant attacks, she would offer her only son, named Oluorogbo as compensation to the goddess. Water personification exists in African land and religion. Due to this factor, there are spirits and divinities which are believed to inhabit these streams, rivers and waters. Supporting this view, Mbiti submits that "oceans, seas, lakes and permanent ponds are often thought to be inhabited by spirits or divinities that generally have to be propitiated when people are using the water in one way or another."¹⁶ For instance, "the Banyoro tribes in Uganda make offerings to the spirit of Lake Albert

¹⁵Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 18.

¹⁶Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 54-55.

when a person wants to cross it in a canoe. The Baganda people of Uganda have *Mukasa* as the archdivinity of the seas and lakes”.¹⁷

The Yoruba have various riverine spirits and divinities, but the common name given to them is *Olokun*, or *Olu Okun*, meaning, water spirit or chief water goddess. It should be submitted that these water spirits and goddesses are accorded great respect and are believed in by the people in the riverine areas and those communities that host the major source and concentration of the rivers and waters. For instance, River *Osun* is in Osogbo, the capital city of Osun State, whose name is associated with the River, *Osun*. Hence, the people worship the water goddess annually. It has eventually become a tourist centre in the country. According to Awolalu, “*Yemoja* is another water spirit in Yorubaland, which is believed to be the goddess of waters generally and from her body, according to the people’s belief all rivers, lagoons and the sea flow out.”¹⁸ *Oya* is another water divinity in Yoruba belief. She was a favourite wife of the legend Sango who decided to end her life after her husband had committed suicide. Yoruba tradition and mythology have it that she entered into the earth at Ira town but she is now associated with River Niger popularly called *Odo Oya*, meaning River *Oya*.

The water cult adherents offer various forms of sacrifices to these water divinities and goddesses. The reason is that they believe that water is potent. If it can make plants and seed to germinate and produce, it has fertility power. The worshippers believe that there are lots of wealth inside the seas, oceans and lagoons. If only the adherents can provide the expected rituals and sacrifices to these water goddesses, they in turn can bless them and provide their needs. As a result, various sacrificial materials such as fowls, at times, goats, pounded yam, fish, *ègbo* (mashed maize), *èko* (pap), *àkàrà* (beans cakes), palm oil, palm wine, porridge and so on are provided as prescribed by the custodians of the cults for worship and rituals. Certain taboos are avoided according to the taste of each water goddess. For example, the taboo of *Yemoja* is dog, so no one dares to offer such to her while the taboo of *Oya* is that she abhors rams. For *Òsun* goddess, her taboos are snails and guinea corn.¹⁹ These taboos must be avoided if one is not seeking the wrath of these goddesses.

Various petitions are brought to these riverine spirits. It is believed that water spirits control the voyage on the sea, hence the people appease them in order to prevent capsizing of their canoes and other forms of river accidents. The belief in the river and water

¹⁷Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African Religions and Philosophy*. 54-55.

¹⁸Awolalu, J. O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 46.

¹⁹Awolalu, J. O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 46-47.

as the source of wealth and prosperity make many people pray to them for wealth and progress in their daily endeavours and pursuits. Mostly, barren women pray for the gifts of children from the water goddesses. For example, *Osun* the water goddess of the river is believed to be a fertility goddess. Hence, during the festival, barren women make supplications to her for the fruit of the womb. Those who are sick believe that the water also has medicinal powers that can cure the prolonged standing sickness. They also pray for healings during the *Osun* festival.

So, we see in Africa that God, gods, spirits, divinities and ancestors are closely related to nature. They are personified in nature and inanimate objects such as plants, trees, lakes, ponds, oceans, seas, lagoons, rivers, stones, rocks, hills and mountains. Nature is animated, that is, given life and it is a living entity in African and Yoruba beliefs. Super sensible objects are regarded to be supernatural and it is believed that spirits dwell in these natural objects. Nida supports this view and opines that “in much of Africa most of the supernatural power is vested in particular spirits”.²⁰ So, it is the spirits that manifest these supernatural powers. Man naturally believes in the existence of supernatural powers and as Nida observes, this “belief in the existence of supernatural power is universal”.²¹

This belief in the supernatural power is not peculiar to the Africans alone. For example, the westerners practice voodoo, extra sensory perception, and even magic. As far as the Haida of British Columbia are concerned, spirits existed everywhere in the sea, sky, air, stars, fire, mountains, rocks, reefs, lakes, streams, marshes and plants. Africans also believe in the supernatural forces and certain spirits are believed to be behind them. In order to find resting places for these spirits, Africans located them in the stars, sun, moon, earth, plants, trees, stones, outstanding rocks, hills, mountains, lakes ponds, streams, rivers, lagoons, oceans and seas where they could be contacted by man when in need. Some become the totemic objects of some families, tribes and even nations. As Nida has rightly observed, “there is scarcely any object in the universe which has not been regarded by some people or other as being endowed with or indwelt by some supernatural power”.²²

These objects through religious usage, spiritual patronage and consecration eventually became sacred objects. Through the religious veneration and consecration accorded them, they became sacred emblems of worship. There is still an argument till date among scholars, whether these sacred objects are objects of worship in themselves or emblems of worship. This is for another work anyway since it is not our focus in this

²⁰Nida, E. A. 1954. *Customs and Cultures*. New York: Harper and Row. 137.

²¹Nida, E. A. 1954. *Customs and Cultures*. 147.

²²Nida, E. A. 1954. *Customs and Cultures*. 152.

work. Nevertheless, these objects serve the purpose of marking the sacred spots and the meeting points between the natural and supernatural, man and divine, world and the spiritual. Bolaji Idowu succinctly catches it, when he submits that “the method of symbolizing the unseen began with some rough-and-ready objects—a stone, a plant, or a piece of wood—to mark out sacred spots or to set places apart as evidences of the presence of the deity”.²³ They are what man could use to concretize the intangible, the incorporeal, the invisible and spiritual personages around him. The locations where these sacred objects are topographically and geographically situated automatically become *ojúbo*, or *ojú ebo*, meaning, “where sacrifices meet for the gods” or “where sacrifices are presented” and/or “where worship of the gods and divinities are being carried out”. In order to prevent undue familiarity and in-glory against these places, they are marked with species indicators like plants, chinks, small temples and moulds, popularly called *Èsì* in some Yorubaland. They became sacred in order to give them religious garb. In order to accord them dignity and prevent common familiarity, demarcations are made. There are sacred custodians and religious personages who mediate the worshippers and the objects of worship. People could now revere the places as being different from all other places. The reality, efficacies, proficiency and positive responses derived from the patronage of those places prove them to be real and disprove any disclaim of the reality going on there.

Ekitiland has been an ancient province among the Yoruba, in the south western part of Nigeria. The people were predominantly traditionalists before the advent of Christianity and Islam. Many places that were revered and regarded as sacred places are still in place till date. Due to the influence of Christian evangelistic revivals, many have been destroyed. Nevertheless, Oriye opines that “there is no town in Ekitiland that does not have sacred places like sacred water, shrine, sacred trees, rocks, hills groves and the rest”.²⁴ Out of many sacred places that exist in Ekitiland, we chose few to illustrate our points in this research. In Ekitiland there is mountain cult. In Ikere Ekiti, there is a mountain popularly called *Olosunta*. According to our interview, *Olosunta* Mountain protected the people during inter tribal war in Yorubaland. As a result, there are many tribes of Yoruba people in Ikere Ekiti today who migrated to the town during the wars but are now permanent residents if not indigenes. There are the Oyo and people from Afao Ekiti, who migrated from their original native towns to Ikere Ekiti till date. They could

²³Idowu, E. B. 1996. *Olodunmare: God in Yoruba Belief* revised edition. 61.

²⁴Olu Oriye is an indigene of Usi Ekiti, Ekiti State. This oral interview was granted by him on 7th August, 2010 in the course of this research.

trace their origin to these former towns but who migrated to Ikere Ekiti towns as a result of inter tribal wars in the olden days.²⁵

Ikole Ekiti hosts a mountain cult and worship in the ancient town. The name of the cult is *Olókè*, meaning, “he who prevails” or “he that surmounts.” According to Madam Fehintola Ige, *Àwòrò Olókè*, the current *Olókè*, priestess, she claimed that the origin of the cult could be traced to Ibadan slave raiding and wars in Ekitiland. The priest in charge of the cult has a tutelary god that he worshipped who encouraged him during the war. He boasted that he would prevail over Ibadan warriors, should they carry out their war expedition next time to Ikole Ekiti. When he learnt that the Ibadan warriors were coming, he prepared delicious food with charms to seduce them or force them to eat the pounded yam. Many of them ate the food and true to the charm, some slept off while some lost their sensibilities and some gave up the spirits. Thus, the priest prevailed over against the Ibadan warriors and they ceased from attacking people in Ikole henceforth. People in Ikole then praised him for the victory he won for them. Since then they had been worshipping *Olókè*.²⁶ According to Madam Fehintola Ige, the mountain is located in the forest but a shrine was constructed for it in front of the ancient building of the custodian of the cult.

The objects of worship of this cult include *esuru* (*dioscurea dumetorum*) in particular, palm wine, pap, palm oil, goats, hen, gin, water and other traditional materials. Dogs are abominable to the *Olókè*, mountain cult as the priestess narrated. According to Madam Fehintola Ige, the traditional festival of the mountain cult would not be conducted until *esuru Olókè*, as the chief sacrificial material has been provide. She boasted of the efficacy of the *Olókè*, cult when consulted for anything, especially after divination has been carried out and the client could provide the chief sacrificial material, *esuru* (*dioscurea dumetorum*) and palm wine that essentially needed to be provided as sacrificial materials.

On the issue of patronage of *Olókè*, by people, she claimed that people from all walks of life come to Ikole Ekiti to consult *Olókè*, cult for their various needs. Specifically, during its annual festival, the crowd is always a striking sight. Many people of the town especially women and youth participate in the festival. People would come and make various requests, women mostly ask for the gift of children. Everyone comes

²⁵ An oral interview granted by Madam Anike Aderinto on 10th July, 2010. According to her, her family originated from Oyo town but due to wars they migrated to Ikere Ekiti many years ago. Now they claim Ikere Ekiti as their town.

²⁶ Madam Fehintola Ige is the current *Olókè*, Cult Priestess at Ikole Ekiti. The woman is about 100 years and she claimed that she inherited the cult from her predecessors and the cult is widely known in Ekitiland and beyond. This interview was granted on 10th July, 2010.

with his or her materials for sacrifice and kneel before the shrine making their requests and vows. They make vows that if the requests are granted, they would come back and pay their vows. Subsequently, in every year, men and women would come to fulfil their promise as they come with their sacrificial materials such as *èsúrú Olókè*, palm wine, palm oil, pap, gin, hens and others. The divinity could make various demands from the clients according to their needs during oracular consultations. Children that are provided through the *Olókè*, cult are brought to the shrine in the following year for more blessing.

Another striking point that we should mention is the spiritual preparation of the priest or the priestess of this cult. Madam Fehintola Ige claimed that sex could be a barrier to the efficacy of the *Olókè*, cult.²⁷ That is why she abstains from sex with her husband from time to time in order to enhance the potency of the cult. In actual fact, she is not living with any husband now. When asked, why? She claimed that it would not prove the potency of the consultation and divination. Also, she would be on “white fasting” anytime the annual festival is drawing near. She claimed that she would be on *èko*, pap alone and palm wine for almost thirty days, drawing powers from the ancestors of the cult in order to prove the effectiveness and potency of the cult during the festival. Other preparations were not revealed since the researcher is not an initiate when she was asked.

Furthermore, our investigations revealed that there are oracular activities going on in the *Olókè*, cult. The divinity or gods do reveal mysteries, messages and visions to the priest or priestesses. Madam Fehintola Ige was asked, how she communicated with the divinity. Her response was that “if you are worshipping an object, you know the object of worship intimately just the way the domestic animals know the voice and odour of their owners. Also, she said “as the Spirit of Jesus Christ is in His worshippers and He communicates with them through that, so also does the divinity of the cult communicate with her”.²⁸ She even claimed that our coming had been communicated to her in a dream. She claimed that she had a dream and one man came to her in the dream and was dialoguing and holding a discussion with her. She claimed that through extra sensible powers, she could hear from the god of *Olókè*, cult and see beyond the physical. Also, divination is another means through which she receives from the gods. We met a woman, a client there who had come for oracular consultation and she also supported this view.

Another sacred mountain in Ekitiland is *Òbó* Mountain cult at Ire Ekiti, Ekiti state. This is one of the inherited sacred places in the town. Ire Ekiti is a historical town in the history of Yoruba divinities and gods. This is so because traditionally and historically, it is

²⁷Madam Fehintola Ige, an oral interview, 10th July, 2010.

²⁸Madam Fehintola Ige, an oral interview, 10th July, 2010.

claimed that it was in this town that *Ògún*, the god of iron entered the bosom of the earth with his symbols around the spot.²⁹ *Òbó* Mountain is located at the outskirts of the town in a thick forest surrounding it. It is being worshipped by people in Egbe quarters in Ire Ekiti, Ekiti state. The current chief priest is Chief Philip Olojaegbe who also doubles as the head of the quarters in Ire Ekiti. Our investigation revealed that “at the sacred place, a voice speaks to people from nowhere and discerns all the intents of the supplicants and the petitioners any time they are there for oracular consultations”.³⁰

Òbó Mountain is being worshipped with sacrificial materials like pigeons, a ram, goat, hen and wine. At the same time, the sacrificial materials also depend on the problems that the supplicants want to be solved. The festival is being celebrated in July every year. People go to the shrine place in order to receive various blessings. According to Martins A. Oguntimehin, an indigene of Ire Ekiti, “the only thing the *Òbó* divinity hates is backbiting or slanderous words against it. After that, if someone could bring whatever *Òbó* says to the petitioner to go and bring or do, the solutions would definitely come to reality”.³¹

The spiritual functions of *Òbó* divinity ranges from fertility to the barren women, healings of various mysterious sickness and disease, curbing pestilence, city protections and prevention of external war against the Ire town. Many women patronize the shrine for their fertility and sick people go there for healing purposes. Some indigenes of the town claimed that when there were external wars against the town, they pleaded to the *Òbó* divinity for protection and victory and it has not let them down. From the above submission, it is glaring that the Yoruba have mountain cults with festivals that go with them. They also patronize these shrines for various reasons. The mystery behind this is what one could not unravel but one could say that patronage of divinity on the mountain is prevalent in Yorubaland prior to the advent of the indigenous churches.

Besides, there are also riverine cults in Ekitiland with their various functions. Ekitiland is blessed with various lakes, ponds, streams, springs and rivers. Some still reserve their traditional and religious status while some such as Ikogosi Ekiti Warm-spring has been modernized and it is now a tourist centre in the state. Among those who are still being worshiped because of their religious and spiritual status are *Omi Agbólú*, *Omi Àlílá*, *Omi Atan* at Ire Ekiti; River *Ògbèsè* at Ijan Ekiti, *Omi Oríta Àita* at Ilupeju Ekiti; *Omi Olúa* at Usi Ekiti; *Omi Omísànjana* at Ado Ekiti, and River *Elémi* at Igede Ekiti to

²⁹Awolalu, J. O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 32.

³⁰Oguntimehin, M. A. is an indigene of Ire Ekiti. This interview was granted during this research.

³¹Oguntimehin, M. A. an oral interview granted.

mention but a few. Our investigations revealed that these are sacred waters in Ekiti that are still being worshipped. For instance, *Omi Agbólú* at Ire Ekiti is very popular sacred water in the town that people patronize for the sake of their spiritual blessings and solutions. The water could be regarded as a small stream but ancient and traditionally revered by the indigenes. It belongs to the *Iyeni* quarters at Ire Ekiti. The worship and festivals of the sacred water are spearheaded by the people of *Iyeni* quarters at Ire Ekiti.

There is only one sacrificial material that it demands and that is *eyelé*, pigeon bird, in order to grant the request of the petitioners. But it is a forbidden thing to call this *eyelé*, which is the common name for the bird among the Yoruba when it is being presented as a sacrificial material to the sacred water. This must be called *èrukùkù*, a local dialect for pigeon bird in Ire Ekiti.³² According to Ofere, “there is one taboo that is associated with the sacred water; it hates making a noise within its environments. So, people do not make a noise while they are within the vicinity of the sacred water”.³³ The spiritual functions of the *Omi Agbólú* are fertility, fecundity, and curing of fever and malaria in children. Many barren women have smiled again due to the patronage of *Omi Agbólú* and the sacrifice of *èrukùkù* to the water goddess.

Omi Àlílá at Ire Ekiti in Ikole local government area is also sacred, and it deserves mentioning. It belongs to Keleju Quarters in the town. *Omi Àlílá* is special and sacred in the sense that it has no particular and permanent custodian or chief priest. But it is the aged women, who have passed the age of child bearing and who are no longer menstruating that usually take the leading roles during its worship. The water goddess has no particular day of worship. Unlike *Omi Agbólú*, it has no taboo associated with it. The sacrificial materials of this water goddess are *obì olójú méta*, -a kolanut with three pieces, snails, bitter kola and a fowl. The mysteries behind all these materials of worship could not be unravelled since we are not initiates. It is claimed that once these materials are provided and offered, the supplicant can be sure of receiving his petitions. The spiritual functions of *Omi Àlílá* are fertility, fecundity and healing of sickness affecting children. The patronage of the water has brought much relief to the barren women and curing of many children. Faith is required if anyone comes to the water.

There is another sacred river in Ekitiland; it is called *Elémi* in Igede Ekiti. According to Elder Dada Ajiro, “River *Elémi* is traditionally and historically claimed to be

³²Ofere A. F. is an indigene of Ire Ekiti. This oral interview was granted by him in the course of this research on 20th August, 2010.

³³Ofere A. F. is an indigene of Ire Ekiti. This oral interview was granted by him in the course of this research on 20th August, 2010.

the source of the popular River *Osun* at Osogbo, Osun State”.³⁴ River *Elémi* is beside the major road that links Igede Ekiti with Iyin, leading to Ado Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti State. It is unattractive and yellowish in colour. River *Elémi* is popular and it is being patronized by the people. The water goddess believed to be living there is regarded as a compassionate goddess on man generally. According to Bosun Ajayi, “River *Elémi* is being worshipped as a result of its benevolence to mankind”.³⁵ Every year, the worshippers gather at the river bank for worship. Many people who are in difficulties come with their petitions, asking the water goddess to grant them solutions. Those who had come within a year and have received answers to their petitions would come with thanksgiving, fulfilment of their vows and seeking the permanence of the benevolence received.

There is a mystery that worth mentioning. According to Dele Ogunsuyi, anytime, people gather for worship at the river bank of *Elémi*, the water surges and certain number of fowls would come out for people to pick and rear for the water goddess. These are termed *adiye yèyé*, meaning, “fowls of the mother goddess”.³⁶ People would go with the fowls and rear them. The following year, the hens and their chicks must be brought back to River *Elémi*. They would be thrown to the river, those which disappear are its own but the surviving ones belong to the rearer. River *Elémi* is a water of fertility and defence. It is claimed that in the olden days, it defended the town against external attacks. Many blessings and peace in the town were bestowed by the river goddess.

From the above, it is glaring that the Yoruba have sacred hills, rocks, mountains, ponds, lakes, streams, rivers and waters. These are believed to be inhabited by water goddesses. The forces of these waters are harnessed to the benefits of mankind. The patronage of these sacred objects is believed to be potent and fruitful, provided the needed materials of sacrifice are accurately and adequately provided. The functions of these sacred objects are mostly fertility, fecundity, blessings, victory, defence and healings. They also provide protection against external attacks as in the case of *Olókè*, at Ikole and *Olosunta* at Ikere. Till date, the above selected sacred mountains and waters have not been taken over by Christianity. They are not part of the selected sacred mountains and waters in the indigenous churches under our focus. The implication of such is that there are still

³⁴ Ajiro D. is an indigene of Igede Ekiti. He lives very close to River *Elémi*. As an elderly man in the town; he shared this with us during an interview granted on 23rd August 2010.

³⁵ Bosun Ajayi is an indigene of Igede Ekiti who witnessed the worship of River *Elémi* and shared this with us.

³⁶ Ogunsuyi, D. claims that from their lineage, the priests of River *Elémi* rise. He granted us this interview.

inherited and ancient sacred mountains, waters and places that serve the same purposes of sacred places in indigenous churches in Ekitiland.

5.2 The Beliefs in Sacred Places in the Selected Indigenous Churches in Ekitiland

The emergence of indigenous churches in African land was historical and a great change in the Christian religion. Before the era, all Africans who were evangelized were formerly in one mainline church or the other. The advent of indigenous churches was conditioned by quite a number of reasons which included social, cultural, spiritual, administrative and political factors. But Mitchell is of the opinion that “what motivated the *Aladura* leaders and their followers was a desire to reform existing mission protestant Christianity and make it more relevant to the needs of the daily African life”.³⁷

Oshitelu calls our attention to the political dimension of the emergence of indigenous church and the quest for freedom from the white missionaries. He opines that they wanted to free themselves from “the political domination of the government-backed white missionaries who generally adopted negative attitude towards local participation in the administration of the church”.³⁸ The missionaries were seen as extending agents of the colonial masters and they extended their discriminating attitude to the church. The African leaders in the church had certain limits they could go and participate in the administration of the church. This did not augur well for the African leaders; hence a new movement emerged like Ebenezer African Church, Methodist *Eleja* Church and the like.

Above all were the religious reasons which led to the emergence of the indigenous church. Ayegboyin contends that one factor that is responsible for the emergence of indigenous Church is “the passion for a purer form of Christianity”.³⁹ Some leaders in mainline churches could not affirm their stand on friendship with secret society. Prominent members of the church, who were equally members of the secret society, were appointed as leaders in the church which the African Christians did not welcome. Part of these religious reasons was westernized Christianity which did not meet the needs of African Christians. The church administration and hierarchy were not structured to meet the needs of the common man in the church. African cultures were castigated to be pagan or animistic at best without any value to the new faith-Christianity. The liturgy was

³⁷Mitchell, R. C. and Turner, H. W. 1969. *A bibliography of modern African religious movements*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. 29.

³⁸Oshitelu, G. A. 2007. *History of the Aladura (Independent) churches. 1918-1940*. 27.

³⁹Ayegboyin D. and Ishola, S. A. 1997. *African indigenous churches*. Lagos: Greater Heights Publications. 25.

Eurocentric and prayers were read from books. Everything was stereotyped to the African Christians.

David Barret succinctly observes that the quest of the indigenous church leaders for “independency reflects a rebellion against a Christianity that had become “over-Europeanised”.⁴⁰ Corroborating this, Oshitelu opines that “they wanted to incorporate into the church African ideas, thereby making the church attractive and meaningful to the great majority of indigenous people”.⁴¹ So, it was their desire to found a church that would appreciate African cultures and customs where relevant and applicable. They wanted to have a church that would appreciate and utilize both the spiritual and physical gifts, talents and endowments of the African Christians. They wanted a contextualized Christianity that would appreciate their local environments. The needs of the African Christians that have been neglected by the European church leaders became their focus and proffering solutions to them.

Adamo submits that “the formation of African Indigenous Churches is a result of a process of ecclesiastical experimentation that started in the face of much opposition.”⁴² Having broken away from the mainline churches, their worship and liturgy contrasted much to the stereotyped nature of worship in the orthodox settings. Much of the African cultures, customs, practices and mode of worshipped were incorporated and contextualized in the indigenous churches’ liturgy. After all, most of the leaders in indigenous churches in one way or the other had been adherents of traditional religion, some were familiar with African cultures and customs where they were not traditionalists before; some grew up with the traditionalists as uncles, brothers, cousins, and nephews. Even through observations, some could know one or two things about the practices in traditional religion.

There are areas in which the beliefs in sacred places in African traditional religion influenced the indigenous churches. African traditionalists believed that gods, spirits, divinities and ancestors could dwell in natural objects especially trees, groves, waters, rivers, lakes, oceans, seas, lagoons, rocks, hills and mountains. From there, they could be contacted and revered. Even if the indigenous church leaders did not believe this, their practices and patronage of these places connote the fact that they could meet their God on hill tops and mountains. For example, prophets Michael Ojo Ajagunigbala, Joshua

⁴⁰Barrett, D. ed. 1971. *Schism and renewal: African initiatives in religion*, Nairobi: East African Publications, 161-162.

⁴¹Oshitelu, G. A. 2007. *History of the Aladura (Independent) churches 1918-1940*, 27.

⁴²Adamo, D. T. 2004. *Reading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous churches*. Benin: JECO Publishing. 24.

Adeyemi and Hezekiah Olu Alademomi who were pioneer prophets in African Apostolic Church claimed that God told them to go to *Igbó Àjàlù* now *Òkè Àjàyè*, a sacred place in the denomination to meet Him in prayers. Prophet Emmanuel Omoniye Omotunde, the founder of the denomination was called by God and was instructed to go to the mountain at *Òkè Àjàyè*. Likewise, after the call of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, he went back to his Ipetu-Ijesa residence. A prophet called Joseph Fapohunda took Babalola to a hill top at Ipetu-Ijesa called *Igbo Ilesi*⁴³ for prayers. While he stayed at Ipetu-Ijesa, Babalola used to go there every day for prayers with fasting.

According to Babalola's ministry and prayers, you will think of his mountain top patronage. At Odo Owa, Kwara state, Efon Alaaye, Erio and Ido-Ile all in Ekiti state and Oke-Epinmin Akoko in Ondo State, there are sacred prayer mountains establishment by Babalola as a spiritual personage, for prayers and meeting places with God. The influence of African traditional religion may not be ruled out on this practice. Nevertheless, in all the establishments of these sacred places, Babalola claimed divine directions, prophetic instruction and revelations guiding him to go there, consecrate them and use them for prayers.

In the area of embarking on spiritual journeys, retreats and communion with gods, spirits, divinities and ancestors, this is well at home with the Africans. Prominent kings, powerful religious custodians and personages and some high chiefs as tradition allows, go on this type of spiritual retreats. In Akure, the capital of Ondo State and Ekitiland, it is commonly called *Ile 'Fúnta*, or *Oba wo ilé 'fúnta*, meaning, "the king has retreated" or "the king has embarked on spiritual journeys". This journey may be from seven to twenty one days, according to the custom of each town. During the course, the king or any religious custodian concerned is not expected to eat, have sex with any woman or engage in any human activity. It is a period of having a communion with gods, spirits, and ancestors for the renewal of his spiritual prowess, and power in order to be more powerful and efficient afterward.

In the indigenous churches, the founding leaders also practised spiritual retreats in solitary and secret places adjudged to be sacred. They departed from the crowd in order to hide or retreat for a while in prayers. In the course, they believed that their spiritual powers, insights and performances would be renewed. In Christianity, this may be called

⁴³Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great Revivalist*. Lagos: Omega Publishers. 98.

fasting and prayers to the monotheistic God. Elder Gabriel T. Omojadegbe⁴⁴ recalled how Babalola would say that God has sent him on an errand and he was yet to do it. So, he would retreat to the mountain top at Ido-Ile for more spiritual power and authority. During this period, indigenous church leaders claim to receive powerful dreams, visions, revelations and prophetic directions. Dreaming, receiving vision and divination were not foreign to African culture. Africans believe in spiritual communication between the human and the divinities. Ancestors who had died several years ago could still be living and communicating to the living through oracular divination. Gods, divinities, spirits and ancestors are neither dead nor mere imaginary figures in African religious setting. Contacts and real communication can still be made with them. So, when indigenous church leaders formed their movements, there was revival of dreaming, seeing visions, revelations, and prophetic revelations.

There is an account that it was rejection of the dreams and visions of Pa Ali in Saint Saviour's Anglican Church at Ijebu Ode, Ogun State in 1918 that led to the formation of Precious Stone Praying Group, which metamorphosed to Faith Tabernacle and eventually led to Christ Apostolic Church worldwide. Olowe catches this well and reports that "the Aladura movement arose in July 1918 after the aged sexton of Saint Saviour's Church at Ijebu Ode, Ali relayed a dream to the Vicar, Rev. S. J Gansallo who ignored him and his dream".⁴⁵ Prophetism and dreaming are not peculiar to the biblical eras alone or to the ancient Israel. Prophecies and dreams were traditional with Africans and they were incorporated into the indigenous churches by their founders. Rituals and sacrifices are made in African traditional religion. Quoting Monica Wilson, Olubanjo says that rituals are "primarily religious actions directed to securing the blessing of some mystical powers";⁴⁶ this is to say that rituals are sometimes carried out in order to secure the favour and blessings of the gods. Some rituals are performed as symbolic representations of the clients before gods and their needs. Sacrifices are also made when in need and during festivals. All these are purposefully performed in order to secure the favour of gods. Paramount to this exercise was the roles of the intermediaries between the gods and the humans.

⁴⁴Elder Omojadegbe, G. T. claims to be about seven years old during Babalola revival and he is an Elder in *Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Adura* at Ido-Ile Ekiti. He witnessed the ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola.

⁴⁵Olowe, A. 2007 *Great revivals, great Revivalist*, 68.

⁴⁶Olubanjo, F. 1987. "Understanding Rituals". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XIX/1 June*, 34.

In indigenous churches, prayers and monetary sacrifice in the name of vows and offerings are made to support the efficacy of their prayers too. The leaders teach and practise the art of presenting the prayers of their members to God. Prayers requests are encouraged to be written and submitted to the leaders who would take them to sacred places like mountains for prayers. Through the prayer requests, members and their spiritual needs are presented before God for favour, blessings and victory. A case was reported at the prayer mountain at Epinmi Akoko when the prayer requests of the people were presented before God. Olowe reports that it was “on a Galilee day (Easter Monday) when suddenly a whirlwind grabbed all the prayer requests written on papers by individuals and took them to the sky, never to be found again”.⁴⁷ If it were in a traditional setting, the adherents would say *ebo ti gba*, meaning, their sacrifice had been accepted by the gods.

African traditional religion also has influence on indigenous churches on the beliefs in sacred places through its patronage. At certain seasons and in times of need, traditionalists consult gods in the groves, forests, shrines, temples, on the hill tops and mountain. In traditional African setting, sexual intercourse on a sacred land is not only abominable, it is a forbidden taboo. Even, when a spiritual priest is preparing a powerful traditional medicine, a woman who is menstruating is not allowed to come near much more of having sex with a woman during the course. It is simply believed that such contact could render the traditional medicine impotent. The indigenous church leaders also held this view from African culture and practice. The indigenous church leaders would leave the conventional places of worship for “higher” sacred places for prayers. This is to avoid human activities like eating, drinking, sex and disturbances. They believe that too much of eating can drain one of his spiritual energy and efficiency.⁴⁸ It should be noted that the social problems which this created in their families were thorns on their flesh and on their wives, who were not immune by their level of spirituality against such things as sex and incessant fasting.

If there was any area where the beliefs in sacred places in African traditional religion have influenced the indigenous churches, it was in the area of giving them sacred places of worship and spiritual activities. The Aramako Prayer Mountain, belonging to Christ Apostolic Church now was formerly a shrine of a divinity in the town. Our visit to this mountain revealed the exact spot where the Aramoko people used to sacrifice to the divinity in the caves. Another example was the prayer mountain at Ifira Akoko, which was

⁴⁷Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great Revivalist*, 256.

⁴⁸Oluwaniyi Ashaaju, L.O. is a *senior Pastor in Christ Apostolic Church*, he testified to this practice.

formerly the shrine of *Egule* divinity, worshipped by *Isowo* quarter. Odunayo succinctly gives the description thus:

This bush (housing this dreaded god) is on a hill near the quarter. All the inhabitants of the town feared the god and more especially the python that coiled round its base... For the yearly sacrifice, a live sparrow was used as offering to the god. The chief priest to this god usually killed goats and rams as sacrifice to appease the python on which the god was enthroned.⁴⁹

Babalola was instructed to go there and destroyed the pot and the python, which he did through prayers and the ringing of prayer bell. Olowe submits that “what likely irked Babalola was that the shrine of the *Òrìsà* was built on top of a mount, which he believed should be a sacred place to pray and worship God”.⁵⁰ Today the place is a sacred Prayer Mountain for all to use. But before this episode, it was a sacred place to the Ifira people with a shrine of their god.

The use of palm fronds is a common phenomenon in Yoruba culture. They can be used as roofs over a tent, or a building. House roofs were palm fronds initially in Yorubaland. They were also used for a shed, a resting place during a biting sunny day. Sacred places in African traditional setting were and are still being marked and demarcated with some plants and fronds revered to be sacred. This is to show to the people that it is not a conventional territory but sacred. *Ogun* shrine, mountain cult shrines, and other *Ojúbo*, sacrificial places in Yoruba traditional religion are marked with palm fronds and sacred plants like *pèrègún* (*Dracenea*). Other places that are forbidden for uninitiated to enter are also marked with palm fronds. Sacred personages also put on palm fronds for religious and spiritual reasons.

Babalola must have seen this practice before his call. In the year 1928 when his steam-roller broke down beside River *Àrìràn* at Ikeji-Arakeji, Osun State, he consciously cut three palm fronds as a mini shed from the sunlight. These tree palm fronds later became sources of prophetic messages to him and his ministry at the beginning.⁵¹ Again when Babalola left Ipetu Ijesa for his home town, Odo-Owa, Kwara State; he was given specific instructions from God pertaining to the manner of his entrance into the town. According to Odunayo Ojo “he was to enter the town on the market day half-naked,

⁴⁹Ojo, J. O. n.d. *The life and ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola 1904-1959*. Lagos: Ibukunola Printing Press. 135-136.

⁵⁰Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great Revivalist*. 256.

⁵¹Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great Revivalist*. 178.

covering himself only with ashes and bands of tender palm leaves around his waist”.⁵² One could discern an ambiguous manner of attracting the crowd to himself under the guise of angelic instructions. Sacred and spiritual beings also paint their faces with ashes as a mark of their gods or as part of their religious decorations.

The use of palm fronds by religious personages was also known in Yorubaland. So, here we saw Babalola using palm fronds not as part of his religious decoration nor the ashes on his face as a mark of God that has called him. He was only acting under the divine instructions to do so. After this experience, we do not have the record that he did it again. Also, testimonies abound that any time Babalola was on the sacred prayer mountain, especially on *Ori Òkè-Ìségun* at Efon Alaaye, he also used palm fronds as a sign. Any time he was praying and did not want people to come and see him or disturb him, he would tie palm fronds on the entrance of where he was.⁵³ The knowledge of such a practise was a native one. This was due to the influence of traditional cultural practices in sacred places and shrines.

In a nutshell, there are certain things in African cultural practices that are similar to Judeo-Christian traditions and culture. Where these are relevant and applicable to Christian traditions, the indigenous church leaders adopted these practices and they were adapted to their worship and liturgy. But one could wonder that if the Yoruba people were neighbours of ancient Israelites, who worshipped Yahweh, though tempted many times to be syncretic, whether there would be no conflict? It is part of religion and its nature to borrow ideas from other religious practices and even names from the gods. For instances, there were similar feasts of the Canaanites found in Israelite feasts and *El* the name of the God of the patriarchs was originally Canaanite god.⁵⁴ The indigenous church leaders might not have the concept of God dwelling on mountains, inside sacred trees and waters as African traditionalists, but the places were viewed to be sacred places for prayers where they could meet God, commune with Him, receiving revelations, places of spiritual retreats and at times resting places from the crowd.

The origins of sacred places in the selected indigenous churches were attributed to the prophetic revelations and divine instructions given to them. The influence of the Judeo-Christian traditions on the sacred places in the indigenous churches should be appreciated. They would have read the Moses', Elijah's and Jesus' accounts of mountaineering and the ways they patronized sacred places. Following these biblical

⁵²Ojo, J. O. n.d. *The life and ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola 1904-1959*. Lagos: Ibukunolu Printing Press. 21-22.

⁵³Olowe, A. 2007. *Great revivals, great Revivalist*, 101.

⁵⁴Riggren, H.1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans. Green, D. London: S.P.C.K.. 19-25.

examples, they would have had no problem to Christianize the Ekiti topography and incorporate its waters, grounds and mountains into the new faith. African cultural and religious practices' influence, notwithstanding, they believed that Bible has examples of beliefs in and patronage of sacred places, which they did not have problem to incorporate to their liturgies.

5.3 Peculiar Sacred Places to Christ Apostolic Church in Ekitiland and their Significance

5.3.1 *Orí-Òkè-Ìségún* (Mount of Victory) at Efon Alaaye Ekiti

According to Alokan “ Efon community led by some eminent people especially Pa Joseph Adetayo and the representatives of the town Tailors' Association numbering over 300 people pressurized Oba Aladejare Agunloye to invite the man God to Efon Alaaye”.⁵⁵ The revivalistic campaigns of late Apostle Ayo Babalola extended to Efon Aalaye on 29th September, 1930 when he arrived in the town at 5:30am.⁵⁶ His first place of contact was the palace of the king Oba Solomon Aladejare Agunsoye, the Alaaye of Efon Aalaye. The king of the town accommodated him in his palace. Joseph Ayo Babalola conducted revival in the town and as usual, many people were converted and their charms, idols and concoctions were submitted for burning. Many miracles were wrought which attracted people from various towns, such as Ikare, Benin, Sapele, Warri, Onitsha, Ibadan, Ijebu-Ode, Abeokuta, Ife, Oyo, Dahomey, Togo, Ivory-Coast, Ghana and Sierra-Leone.⁵⁷ The population of the people trooping to Efon Alaaye during the revival was in leaps and bounds. As a result, there was insufficient space for the people to conduct the revival. After the service, Babalola observed that people were many and he prayed to God for more space. As directed by God, he was searching for a place on the hills around Efon Alaaye which was the current region of his revival. He was followed by Late John Oloruneto, Erinle Atoseloso, Pa Isaac Alo and few others until they got to a spot, where they stopped in order to pray. It was a forest without any armlet or hut. According to Evangelist Michael Olu Ajayi,⁵⁸ when Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and his entourage got to a spot on the mountain, they started praying as conducted by himself. All of a sudden,

⁵⁵Alokan, J. A. 2004. *The origin and growth and development of Efon Alaaye Kingdom*, Ile-Ife: Timade Ventures. 200.

⁵⁶Ojo, I. et al. 2005, *Itan Bi Apostle Ayo Babalola Se Mu Ihinrere Wo Ile Efon-Alaaye ni 1930 ati Idagbasoke Ijo Aposteli ti Kristi*. A & T Superline Prints. 5 (translated).

⁵⁷Ojo, I. 2005. *Itan Bi Apostle Ayo Babalola Se Mu Ihinrere Wo Ile Efon-Alaaye ni 1930 ati Idagbasoke Ijo Aposteli ti Kristi*. A & T Superline Prints. 6.

⁵⁸Evangelist Michael Olu Ajayi is the current minister in charge of the *Ori-Oke Isegun* at Efon Alaaye. An oral interview granted on 12th September, 2010.

there was a thick cloud on the firmament, about to rain. Apostle Ayo Babalola then asked the people to bring their Bibles and clothes and placed them on a particular spot. On that day, there was a heavy down pour and everywhere was soaked with the people praying but the spot where the Bibles and clothes were placed was not touched with the rain. Babalola spiritually sensed that it was a sign that God wanted them to be there. He was instructed by God that this was the place He wanted them to stay and use for prayers. They went further no more as they believed that God has chosen the spot as Prayer Mountain and it was dedicated as a sacred place.

The particular spot where the Bibles and clothes were placed was called *Ilè-Agbára*, meaning, “place or spot of power” and a monument, as a sign of demarcation from other spots on the mountain was erected there till date. It is regarded as the “centre of prayer and power on the mountain”.⁵⁹ There is a rectangular pavement with a monument on the spot of power within it. This monument reminds people about the spot where Joseph Ayo Babalola and others had placed their Bibles and clothes and it rained but the rain did not touch them. According to the people, this was a divine indicator and pointer that God had chosen the place as being sacred and the place Babalola was looking for as a prayer mountain. Since then, it had become a sacred place in Christ Apostolic Church world-wide. Originally, this mountain formed part of the topography of Efon Alaaye in Ekiti State. A visit to the town will show that Efon Alaaye is full of mountains, hill and the gulfs. But due to the experience of Ayo Babalola on this fateful day in April, 1931 this particular mountain had been a sacred place. As regards its name, it has various names. Examples are *Ori-Òkè* Ayo Babalola- Prayer Mountain of Ayo Babalola; *Ori-Òkè Èfòn*-Efon Prayer Mountain; *Ori Òkè-Àdúrà*-Prayer Mountain. *Ori-Òkè* Efon, is the most popular name given to the mountain in most publications, referring to the sacred mountain but its spiritual designation is *Ori Òkè-Ìségún*, Mountain of Victory, as given by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola.

The naming of the mountain as our interview revealed to us was traced to how the power of darkness used a gulf below the mountain to trap their prey. Whosoever was attacked and conquered by the agents of these diabolical powers would be dumped inside the gulf spiritually. Now, God had taken over the mountain top of the gulf; it was their turn to be dumped in their dungeon. The gulf has now become a dumping ground for God

⁵⁹Evangelist Michael Olu Ajayi is the current minister in charge of the *Ori Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye. An oral interview granted on 12th September, 2010.

to dump all the problems of the people who would patronize the mountain, hence the name, *Ori Òkè-Ìségún*, Mountain of Victory for those who would patronise it.⁶⁰

Now the town is always visited by majority of the people going to *Ori Òkè-Ìségún* for their solutions. People from the nooks and crannies of Nigeria and oversea countries patronize the prayer mountain. Ministers of various denominations come to the prayer mountain for spiritual strength and power for the exploits in their ministries and various spiritual reasons. The dominant prayer points that people offer on the mountain especially during the corporate prayer session are prayers for endowment of power from on high, victory over evil attacks, diabolical powers, fertility, confirmation of pastoral calling, spiritual breakthroughs, upliftments in their daily endeavours and pursuits, help from above and salvation of souls among others.

There are certain religious injunctions that someone must observe while on this prayer mountain so that his or her prayers would be answered according to our investigations.

- i. The rectangular space constructed on the mountain is regarded as centre of the sacredness of the mountain. It is revered with religious awesomeness and respect.
- ii. The monument inside this rectangular place is the spot where Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and others placed their Bibles and clothes which was not touched by the rainfall in April, 1931. Therefore; it became a spiritual indicator and pointer of the sacredness of the mountain.
- iii. It is only men who are accessible to the rectangular place to pray or place any object like water and oil for sanctification and prayer requests on the monument.
- iv. Women are not allowed to enter the rectangular place but their prayer water bottles, oil and prayer requests can be taken to the place with the assistance of any man around.
- v. No forms of earrings, jewelleries or other golden ornaments are allowed on the mountain.
- vi. Ladies or women in trousers are not allowed on the sacred mountain.⁶¹

One may ask why not women in the rectangular place for prayer? Is this not gender imbalance even in spiritual matters? This could be regarded as limiting the movement of

⁶⁰Evangelist Michael Olu Ajayi is the current minister in charge of the *Ori Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye. An oral interview granted on 12th September, 2010.

⁶¹Evangelist Michael Olu Ajayi is the current minister in charge of the *Ori Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye.

women even in sacred places. According to Akintunde, this could be termed “psychological violence”.⁶² When we asked: why are women not allowed to go inside the rectangular monument? The reply was that lest the women defile the place. Women are susceptible to spirit possessions and they undergo monthly menstruation and these are considered to be *abomination* to the sacredness of such a place. Corroborating this, Akintunde opines that “the restriction placed on them (women) on certain aspects of the religious life could be attributed to the ritual cleanliness of the priests at all times especially during the monthly menstrual flow”.⁶³ It is a puzzle and it stares one at the face when we discover that there is still a disparity and segregation the way women are being treated when it comes to sacred places.

God created women and He made them in such a way that they menstruate; their menstruation is part of the biological makes-ups for the world and human beings at large when it comes to reproduction. The biblical evaluation was “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Gen.1:31). The woman, Eve was also created and she was very good. One may ask: did God put dirt or abominable thing-*menstruation*, in her so that she would become an abominable, sacrilege and defiling object to the sacred places? Another issue is: what about men who ejaculate or mate with their wives before coming to the sacred place, are they not defiled according to Leviticus 15? Till date, there is a religious notion that menstrual flow defiles sacred places such as altars, sanctuaries, hills, rock, and mountains. There are places women could not go or enter into based on this notion. Nevertheless, women are spiritually endowed with spiritual gifts, powers and various ministries in the church today. There are Prophetesses, Lady Evangelists and *Iya' Aladurà* on the sacred mountains and in several places today in the church.

The religious functions of this sacred mountain are efficacious, powerful and real. Prominent among the religious functions of this place is overcoming all forms of evil attacks, confirmation of pastoral calling and proffering solution to the infertility of the barren women. According to Pastor Caleb Oluwadare Alo, an eighty eight year old man, also an eye witness of the ministry of Apostle Joseph Babalola and Evangelist Michael O.

⁶²Akintunde, D. O. 2004. *The ministry of women in Lucan Narratives: a model for Aladura Churches in Nigeria*. Ibadan: The African Association for the Study of Religion, 19.

⁶³Akintunde, D. O. 2004. *The ministry of women in Lucan Narratives: a model for Aladura Churches in Nigeria*. 20.

Ekundayo, God has solved the problems of barrenness of many families on the mountain through its patronage.⁶⁴

Many have received deliverance and victory over spiritual problems and diabolical attacks. Many politicians have patronised this sacred mountain in order to gain political victory in their political career. The mountain care taker testified to this when he was interviewed. Another religious function of the mountain is spiritual empowerment. Ministers of the Gospel from many denominations have been patronizing the mountain for endowment of power from on high. When we checked through the attendance register of the mountain, we discovered that many members of various denominations and the ministers of the gospel patronised the mountain in order to seek the power of God. The spiritual rationale for this could be traced to the prayer life of Babalola and patronage of this mountain while he was alive.

The sacred place also serves as a refuge place for many who are facing realities of life. As a result, many who are in problem and needs like swallowing poison, attacks by diabolical powers, marital crises, unemployment, various forms of sickness and diseases, failure to travel abroad, family attacks, gynaecological problems, prolonged bachelorhood, prolonged spinstership, prolonged standing pregnancies, desire to build a house, own a car, get promotion on one's jobs and do good in all life endeavours and pursuits are brought to this mountain for answers and divine grants from God. The sacred places have been tagged and treated as "prayer answering sacred place" as they meet God in their prayers. The religious notions and beliefs are that if only they would get to the sacred place, there would be solutions to their crises. One may ask: why this age long religious belief and practice that "if I go to the sacred place there will be solutions like the Psalmist who says, "until I went into the sanctuary (sacred place) of God, then, I understood their end" (cf. Psa. 73:16-17)? Mountains and hills have been associated with house of God, where He dispenses power, governance and controls all the human affairs in the ancient Israel. He gives the Law from the mountain (Exo. 19-26). His throne is in heaven but He dwells in the temple at the same time (Psa. 11:4) and He fights from the mountains (Jud. 4:6); 1 Kgs 78:20-40). The persistence of this religious belief seems to us to localize God. It cages God inside a *box* and makes Him accessible to only those who know where the *box* is placed or situated. It shows that God is for certain people who know where He lives

⁶⁴Pastor Caleb O. Alo and Evangelist Michael Olu Ajayi granted this interview during our trip to Efon Alaaye Ekiti on 10th September, 2010.

within their vicinity or locality. However, this may not be so to the adherents of the denomination and those who patronise this sacred place. To them, it is a sacred place where they have contact with God and receive solutions to their problems.

5.3.2. *Orí-Òkè Áánú* (Mountain of Mercy) at Erio Ekiti

Naturally, Erio Ekiti is engulfed with some natural features that make the town unique. It could be likened to Jerusalem because both are surrounded with mountains and hills. Among them are the two major mountains, one is known as “the mountain of Obanla” while the other is known as the *Olódeòde* mountain. According to Timothy Ikudayisi, “this is the reason Erio Ekiti is known as the Town of Twin Mountains, made of male and female”.⁶⁵ There are other two mountains in the town which are known as *Òkè Eléindìe*, meaning, a mountain like an egg shape and *Òkè Òbèbé*. Religiously, these mountains which surround Erio Ekiti are now occupied by one denomination or the other for spiritual exploits and prayer activities. The present *Orí-Òkè Áánú*, Mount of Mercy, as a sacred place was originally called *Elèjù* in Ekiti language. *Elèjù* means a mountain with mat-making weed. At times it was associated with a name of the owner of the land and people called it *Elèjù Obanla*, meaning, *Elèjù* that belongs to Obanla. Chief Abiodun Obanla was a Chief of repute in Erio Ekiti. He was a traditionalist who was never converted to Christianity. It was reported that one Pa Simon, a native of Modakeke, Osun state, was the first person who used to go to this mountain before the coming of Joseph Ayo Babalola to the town.⁶⁶ Pa Simon had been to Oke-Ooye revival at Ilesa, led by Joseph Ayo Babalola. He was one of the disciples of Joseph Ayo Babalola who had come to the town. Before the coming of Joseph Ayo Babalola to Erio, Prophet Simon had been conversant with this mountain, going there from time to time for prayers whenever there was need for it.

According to the history of this mountain, it was this Prophet Simon who gave the name *Áánú* meaning, mercy to this mountain. He even prophesied that no one would bring any problem to the mountain without getting the right solutions and antidotes to it. Hence *Oke Áánú*, Mount of Mercy became its name till date. When Babalola was in Ekiti environs, he informed people of Erio that God instructed him to find a praying ground on a mountain. This led him to visit *Olosunta* Mountain in Ikere Ekiti but the place was not

⁶⁵Ikudayisi, T. 2010. *The origin and growth of Christ Apostolic Church at Erio Ekiti* (an unpublished work) n. p. 12.

⁶⁶Ikudayisi, T. 2010 *The origin and growth of Christ Apostolic Church at Erio Ekiti* (an unpublished work). n. p. 14.

suitable. He contacted Erio people for this request and Prophet Simon called his attention to the mountain he had been visiting for awhile. The family of Chief Obanla was contacted, and through the influence of late Chief Samuel Ikudayisi who was an in-law of Chief Abiodun Obanla, the mountain was released to Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. On getting to the mountain, he was pleased to see an expanse of mountain, full of suitable spots for his praying enterprise.

The mountain is full of rocks that spread for almost two kilometres. He ordered that they should move round to find a suitable place. On getting to the apex of the mountain, he then prayed, perhaps for divine instruction from God for confirmation whether God would approved the mountain for prayers or not, and it was prophetically confirmed by God for prayer purposes. According to our investigation through the interview conducted, after the prayer, he instructed his entourage to collect some broken stones for a construction of a circle or monument on the rock. He personally made a cross sign on the rock and used the broken stones collected to construct a circle and the circle was divided into two halves. As soon as that was done, he instructed that women should not be allowed to use the constructed circle for prayer but they could pray outside the circled spot.⁶⁷ Soon after this exercise and instruction, Babalola and his entourage prayed till evening, before they came down from the hill. He confirmed the name given to the mount by Prophet Simon as being authentic. He consecrated the mountain as *Orí Òkè-Áánú*, meaning, Mount of Mercy. Ikudayisi corroborates this by reporting that Joseph Ayo Babalola heard the voice of God that Erio is a city of mercy and this mountain is Mountain of Mercy.⁶⁸ According to J.O. Obiwale henceforth, the mountain was consecrated for the use of humanity and prophesied that no one would go there to pray on the mount without receiving mercy from God.⁶⁹

The religious functions of the prayer mountain are many according to our investigations. As the name of the mountain connotes, it is religiously believed that God showers mercy on all and sundry who patronise the mountain. Corroborating this, Oba Benjamin Adesoba Adetoyinbo, Afinbiokin Okinbaloye II, *Elerio* of Erio Ekiti and Ikudayisi submit that “more or less the mountain is the mercy seat, where God dwells all

⁶⁷ _____ 2010,. *Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion 8th edition: the Fourth in the Furnace at Erio Mountain*. n. p., 5.

⁶⁸Ikudayisi, T. 2010. *The Origin and Growth of Christ Apostolic Church at Erio Ekiti* (an unpublished work), n. p. 14.

⁶⁹An oral interview granted by Pastor J.O. Obiwale, a senior *Pastor in Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Isegun, Erio Ekiti* on 12th September, 2010.

the times”⁷⁰ during our interview. It is believed that whoever goes there for prayers would definitely receive the mercy of God. This mountain has been religiously viewed as “abode of mercy” of God when one gets there. Like the ancient Israel, the temple was constructed with a mercy seat where God showed mercy to His people, this mountain is equated with the receipt of the mercy of God when one patronizes it. It should be said that the mercy of God can be found everywhere without necessarily patronising the mountain of mercy. The covenant of mercy operating on the mountain may be peculiar to Christ Apostolic Church members and those who align themselves through faith to the covenant on the mountain. Those who are not accessible to the mountain or those who do not believe in the patronage of Prayer Mountain can still receive the mercy of God without necessarily being on this mountain.

Other functions of the prayer mount include confirmation of pastoral calling, overcoming all forms of evil attacks, receiving solutions to human problems such as infertility, stagnancy in business, and sickness. It was reported that civil servants who had waited for long for their promotion got it after they have patronised this sacred mountain. Ikudayisi reports that the second name of the prayer mountain could be better called the “mountain of solutions to human problems”. He even goes further to submit that “one could infer that the Lord has shifted His base to the mountain. In other words, God Himself is living on the mountain to attend to human problems”.⁷¹ All these submissions are to show how God answers prayers and solves human problems on this prayer mountain. For instance, major problems that are being solved on this mountain are barrenness and various forms of diseases and sickness. God has given fruit of the womb to the long awaiting women who were once barren. Various problems like infanticide, marital crises, prolonged single life, divorce, enmity in the family, sickness, headaches, financial crises, debt, bankruptcy, dissolution of companies, madness, epilepsy, leprosy, deafness, lameness, malaria, fever of various types, lack of progress in one’s pursuits, swallowed poison, nightmares, spirit husbands and wives’ attacks, premature deaths and the likes are being brought to the mountain for solutions. The testimonies of people during the prayer sessions on the mountain and afterward indicate the wonders of God on the

⁷⁰Benjamin Adesoba Adetoyinbo, Afinbiokin Okinbaloye II, Elerio of Erio Ekiti and Ikudayisi, *an oral interview* on 12th September 2010 on the Mount of Mercy.

⁷¹Ikudayisi, T. 2010. *The origin and growth of Christ Apostolic Church at Erio Ekiti* (an unpublished work), 2010, n. p., 14.

mountain and solutions received.⁷² In actual fact, the town has become a spiritual clinic for solutions to diverse problems of the people who patronise the prayer mountain.

The socio-religious impacts of the Prayer Mountain, Mount of Mercy on Erio town increases year in, year out and the patronage of the mountain is growing in a geometrical progression. People have been coming to the town everyday from Lagos, Ibadan, Warri, Sapele, Ughelli, Kano, Kaduna, Port-Harcourt, Calabar, Minna, Abuja, Ilesa, Ondo, Owo, Ife, Ekitiland, Abeokuta, Sagamu, Ijebu land, and even oversea countries according to the register on the prayer mountain. It appears as if every day is a festive day in the town as people come to this mountain for prayers. In a nutshell, Mount of Mercy as the prayer mountain has been a sacred place where people receive blessings and miracles from God.

5.3.3 *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* (Mount of Miracle) At Ido-Ile (Formerly Ido-Ajinare) Ekiti

Ekitiland shares a characteristic feature with ancient Israel in its topography. The Psalmist says “As the mountains surround Jerusalem...” (Psa. 125:2a; cf. Psa. 122:3; 48:1-3) to show her topography. Ekitiland is virtually surrounded with hills and mountains. Hence, there are various hills and mountains associated with certain towns like *Olosunta* at Ikere Ekiti, *Olókè* in Ikole-Ekiti, *Òkè-Ajaye* in former *Igbó Àjàlù* now Ajaye, *Òkè Eléindìe* in Erio, *Òkè Òbèbè* in Erio Ekiti and many others. Some towns are even named with mountains as a result of the mountainous terrain of the land like Oke-Imesi. Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare) in Ekitiland is another town surrounded with many hills and mountains. It would not be strange to see some of these mountains converted to sacred mountains for spiritual reasons by the founding fathers of the selected churches under studied.

Orí Òkè-Ìyanu, meaning, Mountain of Miracles is another notable, very popular and often patronised prayer mountain by all and sundry in Christ Apostolic Church and outside the denomination. Ido Ajinare, as it was popularly known was a town deeply immersed in Yoruba traditional religion before the advent of Babalola revival. All the three major religions in Nigeria, African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity were existing in the town, but traditional religion took hold and was firmer than others in the land. Corroborating this, Adediran submits that various forms of divinities like Ogun, the god of iron, *Olokun* (the goddess of new maize), *Onimejo* (the god of new yams), Sango (the god of thunder), *Osun* (the goddess of human fertility), *Esu* (the god of all evils like small pox and measles) and finally *Ifá* (the general overseer of all the gods and

⁷² _____ 2010, *Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion 8th edition: the Fourth in the Furnace at Erio Mountain*. n. p., 5.

goddesses)⁷³ were all worshipped in the town. But due to the revival of Babalola in 1930 at Oke-Ooye, Ilesa, the people of the town who went to the revival had taken their juju, charms, idols and fetish materials to Ilesa and they were burnt there. What attracted the people to Oke-Ooye revival was the report of the outstanding miracles and healings God wrought through Babalola.

Ido-Ile people also wanted Babalola to visit their town just as he had visited the neighbouring towns like Efon Alaaye, Iwaji, Ipole-Iloro, Aramoko, Igede, Oke-Imesi, and Ado Ekiti. A lot of efforts and spiritual preparations were made in order to have Babalola at Ido-Ajinare. According to Adediran, “a lot of fasting and prayers were conducted to God Almighty to direct Apostle Babalola to Ido Ajinare to remove all the satanic burdens in the town”.⁷⁴ As Adediran submits, before his arrival, those who visited Oke-Ooye revival like Timothy Ojo Adaramoye, Timothy Bababusola and Samuel Ogundipe Williams has started a fellowship group with skeletal services with prayers as a result of the new tide of affairs, as they witnessed the power of God through the practical demonstrations of miracles. This was the nucleus fellowship group that later led to the founding of Christ Apostolic Church at Ido-Ajinare Ekiti (now Ido-Ile). At last, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola with his assistants- John Oye Ajilore, Ben Adefibijo, Adako and Fabunmi stepped his feet on the soil of Ido Ajinare on 2nd October, 1931 amidst great joy and jubilation by all the townsmen.⁷⁵

Ordinarily, *Ori Okè-Iyanu* Prayer Mountain in Ido-Ile was part of the topography of the town. On entering into the town, one could see the hills and mountains around the town. According to Elder Gabriel T. Omojadegbe, “this particular mountain was formerly a forest for farming, owned by three royal families of the town, namely *Agbo ile Elepeoje*, *agbo ile Arao* and *agbo ile Agbegbaaje*”.⁷⁶ After the revival of Babalola in the town, many people tramped to the town for their healings. Babalola needed a place where he would commune with God. Babalola was inspired by God to look for a mountain praying ground and he was accompanied by Evangelist Ben Adefabijo. They could not succeed on the first day. According to Adediran, “but on the second day, they went round again and as they were tired as a result of going round, they sat on a rock to rest. ‘There God told him

⁷³Gabriel T. Omojadegbe is an *Elder and the Secretary in Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Adura at Ido-Ile* since 29th March, 1958. *An oral interview* granted on 19th September, 2010.

⁷⁴Adediran, B. O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare) With Special Illuminating Revelations about God’s Work on Ori-Oke Ido (The Miracles Mountain) Ile-Ife: Tiamde Ventures*. 70.

⁷⁵Adediran, B. O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare) With Special Illuminating Revelations about God’s Work on Ori-Oke Ido (The Miracles Mountain)*, 8.

⁷⁶Gabriel T. Omojadegbe, Oral Interview granted at Ido-Ile in the course of this work.

(Babalola) that the very rock on which they were sitting was the TABERNACLE on which to pray”.⁷⁷ This very rock is the centre of the praying ground till date and it is general one for prayers on the mountain. During our visit to the place, the very spot is covered with tiles as a mark of its sacredness and demarcation from other places or ground on the mountain.

According to Joshua A. Iridayo, “it was the central place where Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola used to pray while on earth since it has been established in the year 1933”.⁷⁸ It was consecrated and dedicated by Babalola himself. Since then, it has become one of his domiciliary prayer mountains. There are other sacred mountains on this mountain which was later discovered by Babalola as a result of pressure of people trooping to this mountain. Because people were too many to see him for prayers and prophetic consultations and many other things, he would sometimes disappear to these two other mountains in the day or in the night to rest and pray. The whole mountain was given the name *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu*, meaning, mountain of miracles as a result of the prayers and divine leading by Babalola. Joshua A. Iridayo also submitted that it was given *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu*, mountain of miracles by Babalola as a result of quick answers to prayers offered on the mountain”.⁷⁹

Sacred places have their taboos and regulations that must be observed in order to be efficient and effective right from the ancient world. The Sinaitic theophany in Exodus 19 buttresses this religious notion. The precautions must be followed before Yahweh could come down and for the safety of the people. During our investigation, we discovered that this sacred prayer mountain, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* has its own taboos, especially the monument erected there, as the place where Babalola used to pray. It is regarded to be “most holy and sacred place” plus the whole mountain. The monument is only open to men only. Women are prevented from going inside the place to pray but they can surround the monument and offer their prayers. When asked, the reason for this; Pastor Joshua A. Iridayo replied that “it is believed that women are more susceptible, easily seduced and attracted to evil and familiar spirits than men. As a result, they could be attacked by the angels of God and fall sick if not leading to death. This could tarnish the name of God, the image of the church, Christ Apostolic Church and the mountain” (sic).⁸⁰ It could be asked

⁷⁷ Adediran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare) With Special Illuminating Revelations about God’s Work on Ori-Oke Ido (The Miracles Mountain)*, 50.

⁷⁸ Iridayo, J.A. is the incumbent Secretary to the Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile Zone. An oral interview granted on 19th September, 2010.

⁷⁹ Iridayo, J.A. an oral interview, 19th September, 2010.

⁸⁰ Iridayo, J.A. an oral interview, 19th September, 2010.

that if indeed it is a powerful sacred place, could the spirit possessed women not get there and start confessing their evil deeds and be delivered? It is pertinent to note that the leaders of the Church and the adherents do not view this point to be so but taking precautionary measures on the mountain in order to prevent them from going there as handed over to them since inception. The issue is that God wants people to maintain the sanctity of the places as instructed.

The monthly menstrual flow of women was another reason why women are not allowed to pray on this sacred monument. It is considered to be a pollution, defilement and abominable thing for women who are in their monthly menstrual flow to go to the sacred spot. There are places considered to be sacred and holy on the prayer mountain where you do not make a phone call nor receive a phone call. People are not allowed to eat in certain places on the mountain and people dare not to come to the place with charms. These and many others are regarded as abominations to the sacred place. One could submit that all these religious instructions are in place in order to maintain the sanctity, sacredness and efficacy of the *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* Prayer Mountain.

The religious functions of this sacred place are numerous according to the beliefs of the adherents of the denomination and people of the town. Primarily, this particular prayer mountain served as the secluded praying abode for Babalola. Corroborating this, Olusheye submits that, Babalola once said that “he was also commanded to observe the forty days Lenten season annually for the renewal of spiritual power”,⁸¹ as a result, he used to go to this mountain for prayers. Because there were many people who used to throng around him, the sacred mountain served as secluded places for him to have unhindered attention in the presence of God for meaningful answers to his prayers. People patronize this mountain today as a result of the foot prints of Babalola to pray and receive answers on this mountain. As its name portrays, it is centre for miracles as people experience these through answers to their prayers.

Ori Òkè-Ìyanu Prayer Mountain was the most Prayer Mountain frequented by Babalola in his life time. It follows that it is one of the most popular sacred mountains in Christ Apostolic Church till date. Adediran corroborates this by submitting that “think of Apostle Babalola’s up-hill ministry, your mind goes to *Ori Òkè-Ido*. Think of *Ori Òkè-Ido* healing ministries, your mind goes to Apostle Ayo Babalola *Ori Òkè-Ido* has been renowned as a mountain of miracles”.⁸² One may ask: Is God limited to this mountain

⁸¹Olusheye, E.H.L. 2006. *Who is this Joseph Ayo Babalola?* Ibadan: Gideon Global Press. 15.

⁸²Adediran, B. O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare) With Special Illuminating Revelations about God’s Work on Ori-Oke Ido (The Miracles Mountain)*, 51.

before he can perform miracles? Is this prayer mountain the sole custodian of miracles from God? Or does God perform miracles only on the sacred places like this mountain? Cannot others receive their miracles without necessarily getting to this sacred place? One thing we have observed was the fact that sacred places have been portrayed as places where unusual things happen by the adherents of faiths. The unconventional occurrences are religiously attached to sacred places and Prayer Mountains, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* Prayer Mountain at Ido-Ile serves as one.

As Adediran has rightly observed, this mountain also served as a refuge and resting place for Babalola after marathon evangelistic journeys.⁸³ Supporting this view, Gabriel T. Omojadegbe submitted during our interview that Babalola would leave the populace for a secluded place to rest as a result of the multitude around him who came for prayers.⁸⁴ It was in the course of hiding away from people and taking his rest that Babalola discovered two other mountains on this sacred place. They are higher than the first one and are rocky. *Ori-Òkè Ìyanu* or *Ori Òkè* Ido as it is popularly called is three in one but the third one is more restricted because of its altitude and plateau in nature.

The prayer mountain, *Ori-Òkè Ìyanu* is another spiritual clinic for healings of many people. Elder Hezekiah Oni⁸⁵ submitted that the mountain is known for the healing power of God. Diverse sicknesses and diseases are taken to the sacred Prayer Mountain for healing. At the beginning of Babalola revival in the town, it was quest for healings and miracles that brought multitude to the place. Omojadegbe reported that the crowd were many; coming for healings in leaps and bounds to the town and the mountain to receive their miracles.⁸⁶ Whenever Babalola departed from the crowd to the mountain, he would be praying in a hide out. But when it was time for him to break his fasting around 3pm-6pm, he would shout from his hideout with a loud voice, roaring like a thunder and a great barrel, shaking everywhere. As he shouted the name of Jesus Christ and prayed for people, there would be mass healings of various kinds. Till date, people patronise the sacred mountain for healings. Spiritual endowment of power is another religious function of the mountain.

Supporting this idea, Iridayo writes that “Babalola prophesied that the fire of religion (spiritual power of ministers of the gospel) would be dwindling or quenched in all

⁸³ Adediran, B. O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile (formerly Ido-Ajinare)*. 51.

⁸⁴ Gabriel T. Omojadegbe is an Elder and the Secretary in Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Adura at Ido-Ile since 29th March, 1958. *An oral interview* granted on 19th September, 2010.

⁸⁵ Hezekiah Oni is an elder and the incumbent Financial Secretary in Christ Apostolic Church Oke Adura Ido-Ile, *an oral interview* granted on 19th September, 2010.

⁸⁶ Gabriel T. Omojadegbe, *An oral interview* granted on 19th September, 2010.

churches all over the world but people would come to *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile for rekindling their “spiritual fire”.⁸⁷ When we went through the record on this sacred place, truly, ministers of the gospel from various denominations like Celestial Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministry, The Word of Life Bible Church, Charismatic Movements, Gospel Faith Mission International, and many new age denominations have patronised the sacred place in order to renew and energize their God given powers through fasting and prayers.

The spiritual functions of this sacred mountain are multidimensional. It is widely known for confirmation of pastoral calling, spiritual empowerment, fertility and victory over evils, miracles and healings of various forms. *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile could be regarded as a “solution centre” to diverse problems. J.B. Afolayan submitted that people come to the sacred place with diverse problems like barrenness, infanticide, marital crises divorce, debt, partial stroke. We even saw one man with partial stroke while on this sacred mountain) who was trying to respond to healing by walking without any aid. Bad dreams, unemployment and the like are other problems that people brought to the place for solutions through prayers. It was evident that people patronise sacred places as a result of their problems.

The patronage of this prayer mountain cuts across every class of people. A close examination of the register on this mountain showed that ministers of the gospel from many denominations, nations, businessmen and women, students of various categories, and institutions, unemployed ones, hairdressers, civil servants, photographers, tailors, welders, barbers, mechanics, electricians, different associations, drivers, kings, professionals like Engineers, Quantity Surveyors, Accountants, Pressmen, Financial Brokers, Teachers, Consultant of various kinds, Contractors, Medical doctors, Farmers and so on patronise this sacred mountain for various reasons. According to the record, in a day, at least ten to twenty people would come to the place which shows that in a month nothing less than three hundred to six hundred people patronise the place on regular basis. This is apart from festive and seasonal periods such as Lenten periods, End of the year, New Year season and speciall organized prayer sessions on the sacred place. The purpose of this attendance record is to adequately record the data and addresses of the people patronising the sacred places in order to know where they come from and in case of any emergency.

⁸⁷Ibidayo, J.A. is the incumbent Secretary to the Christ Apostolic Church Ido Zone. An oral interview

People came from various towns like Lagos, Ibadan, Oyo, Ogbomoso, Ekitiland, Ondo, Owo, Akure, Ife, Ilesa, Warri, Eastern states (in fairness, many Ibo were met there) Benin, Sapele, Offa, Ogun States, even overseas countries but they are all Africans. The days spent on this sacred mountain ranged from one day to thirty three days as directed by God and according to the individual's need and heart desires.

One could postulate that people of all classes patronize sacred places irrespective of their educational, economic, social, political and religious status. The major reason for this patronage is to get solutions to their diverse problems. Olusheye opines that "*Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile is notable for spiritual power endowment, quick answers to prayer and especially solving the problem of infertility of women".⁸⁸ Records on these sacred places show that more women patronise sacred places than men. Like the ancient Israelites, for instance, pilgrimage to Shiloh every year showed that people could go there not only to pay their vows and offer sacrifice to Yahweh. But the story of Hannah demonstrated that women could be there in order to solve their infertility problem (cf. I Sam. 1:9-28). Children are precious to women in the family. Child-bearing is a way of securing their stability in their matrimonial home; hence they patronise sacred places in order to give birth to children especially the barren ones.

The quest for miracles has been with man from antiquity. Some things, events and occurrences have been attributed to extra-ordinary sources. Hendrickx is of the view that "for our ancestors, miracles were a confirmation of the faith... in order to be considered a miracle an event should have religious significance",⁸⁹ otherwise; it can be regarded as magical or any psychic phenomenon. Patronage of sacred places for one miracle or the other clothes the miracles received in the garb of religion. The people go there with a desire or to receive solutions to their problems. They have in mind that God is on the sacred place or manifests Himself and His power from there. They have the intension of having a contact with Him. They go on fasting and prayers and make their petitions to Him.

The religious notion of going to a place regarded as sacred appeal to the religious psychic apparatus in man and sets their mind on the miraculous. Much more, when a place is tagged *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu*, mountain of miracles; the conclusion to be drawn would be "If I go there, I will definitely receive my miracles". But the question is: Does Almighty God need a particular sacred place before He could perform miracles? Why do people associate

⁸⁸Olusheye, E.H.L. is the current President of Christ Apostolic Church and the last Secretary of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. *An oral interview* granted on 18th October, 2010.

⁸⁹Hendrickx, H. 1987. *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels*. London: Geoffrey Chapman. 3.

miracles to certain sacred places as the harbinger or a reservoir of miracles? To proclaim a religious message without supporting it by any signs was considered unusual right from the antiquity⁹⁰ as the experiences of Moses (Exo. 4:1-9; 18:18-22); Gideon in Judges 6:17,21, 36-40; Isaiah and Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:8-11; Isaiah 39:70-8; Isaiah and his family (Isa. 8:18) even up to the New Testament era (Jn. 10:412) have shown. God can perform miracles at anytime, and in anywhere for anybody, without necessarily patronising a sacred place. He is not confined to a particular sacred place but if He has chosen a place for unusual works among men, so be it.

5.4 *Ilè-Agbára and Ile-Babalola (Power Ground and Babalola Ground) at Ido-Ile Ekiti*

Ilè-Agbára and *Ilè Babalolá* as they are fondly called are parts of *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti. They are sacred places of prayers for the spiritual benefits of those who patronise the sacred places. These sacred sites are beside the resting house on the mountain. They are beside each other on the plane ground. People are accessible to them without any restriction. In other words, male and female could go there and offer their prayers to God without any preventing instructions. Our recent visit to the sacred sites showed that they have been reconstructed for the convenience of the people. At *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu*, there are spots that Babalola used for prayers. These spots were marked with stones and artefacts to demarcate them. Hence the spots were given the names, *Ilè-Agbára* and *Ilè-Babalolá* after the person of Babalola to show the power of God upon his life and ministry. They were consecrated for prayers. Our investigation showed that they were consecrated as places of prayers as a result of prayer needs of the people.

The entire *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* is known for miracles and healings. So, it follows that *Ilè-Agbára* and *Ilè-Babalolá* are powerful sacred spots of prayers for power releases from God. In reminiscence of the historical contact of Babalola with the sacred spots, *Ilè-Agbára* and *Ilè-Babalolá* are also known for endowment of power. The spiritual functions of the spots among others are reported and believed to engender spiritual endowment, inspire spiritual visions, solutions and answers to prayers among the adherents. Therefore, those who patronise *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* seek to pray on these spots while on the spiritual retreats to the mountain.

It is also believed that whatever has contact with the sacred spots would surely receive power and the spiritual blessings of the spots. So, people place their prayer water

⁹⁰Hendrickx, H. 1987. *The Miracle Stories of the Gospels*, London: Geoffrey Chapman. 2.

bottles, olive oils, handkerchiefs, pictures of their family members and other personal objects there for power transfer and blessings.

5.5 Sacred Waters and Streams in Christ Apostolic Church and their Functions

5.5.1 Omi Òni At Efon-Alaaye Ekiti

Before the advent of Christianity in African soil, people had beliefs in certain lakes, ponds, streams waters, and rivers as being sacred with their spiritual functions as we have demonstrated it above. The sacredness of these waters could not be separated from in-depths of elemental forces of waters in food production, control of the weather and regulation of the body system. Water is found everywhere and it also falls from heaven in form of rain. They had been patronizing these waters for various reasons. Supporting this view, Ubrurhe rightly observes that “hydro-therapy is the application of water of different forms and temperature for the treatment of ailments”⁹¹ in African culture especially in Urhobo healing techniques. The waters could be as natural as it is fetched, cold or warm. Patients are asked to drink or bath with it for the desired needs. At times, it could be through massaging the body with the cloth dipped inside it. Mbiti corroborates this when he writes that “during a serious illness, the head of the family offers food and water which he places on the right threshold of the house, praying God heal the sick”.⁹² Adamo also submits that “water has been part of the therapeutic devices of the Africans from the ages before the advent of Christianity and Western medicine”.⁹³

Babalola found water everywhere he went and prayed over it for spiritual and therapeutic reasons. *Omi Òni* in Efon Alaaye Ekiti is prominent sacred water that is very common in Christ Apostolic Church. During the revival of Babalola in the town, people had surrendered their idols, charms and fetish objects and they had been burned in a furnace for almost two weeks before they were finally consumed. The traditional health services and delivery had been established in Efon Alaaye like any other Yorubaland before Babalola revival. There were traditional means of doing these health services. Now they have been destroyed by fire according to the Gospel of Babalola. The people of Efon Alaaye now questioned Babalola: How do we take care of ourselves after you had instructed us to abandon fetish and traditional medicine?” This was raised because the people were at the cross road about their health. Yoruba people do not play with their

⁹¹Ubrurhe, J. O. 2006. “Life and Healing Process in Urhobo Traditional Medicine”. In *Science and Religion in the Service of Humnaity* ed. by Ade P. Dopamu et.al. Ilorin: Local Society Initiative and NASTRENS, 247.

⁹²Mbiti, J.S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*, 60.

⁹³Adamo, D. T. 2005, *Reading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous Churches*, 51.

health and they do everything to establish their health. In response to the question of the people, Babalola told them it was water alone that was blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that they would be using for their healing and health. He then asked for any water in the town and the people took him to River *Òni*. Originally, *Omi Òni* served as a source of domestic drinking and bathing water to Efon people because of the problem of water.

River *Òni* according to our findings flows from Erin hill, a mountain in between Erin-Ijesa, Osun State and Efon Alaaye, Ekiti state. It is divided into two; one flows toward Erin Ijesa and the other one flows toward Efon Alaaye. The one that goes to Erin Ijesa is called *Olúmirìn*, meaning “another god” in Ijesa language. Supporting this view, Olusunmbola submits that “the two major rivers that have taken their sources from Erin Hill are *Òni* and *Olúmirìn*. *Olúmirìn* on Erin Ijesa side has become a major water fall”⁹⁴ and an attractive tourist centre in the town and in South-West, Nigeria. According to Pa Caleb Oluwadare Alo, Babalola was taken to *Omi Òni* for prayers and sanctification.⁹⁵ The record of the history of the Church in Efon Alaaye shows the purpose of the water through the prayer of Joseph Ayo Babalola thus:

The water was sanctified for healings of various diseases like leprosy, on the leprous people, pregnancy for the barren, healing of curses, epilepsy, margarine, hunch back, hernia, lunacy, prolonged sores, prolonged pregnancies and so on (translated).⁹⁶

According to Pa Noah Kehinde Adegboluyi, the water was sanctified in the year 1931.⁹⁷ Since then, it has become sacred water. It is claimed to be miraculous water with diverse of miracles that occur through it. It is called *gbogbo-nise*, water, meaning, “all is curable water” or “all is possible water” as a result of its efficaciousness on sickness. Pa Jacob O. Alo claimed that Joseph Ayo Babalola prophesied that “if people refuse or do not believe the water for healing or patronise it, the water will come to their houses one day”.⁹⁸ This prophecy came to pass in the year 1952 when the then government planned to construct water pipes from River *Òni* in Efon Alaaye to Ilesa. The Efon people who host the water were given eight tap water joints. This served as the fulfilment to the prophecy of Babalola. According to Caleb Oluwadare Alo “the *Ogboni* cult members who did not

⁹⁴Olusunmbola, O. 2001. *The growth of Christ Apostolic Church in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Ayox-Press. 42.

⁹⁵Pa Caleb Oluwadare Alo, *an oral interview* granted 11th October, 2010.

⁹⁶_____ 2005. *Itan Bi Apostle Ayo Babalola Se Mu Ihnrere Wo Ile Efon-Alaaye ni 1930 ati Idagbasoke Ijo Aposteli ti Kristi*. A & T Superline Prints. 7 trans.

⁹⁷Pa Noah Kehinde Adegboluyi is the current care taker of the sacred River Oni at Efon Alaaye. An oral interview granted 11th October, 2010.

⁹⁸Pa C.O. Alo. *An Oral interview* granted.

believe in the ministry of Babalola and in the water now have the water in their houses for domestic chores and the rest”⁹⁹.

The religious function of *Omi Òni* as a sacred water primarily is on healings, deliverances from poisons and fertility. Originally, it was sanctified for healing purposes. So many people in Efon believe that it has power to heal various sicknesses, set free and bring about solutions of various kinds. During our visit to Efon Alaaye, a woman was reported to have been poisoned by wicked people. After three days of prayer in Christ Apostolic Church, *Òkè-Ìségún* Efon Alaaye District Coordinating Council Headquarters, she was given *Omi Òni* to drink. The power in the water naturalized the poison and she vomited the poison. Healings in various forms are the dominant spiritual functions of this sacred water based on the fact that those who are sick are more than those with other types of problems. *Omi Òni* is on the lips of nearly all Efon indigenes and the people would first of all remember to visit *Omi Òni* before visiting the hospitals. Certain factors are responsible for this influence. Efon Alaaye was the residence of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola during his life time. It is also a strong base of Christ Apostolic Church as a denomination.

The function of the sacred water is believed to be powerful enough to procure solution to barrenness. A story of one Mrs. V. A. Oni was narrated to us which was recent. She had been expecting pregnancy for the past twelve years. She came to *Omi Òni*, took her bath and drank some quantity of the water by faith. Her womb was opened and she conceived and gave birth to a baby. People go there and take the bath for desired needs and purpose. Olusheyé narrated his experience when he was at Babalola’s house at Efon, how he was instructed by God to go to the river for a bath. It was an unforgettable experience for him as he obeyed God and took his bath in the river for healing. Today, many people from all walks of life patronize the sacred *Omi Òni* for their spiritual needs. Members of various denominations like Anglican, Celestial Church of Christ, Christ Church of Light, Catholic, Redeemed Church of Christ, Cherubim and Seraphim and others were met on ground during our trip to the sacred river. *Omi Òni* was likely be an ordinary river before but now it is not so. Members of Christ Apostolic Church in Efon Alaaye had constructed two bath rooms over the water. One on the right side is meant for women, and one on the left hand side is for men.

It is a reality that any unusual element such as grounds, rocks, hills, mountains, waters, rivers, lakes, ponds and streams would be accorded spiritual and religious features.

⁹⁹Pa C. O. Alo, *An Oral Interview* granted.

When the hunters in Erin Ijesa came to the water fall in the forest in Erin, they exclaimed that this was *Olu-mi-rin*, meaning “this was another god”. It was after they consulted their *Ifá* Oracle that they were told that it was not another god but the handiwork of God, the Creator of heaven and earth. *Omi Òni* was a large river for Efon town to use for domestic chores. Besides, Pa Noah Kehinde Adegboluyi claimed that it was a deified stream that was benevolent to the people in the ancient times. It was being praised chanted by calling it *èyélomo* and *àbálo* meaning, “a mother of children and father of children”. This connotes that the water would have been a river of fertility for the barren before the advent of Babalola. On the contrary, Pa. Alo J.O. said that it was not worshipped by anyone before Babalola’s revival. Whatever maybe the spiritual status of this water before it was sanctified by Babalola, it assumed a new religious and spiritual garb after the prayers of Babalola. It is being used in the light of Christian faith today.

5.5.2 *Omi Olúwánifise* At Erio Ekiti

Omi Olúwánifise, meaning, “God has need of you” or “God has need of it”, is a notable sacred water in Christ Apostolic Church Worldwide. According to J.O. Obiwale, the water was originally a blessing of nature called *Omi Ìròkin*, a traditional name given to the water inside the cocoa farmland of late Prophet John Oreoluwa Obiwale,¹⁰⁰ a contemporary of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. As normal water, one could do some domestic activities with it then. But a time came when Prophet John O. Obiwale had a theophany of an angel who introduced himself as Angel Gabriel sent from God. He commissioned Prophet Obiwale for divine task to go and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and he positively responded though with initial complaint that he was the only surviving son of his parents. Prophet Obiwale was endowed with spiritual gifts like vision, prophecy and healings of various kinds afterward. After his call, God directed him to go to his father’s farm settlement for the ministry and he obeyed.

On his father’s farm settlement, Prophet John Obiwale began his healing ministry with attested miracles. Very soon, the village also called *Olúwánifise* became popular for the healing activities going on there. Since *Omi Ìròkin* was the only available stream around for domestic use, it was sanctified for healings. For storage reasons, a drum was placed inside the small stream but later decayed on the spot. According to Pastor Jacob O.

¹⁰⁰James O. Obiwale is a direct son of late Prophet John O. Obiwale who gave this information. He is the custodian of the sacred water at Erio-Ekiti.

Obiwale, a direct son of late Prophet John O. Obiwale, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola gave the instruction that “the drum should be left alone there”.¹⁰¹

A day came in the year 1945 when Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola visited the village; he ordered that the stream should be dug for more water for the use of the healing ministry going on there. Afterward, he mightily prayed over the water for healings and miracles for all and sundry. Certain powerful biblical texts especially from the book of Psalms were read to the water in order to enhance the efficacy of both the prayers and the water. Abioye opines that “it is the usual and spiritual practice of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola to prescribe certain Psalms for spiritual reasons”.¹⁰² The “Opa Iye”, meaning, “rod of life” or “living rod” he was given by God was stretched toward the water to touch it and he prayed over it again. He also prayed prophetically, that whosoever comes to and patronises the water will receive his healings and miracles. He then changed the name of the water from *Omi Iròkin* the original traditional name it bore to that point to *Omi Olúwánifise* with the significant meaning that “whosoever God wants to save and heal will be directed to the water”, hence *Olúwánifise*, meaning God has need of you for healing and salvation.¹⁰³

Omi Olúwánifise has peculiar features that make it unique as sacred water and people have given various religious interpretations to this water because of these features. The sacred water changes its colour from time to time. This is contrary to the quality of water. Water is colourless. Erosion can be said to influence the changes of its colours because it is within valleys. But the experience of the people has confirmed that whether there is erosion or not, *Omi Olúwánifise* changes its colour.¹⁰⁴ This is given a spiritual interpretation by people to be a symbol of the descension of the power of God inside the water. It is reported that *Omi Olúwánifise* is being stirred occasionally. This is also interpreted to be the hand of God inside the water. The stirring is taken to be the release of the spiritual power of God to maintain the spiritual potencies of the water. People have witnessed the stirring of the water like the biblical pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-4. Also, the stream has never dried up during dry seasons since its consecration for spiritual purposes by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola.

One thing we note is the fact that sacred water like this in any religion cannot but be given peculiar and religious veneration and features by the adherents of faith. People who believe in the instrumentality of water from God for their healings cannot but attach

¹⁰¹Obiwale, J.O. *an oral interview* granted on 18th September, 2010.

¹⁰²Obiwale, J.O. *an oral interview* granted on 18th September, 2010.

¹⁰³Abioye, N. n.d. *The Use of Psalms from Apostle J.A. Babalola*, n.p., 6.

¹⁰⁴Obiwale, J.O. *an oral interview* granted on 18th September, 2010.

certain peculiarities to the sacred water of this nature. This is a way they believe they can treat, honour, venerate and picture the water in order to enhance its sacredness and potencies. Any natural or unusual manifestation could only be given spiritual answers and interpretations in a religious milieu like this sacred water.

The spiritual functions of the sacred *Omi Olúwánifise* are many. Principal among these is the efficacy of the water to completely heal and cleanse lepers. Timothy Ikudaiyisi, when interviewed testified to this as he narrated an event. There was a leprous man who was kept in the house of Prophet John Obiwale and this was unknown to the people in the town. In those days, people dreaded the leprous people; hence they had a colony for them outside the town. One day this leprous man was sent to go and fetch water, perhaps for spiritual reasons from the stream. When people sighted him, they were furious and reported the case to Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. But before Babalola arrived at the scene, the leprous man had been miraculously healed up. The sacred *Omi Olúwánifise* has been an instrument in the hand of God for the healing of lepers.¹⁰⁵

Lunacy is a dreaded disease in every society. It brings shame to the family of the victims and ends the career of such victims if not taken care of. Many factors could be responsible for lunacy, ranging from spirit-related factors, accidents sustained and hard drugs. *Omi Olúwánifise* has offered solace and healings to many victims of lunacy. The story of a boy from Erinmope Ekiti was told during our interview on this sacred water,¹⁰⁶ this boy was attacked and suffered from lunacy for sometimes. He was brought to Erio and transferred to *Olúwánifise* village for his healing. God healed him miraculously before too long. People who knew him to be a lunatic were surprised when they saw him in his home church as he played a key board.

The healing of epilepsy is another spiritual function of the *Omi Olúwánifise*. As if it is the exact medical antidote to epilepsy, *Omi Olúwánifise* could be termed as “a specialist” water on the healing of epilepsy. It was reported to have the spiritual capacity to cure the disease as fast as possible. It is fiery and firing on epilepsy. This is one of the healing properties of the sacred *Omi Olúwánifise* that makes it so popular in Erio Ekiti and its environs. Several cases of epilepsy and its related effects are still being treated with the sacred water whenever people know about *Omi Olúwánifise* and patronise it. Also, *Omi Olúwánifise* has been instrument of hope and joys to the barren women. During our investigations and interview at Erio about the water, records showed that people who suffered from barrenness became fruitful as a result of their patronage of the sacred water.

¹⁰⁵Timothy Ikudaiyisi, an oral interview.

¹⁰⁶James O. Obiwale, an oral interview.

The methods of its application are drinking and bathing with the water. The barren women would be asked to drink from the fetched water after the prayers have been said by a prophet or a pastor in charge. At times, certain prescribed portions of the book of Psalm like Psalm 127,128, Genesis 18:7-18; 21:1-5; Judges 13, I Samuel 1 and Luke chapter 1 would be read into the water before drinking. The aftermaths of these spiritual exercises would be the pregnancies of babies. *Omi Olúwánífise* is also efficacious in the healings and miracles of other cases of spirit-related attacks and diseases. Notable among these was the healing of a young man called Ojo *Odi*, meaning, Ojo the deaf and dumb, from Efon Alaaye. He received his healing by taking the sacred water, *Omi Olúwánífise*.¹⁰⁷

Pastor Jacob Obiwale reported another healing power of *Omi Olúwánífise* which was demonstrated in March, 2010. A medical nurse was attacked by charms and diabolical powers and she could not sit down for sometimes. When she came to the healing *Omi Olúwánífise*, she drank from it and took her bath also. Miraculously she was delivered and healed completely. Another efficacy of *Omi Olúwánífise* was demonstrated through another woman from Ibadan, Oyo State. This woman delivered a set of twins at Ibadan and after the delivery, she ran mad. She was brought to Erio Ekiti and taken to *Omi Olúwánífise* site. After taken her bath with the water and drunk from it, she was made whole.

From the fore goings, we see another dimension to the origins of sacred waters in an indigenous church. What was a natural blessing to the local people like *Omi Ìròkin* in a farm land could be turned to a divine instrument. The contact of a spiritual personage with any element in nature can change its status from ordinary to extra ordinary. The prophetic prayers of a spiritual icon and utterances or prophecies of a sacred personage can also make an object in nature become sacred. Above all, the revelation of the mysterious powers for healings, miracles and the results the people received when they patronize these sacred places and waters make them sacred to the people.

5.5.3 *Omi Babalola* at Ido-Ile (Formerly Ido-Ajinare) Ekiti

In search for a place to pray, Babalola was roving from one hill to another at Ido Ajinare now Ido-Ile Ekiti. Elder Gabriel T. Omojadegbe claimed that “he (Babalola) went to the mountains in one side of Ido-Ile leading to hills and mountains very near Oke-Imesi Ekiti but God said “No” to those hills and mountains”.¹⁰⁸ Babalola returned and continued in his search until the present *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* was located and approved by God. *Ori Òkè-*

¹⁰⁷Ikudayisi, T. 2010. *The origin and growth of CAC at Erio Ekiti*, (unpublished manuscript), 7-8.

¹⁰⁸Gabriel T. Omojadegbe, *an oral Interview*.

Ìyanu at Ido-Ile is a very steep mountain, overlooking the town below. If one is climbing it from the plain, it will take up to four to five times rest on the way before he climbs the over five hundred staircases to the mountain. As a result of its heights, water was a difficulty attached to the mountain. There was not water from any corner on the mountain, no pond, lake, stream or a waterfall.

Women and some young men were reported to be fetching water from the plain to the mountain for use by Babalola and his evangelistic members. This was a Herculean task because of the height of the sacred mountain. It happened on one eventful day, when Babalola disappeared from the crowd in order to hide himself from them and pray. He went to the third mountain at *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* because it is three in one mountains. After his prayers, he was direly in need of water and thirsty. According to Adediran, Babalola cried out to God in powerful prayers for water in front of small rocks, with a tree on top of them. God answered his prayers as water miraculously oozed out of the rocks for him to use”.¹⁰⁹ Hence it is called *Omi Babalola*, meaning, “sacred water of Babalola”. It is flowing and dropping gently and without any force till date out of the rocks with the tree on top. According to Omojadegbe, Babalola gave specific instructions that the water should not be used for cooking, nor boiled. It should not be used for washing of clothes either. It is only for drinking and bathing for miracles, healings, signs and wonders.¹¹⁰ It was regarded as sacred water from onset according to the prayers of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola for the miracles and healings of all and sundry.

Omi Babalolá is more or less, the smallest of all sacred waters on the sacred places peculiar to Christ Apostolic Church. Yet, its origin was not natural; it has not been there nor flowing before the advent of Babalola revival. It was miraculously *invoked* out of small rocks hosting a tree on top. This miracle of calling forth water out of rocks or invoking it out as a result of powerful prayers of Babalola was likened to the miracle of water from the rock during the time of Moses in Horeb (Exo. 17:6). Samson saga also came to one’s mind when the origin of this sacred *Omi Babalolá* was told. Could it be a fallacy? Could it be a way of attributing outstanding miracle to a spiritual icon like Babalola? Or was it to equate him with Moses or Samson of Old Testament? Or was it to say that the miracle of water from the rock during the Mosaic period and Samson’s experience also happened during the time of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola? The reality was that the water was called forth through prayers.

¹⁰⁹Adediran, B.O. 2009. *The history of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile*. 51.

¹¹⁰Elder Gabriel T. Omojadegbe, *an oral Interview*.

What is surprising about this sacred and miraculous water is that it is spiritually potent. It also responds to spiritual command in prayers. Till date, it responds to the commands of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola in terms of working miracles and healings. People patronise the water for healings and miracles and they receive them. At this juncture, it worth to note that come rain, come drought, it has never dried up; it flows throughout all seasons. It responds to the spiritual ordinance and instructions that Babalola gave on it from the beginning. Also Babalola instructed that it is for all and sundry; it should not be hoarded. But an event happened in 2001 to 2002, when the care taker in charge of the mountain, Pastor Ibitoye carved the water in with iron sheets based on the fact that people were not keeping the water neat but polluting it with dirt. To the amazement of all, the water stopped oozing out. According to Gabriel T. Omojadegbe and Hezekiah Oni,¹¹¹ the prophets, evangelists and prayer warriors of the church at Ido-Ile were summoned to prayer in order to know the reason for the stoppage of the water. God responded through prophetic revelation that it was because the sacred water was carved in and people were not given free access to it according to the prayers of His servant, Babalola and God's heart desires. After, the iron sheets were removed, in the presence of all, the water started oozing out again.

The spiritual functions of this sacred water, *Omi Babalolá* include fertility, and other forms of miracles. These types of miracles are outstanding ones according to the prayers of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. Olusheye claims that *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido is meant for miracles generally. One of the outstanding miracles of God being performed through the mountain is the raising of the dead. J.B. Afolayan¹¹² also narrated a recent miracle of raising a dead boy at Port-Harcourt. They boy died at Port-Harcourt after an illness and the mother was crying and praying to God to bring him back to life. After a while, she remembered that she had been to *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido and brought a quantity of *Omi Babalolá* to Port-Harcourt. She went for the water and poured some on the boy. The Lord proved Himself and the boy was brought to life.

Also, the water, *Omi Babalolá* is notable for its spiritual healing of both internal and external sicknesses propensity. One of the major features of *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* is miraculous *Omi Babalolá*. People from all walks of life have been coming to the sacred mountain in order to take the sanctified water for their healings. One simply goes there, uses a cup placed there to collect the water and fills his or her container with the sanctified

¹¹¹Elder Gabriel T. Omojadegbe witnessed the ministry of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. Elder Hezekiah Oni is also a leading elder in the Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Adura at Ido Ile Ekiti.

¹¹²Pastor J.B. Afolayan is the current *Chairman of Christ Apostolic Church Ido-Ile Ekiti Zone*. He granted this interview in the course of this work.

water and return. It is important to note that faith in God is required before the healing could follow. Olusheye opines that “the use of sanctified water for healing of diverse kinds of diseases”¹¹³ is a peculiar factor that gave the church a great success at the beginning. Also according to Olusheye, “the use of unpolluted, sanctified water, bringing perfect cure to the sickness of most people declared incurable in our society today was originally introduced by the Christ Apostolic Church through Apostle J.A. Babalola”.¹¹⁴

It is glaring from the above submissions that the use of water for healings and miracles in the denomination is traceable to Babalola spiritual practises.

5.6 Sacred Places and Waters in African Apostolic Church and their Significance

African Apostolic Church popularly known as “Ajaye” is an indigenous Church that has its root in Ekitiland, its environs and across the nations. The origin of the church was traceable to the trio- Joshua Adeyemi, Michael Ojo Ajagunigbala and Emmanuel Omoniye Omotunde who was known to be founder of the church. Apostle Emmanuel Omotunde was born in the year 1864 in Aramoko Ekiti in Ekiti State. His parents were predominantly idol worshippers. Apostle Emmanuel Omotunde did not have the opportunity of western education. He was a cook under a white man who was a missionary of Church Mission Society (now Church of Nigeria, Anglican Communion) at Aramoko. As a result, he could speak one or two vocabularies in English words.¹¹⁵

Apostle Omotunde became a Christian through the evangelistic activities of Christ Mission Society (now Anglican Communion) missionaries. He worked with them for some years as a cook, attending to the domestic chores of the missionaries. By profession, Omotunde was a bricklayer and embroidery maker (*Asede-made*). After a while, he left the CMS Missionaries and went back to his trade, perhaps for more green pasture at Ile-Ife, in the present Osun State. On getting to Ile-Ife, he joined the Cherubim and Seraphim Prayer Group and he was attending their prayer meeting, especially vigils. Before returning to his home town, Aramoko, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola had taken his evangelistic campaigns to Aramoko and established a Prayer Group known as *Òkè-Ayò* Prayer Group at Egbehin in Aramoko, which is now known as the first Christ Apostolic Church. Omotunde joined this Prayer Group established by Babalola but he later started a

¹¹³Olusheye, E.H.L. 1999. *Thunder over Africa: Babalola's Revival*. n. p. 18.

¹¹⁴Olusheye, E.H.L. 1994. *A short history of the Christ Apostolic Church (Revival Edition)* Ibadan: n. p., 51.

¹¹⁵This oral interview was granted by Revd. Joshua Alademomi, Church the incumbent General Secretary of African Apostolic church on 21st May, 2010 at Ajaye sacred sites during the *Annual Conference of the Church*.

Prayer Group in his residence at Oke-Anaye Quarters, Aramoko on weekly basis.¹¹⁶ The Prayer Group also included Bible Study exercise to their prayers as far as their knowledge could carry them under the supervision of Omotunde. According to Joshua O. Alademomi,¹¹⁷ the inspiration came from the influence of the missionaries of Christ Mission Society that Omotunde had worked with. Members of this Prayer Group were Mr. Michael Ojo Aruwa popularly known as Ajagunigbala, a sawyer by profession, Mr. Joshua Adeyemi Mosho, also a sawyer, Hezekiah Olu Alademomi –the father of the present General Secretary of the church, who was a farmer, Mr. Thomas Ore-Ewi and one Olusanmi (all of blessed memory). These men formed the church in embryo which later metamorphosized to African Apostolic Church as later events in the church revealed.

Before the call of Omotunde, Michael O. Ajagunigbala and Joshua Adeyemi who were of the same trade-sawyer ran into debt because of dowry they had borrowed from someone, which they could not pay back. They ran to Ijero Ekiti for wood felling in order to pay back their debt. They saw a tree called *orún modò*, believing that this wood would solve their financial problem but surprisingly, it was a white wood of a little significant financial value. It was at Ijero that God spoke through Joshua Adeyemi in the year 1937, that the duo should go to *Igbó Àjàlù*, *Àjàlù* forest, that He has prepared a better tree for them there. They were given specific instruction thus:

- i Go straight to Àjàlù forest without calling on any place;
- ii They should not pass through Aramoko by day light.
- iii They should not greet anybody by the way and
- iv They should not keep night at Aramoko.¹¹⁸

According to Joshua Alademomi, the current General Secretary of the church, it was only Michael Ajagunigbala who got there that very day and Joshua Adeyemi got there the following day.

The call of Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde began when God spoke through Joshua Adeyemi again while the two sawyers were at *Igbó Àjàlù* that they should send for Emmanuel Omotunde. God spoke through Joshua Adeyemi to call their Prayer Group leader, Emmanuel Omotunde, to come and organize their prayer meetings and administer them better. This message came three times. All of them did not understand the message fully but they obeyed. They went to Aramoko and delivered the message to Omotunde. He was a sawyer by trade but also a bricklayer and embroidery maker. He visited them three times with vigorous prayers each time he visited. As a Christian, he counselled them to be

¹¹⁶*The Constitution and Guiding Principle of African Apostolic Church Worldwide*, 2000, v.

¹¹⁷*The Constitution and Guiding Principle of African Apostolic Church Worldwide*, 2000, v.

¹¹⁸*The Constitution and Guiding Principle of African Apostolic Church Worldwide*, 2000, v.

faithful and make a full scale of their planks. He instructed them to be cheerful to their buyers for market promotion.¹¹⁹

During his third visit Adeyemi also received a message from God that the father of Emmanuel Omotunde would soon die. Omotunde loved his father so much and he was instructed to fast and pray for seven days. God promised him that he would miraculously provide for the burial ceremony of his father. He returned to Aramoko and found his father on the sick bed. The father eventually died and Omotunde celebrated the funeral very well with abundant provisions as God promised. After the burial, God sent a message to him that he had sinned by touching the corpse of his father and he should go and pray for seven days for cleansing. Meanwhile, God had prophesied through Adeyemi that He would mightily use one of them.

One event then happened that scattered these people at *Igbó Àjàlù* according to the oral interview granted by Joshua Adeyemi Alademomi.¹²⁰ The creditor of Michael Ajagunigbala and Joshua Adeyemi, who happened to be the elder brother of Joshua Adeyemi, Mr. Thomas Ore-Ewi was overwhelmed by the power of Holy Spirit while praying at the prayer mountain at *Igbó Àjàlù*. He was thrown to the top of a tree. He then gave a prophecy that God sent him to go and heal a mad woman called Osunkeye at *Ikesan* market in Aramoko. Also he was instructed to go and fell a terrible tree in the town in the name of Jesus Christ. When Mr. Thomas Ore Ewi got to Aramoko, he commanded Osunkeye to be healed but the woman reacted and traced the genealogy of Thomas Ore-Ewi from Ile-Ife before him in a manner that baffled Ore-Ewi. He was astonished and left Osunkeye, the mad woman. The tree popular called *Agbonyin*, inhabited by evil spirit did not fell. This became a shame to the group and Ore-Ewi ran away. The trio-Emmanuel Omotunde, Joshua Adeyemi and Michael Ajagunigbala returned to *Igbó Àjàlù* for prayer after the incident.

While at *Igbó Àjàlù* for prayer, Joshua Adeyemi received a prophetic revelation from God that He would use one of them with mighty power of miracles, signs and wonders. But none of them could specifically say who the person would be. It was in the course of the third visit of Omotunde to his two friends at *Igbó Àjàlù* that it became clear to all of them that God would use them with signs they did not understand yet. The actual person that would be mightily used was not known to them, how and when it would happen was not equally known to them. But they agreed among themselves that whosoever God chose to use should remember the remaining two. This was bonded in an

¹¹⁹This oral interview was granted by Revd. Joshua Alademomi, 21st May, 2010.

¹²⁰This oral interview was granted by Revd. Joshua Alademomi, 21st May, 2010.

agreement or covenant among them. They all made a covenant that whosoever God decided to use among them, should remember the remaining two persons. Mr. Joshua Adeyemi who had gifts of prophecy and visions gave another prophecy before they scattered that Emmanuel Omotunde had an assignment at Ilorin, in the present Kwara State. After this exercise, they all departed and Omotunde travelled to Ilorin where he was planting groundnut and other seedling popular called “aapon” in Yorubaland- a seed for drawing soup in order to sustain himself. Later, he won a contract as a bricklayer for house building at Gbogi street in Ilesa, which made him to leave Ilorin. He was a man with two wives; his second wife was attending a Cherubim and Seraphim church for vigil prayers alone. It was in this church that there was a revelation that her husband would be a mighty prophet of God. She was commanded to invite her husband for prayers. Omotunde obeyed and followed his wife to the Cherubim and Seraphim church and he was prayed for.

Meanwhile, God had been revealing many things to him through dreams and visions. Many healings and miracles had been performed through him but Omotunde never believed himself. These occurrences had been disturbing his bricklaying work to the point that the man who engaged his service was annoyed with him for delaying his building project. In 1939, a notable miracle that eventually convinced Omotunde was the issue of a woman who came to him and lodged a complaint that her husband hated her. Omotunde prayed for her and God gave him a revelation of the secret of the problem and the solution through the use of coconut oil, “adin agbon” in Yoruba language. He prayed on this coconut oil and gave it to the woman in order to drink. He instructed her that when next she passed excreta, she should do it on a plain ground and whatever object she emitted, she should bring it to him.

On the following day, the woman emitted a frog and brought it to Omotunde. He later told her that the demonic agents have turned her to a frog before her husband and that was the reason her husband hated her. Like the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4, the woman ran to the town, proclaiming the miracle of God in her life. Henceforth, miracles began to follow Omotunde’s ministry and mighty revivals also broke out at Ilesa. This was the history behind the call of Apostle Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde and the genesis of the African Apostolic Church worldwide. He remembered the covenant made with his friends, he sent for them at Aramoko. He introduced them before the people that they were his predecessors and they all returned from Ilesa to Aramoko on a market day. The king then had heard about the ministry of Omotunde and he sent his sceptre with emissaries to

meet them on the way. Healings and miracles followed his revivalistic campaigns. Eventually, God used Omotunde to heal Osunkeye the mad woman of the first incident and the powerful tree “Agbonyin” was fell down through the ministry of Omotunde. This was how the first shame that scattered them was taken care of.¹²¹

5.6.1 *Igbó Àjàlù* Now *Oke-Ajaye* as a Sacred Place in African Apostolic Church

Originally, the name of this sacred site of the African Apostolic Church was *Igbó Àjàlù*. There was no attempt to give the meaning of the name during my interview with Joshua Alademomi. It is a forest with trees suitable for the plank business by the sawyers. It was a farm land with less than ten kilometres from Igede Ekiti. In actual fact, it is a forest very close to Igede Ekiti and but it is under Aramokoit, Ekiti West local government. Nothing was special about this land before until God directed Emmanuel Omotunde, Michael O. Ajagunigbala, Joshua Adeyemi and others to this place. Initially, it was their debt that drove them to the place couple with the prophetic messages received. They were led by vocation to the place and later turned it to Prayer Mountain. Due to the prophetic revelation through Joshua Adeyemi saying, go straight to *Igbó Àjàlù*. Through prophet E.O. Omotunde, *Igbó Àjàlù*, forest of *Àjàlù* was divinely renamed as *Òkè-Àjàyè*, and it became the nucleus of the great revivals in the 1940s.

According to the Constitution of the Church, “it is the permanent missionary headquarters of the church and the nerve centre and focus of the ministry of Omotunde”.¹²² According to the history of the church, the historical 1939 migration of people from Igbogi at Ilesa to Aramoko as divinely directed and the final settlement of Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde at *Òkè-Àjàyè*, the Holy City of African Apostolic Church, made this place a sacred place.¹²³ This may show how some ordinary places before spiritual encounters became sacred place. There would have been a human experience like dire need like finance, debt, disappointment, failure and the like driving man about. In seeking for solutions, there were some hearings of voices, a revelation, theophany, or acclaimed divine directions or prophetic messages to make the place a centre of meeting with God in fasting and prayers like the case of Omotunde and his friends.

Our trip to *Òkè-Àjàyè* revealed that it is still a forest with untarred but muddy and motorable road. There are few houses on the road and church auditoria. The sacred place

¹²¹This oral interview was granted by Revd. Joshua Alademomi.

¹²²*The Constitution and Guiding Principle of African Apostolic Church Worldwide*, 2000, vi.

¹²³*The Constitution and Guiding Principle of African Apostolic Church Worldwide*, 2000, v.

has ancient but habitable buildings. The population of people living there is few and it is a bit remote from the major road. It is real that there are no social amenities there though it is electrified but the work is not complete. It is a spiritual site that receives visitors from South Western Coast of Nigeria up to the Mid-West and Republic of Benin during the annual festival of the church.

5.6.2 **Orí-Òkè Àjàyè Sacred Prayer Mountain at Ajaye Ekiti**

Orí-Òkè Àjàyè is a sacred place, Prayer Mountain that is revered by the Church. The mountain is notable for answers to prayers and miracles. The mountain is ancient in outlook and not all that spread abroad but small in size. It is revered by the members of the church because of its spiritual and historical antecedence. Back to the time of the three friends, the sawyers, it was when they were praying on this mountain that the power fell on them especially on Ore-Ewi. According to the testimony of the General Secretary of the church, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde were praying on this mountain on an eventful day; the mountain began to shake seriously to the extent that they could not stand on it again but prostrated on it because of the experience.¹²⁴ Isaac Ayegunle relays an encounter that Michael Ojo Ajagunigbala had on this mountain as the source of his divine empowerment. When the three friends were instructed by the Spirit of God to come to this mountain, Ajagunigbala was the only person that got there as instructed. On getting to the mountain, there was a heavy down pour of rain and God used it to transfer his power on him.¹²⁵

The miraculous demonstrations on this mountain also made it a sacred place. The current president of the mission, Primate A.A. Atobatele narrated another event on this mountain during our investigation. It was Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde that were praying on this mountain and a cobra crawled under Babalola unknown to him. The cobra became dead under Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola after the prayer. It became a miracle to the people who noticed this event.¹²⁶ People perceived the mountain to be a sacred place, which should be revered because of the historical events that took place and that are still taking place. One of the reasons why *Igbó Àjàlù* became *Ìlú Àjàyè* and the sacred place in African Apostolic Church was the

¹²⁴This oral interview was granted by Revd. Joshua Alademomi.

¹²⁵Revd. Isaac Ayegunle is the National Sunday Superintendent of the Church and the Director of Education of the African Apostolic Church worldwide. He granted an oral interview during the annual pilgrimage and convention of the church at Ajaye, 7th May, 2010.

¹²⁶This oral interview was granted by the Primate of the Church during the annual National Conference of the Church at Ajaye.

supra sensible encounters people experienced there and the miraculous that took place there during the early years of the trio-Ajagunigbala, Adeyemi and Omotunde.

The spiritual functions of the mountains include divine communication from God and healings. Miracles are religiously attached to this particular mountain. One of such is the release of divine power on someone who needs it. It is spiritually believed by adherents of this denomination that anyone who believes and prays for power of God on this mountain will receive it. This could be traced to the episode of the three sawyers who were directed to go to this site and later in given power. Another reason could be traced to the experience of Ajagunigbala. When he got to this sacred place, the rain that fell on him from heaven according to the prophetic message that followed signified the power of God on him and his endowment with spiritual gifts and power. Moreover, the prayer exercises of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde and the miraculous that happened then made people to believe the place as a sacred place.

During our visit to the place during the *Òkè-Ajáyè* annual conference on 21st May, 2010 we saw the mountain. It is whitish in nature and clean. "Strange objects" such as shoes, neck laces, jewelleryes and stain materials were forbidden from the site. One notable attraction to the place was the way people were praying; various prayer requests written on sheets of papers were a phenomenon that the people believed could be brought to the place for divine attention and grants. Other objects were the photographs of relatives that were brought there for prayer. It is believed that if people or relatives at distant places could not come to the place, once they are living, their pictures could represent them before God in prayers. This practice could not be separated from the African traditional belief and practice that once the image of someone or a victim can be laid hold of, it can be used as a point of contact to do him a favour or to attack him wherever he is, with the aid of potent words. The Christians may not see this as an influence of African traditional belief and practice on them. This is because they claimed divine revelation and directives for their practices. It is fond of both the indigenous church adherents and their leaders to make reference to hearing of voices, visions, dreams and prophetic messages as the origins of sacralising some places as sacred.

5.6.3 *Ilè-Agbára* (Power Ground) As a Sacred Place in African Apostolic Church

A prominent sacred place that belongs to African Apostolic Church on the Holy City at Ajaye is a sacred place popularly called *Ilè-Agbára*. The origin of *Ilè-Agbára* is traceable to the year 1937 when the leaders of the church in embryo came to the spot after

their prayers in order to rest. The people who were pioneers of the church used to go to *Igbó Àjàlù* now *Òkè-Àjàyè* for prayers from time to time. *Ilè-Agbára*, meaning “Power Ground” or “Land of Power” is a sacred site on the Holy City of Ajaye. It is a place of less than two plots of land. It hosts a dilapidated altar of mould and plastered bricks. The ground is cemented but with cracks on it. We could see some reconstruction and renovations going on in the site during our trip. It was surrounded with grass and an old moulded brick house was beside it. There is an altar on this ground which serves as a sacred spot. It is believed in African Apostolic Church that the spot of the altar was the exact location of the big tree called *oruń-modò*, a white tree for that matter, which the original duo, Ajagunigbala and Adeyemi wanted to fell.

Another significance of the spot was the fact that *Ilè-Agbára* was the original place where Ajagunigbala and Adeyemi got the tree they wanted to fell in order to settle their bill because they were in debt. The monument that is erected on the sacred land was the spot the tree stood. It was dedicated after some super sensible experience the duo had on the land.¹²⁷

Another spiritual function of this sacred place is that it is known as a powerful spot in Ajaye territory. The members of the church tenaciously believe that if anyone wants spiritual power, he can go to the place and pray for such. It is regarded as the climax of prayer spots in Ajaye holy place. Prayers offered on this sacred place are bound to be answered by God according to the testimony of the members.

This place is also known for miraculous provisions. Whatever may be the material need of the people all that is needed is for someone to get to the sacred place and pray. The manifestation of such miraculous was traced to the experience of the spiritual fathers of the church at the early period of the church. One day, they were hungry after retirement from prayers. They came to the spot and prayed that God should provide food for them. Miraculously, one man was claimed to have come from the bush and gave them tubers of yam. Shortly after the man gave those tubers of yam, they decided to trace him in order to appreciate him, thinking that he was in his farm land in a nearby spot, only to discover that he was nowhere to be found. They realized that it was an angel in human form, sent by God to them. Since then people have been experiencing miraculous provisions of God on the spots.

5.6.4 *Ilè-Àánú* (Mercy Ground) As a Sacred Place in African Apostolic Church

This is another sacred place at Ajaye Holy City. The original name of the place is *Ilè-Òwúró* or *Ilè Áárò*, meaning, the source. According to Ayegunle, it is believed among the members to be the first place where the founding fathers of the church pitched their tents when they came to *Igbó Àjàlù*, now *Òkè-Àjàyè*. It was claimed that it was the first spot where the sawyers who later became the founding fathers of the church pitched the first building of worship on the whole sacred place at *Igbó Àjàlù*, when they were led to the place.¹²⁷ During our trip to Ajaye, the sacred place has a raised altar decorated with marble on the spot. There is a fairly modern house erected on the spot. It was reported to be the first place of worship for the church. The environment of the sacred place was kept neat, though it was not plastered or cemented perhaps, this may be for spiritual reasons. One instruction that must be observed while going there is that one must remove his shoe. This may be due to the reverence accorded the place as a sacred place. Also, there may be hygienic reasons for this practice.

The principal spiritual function of this sacred place according to the members interviewed is mercy bestowal. There are also healings of various kinds taking place in the sacred site. The sacred place got its name changed from *Ilè-Òwúró* or *Ilè Áárò*, to *Ilè-Àánú* due to the spiritual functions, manifestations and experience of people. The sand on the ground of the place is believed to be potent and efficacious for diverse miracles. So, the people would come and take some quantity of sand from the spot for spiritual use. After taken the sand, the people would mix it with soap, sponge and take their bath with it. When miracles and answers to their prayers began to manifest they realized that the place had spiritual potencies. It was the experiences of the people that led to the change of the original name of place from *Ilè-Òwúró* or *Ilè Áárò* to *Ilè-Àánú*.

Other spiritual functions and peculiarities of this sacred place are rain making in particular and miraculous provisions. The members of the church who were interviewed revered the place as a result of its efficacy on rain-making. It is believed that he who goes there to pray for rain will surely experience the rainfall. They are afraid of toiling with prayers on rainfall while on the ground. Even in the time of drought, when one prays for rainfall, it will surely rain. Joshua Alademomi narrated an incident when one late Reverend Osunkeye, the first principal of African Apostolic Church Bible College at Lagos brought some seminarians to Ajaye. They all went to pray on *Ilè-Agbára* and it happened in a dry season. One of the seminarians doubted the efficacy of the spot and said

¹²⁷This oral interview was granted by Revd. Isaac Ayegunle who is the National Sunday Superintendent of the Church and the Director of Education of the African Apostolic Church worldwide.

“but they said it would rain anytime one prays on this spot; now it is dry season, let rain fall now”. Before they went further to where they lodged, there was a heavy rainfall. Though the seminarian was not a member of the church, he witnessed the power of God on the spot and he prostrated.

The question on our lips is, must all go there for prayer for rainfall at all times? Is it not idolatrous, magical and fixing God on a spot in prayer for rain? Above all, is God limited to this spot before He could give rain? What about the ordinance of God in nature and the covenant with seasons as long as the earth remains according to Genesis chapter 8:22? The reality is that God made a covenant with adherents of this denomination on the *Ilè-Agbára*. It is their peculiar covenant and the way God is dealing with them. In our own opinion, prayer for rain can be made on the spot while in drought or need but it is not binding on the rest or people that do not share the same religious belief with them. The land is also known for crowd pulling effects in churches. According to J. A. Alademomi, when the sand of the sacred place, *Ilè-Àánú* is collected and brought to a church that is experiencing retardness and is not growing in population, it can definitely experience changes.¹²⁸ The sand of the sacred place is reported to have crowd pulling power if it is used with faith. One only needs to take a quantity of the sand of the ground and take it to the church in question; then there will be miracles of numerical growth.

Another spiritual potency of this sacred place is the fact that it can confer the power of completion on any building project embarked upon, especially if the problem attached to it is spirit related one. That is, if someone has been on a building project for a long time and unable to complete it due to bewitchments. It is believed by the Church adherents that if the sand of the sacred place is taken to the site, it will bring about the miracle of completing the construction of the building in time through divine provisions.

A critical look at the way the adherents of African Apostolic Church use the spiritual materials at their disposal betrays cultural influences. African culture believes in the efficacy and animation of objects such as sand and air as essential elements in spiritual ventures. The invocation of land or sand is well at home in African traditional setting. It is believed that the sand “hears” words and can respond to invocations and prayers. The influence of African culture and practice on this spiritual practice among African Apostolic Church members cannot be denied in as much as they are Yoruba people coming out of African traditional religion, culture and background. The difference in their practice could be pointed out in the area of using the name of Jesus Christ and biblical

¹²⁸Alademomi, J.A. *An oral interview* granted.

verses instead of incantation as obtains in African traditional setting. At same time, we can see one of the positive contributions and influence of African traditional religion on Christianity especially in Ekitiland. Also, the people on the other hand as Africans, can integrate their culture and blend it with Christianity without any friction.

Our attention has been called to the Earth cult and veneration in Yorubaland. This is because it is believed to be inhabited by certain spirits. This belief cannot be separated from the fact that Yoruba creation story involved the generosity of the Earth to cover the deep for man's living through the instrumentality of Obatala the arch divinity of Yoruba gods.¹²⁹ The creation myth of the Yoruba is of the view that originally the land was covered with waters but the earth was spread on it and it became a solid ground and habitable for man. Besides, when *Olodumare*, God of the Yoruba sent *Obatala* or *Orisanya* to create man, he used clay or earth to mould human forms before *Olodumare* gave him breath.¹³⁰ It is believed in Yorubaland just like the Genesis Creation story that man came from the earth. When a man is born, the first place to touch is the earth. He lives and walks on earth during his life time. And when he dies at any age, his remain is committed to mother Earth. Man cannot do without the earth from the cradle to grave.

Yoruba people are farmers and they depend on the produce from the earth for their sustenance. It is the source of their food crops, brooks, well waters, streams, lakes, rivers and ponds. It is viewed as productive through the creation of man from the earth and his sustenance through crops and food stuffs. Thus the Yoruba view and present the earth as being productive, significant and concluded that there must be some spirits dwelling inside it. Thus, it is venerated, worshipped and invoked when occasions arise. It is given a sense of animation in Yoruba belief and practices. The Earth spirits are revered with the first fruits of the farm produce in some occasions. The Earth is invoked either for blessings of the recipient or attacks against perceived enemies and victims. According to Adewale "water libation is poured on Earth goddess in order to repair any damage (sins or offences) that might have been done to the relationship between the worshipper and the supernatural by assuaging the wrath of the supernatural and appeasing them".¹³¹

With all these, it is apparent that the Yoruba believe in the animation of the Earth and its religious benevolence to man's existence. Mbiti opines that "the earth has many natural objects and phenomena" in African culture "and various concepts associate them

¹²⁹Awolalu, J.O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 4.

¹³⁰Awolalu, J. O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 12-13, 45.

¹³¹Adewale, S. A. 1986. "The Cultic Use of Water Among the Yoruba". In *ORITA Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XVIII/1 June*, 29.

with God or give them other religious meaning”.¹³² Africans do not doubt the pre-existence of earth before man and many tribes in Africa have a divinity of the earth or Earth gods or goddess. The indigenous Christian adherents would have been espoused to this rich African traditional cultural and religious beliefs and practices before the advent of Christianity in their towns and cities. The fact that they have the carryover of this religious practice to their new faith could not be denied.

The veneration or animation of the Earth in indigenous churches especially the *Aladura* is also displayed during their prayer sessions. The preachers and prophets of these churches believe that the earth can be invoked for spiritual reasons. They believe that you can speak to the earth and it would respond to your words. Hence we heard them saying, *bá ilé sòrò*, meaning, “speak to the earth” during revivals and prayer meetings. After this, a prayer point would be raised for the adherents to offer. At times, their members would be asked to touch the earth and invoke it three times before the prayers are offered. Our experience during the services of these churches revealed that at times they would touch the earth and offer prayers. These types of prayers range from defence, blessings, prosperity on the land to imprecations and revenge. At times, they believe that it is more potent and efficacious while praying that you touch the earth bare footed. Hence, sometimes the members would be asked to remove their shoes so that there would be direct contact with the earth during prayers.

There is another practice by the adherents of the indigenous churches to show their belief in the potency and animation of the earth which is worth of mentioning. The practice is to ask the members to go to their houses, new buildings under construction especially and bring a quantity of its sand to the church for prayers. It is believed that having prayed on it and it is mixed with the sand of the building; there would be answers to the prayers offered. If the construction has been slowed down by unknown and unseen forces, due to the prayers offered, it would be rendered impotent. At times, certain portions of the book of Psalm can be directed to be read to it before it is poured to the new building under construction.¹³³

They also demonstrate this belief in the animation of the earth through songs. For instance, there is a chorus that goes thus which is common to the indigenous churches during prayer meetings:

¹³²Mbiti, J. S. 1979. *African religions and philosophy*, 54.

¹³³This was discovered during a revivalistic prayer meeting in African Apostolic Church, Oke-Ajaye during their annual national conference.

Ilè, gbó òrò Olúwa,
Ilè, gbó òrò Olúwa,
Láti òní lo,
Mà gbé orí re,
Mà s'ohun rere,

meaning,

Oh earth, hear the word of the Lord,
Oh earth, hear the word of the Lord,
Henceforth, I will live on you,
And I will do good and prosper.

After this instruction, and singing this chorus, a prayer point would be raised for the adherents to offer.

When we interviewed the adherents whether the practice of animation of elemental force such as earth has biblical support? Their respond was amazing. They pointed out that the earth was older than man by virtue of creation. And what is older could be greater in spiritual enterprise as an element. A Yoruba saying was quoted thus: *Ilè l'àgbà*, meaning, “the earth is the greatest” or “the earth is the oldest”. This is typically African in nature and cultural beliefs. The earth heard the voice of God when he was creating the world and it obeyed the voice of God. It responded to the command of God (cf. Gen. 1:11ff). The mystery of the earth was pointed out to be from the origin of creation. It was argued that if the earth could not hear, God would not have commanded it and it obeyed. The Mosaic experience with the earth was also alluded to while in Egypt. It is held that the earth holds miraculous powers when supported with the word of God. Exodus 8:16-19 was referred to in order to show the potency of the earth where God instructed Moses to perform a miracle through the instrumentality of the earth. The blessings that Isaac pronounced on Jacob and Esau were also attached to the earth. Thus, showing the fertility power of the earth, which can be tapped and experienced in spiritual matters (cf. Gen. 27:28, 39).

The reality that the earth could respond to any command issues out to be obeyed was also pointed in the Mosaic experience with the earth in Numbers 16. It was argued that Moses spoke to the earth through the authority of Yahweh that the earth should swallow his enemies when they conspired against him. Deuteronomy 32:1 was also quoted to support the animation of the elemental earth. It is reported that Moses was blessing the Israelites at the verge of his demise. He called on heaven and earth to hear his words. This connotes that the earth can hear and respond to words.

The inherent features of the earth like innumerability, expansion, fertility, productivity and durability and many more have been fully understood by Africans before the advent of indigenous churches. Many of the first generation and pioneers of the

indigenous church would have probably gained this understanding and known the secrets. To transfer these potencies to reality in African culture and practices need the backing of incantations in a traditional setting. The indigenous church adherents gain these spiritual in depths and it is being utilized. Instead of herbal concoctions, they hold prayers and instead of incantations, they use biblical words especially Psalms that are *akin* to traditional incantations. They believe they can transfer the blessing of the earth for their use; hence they make contact with the earth through touching, invocations in prayers, animation of the earth through spoken words. Some places on the ground are religiously designated to be sacred for prayer purposes.

Ilè-Áánu, Land of Mercy, as a sacred place in African Apostolic Church at Holy City in Ajaye is being patronised by many people; both the members of the denomination and non members. Our experience on the trip to the sacred place showed that people knelt down on the ground with all seriousness and began to ask for their various needs. After all, it was the experience of the people after they have had contact with the ground that changed the original name of the place, *Ilè-Òwúró*, the land of the source to *Ilè-Áánu*, Land of Mercy. It is the belief of the people that the mercy of God can be contacted on sacred places in this planet. This is due to the experience of the people after they might have gone round the globe, seeking solutions to their various problems and dire needs. On coming to a sacred place like this and get solutions to their problems and their prayers are answered, they attach spiritual importance to the place as being sacred. The questions are: Is the mercy of God fixed to a particular place in a particular denomination? What about other Christians who are not accessible to this place? Is the bestowal of mercy of God not His Supreme prerogative without any attachment? It should be noted that while we are not denying the spiritual reality of this sacred place, it is our view that God can show mercy to any one at any time and any place.

5.6.5 *Odò Jórídánì* (River Jordan) As Sacred Water and Its Religious Functions

Odò Jórídánì is an adulteration of biblical River Jordan as the name implies. It was a name given by the Holy Spirit through Joshua Adeyemi through a word of prophecy that the water would be called *Odò Jórídánì*, meaning, River Jordan. Originally, it was called *Omi Eríko* by the indigenes of the place. It is a small stream that strolls from the left hand side of the road that leads to the Holy City, the Vatican City of African Apostolic Church at Ajaye. Its source rises from *Osun-Igbo* in Igede Ekiti farm land. It could be regarded as one of the streams in the forest which people used for various domestic purposes and quenched their thirst from it. There was no importance or any spiritual significance

attached to this stream from the beginning even when the founding fathers of African Apostolic Church were in the forest for their plank business.

The spiritual attachment of the water started from 1939, the same year *Igbó Àjàlù* became *Oke-Ajaye*, the missionary headquarters of African Apostolic Church. It was this year, 1939 that Prophet Joshua Adeyemi prophesied in the name of the Lord God that God says “the water will be called *Odò Jòrídàní*, River Jordan, and it shall be for healings of all kinds and for all and sundry who have contact with the water”.¹³⁴ *Odò Jòrídàní* was the original utterance of Prophet Adeyemi according to our findings but for smooth pronunciation, it was called *Odò Jórdàní*. Since then, the name of the water has changed from *Omi Eríko* to *Odò Jòrídàní*, according to the prophecy through Prophet Joshua Adeyemi. Virtually today, no one remembers the original name of the water as *Omi-Eríko* but the sacred name fondly called *Odò Jòrídàní*.

The sacredness of the water could be traced to the prophecy uttered by Prophet Joshua Adeyemi. Africans are well at home with divine utterances either through oracular consultation or divination. Any word from the oracles are never doubted but regarded as divine and binding. It could not be a strange thing to the people around then when there was a prophecy from God through Prophet Adeyemi that *Omi-Eríko* should transform to *Odò Jòrídàní* -River Jordan- and it should be for healings of various kinds of sickness and diseases. It takes its cue from 2 Kings, Chapter 5 with the episode of River Jordan and the cleansing of Naman, the chief army of the Syrians. In those days, any prophecy without any correlation to the Bible would not be regarded as being genuine in church like this. So, to regard the prophecy of Prophet Adeyemi as genuine, one could point to the name “Jordani” in 2 Kings, Chapter 5. The healing power of God demonstrated in the water through Elisha as directed by God would no doubt make the people believe that God could use *Omi-Eríko* as healing source to people. But its name must change from *Omi Eríko* to *Odò Jòrídàní*. This could quickly change the mind of the people from seeing the water as ordinary to divine water, sacred water.

The transfer of power of healing to the water, the transformation of the water and its translation from a brook or stream in the farmland to sacred water could be attributed to the prophecy uttered by prophet Adeyemi. The religious sensibility of the people was attracted to the water as a result of the high view of religious significance attached to prophecy in the indigenous churches like African Apostolic Church. Through the prophecy, the spiritual in- depths of River Jordan in 2 Kings 5 for healing were transferred

¹³⁴An Oral Interview with Revd Alademomi.

to the *Omi Eriko* through its change of name to *Odò Jòridàni*. Its association with River Jordan of 2 Kings, 5 could be a mystery. But since it came through a divine instruction-a prophecy, and there was no doubt that Prophet Adeyemi was a prophet of God in the church, people have to believe this spiritual transformation for healing purposes.

The demonstrations and the healing powers of this water have been witnessed and experienced by various people from within and outside the denomination. The experience of a man with hernia that came to the water was relayed to me. The man had hernia for many years and he was directed to the water for healing. He came to the water and took his bath. Miraculously, the hernia disappeared and he was healed. He then went away without giving thanks to God who has healed him. On getting to his destination, he was being hunted by the angels of God for many days. Unknown to the ministers and members of the church at Ajaye about the incident, the man now came and told them his ordeal in the hands of the angels of God after his healing. After he has given the glory to God with thanksgiving, he was not hunted by the angels of God again.

God shows that the water is sacred and has been sanctified by Him, who can use any element to accomplish His goals. This was also demonstrated when a man was coming to the Holy City, in order to fight the people of God with charms. On getting to the bridge constructed across the water, he fell down suddenly and he started confessing his evil intentions. According to the testimonies of the people of the denomination, the water abhors dirty things, things associated with fetishism such as charms, armlets, native rings and idolatrous things. Principally, it is for healings of various kinds of sickness.

5.6.6 *Omi Amúbíiná* as Sacred Water and Its Spiritual Significance

Omi Amúbíiná, meaning, “fiery water” or “water that is as burning as fire” is a prominent water in the denomination among the sacred waters that belongs to the African Apostolic Church. It is highly revered among the members of the denomination. It is also regarded to be divine and its awesomeness is believed and protected. Our visit to the water shows that it is revered with high honour. This is demonstrated by demarcating it with bricks and planks with a gate as an entry point.

There are many guiding instructions associated with *Omi Amúbíiná*,; one of such is that no female member is allowed to go and fetch the water except a male member. In actual fact, on the sacred site of African Apostolic Church at Ajaye, there is a man who has been given the responsibility of fetching the water for whosoever visits the sacred

place and the sacred water in order to prevent the water from pollutions and preserve its sacredness.

Originally, this sacred water was being called *Omi lí Èré* by the villagers who were using the water before the advent of African Apostolic Church. It was also a stream that served the villagers for drinking and domestic purposes. It is situated on the land of Aramoko people in Ekitiland but very close to the boundary between Aramoko and Igede Ekitiland. The name of the water changed from *Omi lí èré* to *Omi Amúbíiná*, in the year 1939 through divine power and instructions. When we asked for the reason for the new name of the sacred water, *Amúbíiná*, it was reported that it was as a result of its instantaneous and efficacious effects on healing people on whatever may be the sickness, disease and general problem anyone may have and brought to the sacred water. *Amúbíiná*, is a compound word of two Yoruba words- “Amu” which means “sharp” or “sharp in cutting” or “sharp in effects”; and *iná*, means fire. The combination of the two means sharp in consumption, delivery and in effects as fire consumes anything it torches instantly. The sacred water is noted for its fierceness, fieriness and firing power to heal any sickness. It is believed to possess a consuming power as of fire in healing. The adherents of the church from Osogbo, the capital of Osun State in the south-west of Nigeria have given the sacred water another nickname. It is called “Ajebi idan”, meaning, “as efficacious as magical power” because of its sacredness and power for miracles.

According to the belief of the adherents of this denomination, the sacred water, *Omi Amúbíiná* is principally known for the healings of festering sores. It is due to its healing power that people have experienced that make people to always patronize it. They even invite others from various places to the sacred water for their healing. It was believed that the water has healed many people who were written off with sickness that could not be healed by western drugs and medical practitioners. Today, *Omi Amúbíiná* is firmly trusted and believed to hold healing properties as of old since 1939 because it was sanctified by Prophet Emmanuel O. Omotunde, the founder of the denomination. People of other denominations were met on the sacred site of the denomination with various sizes of water containers to collect and store the sacred water, *Omi Amúbíiná* for their solutions.

Another major miraculous function of *Omi Amúbíiná* is proffering solution to barrenness. Childlessness in African setting is viewed as a taboo or a curse placed on someone by gods or wicked people like witches and wizards. It is viewed as terrible as impotence in a man. Anyone in such a situation would seek all possible means to find solutions to his problem. This is because if a man or woman cannot produce offspring, his

lineage would be cut off on earth. So, to invite someone to water that could cure him or her would be gladly welcome. *Omi Amúbliná* is reportedly noted for its fertility power to give children to the barren women. A lot of people have received their joys and family harmony through childbearing by coming to the sacred water and drinking from it.

The methods of application of this sacred water in one's life situations are many. First of all, the fellow would need to collect the water, may be at a specific time as instructed by the prophet or at any convenient time. Afterward, the water would be stored in a container for storage in one's house. He or she may be required to drink from it at a particular time. Some may be put beside the sanctuary, that is why in most of these indigenous churches, there are sanctuary waters, that is, waters inside bottles or rubber kegs placed on the sanctuary or beside it for the transfer of the power of the Divine into it.

According to Adewale, among the Yoruba the belief is strongly held that:

The spiritual object of worship is always present in the sanctuary and that its presence will consecrate and hallow the sanctuary, its premises and everything in and around it including the water (placed there for spiritual reasons and solutions desired). Thus, it is believed that the pottery and the water too, have been consecrated and that the water has been given spiritual power to solve physical problems and enable the worshippers to achieve their desires.¹³⁵

At times, certain portions of the Bible like the Book of Psalm may be prescribed for this purpose. In other words, passages that relate to the issue of child bearing could be read into the water. If the person is on the sacred land for prayers from three to seven days, he or she may be asked to go and fetch the water as early as possible in the morning, when he or she could hardly meet anyone on the road for prophetic reasons as prescribed by the ministers of God in charge. Adewale corroborates this by submitting that such water is called "Omi aifo" in Yoruba, meaning "water without talking".¹³⁶ But in most cases, it is through drinking and bathing that people use the sacred water, *Omi Amúbliná* for their various spiritual needs. The cleansing and purifying effects of the sacred water are believed to be more potent when it has contact with both the physical and internal parts, the entrails of the supplicants for their solutions.

Omi Amúbliná is also known for taking care of all other general cases that defy solutions medically and traditionally. Its religious powers, functions and potencies are not limited to healing and curing of barrenness alone. If anyone is in any danger, chronic

¹³⁵Adewale, S.A.1986. "The Cultic Use of Water among the Yoruba". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XVII/1 June*. 33.

¹³⁶Adewale, S. A. 1986. "The Cultic Use of Water Among the Yoruba". 33.

problem of any sorts and so on, the inherent properties of *Omi Amúbíiná* can proffer solutions to them. During our trip to *Òkè Àjàyè* especially to *Omi Amúbíiná*, people were trooping to the sacred water in order to collect the water for their various solutions. Women were the largest number of people struggling for the water. Our interview and encounters with some of them showed that they were looking for the fruits of the womb, healings, solutions to spiritual attacks, the adult women were looking for victory over enemies that are troubling their children within and outside the country and many sorts of solutions were being sought for by having contact with the sacred water. The pulling and attracting force to the sacred *Omi Amúbíiná* according to the people is its instantaneous effects on any ailments within and without the lives of the faithful especially the adherents of the denomination.

5.6.7 *Omi Olútokín* and Its Religious Significance in African Apostolic Church

This is prominent sacred water in African Apostolic Church as a denomination. It is the first sacred water one would meet on his way to the sacred place of African Apostolic Church. The sacred water is small in size and it is surrounded by elephant grass, near a cocoa plantation. It is also situated on the left hand side on the road that leads to the sacred city of the church. There is an old bridge constructed across the sacred water on a sloppy arena. The water looked whitish as if it was mixed with sandy soil. It has a foot path that leads to the spot where the sacred water is located.

According to the adherents of this denomination, it is believed to be a sacred water of spiritual demarcation and boundary of *Òkè-Àjàyè* from other ground. That is, the sacred water is revered and regarded as the spiritual boundary of the sacred place of African Apostolic Church from other territory. As a spiritual boundary, it demarcates the sacred place of the denomination from the other territory and terrains. It marks and shows the spiritual entrance to the holy and sacred place of the church according to the adherents of the denomination in Ajaye. On getting to the spot of the sacred *Omi Olútokín*, it is believed that one has entered another realm from where he is coming from. He has entered a spiritual space and come to the spiritual boundary of the sacred place of African Apostolic Church at Ajaye Ekiti.

It is a common belief of the faithful of African Apostolic Church that when one gets to the spot of *Omi Olútokín*, he has entered a different realm and he should prepare for spiritual encounters on the sacred place of African Apostolic Church at Ajaye. Anyone that comes to the sacred place at Ajaye is expected to experience the spiritual and distinctive atmosphere that is believed to surround the sacred water and its environs and

be engulfed by the spiritual powers of the sacred *Omi Olútokín*. An instance was cited during the Old Western regional government, when some government officials came to the spot of *Omi Olútokín*. In particular, Major General Adeyinka Adebayo, Chief Fani-Kayode and other friends came to the sacred place at Ajaye. When they got to the spot of sacred *Omi Olútokín*, it was reported that Major General Adeyinka Adebayo exclaimed, “Ah! I have come to the holy and sacred city called Ajaye and the power of God is here indeed”, he remarked.¹³⁷

Besides functioning as a mark of spiritual boundary and demarcation to the entrance of the sacred place at Ajaye, *Omi Olútokín*, also heals any form of diseases and physical ailments. Its healing powers are religiously adhered to by the adherents of the denomination. It is notable sacred water in African Apostolic Church for the curing of skin diseases and incurable sore popularly called *Egbò àdààjìnà* in Yoruba language. It was reported that this sacred water *Omi Olútokín*, fights any prolonged sore like a wounded lion. Any prolonged sore is termed to be its chief enemy and the sacred water would fight it and heal it. According to the experience and witness of the interviewed adherents of the denomination, the efficacious power of sacred *Omi Olútokín*, has never been doubted for once. Many people drank from the water during our trip to the sacred water, not minding its colour due to rainfall and erosion that flowed to the sacred water. It is special sacred water for specific healings according to the belief of the adherents of the denomination.

One would examine some critical issues on these sacred waters in African Apostolic Church and the ways the faithful approach the water, the spiritual treatments and reverence they accord these sacred waters. It is our observation that these sacred waters have no scientific qualities of drinkable waters as expected. Good and drinkable water must be colourless, tasteless, without odour, without sediments and germs. In our participatory observation, we discovered that these sacred waters do not have these qualities. There are no rooms for testing or purifying these sacred waters. The people did not bother on all these qualities that are absent in these sacred waters. They have no regard for the dirt, germs, particles, tastes and colours of these waters. Our visit was during a continuous rainfall in May. So, there was erosion on every side and everywhere. Definitely, the erosion flowed to these sacred waters. Undoubtedly, they are medically questionable and scientifically poor for drinking and procuring sound healing and health. It is a paradox that “dirty”, “colourful” and “tasteful” waters are sources of healing and

¹³⁷Oral Interview by Revd Alademomi.

sound health to many. They are scientifically questionable but spiritually potent to proffer cures through divine power. This is spiritual, mysterious and miraculous to us.

Both the rich and poor struggling for these sacred waters did not mind their conditions nor consider their hygienic conditions. It is religiously and spiritually believed that all these colours, tastes and sediments are parts of the “components of their sacredness”. The healing powers flow through these materials to the waters as religiously believed by the faithful. It is our view that the level of the conditions and predicaments of the people make them defy all the conditions that may be attached to the clean and drinkable water. The quest for solutions and faith in particular that God could bring healings and solutions to their problems through these waters were highly adhered to by the people as they patronize these sacred waters. Outsiders may consider the patronage of these sacred waters as primitive, animistic or even fetish in nature.

We queried the people we interviewed by asking a question: “Where does the source of your healing, fertility and miracle come from?” The reply was that the source of their fertility and healing does not come from these sacred waters. Rather, it is their faith in God, the Ultimate Source of all healings, fertility and miracles that bring these blessings. We questioned further: “What roles then do these sacred waters play in their healing and the liturgy of the denomination?” They replied that they serve as media or channels; they serve as points of contacts between God and the humans. Since God could not be seen or touched except by faith. He uses these sacred waters to touch them and He releases His healing power to the waters in order to heal people. They were of the view that God is sovereign, ultimate and the Creator of the universe, He can use any of the elements He has created. Any animated or inanimate objects are believed to be at His disposal, so God uses these sacred waters as points of contacts. Any animated or inanimate objects are believed to be within his disposal and He can decide to use any to accomplish His purposes as channels or media of effecting plans.

Another critical look on the usage of these sacred waters is: Are these sacred waters not turned to idols to be revered with too much of awesomeness, veneration and respect? The popularity and religious publicity or advertisements attached to these sacred waters are the reasons people patronise them at various sacred locations. It is not the popularity and gospel advertisements of the grace of God to save sinners. It is the quest for healings, miracles, signs and wonders people can get through these sacred waters that draw them to these sacred places, hence their patronage. It is possible for people to cherish these sacred waters than their God and *idolize* them.

Another issue is the way these sacred waters are being approached at their locations. Inasmuch as the adherents have put their faith in these waters, there is high tendency to approach the spots and locations of the sacred waters as if *one is approaching a water goddess in a shrine*. This will definitely portend a theological danger to the Christian faith they profess. In the quest for healings, and seeking for solutions to diverse of problems facing them, people can be treating sacred waters as if they are honouring water goddesses in their abodes. God, who they worship can be turned to water goddess like *Yemoja*, who people believe could give wealth to the poor ones or as Awolalu observes, “if suitably provided for, can in return provide man’s needs”¹³⁸. In other words, it is possible that God can be viewed or equated with *Osun* the tutelary sea lord of a river in Osogbo, who is in charge of fertility and healing. A powerful sea divinity of the Ilaje people is called *Olokun* or *Malokun*. He is in charge of peace, wealth and prosperity of the people. One question arises: what is the difference between *Olokun* or *Malokun* of the water cult from Ilaje, for instance, that a man from the water cult knows that can give peace, healing and prosperity and the God of sacred waters he encounters in an indigenous church? Or if someone had been a worshipper of River *Osun* in Osogbo or *Malokun* in Ilaje or *Oya*, the river goddess of River Niger, how would he view the Christian patronage of sacred waters for fertility, healing, wealth, victory over the enemies and prosperity in one’s work and endeavour? All these call for caution the ways Christians in indigenous churches view and patronize sacred waters in particular despite the fact that their realities cannot be denied.

5.6.8 *Omi Ìbùkún* (River of Blessings) And Its Blessing Invoking Power

This is notable sacred water in African Apostolic Church with distinct function. It is popularly called *Omi Ìbùkún*, meaning “water of blessing”. According to the tradition in the denomination, its origin hailed from the prophetic ministry of Prophet Joseph Aribatise Aiyegunle. Prophet Aiyegunle hailed from Ekinrinade, Kwara State. He had the call to the evangelistic and prophetic ministry in the year 1940. He also ministered alongside with Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola in the early 1940s. He was gifted in the healings of the lunatics and people inflicted with incurable sores.

Omi Ìbùkún, is a small brook in between two small rocks on a sandy soil inside a cocoa plantation at Ajaye when we visited it. It could be said to be a brook from which someone could quench his thirst after a laborious and manual labour in his farmland. But

¹³⁸Awolalu, J.O. 1979. *Yoruba beliefs and sacrificial rites*. 47-48.

this water turned to be sacred water through the prophetic ministry of Prophet Joseph Aribatise Aiyegunle in the year 1940s. Actually, this brook that later turned to a sacred water was in his farmland and it is very close if not the closest to the sacred land of the African Apostolic Church. According to a direct source from one of his sons, Isaac Aiyegunle, the water became a sacred water in African Apostolic Church as a result of the prophecy through his father. Prophet Aiyegunle prophesied that God has turned the water to a source of blessings for His people.¹³⁹

Its specific and religious functions are to change the poor financial status of a person and bless him financially. It is called *Omi Ìbùkún*, meaning, “water of blessings”. It is reported that the water has been a source of financial blessings to many people after their encounters with the water. It has the power to bestow blessings to people according to the interview granted by Joshua Alademomi, Ezekiel A. Ajagunigbala and Isaac Aiyegunle, the direct son of prophet Aiyegunle. According to our findings, it was the aftermaths and experiences of people after they had collected the water, took their bath in the river and the changes they experienced in their business that increased the level of patronage of the sacred water-*Omi Ìbùkún*. Anyone who patronizes the water by collecting it, drinking from it and taking bath with the water always receive financial blessings and prosperity in their works and endeavours.

5.6.9 *Omi Aràròmí* (River of Comforts) and Its Fertility Functions

Omi Aràròmí, meaning, “water of comforts” is sacred water that the faithful in African Apostolic Church also revere and patronize. It is located besides a major stream, strolling from Igede Ekiti, Ekiti State. It is less than two feet in depth and bowl-like in size. It is inside a forest with foot paths to its location. The sacred water was said to be dug by one prophet Obisesan Atayero during his prophetic ministry. Prophet Obisesan Atayero was another notable Prophet in African Apostolic Church that ministered as a contemporary of Prophet Emmanuel Omotunde.

Its major spiritual function is fertility, in particular, the birth of male children to the barren women. Its child bearing power is the reason people patronize it within and outside the denomination. Many barren women had become fruitful and regained their fertility through their encounters with this particular sacred water. According to our finding, sacred water, *Omi Aràròmí* does not cure infertility alone, it is reported that the sacred water when drunk with faith in God, also functions by granting male children to

¹³⁹Isaac Aiyegunle is a direct son of late Prophet Aiyegunle. He granted this information in this course of this research, 19th May, 2010.

those who have been given birth to female children alone. A couple was mentioned who had been giving birth to female children alone. When the husband came to the sacred water and drank from it by faith, the next copulation led to the birth of two male children. Such is the power of the sacred water, *Omi Araròmi*.¹⁴⁰

From the above investigations and submissions it is glaring that there are sacred waters in African Apostolic Church as a denomination. These sacred waters have their various prophetic origins and declarations. They all have divine origins and specific instructions guiding them. In particular, they serve various religious functions and spiritual purposes as far as the faithful of the denomination are concerned. The sacred waters are living, powerful, with spiritual properties and potencies. They are viewed as waters established by God for various reasons ranging from healings, miracles, fertility, blessings bestowal and prosperity, victory over satanic attacks, poisons and male child bearing ability. These sacred waters are blessings from God to the denomination. As Africans, it is their belief that God is close to man even through the elements in nature and He can do all things. In line with Adamo's submission, these people believe that "this God can use any means (like sacred waters) to heal, protect, and bring success in all life endeavour".

In the ancient Israelite practices, there were ordinary waters which later on became sacred in later years. This was due to the fact that special miracles and events took place. For instance, River Jordan which was crossed by the Israelites on their way from Egypt under the leadership of Joshua became healing source during the time of Prophet Elisha (cf. Jos. 3-4; 2 Kgs 5.). The miracles of crossing the River Jordan by Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings Chapter 2 and crossing it by Elisha alone after the ascension of Elijah would have railed road an idea to the minds of the ancient Israel that it was a sacred water, much more the healing of Naman afterward.

Undoubtedly, African cultural practice on the use of water for healing and other reasons would have influenced the indigenous church adherents' practices of use of waters for healings. At the same time this does not rule out the divine revelation that the indigenous church leaders claimed. In essence, water therapy and water as a divine therapeutic tool in the hands of the indigenous church believers are well at home for a long time.

The danger associated with this practice in indigenous churches is degeneration to water worship. Water is a sacred element right from the ancient world. It has been an object of worship and water cults abound across the globe. There is nothing wrong in

¹⁴⁰J.A. Atobatele, 2010. *Oral Interview* granted on 20th May, 2010. Primate J.A. Atobatele is the current President of African Apostolic Church Worldwide. He oversees the church from Omuo Ekiti, Ekiti State.

patronising sacred waters for one's spiritual needs. But the danger of patronizing these sacred waters should not be in the manner of approaching water goddesses. Faith must be in God who heals and performs miracles. These sacred waters should be viewed as media to an end and not end in themselves.

It has been demonstrated how the selected churches in Ekitiland under this research came about the idea of sacred places. The origins of these sacred places have been unravelled with the influence of both Judeo-Christian traditions and African beliefs and patronage of sacred places. Both Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde upheld the socio-cultural and religious beliefs of Africans in sacred places and their patronage but in the light of Christian traditions and practices. They established those places as a result of the prophetic revelations and instructions given to them by God. The patronage of these places by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde enhances the spiritual power attached to the sacred places in the selected churches.

It should be said that some of the sacred waters were in existence before their evangelistic campaigns. They were meant for domestic and religious functions to the people; but when the revivals of Babalola and Omotunde broke out; they were taken over and sanctified for higher reasons. They were given biblical and Christian names according to the divine injunctions. For instance, *Omi Jórídáni*, was liken to the biblical River Jordan and it is meant for healing of various sicknesses till date.

The religious functions of the sacred places have been highlighted. These are the reasons behind their patronage since they have been consecrated. It is glaring that each sacred ground, water and mountain in the selected churches in Ekitiland has specific religious functions that it performs. The patronage of these sacred places is well rooted in the liturgies of the selected churches and it enhances their status as classical indigenous Pentecostal churches in Ekitiland and Nigeria.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 THE SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS EFFECTS OF THE BELIEFS IN AND PATRONAGE OF SACRED PLACES

6.1 The Socio-Religious Effects of Patronage of Sacred Places

The patronage of sacred places has been a common phenomenon in Yoruba religion. People in need found solace and succour in the patronage of the sacred places. Mere going to the places tagged to be religiously sacred would work on their psychological state of mind and they would have received certain relieves from the agonies of their problems. Before the advent of Christianity, the Yoruba visited sacred water sides, mountain, groves, forests and other nearby shrines and presented their requests. The annual festivals of major gods, divinities and ancestors in the town usually attract all and sundry from towns, cities and even from overseas countries like *Oloke* Mountain cult and others. People see this as an avenue to come home and interact with the villagers, townsmen and identify with their people and their “common” religion.

The patronage of sacred places has cultural values in Africa as well as in the indigenous churches. Africans patronise shrines, mountain cult shrines, riverine cults, shrines, groves, forests or nearby shrines. But with the advent of Christianity and the conversions of many people that took place, they found replacements or alternatives in the indigenous churches. The courage of the indigenous church leadership to adopt this African culture into their worship and liturgy earned them positive result of souls conversion to their assemblies and denominations contrary to what obtained in the mainline churches they left. On the side of the indigenous church leaders, it was an appreciation of African culture. On the side of the followers or adherents, it was an alternative where they could “see” and “speak” to God. The shrines have been replaced by sacred places in Christianity as alternatives where they were they had been used and could derive certain relieves in prayer.

The groves, hills and mountain tops which constituted great threats to a common man in African traditional religion have now become places where they could freely go to for prayer. For instance, the shrine of *Egule* in Ifira Akoko, Ondo State was on a mountain top. Odunayo describes the god better by submitting that “when this god (Egule) was arrayed during its festive days, it was a forbidden thing for anybody to call people’s attention to it by pointing a finger at it.”¹ No powerful hunter would go there for hunting

¹Ojo, J. O. n.d. *The life and ministry of Apostle J. A. Babalola*. 131.

expedition and make any success, provided he returns back alive to tell the story himself. At times, the python on the mountain in the bush could be brutal to any intruder. That was why Babalola was strongly persuaded by the Ifira people not to dare to go there. According to Odunayo “the then Oba of Isua, Onishua of Isua sent a high delegate to Babalola, including his brother, Mr. Daniel, Mr. B. Solomon, a court clerk, some policemen and host of others”² to watch if Babalola would go to the hill and if the dreaded python would allow him to come near the god, *Egule*. All this was to show how people feared shrines and some other sacred places in African religion then. The priest could only worship the god once in a year. Babalola ascended the mountain with his prayer bell in his hand, calling the name of Jesus Christ. All of a sudden, the black pot burst and the python ran away. He prayed over the pot and sanctified the mountain. On his way coming back, people drew near him; they saw the python and trod over it to death. Now the mountain is a tourist centre and a prayer mountain at Ifira Akoko, Ondo State.

The social impacts of the patronage of the sacred places on the communities that host them are surprising and many. The communities that host these sacred places in indigenous church were once small towns with little or no socio-economic significance to themselves and even state than where the people hailed from. One of the social effects of the patronage of the sacred places in these towns is the face uplift of these towns. Due to the patronage of sacred places, the citizens have seen the towns worthy of upliftments. This social effect has elevated some to local government headquarters status. Take for instance, Efon Alaaye Ekiti in Ekiti State; Efon Alaaye has become the headquarters of Efon Local Government. The effects of Christ Apostolic Church presence in the town in terms of local assemblies, residence of Babalola from 1931-1959, the establishment of a sacred Prayer Mountain, *Òkè-Ìségun*, establishment of primary and secondary schools, grammar schools and Teachers’ Training College in the town contributed to this. The inspiration received from all these contributed to the upliftments of the town. Corroborating this, Nabofa says, “people are keenly interested in religion because of its significance in the human society” and “religion is also regarded as a civilizing element.”³

Also, the towns that were next to a ghost city once upon a time are now witnessing visitors coming on daily basis due to the patronage of the sacred places situated there. These towns have “come alive” and become where people troop into and visit every day. When we cross checked the attendance records placed on these sacred places, it was

²Ojo, J. O. n.d. *The life and ministry of Apostle J. A. Babalola*. 133.

³Nabofa, M. Y. 1988. *Introduction to the study of religion*. Ibadan External Studies Programme Series. 2-3.

glaring that people in their hundreds visited the towns that host the sacred places on weekly basis. During our visit to *Òkè-Àjàyè* in May, 2010, people from Lagos, Ibadan, Benin, Badagry, Cotonou and other places came to the sacred places for their spiritual need. A rough estimate of the population of people living in Ajaye as a town could be given as less than one hundred and fifty people. But due to the patronage of the sacred places there, it is always a bubbling centre. Also, Erio, Efon Alaaye and Ido-Ile in Ekiti State are still towns with developing features. According to Joshua A. Ibidayo and Hezekiah Oni at Ido-Ile, people do not ceased from coming to the town daily due to the sacred places, *Orí-Òkè Ìyanu* and miraculous *Omi Babalolá* that are in the town.⁴ Through this, the people of the town meet other people from other tribes. There are social interactions in relationship; during spiritual exercises like joint prayers they all come together to pray. During our visit to Ido-Ile sacred places, many Ibo and the South-South people were there for prayers. The rhythmic songs and clappings they were singing filled the air.

Commenting on the economic activities of Efon Alaaye and its environs, Alokan submits that “the majority of them were humble and peace-loving farmers and cultivators. As there was no landless family in the town, farming with the use of primitive tools formed the major economy of Efon people.”⁵ Various forms of agriculture like farming, husbandry, production of palm oil, palm kernel oil, crafts like carving, carpentry, calabash and leather dressing, blacksmithing, designing of crowns and caps, entertainments, divination, palm wine tapping, cloth production and weaving, dyeing, soap making in its local forms, and marketing were the predominant economic activities in Efon Alaaye as well as other neighbouring Ekiti towns like Ido-Ile, Erio, Oke-Imesi, Ipole Iloro and host of others. Even during the era of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola, the places could not develop above these levels because when compared with major cities like Ibadan, Ilorin and Lagos, they could be termed “rural” towns. But with the constant patronage of sacred places in these communities and towns, there has been considerable economic growth in these towns. In the past people trekked the distance of these towns to other places, however, now the transportation system of these places has changed. The jobless youth of these towns have found at least something to lean upon. They are the popular “Okada” men, the motorcyclists in the town. Our trip to one of the sacred waters in Erio, *Omi*

⁴Joshua A. Ibidayo and Elder Hezekiah Oni are indigenes of Ido-Ile Ekiti, *an oral interview* granted.

⁵Alokan, J. A. 2004. *The origin, growth and development of Efon Alaaye Kingdom*. 141.

Olúwánífise at *Olúwánífise* village was made possible through a motorcyclist who transported us to the remote village in order to visit the sacred water.

There is an annual spiritual programme tagged “Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion” that takes place at *Ori Òkè-Àánú* in Erio Ekiti. It is being organized by Prophet Hezekiah O. Oladeji of Christ Apostolic Church Canaan Land, Omifunfun, Ondo State. It is strategically located at *Ori Òkè-Àánú*, in Erio Ekiti, one of the paramount sacred places where Babalola used to pray. During this programme, it is always business galore for the public transporters because people in their thousands flock to this sacred place, though, the transport fares used to be hiked by the transporters and the motorcyclists. Those motorists who have been in their motor park for hours and even days without making trip would have enough to transport to the sacred spot on these special days.

This is also applicable to *Òkè-Àjàyè* during our trip to the place. The towns would become rowdy and noisy because of the number of people. The buying and selling activities also increase in the town. Many food vendors, especially women who deal in selling of sachet water, bread, and milk, fruits such as oranges, apple, and banana and so on rejoice on daily, weekly and monthly basis as a result of the cash that flows to their purse. Due to the patronage of sacred places in these formally rural areas, the fruits, bread and simple edible materials sellers make more sales daily. People, who could not go down to the plain of the mountain, would readily find some young boys and girls running the errand for them at certain amount ranging from fifty naira and above. *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile has stair case running around six hundred steps. People who are on long fasting or who are not used to climbing such a long stairway find help from these errand boys and girls. They in turn have money to part with. Nevertheless, these are not without their economic side effects. Because people are many and there is likelihood of shortage of water and food supply, the vendors used to increase their prices and the worshippers had no option.

During our trip to *Ori Òkè-Àánú* in Erio Ekiti, we observed that the motorcyclists used to charge two hundred naira for transporting a passenger from the plain to the mountain top which is a distance of less than two and a half kilometres. The public transporters also charged high prices because they know that people are coming to the sacred places in their town. Looking at the financial capabilities of some of these worshippers, the fares might not augur well with them. Many at times people would be

stranded financially, especially people from long distant places like Ibadan, Lagos and the eastern part of the country.

The host communities of these sacred places are now witnessing certain developments in phases. As “rural” towns far from major cities, the categories of buildings constructed are made with mud bricks. Many indigenes of these communities were once scared of the environments due to cultural and religious beliefs and under development of these areas. But due to the patronage of the sacred places in these communities, things are now changing. Many educated and well to do indigenes of these communities are now coming home to settle down because of many socio-economic changes the towns have undergone due to the patronage of the sacred places located there. For instance, a retired provost of the College of Education, Ikere Ekiti, who is an indigene of Erio-Ekiti, retired and returned to Erio. He built a modern and beautiful edifice in the town. When we interviewed him, he told us that he is planning to construct a petrol station in the town as part of the development in the town. This has personal economic reasons for him but at the same time it is a strategic decision that would enhance the economic strength of the people through employment generation and uplift the town.

People come from far and near places with their motor cars to Erio Ekiti because of *Orí Òkè-Àánú* and the sacred waters, *Omi Kòsehuntì* and *Omi Olúwánífise* which are potent and efficacious in healings. The nearest place they could get fuel to their motor would be Ilesa axis which is about thirty to forty, kilometres to Erio Ekiti. Also, there is a modern hotel built by an indigene of the town and it is very close to *Orí Òkè-Àánú* for the accommodation of those who come to the sacred prayer mountain and others. Timothy Ikudayisi told us that it was a joint decision of the indigenes of the town to consider what to do in Erio Ekiti due to influx of people to the sacred places in the town in order to meet their needs;⁶ in the past, this was not so. Also, at Ido Ile, educated ones were found in the town, holding key positions both in the community and the church.

The indigenes of these communities are returning home and building modern houses there. The rationale behind this is the fact that people from metropolitan cities like Ibadan, Lagos, Ilorin, Akure, Benin, Warri, Asaba, Onitsha, Port Harcourt and so on are coming to places once regarded as “rural areas” for spiritual patronage of sacred places in their town. Supporting this idea, HRM Oba Benjamin Adesoba Adetoyinbo, Afinbiokin Okinbaloye II, the Elerio of Erio Ekiti submits that “since the commencement (patronage

⁶Ikudayisi, T. is a retired Provost of Ikere College of Education, Ikere Ekiti and a Pastor in Christ Apostolic Church in the town. He granted this *Oral Interview* in the course of this work.

of *Ori Òkè-Àánú*) of this programme, (Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion) our town has become more popular with influential people coming to the town everyday and this has brought development to commercial activities in the town”.⁷ He noticed the developmental changes that have come to the town due to the patronage of the sacred places there. Elder B.O. Adediran also remarks on the development changes that have come to Ido-Ile due to the patronage of the *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* and miraculous Omi Babalola that are there.⁸

The sacred places on their own have also received social changes. Then, they used to be “primitive” in outlook, with small bungalows constructed with mud bricks at the sites. But now, when we visited the sacred *Ori Òkè-Àánú*, we saw new constructions going on there. A modern church auditorium of one thousand capacities has been constructed. There are modern chalets being constructed there for accommodation purposes. Olu Alo, a care taker and evangelist on the prayer mountain remarks that “the environment (at *Ori Òkè-Àánú*) is equally developing; apart from the church auditorium, Apostles J.A. Babalola’s house, men and women hostels inherited by the current workers and others have been developed”.⁹ There is another magnificent church auditorium that is under construction on the prayer mountain at Erio Ekiti. Administrative blocks are under construction too and prominent members of the society are building houses there too. There is one Madam Erelu who is embarking on the construction of a number of rooms on the sacred place. This is aimed at accommodating people who patronise the place.

At Ido-Ile, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* also has its share of social changes. To climb the mountain was tedious task in the time past. But according to Adediran, “there is now a flight of steps constructed through a pledge by a young lady at the cost of over N600,000.00”¹⁰ People can now climb the mountain through stairs of over five hundred steps to the top of the mountain. During our visit to the mountain, there is a new and modern auditorium for worship on the mountain. Then it was a small mud brick auditorium, which the people used for worship with two small bungalows for accommodation.

⁷HRM Oba Benjamin A. Adetoyinbo, JP, Afinbiokin Okinbaloye II, The *Elerio* of Erio Ekiti, “A Speech Delivered During the 8th Edition of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion at *Ori Oke Aanu*, Erio” in *Programme Magazine*, June 2010, 6.

⁸Adediran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church at Ido-Ile*. 49.

⁹Olu Alo, 2010. “A Speech Delivered During the 8th Edition of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion at *Ori Oke Aanu*, Erio”. *Programme Magazine*, 7.

¹⁰Adeniran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church at Ido-Ile*. 49.

Orí Òkè-Ìségún at Efon Alaaye as another sacred place under our focus too had received a total change. New accommodations have been built and a big auditorium of one thousand capacities has also been built there. According to Olu Aromibose, a man made a pledge of one million naira for the construction of road to the *Orí Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye.¹¹ During our visit to the place, the road had been bulldozed and motorists can now drive straight to the mountain top with ease, unlike before when it used to take sweating and gasping for air while climbing the mountain. Also, *Orí-Òkè Àjàyè*, as a sacred place has a road access from the federal road that links Ilesa and Ado Ekiti. Though not tarred but the adherents of the denomination with little aids from people were able to construct a road to the sacred site. So, it is vivid that the social development accredited to the sacred mountains and waters do not only improve the status of the towns, it also has a direct influence on the sacred places.

All these sacred places have electricity supply from the plain to the mountain tops. This was not so before but due to the patronage of these sacred sites, people donated money and made pledges for this social amenity and the places were electrified. Besides the sacred waters around these sacred places, there is pipe borne water supply at *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile. But in other places, people used the sacred waters and water in sachets and bottles for their domestic purposes.

The social effects of the patronage of these sacred places also include the promotion of peace and unity among tribes that meet there. During our visit to *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido Ile, many Ibo and south-south people were there for prayers. In actual fact, it was reported to us that some Ibo and south-south people are renovating the third mountain top used by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola. It is thrilling that people from such areas are doing something on a land that is far from their native towns. Various tribes meet and interact with people they did not know before on these sacred places. This promotes peace, cordiality and cohesion among people in prayers. It also promotes peace and unity among adherents of Christian faith. On the sacred places, there is no denominationalism but oneness among the believers during prayer sessions, neither is there tribalism. These sacred places unlike conventional church auditoria open up opportunities for Christians from various tribes and denominations to come together and pray and from this spiritual cum social gathering, harmony, peace and unity are introduced and promoted.

¹¹Pastor Olu Aromibose is the current Chairman Pastor of Christ Apostolic Church Efon Alaaye Districts Coordinating Council. He shared this during the *Annual Pastors' Conference* of the Church that was held on 5th -8th September, 2010 at Ikeji-Araokeji, Osun state.

The religious effect of the patronage of these sacred places includes the conversion of many people from other faiths like Islam and Traditional Religions to Christianity. When people are in serious dangers, sickness, attacks and problems, they normally put their religion or denominations aside. Through invitation to special programmes organized on these sacred places and through friends and relatives, many adherents of other faiths have patronized these sacred places and got converted to Christian faith. The attendance register placed on these sacred places show that people of other religions through their names patronize these sacred places. Many have been converted and renounced their former religion for Christianity. Supporting this, Adediran observes that the town, Ido-Ile has benefited greatly in several ways through the establishment of Christ Apostolic Church and the sacred places in the town. “The effects are mostly on the traditional religion which has now been completely wiped out in Ido Ajhinare”.¹² All the divinities that were once worshipped in the town like *Ogun*, god of Iron, *Olookun*, divinity in charge of new maize, *onimejo*, a divinity in charge of new yams production and its festival, Ifa divinity which was peculiar to the King of the town, *Osun*, a water goddess in charge of fertility and caring for the small children, *Esu*, a diabolical divinity in charge of chaos and calamities, *Sango*, god of thunder, secret cultism and even Islamic religion have been totally wiped out in Ido Ile till date due to the influence of Christ Apostolic Church and the sacred places at Ido Ile. Therefore, the religious and spiritual influence of these sacred places is that they serve as avenue for conversion of sinners.

The effective power of prayers has been proven to people without any aid of traditional means. People now depend on power of prayer as a means of receiving from God what ever they want. Prayer programmes have now increased in the towns that host these sacred places. Adediran, testifying to these religious effects submits that “many people now believe in the efficacy of prayers... everybody now even the missionary churches attend morning and evening prayers for God’s guidance and protection”.¹³

A major religious effect of the patronage of the sacred places in these communities is their positive resultant effect on the lives of the kings of these communities. We met HRM Oba Benjamin A. Adetoyinbo (JP), Afinbiokin Okinbaloye II, the Elerio of Erio Ekiti, one on one in the course of this research. He professes to be a Christian and rejoices that Christianity is gaining more ground in his town, Erio Ekiti. He remarks “that once you have close relationship with God, He make(s) things work for you to your greatest

¹²Adeniran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church at Ido-Ile*. 49.

¹³Adeniran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church at Ido-Ile*. 49.

surprise. “I tell you that it is a good thing to serve the Lord and worship the King of kings and the Lord of lords”, he says. In Erio, we worship no idols but Jehovah El-Shaddai”¹⁴ These were his remarks during a spiritual event on the sacred place, *Ori Òkè Àánú* at Erio Ekiti.

Ido-Ajinare now Ido-Ile has been a lucky town since the advent of Babalola revival, in the town. Oba Orisatola Arojojoye was the reigning king of Ido Ajinare during Babalola’s revival. He was the one who gave out a portion of land to the church for her building construction. The incumbent king HRM Oba Augustine Aderemi Obaleye Otutubiosun II is a Catholic member who is also a committed Christian. Our investigation reveals that he regularly carries the entire populace to *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* (CAC Prayer Mountain) every quarter for special prayers for the people and for the progress of the town. However, this is not to say that all things went on well for Christ Apostolic Church and the patronage of sacred places in the town. For instance, it was in the town that Babalola was first arrested and taken to the District Officer at Ado Ekiti in October, 1931. People were disappointed and their enthusiasm was dampened. Members of the fellowship were ridiculed and derided. They were ridiculed and called names such as *tabanako*, *olokuta*, *aselodi*, *olomitutu*, and many other unfavourable names by mainline church members.¹⁵

The patronage of sacred places in these selected areas in Ekitiland has resulted into a high Christian life of the Kings in these areas. Like Oba Augustine Aderemi Obaleye, Otutubiosun II, the Olojudo of Ido Ile, he is a prayerful king who mobilizes his chiefs and the entire populace of the town for quarterly prayer retreat on *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido Ile. During a three days revival organized by CAC authority on 13th-15th November, 2009, it was the king who led the city-wide jubilation and dancing round the town, giving glory to God. HRM Oba Benjamin A. Adetoyinbo, Afinibiokun Okinbaloye II, the *Elerio* of Erio also narrated an incident that he was in a meeting among other kings in Ekitiland. With all seriousness, they all said to him, *Bàbá Ori Òkè, gbàdùrà fún wa, ká tó bèrè ipàdé*, meaning, “the father of the prayer mountain, pray for us before we start the meeting”.¹⁶ This was a particular reference to the sacred places in his domain and their religious influence. He even confirmed the patronage of the sacred *Ori Òkè-Àánú* in his town by

¹⁴HRM Oba Benjamin A. Adetoyinbo, JP, 2010. “A Speech Delivered During the 8th Edition of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion at *Ori Òkè-Àánú*, Erio”. *Programme Magazine*, Jun.10, 6.

¹⁵Adeniran, B.O. 2009. *The History of Christ Apostolic Church at Ido-Ile*. 19.

¹⁶HRM Oba Benjamin A. Adetoyinbo, JP, 2010. “A Speech Delivered During the 8th Edition of Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola Power Explosion at *Ori Òkè-Àánú*, Erio”. *Programme Magazine*, Jun. 10. 6.

other kings. Other kings may be there for security reasons and see prayers as rituals without necessarily giving their lives to Jesus Christ. Or other kings may be there for religious purpose without professing Christian faith to the point of conversion anyway.

Due to the patronage of these sacred places in these environs, religious activities have increased. In the recent past, few programmes were being conducted on these sacred places. But now that economic hardship is biting hard on the populace, many are jobless and some are abruptly disengaged from various parastatals yet they must survive. The religious instinct in man teaches him to seek solutions from the divine. There are many broken marriages and many youth especially the spinsters who are tired of prolonged single life. Spirit-related sickness, attacks, nightmares, witch-hunting, mysterious insanity, broken contracts, lack of contract for contractors, failure in political and career pursuits and the likes are prevalent in the country. All these factors have driven many to seek refuge and solace in God. The places where they believe to meet Him urgently and receive answers to their prayers are these sacred places. The *Bàbá Ori-Òkè*, prophets and ministers of the gospel who had been expecting great patronage of their sacred places find the people coming to the sacred places as answers to their prayers. Either genuine or not, they have looked for various prayers activities on the sacred places. Occasional vigils or fasting are strategically displayed to tie the people to the sacred places. Some of these prayer events are clothed with the prophetic garments. Africans being religious as they are would not resist the prophetic voice, calling people for prayers and means to their solutions. These factors have increased the religious activities on the sacred sites in these communities.

Babalola's spiritual life styles were imbedded in fasting, prayers and mountaineering. The mountain tops were his second home for rest after a long journey and as hide outs. Through divine inspiration, revelation and guidance, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of CAC and Prophets Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde, Michael Ajagunigbala, Joshua Adeyemi, Aiyegunle, Obisesan and Alademomi of African Apostolic Church denomination established several sacred places such as *Ori Òkè-Àdùrà*, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu*, *Ori Òkè-Àánú*, *Ori Òkè-Ìségun*, *Ori Òkè-Àjàyè* and sacred waters. People are patronizing all these till date. Olusheye submits that "several other CAC ministers later established more prayer mounts, including *Akinkemi* hill (by late President/Pastor/Oba Isaac Babalola Akinyele) Ede Hill, (popularly called *Ori Òkè Bàbá Àbíyè*, by late prophet S.O. Akande,

Baba Abiye), Ikoyi Hill, (by Pastor/Evang. D.O. Babajide)".¹⁷ Other ministers of the gospel from various denominations have copied this and have established prayer camps, Prayer Mountains, prayer retreat centre and dedicated certain wells dug around their church premises. This is so as a result of the spiritual benefits, effects and advantages they have received through the patronage of the sacred places.

Unfortunately, the proliferation of Prayer Mountains, sacred prayer centres and dedicated sacred waters has become a challenge to the Christian religion to an extent. Many of these sacred places have become ritual centres due to many rituals in the name of religion that are being carried out there. It is difficult to differentiate between traditional shrines from some of the Christian sacred places as a result of ritualistic rites, bathing and practices that are going on there. Some could only be regarded as "sexual centre" because of promiscuous activities of the spiritual custodians and the members over there. Some leaders in some sacred places have turned them as the real "seat of God" and "miracle centres" without which no one can receive anything from God. Olusheye notices this while he remarks, "the proliferation of prayer mountains in Nigerian, while not totally denounced or derided, requires a note of caution here, to all operators of these prayer mounts, not to pollute them with unscriptural and sinful behaviours..."¹⁸

Beside the proliferation of the sacred places in our society, the sand, stones, granites, waters and other materials on these sacred places have become sources of income to the custodians of the places in our society. In some sacred places, olive oil bottles are prayed over, some special locally made soap or self compounded soap with honey, salt with certain portions of the book of Psalms read into it are being sold to people. They are popularly called *Oróró Bàbá Ori Òkè*, meaning "olive oil prayed over by the prophet in charge of the prayer mountain" or *Ose Bàbá Ori Òkè*, meaning "soap prayed over by the prophet in charge of the sacred place". They charged people with exorbitant price for all these materials. Even the sacred waters are sold in some areas to people who cannot go to the place or the prophet would manipulate the client as if, should he or she go and fetch the water, it would not be as efficacious as if he is the one who goes there and fetches it. This is a religious manipulation and priest-craftiness.

There are some olive oils that have become "magical power" and "money producing oil" on sacred sites. They are portrayed as possessing power to enrich the buyers when introduced and bought. They called people to buy it and take it home,

¹⁷Olusheye, E.H.L. 2010. *The Legacy of our church Patriarchs*, Ibadan: Gideon Global Press. 58.

¹⁸Olusheye, E.H.L. 2010. *The Legacy of Our church Patriarchs*. 58.

promising them that it will make them automatic millionaire even though they are jobless and/or without any certificate for job security. This is being carried out during the fund raising time in some sacred places. Due to the remoteness of the locations of some of the sacred waters, people who go there on behalf of others also charge financial rates for their errand. Some of the stones on these sacred places are being taken away by people who patronize them. It was their belief that they possess powers of prayers and the objects have spiritual potencies. For example, Pastor Ilesanmi¹⁹ lamented that people have almost taken all the stones used by Babalola to design his prayer spot in *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* in Erio Ekiti away one by one. This may be due to the fact that people perceive them to be potent, powerful and blessing carriers. So the presence of those materials connotes the presence of God, or His power in their domain. It is possible that some may religiously see them as tutelary gods in their abode for security reason. Dogmatically, some may perceive them as carriers of the prayers of Babalola to their abode or place of work. This raises fundamental questions. Is this not “Christian idolatry” in a disguise? Is this not syncretism in Christianity? Are there totemic objects in Christianity that carry the power of the Divine and transfer it to the abode of the adherents of Christianity? This reveals the stubbornness of religion in man. As far as these people are Africans, this idea reveals the African nature in them as far as religion is concerned.

The abuse of prophetic office and prophetism should be mentioned as part of the religious side effects of the patronage of the sacred places. Most of the religious personages on the sacred places are prophets and evangelists. As Africans, and Yoruba in particular, divination and oracular consultations have been in the land since inception. For instance, *Ifá* consultation was part of Yoruba traditional religion which the Yoruba consult on nearly every occasion. Adewale describes it this way, “*Ifa* is the geomantic form of divination connected with the cult of *Orunmila*.... It is so popular in Yorubaland that almost every important event in life is regarded to the situation(s)”.²⁰ In every situation in Yoruba societies, *Ifa* oracle is consulted to know the past, the present and future situations. It is a means of guiding the society and people trust the oracle coming from *Ifa* consultation. Corroborating this, Bolaji Idowu affirms that “*Ifa* is very popular in Yorubaland. The Yoruba are rather impatiently curious about the future or what the

¹⁹Pastor Peter Ilesanmi is the current Superintendent Pastor in charge of *Orí Òkè-Àánú* in Erio Ekiti.

²⁰Adewale, S.A. 1987. “The Role of *Ifa* in the Work of the 19th Century Missionaries”. In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XII/1 June, 23.

outcome of an enterprise may be; and they regard *Ifa* as a sure and unfailing source of comfort: their faith in it is complete”.²¹

The Yoruba converts in Christianity apparently have this mentality of oracular activities and prophetic consultation when Christianity came to their land. In actual fact, according to Omoyajowo “it was one of the major reasons that led to the advent of indigenous Precious Stone in Ijebu Ode in 1918”.²² It looks that the prophets in the sacred places understand the religious psychology of the people and they capitalize on this. Many prayer events are organized and coined in the prophetic voice since they know it would pull crowd. But unfortunately, God might not be the one speaking but a mere imagination of the prophet. Many anointing oil or olive oil bottles have been sold to people at exorbitant prices for “prosperity” of those who are undergoing economic hardship in the name of prophetic proclamation and hearing of voices from God. But to some it is finding a way of enriching themselves. Despite all these abuses, the patronage of sacred places impinges their persistence and stubbornness on the religious psychic apparatus in man in our land from nooks and crannies of the nation.

The renovations of sacred waters in these sacred places have been well packaged due to the patronage of these sacred places. *Omi Kòshuntì* in Erio Ekiti, *Omi Òni* in Efon Alaaye and *Omi Babalolá* in Ido-Ile are well built with modern outlooks and befitting constructions. In the last few years they were not like that. This is another social and religious effect of the patronage of the sacred places in these towns. The patronage of the sacred places in indigenous churches proffers solutions to the problems of many. They are replacements of traditional pilgrimage and patronage of traditional “idolatrous” groves, shrines and forests. The converts of traditional religion to Christianity find succour these sacred places in Christianity. Instead of *Ifa* divination, they find the prophetic office as alternative where they could hear from God and know their state of affairs. Certain cultural songs are “Christianized” and changed to Christian tunes and words. For example; the song in praise of heroism of Moremi and Oluorogbo her only son that goes thus:

Moremi a ja soro lyrics become

Jesu mi a pe juba with the same beat, syllables and tunes.

Instead of rituals, people now offer prayers to the God of the Bible. The incantations are replaced with the reading of the biblical text especially the Book of Psalm which function and is akin to traditional incantations in Yoruba context.

²¹Idowu, E.B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*. 76.

²²Omoyajowo, A. 1982. *Cherubim and Seraphim: The history of an african independent Church*. 8.

6.2 Other Christian Perceptions of Sacred Places in Non-Indigenous Churches

The existence and beliefs in sacred places are peculiar to indigenous churches especially to the Yoruba in the South West in Nigeria. These indigenous churches include Christ Apostolic Church, African Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, the Church of the Lord (Aladura), Celestial Church of Christ, the Zionist Churches and the likes. These indigenous churches were founded by Africans, especially the Yoruba people, as a result of many factors that compelled them to Africanize Christianity.²³ The beliefs in patronage, rules and regulations safeguarding the sacred places in indigenous churches vary from one denomination to another. The example of Cherubim and Seraphim will suffice to illustrate this. In Adegoke's submission, "the Cherubim and Seraphim most sacred place is the church which is referred to as "House of Prayer" (Matt. 21:13; Isa. 56:7)".²⁴ There is also a chancel or an altar which is located on the eastern side of the **House of Prayer** with a boldly written inscription: "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty at the entrance. This place is meant only for the *Alàgbà*, meaning the Elders in the church who must be in the worship garments before they can enter this place. Any one without the white garment would not be allowed in. This is treated with a great veneration and honour. It is also regarded as a sacred place.

In Cherubim and Seraphim, other places like sanctified mountains, wilderness, forest, open solitary savannah desert, river banks, seas shores and others could be regarded as sacred places. Adegoke opines that "these places, once identified as good enough for meditation (Mk. 8:23) are accordingly demarcated and consecrated in accordance with specified practice and procedures".²⁵ Members are encouraged to use these places for prayers. They are regarded as sacred places which are different from other "profane" places. In search of sacred places, he submits that "sometimes a secluded part of the church may be demarcated and sand filled to serve as a sanctified sanctuary for prayers. This is popularly called *Ilè Àánú* in Yoruba, meaning "Land of mercy".²⁶ But this does not

²³For detail on this see Adamo, D. T. 2005. *Reading and interpreting the Bible in African indigenous churches*, Benin: Justice Jeco Press and Publishers Ltd. 23-44 and Adamo, D. T. 2005. *Explorations in african biblical studies*, Benin: Justice Jeco Press and Publishers Ltd., 17-21.

²⁴Adegoke, J. 2004. *The Cherubim and Seraphim: beliefs and practices*. Oshogbo: Iwaloye Adegoke Press. 40.

²⁵Adegoke, J. 2004. *The Cherubim and Seraphim: beliefs and practices*. Oshogbo: Iwaloye Adegoke Press. 27.

²⁶Adegoke, J. 2004. *The Cherubim and Seraphim: beliefs and practices*, Oshogbo: Iwaloye Adegoke Press. 40.

mean that the denomination does not have specific mountains and hill tops as sacred places.

There are Prayer Mountains that are regarded as sacred places where they could go and pray. This could not be separated from the fact that in Yoruba cosmology, mountains could be places where one can meet God or where God dwells.²⁷ According to Omoyajowo, “it is the impression that mountains and hills could be the living places of God that inspired Moses Orimolade to send his lieutenants to consecrate *Olorunkole* hill and set it apart as a sacred place, many years after Egunjobi saw an angel there”.²⁸ The origin of mountains as sacred places in Cherubim and Seraphim was traceable to one Ekiti man, Pa Egunjobi who was a hunter. Orimolade claimed that hill and set it apart as a sacred place, many years after Egunjobi had a vision of an angel on the hill called *Olorunkole*, very close to Ibadan. Peel claims that in 1912, Egunjobi, an Ekiti hunter had seen an angel on this hill who prophesied the coming of war and epidemic.²⁹

There are certain religious practices that members are expected to follow while coming to the House of prayer. Members shall enter the House of Prayer with all sense of quietness, reverence and there must be no side talking during the service. Incense is burned during services for spiritual reasons to scare the evil spirits away; menstruating women are not allowed in the House of Prayer and a woman who has just delivered a baby is not allowed. After sexual intercourse between a man and woman, they must take a bath before entering the House of Prayer, members must be without shoes and dead bodies are not allowed into the House of Prayer. Nearly all these religious practices are also applicable to other sacred patronage of sacred places in the church. However, these are not applicable to all the sacred places in the indigenous churches under this research.

Other Christian sects that we came across and interviewed during this research work had divergent opinions about sacred places. Many saw sacred places in the indigenous churches as parallel to traditional shrines in African or Yoruba religion. They affirmed that the Yoruba leaders of these indigenous churches were formerly either herbalists, or came from background or family where traditional religion was being practised. They only copied this tradition and transferred it to Christianity. They asked, what is the difference between going to the shrines in the forest or a cave on a mountain in traditional religion and a Christian who goes to a prayer mountain or inside a cave in

²⁷This is was the position of Edwin Smith in his book *African Beliefs and Christian Faith*, 76.

²⁸Omoyajowo, A. 1982. *Cherubim and Seraphim*. 161.

²⁹Peel, J.D.Y. 1968. *Aladura: A religious movement among the Yoruba*: London: 60.

Christian garb to pray? Where is his God, in his heart or in the wilderness? At Ikole Ekiti, a woman, Madam Paulina Adegoke, a catholic faithful who we interviewed saw this as an aberration to Christianity in Yorubaland. She claimed that, traditionalists believe that God could dwell on mountains, gods, divinities, spirits and ancestors are dwelling in rocks, hills, mountains, ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, oceans and seas. The Christians are also having the same beliefs. She queried, how can we convince them that our God or Jesus Christ is different from their *Orunmila, Ogun, Sango* and others that they worship at these places? She saw sacred places in these indigenous churches as equivalents of shrines in African traditional religion. As a result, she was of the view that the patronage should be discouraged.³⁰

Some Christians from other sects view sacred places from the angle of prophecy, visions, dreams and prophetism that people claim and practise on these sites. Doctrinally, certain Christian sects like Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria, does neither teach nor practise open prophecy, receiving of visions, dreams and Prophetism. The patronage of sacred places could not be separated from prophetic ministrations and prophetism. Due to its abuse many prophets have been labelled “fake”, “dupe” and “419”. Any one found on some sacred places with ambiguous features like, a weedy hair on his head, wearing a cross with a rod and bear footed and especially in white garment, are treated with a certain level of disgust. The arguments of some are that visions, dreams and prophecy can mislead the church. So as far as these set of Christians are concerned it is the Bible alone that forms the foundation of their doctrine and practices. So, going to sacred places to pray is foreign to the New Testament and church teaching in history. This was our experience when we interviewed a group of people at Ikole Ekiti during our research. When their attention was called to passages where Jesus Christ patronised sacred places like mountains, hills, sea shores, and plains and pointed out that these are examples for us in the Bible. The response was shocking when we heard them saying “He did not teach us to follow suit”.³¹ The Gospel of Saint John chapter four verse 23-24, that says “God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”. These two verses make the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places to be appalling to them.

Our attention was called to the “ritualistic prayers” that are being perpetrated on some sacred sites. The burning of incense, though not in Christ Apostolic Church sacred

³⁰Madam Paulina Adegoke is a learned business woman and a Catholic faithful we interviewed at Ikole Ekiti during our visit to the town.

³¹This was as a result of the group discussion we carried out in the course of this work.

places, was another reason why some Christians disdain the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places. Truly, the burning of incense was a religious practise in the Old Testament era (Exo. 30:7-9, 34, 35; Num. 16:40; 2 Chro. 26:16-21). The reference to it in the New Testament is metaphorical and it is not established by the Apostles in the early church experience. This looks strange to some members of the New Age Churches like Living Faith Chapel, popularly known as Winners' Chapel, Gospel Faith Mission International and Acts of the Apostles Gospel Church we interviewed. Burning of incense was viewed as akin to traditional practice of the herbalists. In indigenous churches where the burning of incense is allowed, it is believed that "the rising sweet smelling incense smoke is the physical representation of the believer's prayer going up to God on His mercy seat (cf. Psa. 14:12; Rev. 5:8; Psa. 8:1-4)".³² The effects of burning incense remove bad odour on one's body, attracts the Holy Spirit's presence into the midst of the saints and drive away evil spirits.

A group of people from other denominations we interviewed queried, "is it incense that drives evil spirits or the name of Jesus Christ?" Would Jesus Christ drive evil spirits away by burning incense or through His power? Which is more powerful between the name of Jesus Christ and the efficacy of His Blood and the burning of incense? The burning of incense is viewed as being syncretic and fetish to some members of the new age churches.³³ The association of burning of incense with sacred places make these categories of Christians from other sects view the places as cultic if not "occultic" and fetish to them. Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church do not burn incense during prayers anyway. But the spiritual reality of burning of incense to those who practise it could not be denied.

The knowledge of some Christian sects on sacred places is attached to the white garment churches as the people who are used to the patronage of sacred places. Many Gospel churches like some new age Pentecostal churches have little or no trust in the white garment churches. Anything associated with the white garment churches like Cherubim and Seraphim, Celestial Church of Christ, The Church of the Lord (Aladura) the Zion Church of Christ and the rest are treated with utmost distrust and regarded as fake. So the beliefs in sacred places and their patronage are viewed as traditional shrines in the garb of Christianity. Without doubt, the white garment churches have suffered a lot of ridicule, jestings and calling of names from other fellow believers. Sacred places and their

³²Adegoke, J. 2004. *The Cherubim and Seraphim: beliefs and practices*, 35-36.

³³A *Group Discussion* we conducted in the course of this research.

patronage are associated with the white garment churches as a result; they are viewed as aberrations in Christianity. Those we interviewed saw it as “a distortion within the Christianity in Nigeria and Africa”.³⁴ They argued that the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places should be purged away in Yoruba and African Christianity. Some see it as a way of drawing us back to what our forefathers practised in African Traditional Religion which we should not encourage within the twenty first century Christianity. They pointed out to the Western Christians who do not patronise sacred places and they are Christians.

White garment or not, the reality of the benefits of patronizing sacred places cannot be ignored in the indigenous churches. It is one thing to put on a particular garment in the name of worship and liturgies; it is another thing for someone to be sensitive to his immediate environment and the benefits accruing to that. The western Christians have different cosmological views from the Africans. The Christianity in their environment is situated and suited to their cultures and there are places they regard as sacred in their environment. Supporting this stance, Witcombe submits that “smaller individual stones can also become invested with the sacred. For example, he points out “the Stone of Scone, also known as the Coronation Stone or Stone of Destiny, until very recently rested on a shelf beneath the seat of the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey in London because it is regarded as a sacred stone”.³⁵ Besides, he observes that “since the 13th century every British king or queen (except for the first Mary) has been crowned monarch while seated on this chair over this stone”.³⁶

Mountains too also played the roles of sacred places and pilgrimage in the western world. They carry a rich symbolism of linking mortal with Immortal. In Japan, mount Fuji (Fujiyama) is revered by Shintoists as sacred to the goddess Sengen-Sama, ... the mountain is believed to be the gateway to another world. In China, there are nine sacred mountains out of which five belong to the Taoists and four belonging to Buddhist. According to Taoist belief, mountains are sources of communication through which people communicate with the immortals and the primeval powers of the earth.³⁷ These few examples show that every religion has elements of sacredness and every tribe has this primitive element of using certain objects located somewhere as sacred pilgrimage centre

³⁴This was a conclusion of the discussants we interviewed in the course of this work.

³⁵C.L.C.E.Witcombe, 1998. *Sacredness* Retrieved on May, 4, 2010, from <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredness.html1998>

³⁶C.L.C.E.Witcombe, 1998. *Sacredness* Retrieved on May 4 2010, from <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredness.html1998> Retrieved on 4th May, 2010.

³⁷C.L.C.E.Witcombe, 1998. *Sacredness* Retrieved on May 4 2010, from <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredness.html1998>

for spiritual purposes. This is not limited to Africans or Yoruba people alone. We can sift the abuses arising from the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places from its pure motifs.

Sacred places in the indigenous churches also include riverine waters. There are many lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, lagoon, oceans and seas that are revered and venerated as sacred places. Man is religious and full of spiritual in-depths. Many of the qualities of water make it appear to be an animated object with potent and living powers, forces and spirits are believed to be living inside it. The religious psychology in man makes it become a natural phenomenon or object of worship. Indeed, before the advent of Christianity, there has been water cults and worship in Yorubaland. There were beliefs in water spirits like mammy water, *Yemoja*, *Osun*, *Oya*, *Olokun* and the belief that beautiful young damsels came from the marine world. People patronized water cults and appeased the goddesses and powers therein for wealth, victory over enemies like the story of Moremi of Ile Ife, for fertility and nurturing of children received from such source.

With the advent of beliefs in and patronage of sacred waters in indigenous churches, some Christian sects could not differentiate between this belief and patronage from traditional patronage of *Osun* of Osogbo, *Oya* of River Niger, *Elemi* of Igede Ekiti and *Olokun* or *Molokun* of Ilaje people. Patronizing sacred waters for healings, miracles, fertility, victory, success and other spiritual reasons look primitive, animistic and unchristian to some members of Deeper Life Bible church, New Light of the Gospel Ministry and The Voice of God Church we interviewed in Ekitiland axis. The examples of miracles of the Red Sea (Sea of Reed), River Jordan and the healing of Naman, the pool of Bethesda and Siloam (cf. Exo. 14; Jos. 3-4; 2 Kgs. 5:1-15; Jn.5:9) were regarded as occasional and temporal. They argued that they were not sufficient to build a doctrinal issue upon.

Some even showed a total disgust to this trend, claiming that “if one should go to stream and the mammy water or any other spirit enters into him or her that would be another problem”.³⁸ The patronage of sacred water was linked with the worship of mammy water spirits. They alleged that some prophets who believe in sacred waters derived their powers and visions from the marine spirits. This could be true to some extent but does not apply to general situations.

The sacred use of water in liturgies in the church is not strange to the Catholic and Anglican faithfuls we interviewed. Already in these mainline churches, especially

³⁸An Oral interview granted by a group of people at Efon Alaaye Ekiti.

Catholic, water is viewed as an instrument for purification and expiation. There is sprinkling of water during worship in the Catholic churches and during a sacramental means of use of grace, especially during baptism. When a woman, a Catholic faithful was interviewed at Efon Alaaye, she was indecisive on the belief in and patronage of sacred waters in indigenous churches. She remarks, “I know that people in the town go to River *Oni* in the town for their healings and miracles. Also, many people too come from all over the places to Efon Alaaye because of River *Òni* for healings and they are receiving their miracles, it depends on their faith.”³⁹ To her, the patronage of sacred places depends on one’s faith and belief in it. On the contrary, Francis Adeniyi⁴⁰ another catholic faithful maintains that the idea was copied from traditional religion; as a result, it is syncretic and it should be abolished. S.O. Olaiya,⁴¹ an Anglican faithful in Ado Ekiti saw the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places as elements of lack of organization in indigenous churches. He referred to them as the runaways of the mainline churches due to lack of organization and the quest for self dependence. He did not show any belief in sacred places but saw the plateau of the mountains as part of the topography of nature around man.

There are other Christian sects that do not belong to the indigenous churches but believe in the existence of sacred places and the patronage. They confirmed that some Christians do not belong to indigenous churches but go to sacred places to pray when in dire need. They also patronise these places for prophetic consultations. They submitted that God does not give everyone the same gifts but diverse. So what some do not have in Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Deeper Life Bible Church, the Redeemed Christian Church of God and other denominations are in these indigenous churches, so one should not speak against them. Individual calling is not the same, they opined.⁴²

We could see from the above submissions, that those opinions on the existence, beliefs in and patronage of the sacred places are not the same. Some in actual fact out rightly denied the existence of such while some recognize their existence but exercise no belief in them. Some see the sacred places as “Christianized shrines”, or “Christian shrines” or as replacements of traditional practices in the garb of Christianity. Some remain loyal to their church doctrines but patronize sacred places while in difficulties. To others, it is a need for prophetic oracular consultations that have led them to the places and

³⁹A Catholic member who wanted to remain anonymous granted this interview at Efon Alaaye, Ekiti at St. Patrick Catholic Pre-Cathedral Church.

⁴⁰An *Oral interview* granted by Francis Adeniyi who is a Catholic faithful at St. Patrick Catholic Pre-Cathedral Church, Efon Alaaye, Ekiti State.

⁴¹Mr. S. O. Olaiya is a member of Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) at Ado Ekiti.

⁴²An *Oral interview* granted by a group of people at Efon Alaaye Ekiti.

as a result, they could not deny the existence of such places. But we also observe that the reactions of other Christians from other sects or their perceptions on the sacred places rise from their Church dogma, doctrine and non participatory observations and experience.

Whatever one's position on the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places, it has become part of the liturgies of indigenous churches in Yorubaland. It has become one major strategy and effective tool through which they carry out their mission and conversion in Yorubaland".⁴³ The patronage of sacred places while in need for solutions gives both psychological and religious relieves to troubled souls in the land. This is a major reason why people patronise them. Supporting this view, Olayiwola affirms that "the praxis of visiting sacred mountains (and other places regarded to be so ...)" and "the general atmosphere on the mountain gives psychological and tension relief to worried souls".⁴⁴

6.3 The Effects of Urbanization and Industrialization on Sacred Places

Every society is bound to experience social changes and this has been termed as civilization. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary has defined civilization as "an advanced and organized state of human social development; a society, its culture and its way of life during a particular period of time or in a particular part of the world; the comfortable conditions of a modern society".⁴⁵ Going by these definitions, every society is expected to experience an advanced system and be better organized than before by undergoing social development. The same dictionary had defined urbanization thus: "to make a rural area, a village etc. more like a town or city by building a lot of new houses, factories ..."⁴⁶ A critical look at this simple definition suggests that in the rural areas and villages, there are uncultivated lands, groves, forest, ponds, lakes, streams, waters, hills, rocks and mountains but in the course of construction of new buildings, offices, estates, factories and companies warehouses, they are bound to go as prices of new development.

⁴³For detail on the strategies of the indigenous Church on conversion of souls, see Olayiwola, D. O. 1987. "The Aladura: Its Strategies for Mission and conversion in Yoruba Land, Nigeria". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XIX/1 June*, 40-55.

⁴⁴For detail on the strategies of the indigenous Church on conversion of souls, see Olayiwola, D. O. 1987 "The Aladura: Its Strategies for Mission and conversion in Yoruba Land, Nigeria" in *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XIX/1 June*. 44.

⁴⁵Crowther, J. et al. 1995. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 5th edition*, ed. by Jonathan Crowther et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 201-202.

⁴⁶Crowther, J. et al. 1995. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 5th edition*, ed. by Jonathan Crowther et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 13-14.

If it is so, many ancient places regarded to be sacred places would have been destroyed without any trace again.

In African cultures and customs, groves, forests, trees, certain plants, burial grounds, lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, waters, oceans, lagoons, seas, hills, rocks and mountains are the subject of lots of myths, legend, stories and folklores. There are also many taboos, the forbidden things that must not be done, the dos and don'ts in the prehistoric era in the society guiding these places, the people and their environment. Gyeke identifies two major reasons why people use taboos: one, for the cultic and purely religious reasons and secondly, for its socio-economic and political reasons.⁴⁷ There are family, tribal, cultural, environmental, health, agricultural, economic, birth control and religious taboos in African societies. The strongest taboos in African societies are religious and cultural taboos. They serve many purposes in religion. Supporting this ideology, Ige-Olumide et. al. opine that “within its historical context taboo was a sacred term for a set of cultic or religious prohibitions instituted by traditional religious authorities as instruments for moral motivation, guidance, and objectivity for protecting the sanctity of their shrines and the well being of their worshipping communities”.⁴⁸ But today many of these places are not known to the new generations of young ones.

A group of young adults were interviewed and asked: “Do you know what a sacred place is?” Some responded by saying “no” while some responded with “yes” after a mental exercise. We asked them again thus: “Have you seen a shrine before?” All of them said “No”. We asked further: “Have you seen water that can “give” babies to the barren women if only they can go there and drink the water?” They all laughed and said “It is not possible” at the initial stage. After sometimes, some said “It is true” and they began to mention what they had heard from people’s experiences. But those interviewed said they have not seen one before. We inquired about their towns, states of origin and how they lived their lives till date. It was reflected that they were born in cities, living in the cities, schooling in private, public and missionaries’ boarding schools and from there they go to tertiary institutions. They are not aware of the existence of sacred places like hills, rocks, mountains and waters, though some of these places surround their cities. Mountains especially were seen as part of the geographical topography of their environment but not

⁴⁷K. Gyeke, K. 1995. *An Essay on African Philosophy thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 27.

⁴⁸Ige-Olumide O.O. et al. 2010. “Socio-Cultural and Traditional Involvement in Management and Conservation of Biodiversity”. In *Many Species, One Planet, One Future Vol. 3* ed. by Ofoezie, O. O. et al. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Studies. Ile-Ife: O.A.U. 91.

as sacred places to them. Those who accepted the existence of sacred place secularized them and regarded them as primitive myths.

Through the media of taboos, folktales and stories, certain shrines, sacred trees, forests, groves, riverine spots and rocky places are preserved. Ancient people could not separate their habitat from their environment and the cultural richness of nature around them, especially as long as they have to do with their religion. The roles of myths, folklores, legend and stories about African environment reflect their native wisdom and knowledge as a way of conservation of their environment, the religious shrines and sacred places around them. Amana A. Roberts is of the view that “conservation is the management of human use of a natural resource of the environment in such a manner that it may yield the greatest sustainable benefit to present generations while maintaining its potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generation”.⁴⁹ It should be appreciated that this conservation has such features as preservation, maintenance, sustainable, utilization, function and transference to other generations.

Africans were able to sustain their environment and the sacred places around them by surrounding them with myths and folklores. Many shrines, cultic places, sacred places in Africa are preserved through indigenous knowledge, indigenous taxonomies, that is, traditional ways of classifying places as shrines, or sacred places from other places and cultural beliefs and practices. This has been an age long trend in African communities. According to Anane,⁵⁰ the biological and environmental conservation and preservation is not a recent phenomenon in indigenous African communities because past generations knew about environmental degradation and the need for its preservation.

Today, lack of indigenous stories, songs, proverbs, myths, legend, and folklores, but an advanced technology, constructions, urbanization and industrialization contributed to the loss of some sacred places in the land. For example, at Ayetoro Ekiti, there was a grove of the ancestors, meant for the masquerades. It used to be a grove where one thousand masquerades used to come out during the annual festival in the town. But presently, on the right hand side of the grove, there has been a construction of medical Health Centre there while the left hand side of the grove is hosting a mast of mobile

⁴⁹Amana, A. R. 2010. “Man and nature conservation: a discordant tune”. *Many Species, One Planet, One Future Vol. 3* ed. by Ofoezie, O. O. et al. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Studies. Ile-Ife: O.A.U. 24.

⁵⁰Anane, M. “Religion and conservation in Ghana”. In *Implementing Agenda 21: NGO Experiences from Around the World*. New York: United Nations Non-governmental Liaison Services. n.p., 57.

telecommunication of Nigeria.⁵¹ Due to this trend, many groves, shrines and cultural places have given way to civilization and technology. This has weakened the force of cultures, sacred places and shrines. It has led to the changes in the world outlooks of both young and old ones in the society. Keith Wilkes, supporting this view, submits that “cultural changes in industrial society have dislocated the influence of traditionally dominant institutions...”⁵² The prevalence of cultures, customs, and the respects for sacred places either in traditional African society or Christian society has reduced or is no longer there.

According to Wilkes, “the advent of industrialization and the acceptance of the scientific attitude are directly responsible for this huge cultural upheaval.”⁵³ Some rocks, hills, mountains, ponds, lakes, streams, rivers, grooves, and forests that used to form parts of the aesthetics of nature have been levelled down in the name of road constructions, urbanization and industrialization. The cultural values derived from such historical places have been replaced with westernized ideas. It is only few people who knew their spots before that could point to them as places that harbour these sacred places. The effects of such technology and urbanisation on the sacred places have reduced their religious consciousness in man’s heart and veneration of the places. Religion, being a persistent entity in the society with its traditional institutions, its influence has reduced and its capacity to maintain the old culture and morality has greatly been weakened.

As earlier mentioned above, Africans have various proverbs, songs, stories, myths, legend, and folklore through which they guide themselves, the environment, traditional health service and care, moral values in particular and their cultures. Most of these myths, stories, songs, folklores, legend and parables are woven around sacred places. With the destructions of these sacred places in the name of urbanization, civilization, constructions of roads, factories, modern houses and industrialization, there have been breakdowns of African moral values in the society. Everyone is now tending towards forgetting his or her culture for foreign culture. Noticing this modern trend, Wilkes opines that “serious attention is now given to the cultural standards of other countries and continents. And while traditional values are tolerated by young people in art, music, literature, religion and morality, many are reluctant to commit themselves to any final position, to an

⁵¹Oral Interview granted by Olu Oriye. He is a Senior Lecturer in Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

⁵²Wilkes, K. 1972. *Religion and Technology*. Oxford: The Religious Education Press. 89.

⁵³Wilkes, K. 1972. *Religion and Technology*. 53.

unquestioned good or goal”.⁵⁴ For example, the African values on morality and sexual purity and virginity were highly cherished in traditional African society. Mbiti treats this value on virginity to a great extent among the tribes like Akamba, Maasai and Nandi tribes in Kenya and Ndebele, Rhodesia. But he is quick to submit that “modern life is, however, bringing gradual change in this attitude and practice”.⁵⁵ Influences of modernity notwithstanding, there are lots of young men and women who still preserve their chastity and remain as virgins before marriage. So, sexual looseness does not apply to everybody; it could be over generalization to say that modernism has taken over all sexual purity among the youths.

Certain caves, soils, waterfalls, springs, rocks, hills, mountains, lakes, ponds, streams, rivers and waters serve as rich habitat for special species of animals, birds, reptiles, fishes, snails, tortoise and other mammals in human environment. These animals are fondly called *eja Òrìsà*, or *eran Òrìsà*, meaning, “fishes of the gods” or “animals of the gods”. You do not hunt them nor catch them lest you incur the wrath of the gods. Simply put, they are also regarded as sacred animals and incarnates of the gods, goddesses, spirits, divinities and/or carriers of the powers of the spirits inhabiting these sacred places. Again, there are taboos surrounding these animals and fishes. One of them is that any fish caught in such river or stream will not be cooked to the edible point no matter how long one cooks it on fire. For example, the River *Elèmi* at Igede Ekiti is sacred water that is highly revered in the town. Also, it is the river of fertility. Tradition has it that it is forbidden to carry out fishing in the water. In fact, it is believed that one can be mysteriously drowned by the sacred water.

These animals and fishes are preserved from generation to generation as a result of the traditions safeguarding them. Positive values concerning the use of natural materials, resources and animals in these sacred places are woven around taboos, proverbs, legend, stories and folktales. Hence, the biological diversity or biodiversity, which is the variety of life-animals, fishes and birds are preserved through these taboos. Academically, these serve as means of study to scientists, researchers, agricultural, biological and archaeological students. Many different species of birds, tortoise, snails, fishes are found in these sacred places and they are sources of educative information to the world of academia. For example, at Omuo Ekiti, a sacred water there hosts special species of fishes

⁵⁴Wilkes, K. 1972. *Religion and Technology*. 89.

⁵⁵On the issue of African moral values see on sexual purity see Mbiti, J.S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*, 121-132.

with four eyes. An interview granted by Folasade Tumininu, an indigene of the town bore witness to the reality of these special breed of fish and it has even been aired on radio as part of the mystery of nature in Omuo Ekiti, Nigeria. But with the high demand for road construction, factories, and urbanization, many of these “sacred” animals have been destroyed. Certain species of tortoise, snails and fishes could not be found again as they used to be found around sacred places like ponds, lakes, rivers and streams.

Trees and other plants are of great importance to the humans and nature. Anongo, quoting Haan and Zoverman, aptly adds that “plant lives have been used in enormous researches as bio indications of early warning signals of changes in the physical, chemical and biological composition of the natural ecosystem”.⁵⁶ Trees and plants has nature and providence arranged it are the only living organisms that can trap the ultra-violet, radiant energy of light for photosynthesis because they all have chlorophyll. Photosynthesis is a vital life process that is very necessary for the survival of humans, animals and non green plant. Trees are good air conditioners as they help to purify the environment by releasing oxygen into the atmosphere during photosynthesis. Anongo also submits that trees and plants also serve as “water conservatory”; and “in extents, plant life helps in maintaining high water table or ground water. This is because the roots of plant life helps to bind the soil together and prevent soil erosion and leaching of water and dissolved mineral elements”.⁵⁷ Plants also ensure the regulation of the temperature of the planet.

However, human pressures and demands for forest products and on the environment for industrialization, agriculture, urbanization and constructions have destroyed some of the antiquities like sacred trees, plants, stones and artistic rocks. Increasing demand for household furniture like wooden tables, chairs, beds, shelves and interior decorations among others have led to the destruction of trees including sacred trees. The habitat destruction of these antiquities especially the trees in turn affects the climate. Currently, man is experiencing climate change. According to Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change has been described as “any change in climate over time whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity”.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Anongo, M. C. 2008. “Think Globally, Act Locally: The Ecological Roles of Plants on Climate Change”. *Towards A Low Carbon Economy. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Studies* ed. by A.T. Salami et. al. Ile Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University, 70-71.

⁵⁷Anongo, M. C. 2008. “Think Globally, Act Locally: The Ecological Roles of Plants on Climate Change”. *Towards A Low Carbon Economy. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Studies*, 72.

⁵⁸_____2010. Climate: The physical science basis. Summary for Policymakers: Contributions of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Retrieved on Oct. 8, 2010, from <http://www.ipcc.ch>.

Parts of the trees even in the sacred groves that regulate the temperature of the atmosphere have been destroyed.

By nature, trees play very significant roles in the preservation of animal and bird species. They serve as conservatory habitat for some animals that cannot live in dry land. In this way, sacred groves with big trees serve means of preserving animals and birds. Among these animals are the ones regarded as sacred. Some totemic and animistic objects are conserved through the natural assistance of groves, sacred trees, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. The ecological importance of these mammalian species could not be over estimated. This might have led the Mahadi administration in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 2002-2006 to embark on tree planting project. The success of such an exercise led to the return of many local and exotic bird species that were not in Zaria environs before. But due to the influence of urbanization, high demands for forest product and industrialization, many of these trees have been destroyed. During our visits to groves and forests, we were convinced that there are animals and bird species that are there due to the atmospheric condition of these places. During our visits to other sacred places, especially the Prayer Mountains with trees around, we saw certain species of birds also that are not common in the cities due to industrialization. But we were told that in the foretimes, they were more than these but due to environmental pressures around, their number has been reduced.

Meanwhile, the sacred places under this research have also been influenced by civilization and urbanization. For instance, the prayer mountain at Efon Alaaye used to be climbed through a rugged and rough place. One would need to be gasping for breath while climbing the mountain. People used to religiously consider *this climbing as a factor God would consider in order to answer their prayers*. But today, due to the influence of civilization and urbanization, a motorable road has been constructed from the plain to the mountain top. The *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile is higher and longer than *Orí Òkè-Ìségun* at Efon Alaaye. A flight of steps going to over six hundred stairs have been constructed through a pledge by a young lady at the cost of over six hundred naira (₦600, 000.00). This has reduced the plight of going through a rough and high way to the mountain. Also at Erio, the mountain of Mercy has been touched by the renewing hands of civilization. Though it is the rockiest of all the mountains under our focus, through modern technology, the hollows on the way to the top of the mountain have been cemented with concrete. So, there is a motorable road to the mountain.

Modern buildings have replaced the ancient huts and mud brick made buildings on these sacred places. Amenities like electricity have replaced the lanterns and lamps that used to be there and pipe borne water through boreholes have been the source of water supply in these sacred places except *Orí Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye. People now worship in modern auditoria instead of old buildings or halls that served this purpose before. There have been food vendors who bring food to the sacred places often while some permanently stay there to care for the people patronizing the places. Modern musical instruments and public addressing systems are now in use there over against the local kettle drums of old. The sacred waters that used to be next to gutter streams before in some of these sacred places have been dammed. At least, mini houses to guide them against public dirt have been constructed around them. River *Kòsehuntì*, at Erio and *Omi-Òni* at Efon Alaye Ekiti are living examples. But *Omi-Babalolá* at Ido-Ile is not housed but a channel has been constructed round it with a pot like spot for storage where people can fetch theirs. *Omi Olúwánífise* in Erio is still at its ancient looks. At Ajaye, *Omi Amúbíiná* is only surrounded with a fence and wooden gate. It is still without much protection and hygienic coverage and modern touches, so also are the remaining sacred waters in Ajaye. God is now seen as “beautiful God” and not a “rugged God” as of old. To people, He is now living in mini city on these sacred places and not God in the desert again. This is due to the influence of civilization and modernization and their effects on these sacred places.

6.4 The Theological Implications of Sacred Places as the Dwelling Places of God

In times past, ancient Israelites were nomads; as a result, their religion was a “mobile religion” in the wilderness. Yahweh was a mobile God, who could be carried about as His people moved from one place to another. Hence, His purported dwelling places among the people such as the Ark of the Lord, the Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle were mobile in nature (cf. Exo. 25:10-22; 26:1-37; 37:1-9; Num. 10:33-36). Prominent examples of this were the crossing of the River Jordan in Joshua chapter 4 and when the Ark of the Lord was brought to the battle front at Aphek against the Philistines. (Jos. 3:1-17; I Sam. 4-5).⁵⁹ The mobile sacred dwelling places of God became the places of contact of God with the people. In actual fact, they were symbols of God’s presence among His people. They were also places of manifestations, revelation and oracular activities between God and the

⁵⁹Akao, J. O. 1992. *Religion of Israel and Judah: External Studies Programme*. Ibadan: The Centres for External Studies. 17.

people. This idea of mobile sacred dwelling places of God or gods was common to the Semitic people.

The religious cum cultural beliefs of the Canaanites about their gods were that their gods dwelt on “high places” and the gods were sky gods who dwelt on places such as hills, rocks and mountains. The mountains of Canaanite gods are sacred places and the dwelling places of their gods. By the time ancient Israel had contact with the Canaanites in the land, they too were influenced with this religious ideology. The Canaanite gods were being propitiated at local and national hills and mountains. Ancient Israel too embraced this religious culture as a result of the change in their occupation from nomad to agrarian occupation. Essential elements of Canaanite religion were transferred to the Israelite religion with some friction anyway. The *El* mountains and *Baal* mountain, Mount *Zaphon* (North) and others were transferred to Yahweh (cf. Psa. 29; 48:1ff). Andrew opines that certain pages of Old Testament texts reveal that “some features of *Baal* were found by some ancient Israelites to be positive help in expressing their understanding of Yahweh”.⁶⁰ Terms such as “most high God or god”, (Gen. 14:18,19,20,22; Psa. 78:35, Num. 24:16; Psa. 73:11; 78:17; 107:11); “sons of the most high” (Ps. 82:1,6; 86:8) “sons of God or gods” (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7); the meteorological and atmospheric languages of Exodus 19, Psa. 29, 68:8-9, Jud. 5:4-5, Hab. 3:3-15 are all akin to Canaanite influence.

As Clifford observes “it seems clear ...that Yahwist and Elohist traditions in Exodus (Exo.19) regarding Mount Sinai borrow motifs associated with the idea of the sacred mountain in Canaan”.⁶¹ John Gray emphasizes⁶² that the kingship of Yahweh as well as the sovereignty of God in the new royal ideology of Israel under the House of David were due to the influence of Canaanite ideology of *Baal* as King and the supremacy of *El* in their religion. Where it is applicable, relevant and accommodating, the ancient Israelites borrowed some elements from the Canaanite religion for better understanding and expressions of their religious beliefs in Yahweh. It was the Deuteronomistic historian that saw this as a religious syncretism when certain tribes were apostatizing; when these tribes, especially in the times of Judges and monarchical period under prophets were making sacrifice outside the temple that they were condemned.

⁶⁰Andrew, M. E. “Israelite and Canaanite Religion: Christianity and other Religions” in *ORITA: Ibadan Journal Religious Studies II/1 June*, 19-28.

⁶¹See Clifford, R.J. 1972. *Cosmic mountain in Canaan and Old Testament*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 34-72.

⁶²Gray, J. *The Legacy of Canaan 2nd ed.* Leiden: 158.

Ancient Israel might have her own religious ideas of sacred places but she was greatly influenced by her Canaanite neighbours. The sacred places of the ancient Israel were the *revealed* ones. Examples are the Ark of the Lord, the Tent of Meeting and the Tabernacle which they carried about until the settlement in the Promised Land. Other sacred places are the ones that their ancestors had contact with when they experienced the theophanies of their God(s). For example, the Oak of Mamre (Gen. 12:6; 13:18) Shechem, Hebron Beersheba, Bethel and the specialised ones such as Gilgal and Shiloh (Gen. 12:6; 1 Sam. 1:3, 9, 24; 2:14; 3:21) were sacred places. Other places were local sacred places conscripted by the Israelites from their neighbours. Since mountains with unique features were around the people in antiquity, and their heights reached up to the heaven, they were considered as the dwelling places of the gods. Several mythologies of the antiquity confirm this idea so also Yoruba religion that high places could be regarded as dwellings of God or gods. Sacred places like trees (Gen. 12:6; 13:18; 18:4,8), stones (Gen. 28:18; Jos. 4; 24:26); grounds (Exo. 3:5; Jos. 5:13-15), and mountains such as *Sinai-Horeb, Hermon, Tabor, Carmel, Bashan* and mount Sion (Exo. 3:19; Deut. 3:9; 1Chr. 5:23; Deut. 33:19; 1 Kgs. 18:20-48; Psa. 89:13;) played major roles in the ancient Israelite liturgy as dwelling places of the numinous.

People locate specific spots as the centres of holiness and sacredness in religion. Whatever become their objects of worship are usually placed on a spot in order to make room for easy accessibility. This idea was ancient in religion. De Vaux is of the view that “devotion and cult alike demanded that this holy mountain (sacred places) should be fixed in a definite spot on earth”.⁶³ Later on these places became popularized and eventually became sanctuaries in Israel cultus. The belief of the people rose to see these places as the dwelling places of Yahweh. They were places where they have contact with Yahweh.

One theological implication of these sacred places as the dwelling places of God or gods was the divine apparitions, that is theophanies and revelations of God or gods that took place and are still taking place there. The sacred places are places of divine revelations and the appearance of the holy ones. When Abraham got to Shechem, a sacred place in Canaan, “then the LORD appeared to Abraham... And he built an altar to the Lord who had appeared to him” (Gen.12:7). Jacob had a dream, a theophany on his way to Haran in a holy place and he recognised the place that this was a “beth-El, a house of God and the gate of heaven” according to the Yahwistic and Elohist traditions of Genesis

⁶³De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*. 279.

28:10-22. Also, in the indigenous Churches it was these theophanies and messages that followed that led the indigenous church leaders to recognize some places as being sacred. For instance, Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola was on his way to Oke Imesi axis when God told him to return to Ido Ajinare (now Ido-Ile) Ekiti environs before He confirmed to him the present *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* prayer mountain. Again, when he left Ilesa for Odo-Owa, God told him to go to Efon Alaaye, but he mistook Ifon in the present Ondo state for Efon Alaaye. It was when he got to Usi Ekiti that God redirected him. It was through a revelation that God confirmed *Ori Òkè-Ìségun* as sacred point of prayer to him. *Olorunkole* hills in Ibadan, to buttress our point, was set apart as a sacred place after the report that one Mr. Egunjobi, an Ekiti indigene saw an angel on the site in the year 1912. This led religious people to perceive sacred places as spots of revelation. Till date, it is the belief of people that when one needs a divine guidance, revelation, or prophetic visions and dream, people go to the sacred places with the aids of fasting and prayers in order to receive such revelation.

The religious ideology of being in close proximity with the Divine on His territories, which are sacred places, forms another theological implication of sacred places as the dwelling places of God. According to De Vaux, “it seems to be characteristics of Semitic religion that the holy place is not merely the precise spot, an altar of sanctuary, where worship is performed; it includes also a certain space around the temple or altar”.⁶⁴ Coming to this vicinity is like coming in close contact with the God or gods believed to be living there. The Jacob saga illustrates this better. After the dream Jacob remarked, *Surely, the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God...* (Gen. 28:16-17). It was not only the “Mount Horeb, the mountain of God” (Exo. 3:1) that was holy, the vicinity, the space and ground around it was equally holy. So Moses was asked to remove his sandals because he was standing on a holy ground (Exo. 3:5). Joshua too was standing on the holy quarter or sacred territory before the Angel of the LORD (Jos. 5:13-15). Sacred precincts and territory have equally functioned in attracting people to the places. Both ancient and modern men have had the idea of close proximity and contact with the God or gods any time they are on sacred places. Such sacral rules such as putting off one’s shoes, quietness, washing of clothes, abstinence from sex, women not coming to the sacred places while experiencing the monthly menstrual flow, taking a bath after co-habitation with one’s spouse and so on are

⁶⁴De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*. 279.

prescribed to safeguard the sanctity and sacredness of these places. Ancient Israelites were also expected to maintain a sacral distance from the mountain, Ark and the Tent of Meeting (Exo. 19:10, 14-15, 23; 40:30-33; Jos. 3:5).

Sacred places give room for coming closer to the gods and sacred beings. So, sacred quarter and territory are the starting points. Sacred places provide a possibility of making contact with the holy ones. From prehistoric era men in antiquity have desire of making contact with the holy, spirit beings and gods. The places they thought to be their dwelling places were special natural objects and elements in nature. Sacred precincts and quarters are the starting points. Since the god is thought of as receiving the homage and listening to the prayer of the supplicant in the places where the worship services are being carried out, the gods are thought and considered to be present there. During the worship, when the liturgy is performed, it is believed that God or gods are present on the sacred spots. This in turn, makes possible having contact with Him. Since the choice of a sacred place where the worship could be carried out is not man's decision to make, it is God's discretion. In such places where He has revealed Himself by a theophany, it conveys the idea that He "dwells" there.

As long as He is thought to be there, man can make contact with him. Making contact with God in sacred places where He is believed to be dwelling provides a religious man the idea of the immanence of God at all time to meet his need. Idowu⁶⁵ and Mbiti⁶⁶ are of the opinion that worship in African traditional settings is every day, at any time and in any place regarded to be a place of worship. They show that they consider God to be ever close to them and He is ready to respond to their needs at any given time. To the Africans, God is ever near and present at hand for divine contact and visitation.

The beliefs in the sacred places as the dwelling places of God impinge on the article of faith in religion. The idea of God living in the places revered and venerated to be so seems to influence the faith of the adherents. Sacred places are already tools for enhancing one's religious belief and faith especially while facing difficulties. During a patronage of sacred place, the religious cum psychological effects it has on the mind of the adherents go a long way in their dispositions and views on the difficulties generally. For example, a case was reported during our visit to sacred places at *Òkè Àjàyè*. Major General Adeyinka Adebayo (retired) the then Governor of Old Western States, Chief Fani Kayode and other colleagues came to the sacred sites. Adebayo suddenly exclaimed,

⁶⁵Idowu, E. B. 1996. *Olodumare: God in Yoruba belief*. 118.

⁶⁶Mbiti, J. S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. 65.

saying, “I have come to the holy city called *Ajáyè*, oh the power of God is here indeed”.⁶⁷ Such was the remark of a military major general during his visit to a sacred place. One needs to ask a bordering question: must one visit a sacred place before his faith increases? Is this religious notion not similar to “seeing is believing” philosophy of Thomas in the New Testament after the resurrection of Jesus Christ? These are questions that need answers. But the experiences of those who patronize sacred places confirm that the patronage enhances helps and influences their faith.

Faith is required by the object of worship in all religions. Before one could witness the resultant effects of his sacrifice, rituals, pleas and supplications, he should exercise belief or faith in such a spiritual enterprise. The spiritual potency of faith in the object of worship carries the realization power of the requests of the worshipper. The psychological effects of having faith in the object of worship who is believed to be more powerful and greater than the petitioner in order to solve his problems practically influences one’s faith. The religious idea that one could meet God or gods in sacred places inspires the adherents in order to visit the place. It is this belief that the adherents would meet God there spiritually in the mind but not in physical sense that draws them to the sacred places. As far as man is concerned God has human attributes that is why anthropomorphic images and features are ascribed to Him. The people in antiquity thought that gods were like human beings, doing things like human beings. Yet they recognized one fact which makes a difference between the mortal and the Immortal, and that is, the fact that gods are much more powerful than man. One could submit that this idea of finding medium or place to sustain and enhance his faith in the physical realm could lead to sacralizing the objects as end in themselves. What is expected to be a means to an end could easily become an end in itself. If there is a misplacement of one’s faith in the sacred place rather in the God worthy to be served, idolatry comes in.

Sacred places are equated with the holy, manifestations of the Holy One, representations of the holy and possible contact with the holy. Since it is approximated to the holy, it is believed that there are existent powers in these places that man could access. Besides, because sacred places are equated with the holy and supernatural powers, one’s pleas, supplications, prayers and entreaties are likely to carry more power. Also, it is believed that the existent powers on the sacred sites affect ones prayers and they are much likely to be readily answered. It is believed that entreaties, supplications, pleas and prayers

⁶⁷ Revd. Ajagunigbala, E. O. 2011. *An oral interview* granted at Ajaye sacred site.

offered at sacred places are much stronger and powerful than those offered at regular places of worship. In our opinion, the reasons for this are that one, the spiritual preparations of the heart that one is going to a sacred place influences his faith. Two, the level of his concentration while in that place for prayers is another factor that is responsible for this. Three, the *ceremonial preparations*, for example, abstinence from sex or a calculated effort of not going there after co-habitation with one's spouse or during monthly menstrual flow of a woman apparently influences the answers to one's prayers on these sites. After all, God says "He is holy" and the places are called holy places and "holy" people are expected to be there offering holy prayers.

On the contrary, some people we interviewed, though they believe in the sacred places but they do not patronize them at all or rarely do, they were of the opinion that since God is everywhere, He can answer prayers at any place and at any time. However, it is our considered opinion that pleas, entreaties, supplications and prayers offered at sacred places carry more powers sometimes than those offered at regular places of worship. They all go to the same God who cannot contradict Himself, but the self sacrifice, self denial and the aids of fasting on prayers allow for this on sacred sites.

Another theological implication of the patronage of the sacred places is the resultant effect it has on moral values and character of the people. The life of the people who worship God depends on their concepts of this God. God says "I AM holy, therefore you shall be holy" (Lev. 11:43-4). Yahweh is a pure God, so Israelites must be holy. The purity of His nature demands that He imposes His will on them which is holiness and moral laws. Sacred places affect one's behaviour. It is spiritual way of controlling human behaviour. The effects on the conduct of the people who patronize them cannot be underrated. It imposes humility, love, oneness, self discipline, self-control and faith on people. The piety of an individual is increased and the person in question also develops the spirit of commitment to God and faith. All these are evident in the life of the people. Patronage of sacred places have changed many lives from bad to good as well as conversion of many adherents of other faiths or religions to Christianity.

6.5 The Health Implications of the Beliefs in Sacred Waters

Water is one of the most essential elements that man cannot do without in the course of living. All over the world today, there are high demands for potable waters. This is because water is used for various purposes ranging from domestic, industrial supply, medical hospitals and laboratories, crop irrigation, transport, recreation, sports and commercial fisheries, power generation, land drainage and flood protection, and waste disposal to religious liturgies. Man needs water in order to regulate his body temperature. For a sound living body, water is needed to maintain the health system. This is one of the reasons man longs for potable water.

It is unfortunate that water pollution constitutes one major source of health hazard to mankind. Many outbreaks of epidemic diseases in the developing countries are due to water pollution and water borne diseases. The most affected class of people are the children. Many medical scientists have played a major role in establishing the nature and the means of transmission of these water borne diseases. Many African nations are suffering from water borne diseases due to poor hygiene and sanitation. A lot of children had died of cholera diseases and others.

The advent of the selected indigenous churches brought a new dimension to the water usage, especially within religious circles. Certain waters, rivers, streams and lakes were consecrated, sanctified and dedicated for healing and spiritual purposes, not minding the health implications of these elements. One thing we appreciate about this trend is the fact that the leaders of the selected churches claimed divine injunction and directions to dedicate these waters for the healings of their followers. The health implications of these waters were not taken into considerations as at the times they dedicated these waters for religious purposes.

It is our observation that nearly all the sacred waters have no scientific proofs and qualities of drinkable waters as expected. Good and drinkable water must be colourless, tasteless, without odour, without sediments and germs. They should be free from water pollution and all other forms of dirt. In our participatory observation, we discovered that these sacred waters do not have some of these qualities. There are no rooms for testing or purifying these sacred waters, yet people keep on patronizing them on daily basis because of the faith they have in them. The people did not border on all these qualities that are absent in these

sacred waters. They have no regard for the dirt, germs, particles, tastes and colours of these waters. In actual fact, some of them are very close to the erosion lines. Definitely, the erosion could flow into some of them, which could constitute health hazard to the people. Undoubtedly, they are medically questionable and scientifically poor for drinking and procuring sound health by scientific standards. It is a paradox that “dirty”, “colourful” and “tasteful” waters could be sources of healing and health to people.

Besides, many people that patronize these sacred waters use various bottles, rubber kegs and containers to fetch and store these waters. The hygienic nature of all different sorts of bottles, rubber kegs and containers is another factor that could be health barriers. Whenever they patronize these waters, these containers are barely opened, perhaps for power and healing property of the sacred waters to be transferred into them. They do not mind the particles and germs in the air that could infect the waters. With all these said, it is high time that the religious leaders begin to pay keen attention to the health implications of the beliefs in sacred waters and their patronage in the vicinities.

It is true that these waters are scientifically and hygienically questionable when it comes to potable waters. This is not to disprove their spiritual potency to proffer cures and healings through divine power. This is spiritual, mysterious and miraculous to us. But there is a need to curtail some of the health hazards they might constitute. The leaders should endeavour to keep the environments of these waters hygienically neat and tidy every time. They should educate their followers on how to keep the waters neat and clean. Instead of everybody dipping his or her container inside the waters, there should be storage where the waters could be stored and a tap is fixed there for dripping. Filter engine could be procured in order to filter the water, so that the potability of the water could be enhanced.

Government on its side could construct drainage on the sides of these waters in order to prevent them from erosion and water pollution especially, during rainy season. If possible, government could assist to provide storage for these waters so that those who go there could fetch directly from the storage. Besides, government could also improve these places as tourist centres for social, recreational and spiritual purposes. They could be improved for economic reasons and social uplifts of the communities that host them.

6.6 The Implications of Beliefs in Sacred Places for Christians in the Light of the New Testament

As a living religion, Christianity in the New Testament times, especially in the Gospels, inherited the ancient beliefs and patronage of the sacred places. As earlier mentioned in this chapter, ancient Israelites borrowed some features of the Canaanite gods, *El* and *Baal* to gain better expression of their God, Yahweh without necessarily equating Yahweh with *Baal* but maintaining the differences,⁶⁸ though John Bright holds a contrary opinion.⁶⁹ New Testament also demonstrates this idea of borrowing from its neighbouring religions and the world around it. Certain concepts like Johannine *Logos*⁷⁰ has Hellenistic origin (Jn. 1:1-3); the word “gospel” is a borrowed language which according to Archibald Hunter means the reward given to a man bringing good news⁷¹ until it is used to denote the God’s good herald proclaimed by Jesus Christ and about Him. Teachings on salvation, immortality, resurrection, water baptism by immersion, Son of God, fasting, light, self denial and sacred meal or Holy Communion that we have on the pages of the New Testament have some parallels with Greek mystery religions and the Qumran community adherents.⁷² The apocalyptic features of New Testament eschatology betray the teaching of the Qumran community and Essenes. This is to show that religions inter relate and influence one another both in conceptions, ideas, beliefs and practices.

Many other influences came from the immediate predecessor of the New Testament teachings, which are Old Testament texts and its religious practices. One of such is the ancient beliefs in and patronage of the sacred places. Pages of the New Testament reveal to us that ancient Israel is a hill country (Lk. 1:39; 2:4; Matt. 5:1; 8:1; 17:1; 20:18; 21:1). Many outstanding events of the Old Testament took place on sites that were regarded as sacred. For example, the worship places of the patriarchs at Shechem, Beersheba, Bethel and Mamre (Gen. 12:6-7; 35:1-4; 28:10-22; 12:8; 21:22-31; 26:23; 13:18; 14:13; 18:1; 35:27). Other places like Mount Horeb-Sinai (Exo. 3:19); Elijah saga on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs. 18:19-39) and riverine places like River Jordan (Jos. 3-4; 2 Kgs. 5:1-14; cf. 2 Kgs. 2:6-14) were regarded as sacred sites. These places later on became

⁶⁸See Andrew, M. E. 1968. “Israelite and Canaanite Religion: Christianity and Other Religions”. In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal Religious Studies II/1 June*. 22-26 and Gray, J. *The Legacy of Canaan 2nd ed.* 163-182.

⁶⁹For the detailed position of John Bright, see Bright J. 1980. *A History of Israel 3rd ed.* 108ff.

⁷⁰Hunter, A. M. 1972. *Introducing the New Testament 3rd edition*. Philadelphia: the Westminster Press. 65.

⁷¹Hunter, A.M. 1972. *Introducing the New Testament 3rd edition*. 23.

⁷²See McCain, D. 2005. *Notes on the New Testament: Introduction*. Bukuru: African Christian Textbooks. 23-27. For the further study on the influence of Greek and other religions on the New Testament writers, see Abogunrin, S. O. 2001. *Critical Introduction to the New Testament*. Ibadan Centre for External Studies. 1-7. Also see Akintunde, D. O. 2002. *Exegesis of St. John*. Ibadan Centre for External Studies 9-15.

sacred sites in the ancient Israelite liturgy. The influence of the Psalmist on the mountain of God, *Mount Zion*, which is the holy mount of the Psalmist on the New Testament and the fact that God is identified with certain sacred mountains in the Psalm could not be underrated (Psa. 2:6; 3:5; 15:1; 24:3; 43:3; 99:9; 68:16-17). The latter prophetic texts on sacred sites also are in tune with this religious ideology in ancient Israelite liturgy (Isa. 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11; 66:20; Jer. 31:32; Eze. 20:40; Dan. 9:16, 20; Mic. 4:1-3) All these have influence on the New Testament writings.

Christians inherit both the Old and New Testament and accept them as final authority on the issues of faith and practice. What we could say that influence the beliefs of Christians in sacred places are the practises of Jesus Christ our Lord. The act of going to the solitary places for spiritual communion with God and meditation was ancient in Israel. At least, we find example of Isaac going to the open field for meditation (Gen. 24:63); and the example of Elijah (1 Kgs. 1:3; 19:8-9). This was the practise of the Qumran community shortly before the advent of Jesus Christ. The Qumran, "under the leadership of the one whom they called teacher of righteousness, they withdrew in to a wilderness of Judea"⁷³ expecting the coming apocalyptic events that would destroy this evil world and usher in a new Kingdom of God. John the Baptist the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ was also in a solitary place in the wilderness before his public appearance (Lk. 1:80). In the days of Jesus Christ, the religious idea of going to solitary and sacred places was affirmative in practice. This too on one hand would have spiritual impacts on the practice of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ prayed in secluded places: in the wilderness; it is said that "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness..."(Matt. 4:1-2; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1-2). He went up to the mountain to pray (Lk. 6:12) He went to a deserted place to pray too (Mk. 1:35; Lk. 4:42). Specific mountain, Mount Olives was mentioned as a place He usually visited (Lk. 22:39-40; Matt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26). He appointed His twelve apostles on a mountain (Mk. 3:13-15; Lk. 6:12-16). While on a mountain supposedly a sacred place, He was transfigured having prayed (Matt. 17:1-7; Mk. 9:2-7; Lk. 9:28-35). Part of His teachings especially the beatitudes were carried out on sacred sites, (Matt. 5:1ff; 8:1); so also He taught on the plains as Luke reports (Lk.6:17-20). Jesus Christ also prayed in a sacred garden of Gethsemane and/or it later became a sacred Garden after Jesus' contact with it (Matt. 26:36-46; Mk. 14:32-42). Saint Luke emphasizes it that Jesus Christ patronized this

⁷³Abogunrin, S. O. 2001. *Critical Introduction to the New Testament*. Ibadan Centre for External Studies, 5.

sacred garden for prayer, as He was accustomed (Lk. 22:39-46). The triumphant entry of Jesus Christ began on a sacred place – “Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount Olives” or “Mount Olivet” (Matt. 21:1ff; Mk. 11:1 ff; Lk. 19:29ff). It was on a sacred site, Mount Olivet that Jesus Christ ascended back to heaven (Matt. 28:16; Lk. 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-12).

It is glaring that Jesus Christ accepted these places as sacred and He used them in all these instances. He followed the religious traditions of His days unreservedly. From the examples of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, Christians and indigenous church adherents find the basis and biblical roots for their beliefs in and patronage of sacred places. At least, African Christians and the indigenous Church leaders in Nigeria look at these as tools to support their practices and patronage of the sacred places. They are seen as fit and good for meditation where they could go for retreat from the noisy environment in the cities. Solitary places, they believe can enhance one’s meditative power and influence one’s petitions and prayers. It is considered as a spiritual exercise to go to these places for meditation, spiritual communion and powerful prayers. It is considered that if Jesus Christ could go to these places in some crucial hours, there is more to it than natural place.

Jesus Christ prayed in the wilderness when He was being tempted by Satan for forty days and forty nights (Matt. 4:1ff; Mk. 1:12-13; Lk. 4:1f). Christians have found this as succour to the souls in hour of their own temptation and trials. Though the hour of temptation of Jesus Christ was neither spiritual attack nor spirit related problem that many are facing today, the challenges before them lead them to patronise sacred places. But those who are tempted by sins, falling into sin or violated the Church standards on holiness, and the priestly purity they are expected to keep in their lives, find the sacred places as harbour to seek refuge from in the time of their trials and the power of sins overwhelming them. According to Oloye and Bandele,⁷⁴ in Christ Apostolic Church till date, any erring pastor or prophet is being sent to any of the sacred places in the church for three to six months to go and pray. The prayer trends are confession of sin and praying for the Holy Spirit to fill him again. It is believed that sins might have drained him of his spiritual power and strength so he needs new infilling of the Spirit.

Though the Apostles patronized only few sacred places like the Temple and the synagogues as pages of the New Testament reveal to us, but the thought of existence of

⁷⁴Pastor D.O.A. Oloye is the immediate retired General Superintendent of Christ Apostolic Church and Pastor P.O. Bandele is the current General Superintendent of the denomination. This *Oral interview* was granted by these Church patriarchs.

sacred places still reflects in the Epistles like Hebrew, *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels* (Heb. 12:22). A comparative analysis of Hebrews 12:18-27 with Exodus traditions suggests that it is a glaring reflection of theophany at a sacred place and God is dwelling there to meet His people. God speaks from there as He spoke on Mount Sinai and people are called to obey His word just as He gave the Torah to the ancient Israelites to be obeyed. 2 Peter 2:16-21 speaks of the trustworthy scripture given to the Christians and Saint Peter uses the theophany on the mountain to buttress his point. This theophany happened during the transfiguration of Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:17; Mk. 9:2-7; Lk. 9:28-35). Many indigenous church leaders started their ministerial training and Bible Colleges on sacred places. Till date Cherubim and Seraphim Church still practices this. Many of their prophets are trained on sacred places especially, mountain. Omoyajowo helpfully submits that “traditionally, most C and S officers in Nigeria are ordained on *Olórunkólé* Hill near Ibadan. Officers generally consider it prestigious to be ordained on that historic hill”.⁷⁵ Bible training school was started by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola on *Orí Òkè-Àánú* in Erio Ekiti and later *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* in Ido-Ajinare, Ekiti State before it was shifted to the plain. *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* was also used as ministerial training centre before a befitting African Apostolic Church Bible College and Theological Seminary were established in Lagos and Ibadan.

There is a practice that is common to Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church denominations. That is, the practise of sending selected people, mostly the gifted ones in visions, trance, dreams and prophecy to go to a secluded place and pray over on issues bordering the church. The trend of the prayers on such an occasion is to table the request before the Lord and praying like this: *Oluwa jeri si, Oluwa fohun, ti o base ife Re ni, Oluwa jeri si, Oluwa fohun*, meaning, “Lord give us a testimony, Lord speak in clarity; if this is Your will or not, Lord testify to it, Lord speak in clarity”. The people may be there for days until there is a theophany, or revelation or words of prophecy from God which they would accept as coming from the Lord. The practise of Jesus Christ, seeking divine guidance on solitary, deserted and sacred places before choosing His apostles informed this practise (Mk. 3:13-15; Lk. 6:12-16). It was reported by Reverend Alademomi an occasion when Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola and Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde were sent to the sacred place, *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* by the church to go and

⁷⁵Omoyajowo, A. 1982. *Cherubim and Seraphim: A history of an African independent Church*, 148.

pray on a crucial issue in the church then, on marriage. The sign that God gave was reported back to the church.⁷⁶

Today, it has become the usual practice of some Christians to go to sacred places, seeking the face of God on some crucial issues and wanting Him to speak, or reveal something to them either in a dream or in a vision. There are many reasons that lead people to these sacred places. For instance, many young bachelors and spinsters who are of marriage age, when interviewed on sacred places we visited said that they are seeking the face of God on the right partners. They would want God to tell them the right persons. Some for economic reasons came to the sacred places, seeking the face of God whether they should go into one particular business or partnering with the people they have come across. Some even wanted to know whether a particular venture or business they want to embark on would lead to success or not, lest they start such an enterprise in vain and so on. The theophany and transfiguration of Jesus Christ on a sacred place like mountain also informed this. On the mountain, Jesus Christ was transfigured, there was an appearance of Moses and Elijah, the atmospheric cloud covered them, and an audible voice came and confirmed the Sonship of Jesus Christ (Matt. 17:1-7; Mk. 9:2-7; Lk. 9:28-35). Christians seeking similar experience, audible voice, open visions, dreams, words of prophecy and theophany believe that they can get them while in prayers on sacred places. On the other vein, this raises a puzzle: Does it mean one cannot experience the same on a plain, inside a regular place of worship or even in his own room? Is God limited to sacred places before He could reveal something? This is a theological issue that needs to be unravelled.

The ancient idea of God or gods dwelling on sacred places or manifesting from the sacred places was adopted by Jesus Christ. He used to go to the mountains, solitary places, deserts and wilderness to pray to God. Luke records: “Now it came to pass in those days

⁷⁶Revd. Joshua Alademomi, *Oral interview*.

that He went to the mountain, to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God” (Lk. 6:12).

Christians in history demonstrated that there are sacred places where God could be met. This was demonstrated through holy pilgrimage they paid to sacred sites like the spring at Lourdes where Saint Bernadette received the revelation of Virgin Mary and the spring there is considered to be sacred.⁷⁷ Some of the hymnody of the church demonstrates that sacred places such as hills and mountains, and there Jesus Christ went to meet God. For example, this stanza in a hymn says:

I want to be like Jesus,
So frequently in prayer;
Alone upon the mountain top
He met His father there.⁷⁸

This was as a result of the influence of sacred places as where God manifest and people could have a contact with Him. They also believe in sacred places such as hills, rocks and mountains as where they could meet Him as this hymn stanza betrays:

Then let me on the mountain top
Behold Thy open face,
Where faith in sight is swallowed up,
And prayer in endless praise.⁷⁹

So the tradition continues from generation to generation that sacred places are specific spots and locations in nature where God dwells, manifests and contact could be made with Him.

The New Testament, especially the Gospels provide ample instances of sacred places and their patronage by the Author of Christianity, Jesus Christ. The reflections of Exodus 19 on the book of Hebrews 12:18-27 reveal that in the early Christian era, God

⁷⁷C.L.C.E.Witcombe, 1998. *Sacredness* Retrieved on May 4, 2010, from <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredness.html>.

⁷⁸_____1998. *Christ Apostolic Church Gospel Hymn Book*, Number 524, stanza 2. Lagos: Ibukunola Printing Press. 208.

⁷⁹_____1998. *Christ Apostolic Church Gospel Hymn Book*, Number 570, stanza 6. Lagos: Ibukunola Printing Press. 226.

was still associated with the sacred places as His Holy City, a spiritual mountain Zion, where He reigns in the midst of myriads of angels and speaks like Sinaitic traditions. Principally, Christians patronize the sacred places as a result of the quest for prophetic encounters and solutions to their problems. Miracles and healings are another pivotal reasons they “house” God in these sacred places.

The Gospel of Saint John 4:20-24 presents a different dimension to the traditional belief in sacred places. The Jews believed in the sacredness of Jerusalem and its temple while the Samaritans held on to sacred mount Gerizim in Samaria. But the response of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman’s inquisitiveness on specific place of worshipping God shows that God can be worshipped at any place. Since God is Spirit, He cannot be caged or boxed or housed in any sacred place, He can be contacted at any place. The spirit-nature of God makes Him accessible to every human who seeks Him in spirit and in truth. God is omnipresent and immutable. He is also omnipotent and supreme. He is everywhere and His presence fills everywhere. Nevertheless, African Christians have done well by regarding the religious and cultural heritage of their environment as worthy of integration to their Christian religious practices.

The omnipresence as an attribute of God is endangered if the indigenous Church adherents only see Him being “localized” or “housed” in the places regarded as sacred. God must be seen as omnipresent as His attribute portrays Him. Sacred places should be seen as places where He extends His grace to His Church. The integration of one’s topography to Christian faith should not overlook the fact that God dwells mostly in the heart of man. The body of man is the temple of God where He seeks to dwell and manifest His power and supremacy.

Christians should appreciate the manifestations of the presence and power of God in their environments. This should be viewed as part of the benevolence of the omniscient

and omnipresent God towards mankind. In essence, they should seek the indwelling of God in their body as taught in the New Testament. In reference to 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, the body of the believers is essentially the temple and the dwelling place of God. This should be maintained with all sense of purity and holiness as enjoyed by the Bible. The adherents of the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland should adhere to the teaching of the Bible on the ultimate dwelling of God which is their body:

...for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 SUMMARY, DATA ASSESSMENT, FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the Study

The definition of a sacred place as given by Eliade as “opposite of the profane”¹ could be accepted when one considers the holy attribute attached to the place. But, this is more than that when one critically examines the religious conceptions and spiritual activities that are carried out there. Sacred places can mean meeting places between the physical and the spiritual, visible and the invisible, divine and the human for religious intercourse and for the benefits of human race. Sacred places are places dedicated for religious worship of the tribal gods, worship of the tribal divinities and ancestors. Sacred places in African traditional setting could mean places of religious contact with the gods as occasion demands for the peace, stability and solutions in the society. It could also be places where requests of individuals, families, communities and the whole society are presented and granted. They are places inherited by the progenitors, guided and preserved by stories, traditions, folklores, folksongs, legend, saga, myths, rituals, ceremonies and festivals from generation to generation. Sacred place exists in all religions in form of space, grounds, trees, plants, temples, lakes, ponds, rivers, waters, lagoons, oceans, seashores, seas, hills, rocks and mountains and the like.

Childs is of the view that “space is non-homogenous in character”.² The mystery of nature and its revelation or “hierophany” brings to the human understanding that space is not the same in quality and content. The consciousness of the reality of a place as non homogenous to others attracts man to it. The spiritual and pragmatic nature of the sacred places serves as a point of attraction to the religious man. He is also of the view that sacred “space cannot be abstracted from its content”³ as far as an individual is concerned. There are places that by experience man have been discovered to have more sacred value and spiritual potencies than others. “The spatial realities, impinging on the senses of

¹Eliade, M. 1959. *The sacred and the profane*, 10.

²Childs, B. S. 1960. *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*. London: SCM Press, Ltd; 83. For further positions of scholars on the mythical and sacred space, see Van Der Leeuw, 1963, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, New York: Harper & Row. 393ff.

³Childs, B. S. 1960. *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*. 83.

man”⁴, the potency and spiritual revelation of the sacred spots allow for the distinction between the sacred and profane in space.

Also, man longs to be in contact with the super sensible and incorporeal world and spatial realities, so he desires to have them around in his environment. If this would be so, sacred abodes must be created for the gods, divinities, and ancestors to dwell and that must be near to the human. In African traditional religion, the world is not only physical in existence; it has spiritual dimensions and places therein. The world of nature and elemental objects with unique characteristics are ascribed with sacredness and venerated as sacred objects. The places where they occupy become sacred quarters or vicinity as far as the religious man is concerned.

As Albright⁵ rightly observes, the veneration of places as sacred has been from antiquity. Archaeological discoveries have demonstrated to us that sacred places characterised the religions of the pre-historic and ancient Near Eastern people. Many of these sacred places have witnessed the setting up of pillars and images, planting of durable plants and trees, representing the physical symbols of the gods. Many altars were raised as places of worship of the gods. In history, man has been with the religious conceptions that gods could be given physical representations. This was because gods were conceived and expressed in human attributes and animalistic features. For instance, the Canaanites symbolised their gods, *Baal* with the image of a *Bull*. Because they were agrarian, fertility was paramount to them. *Baal* was thought to be god of fertility and fecundity who could bring about fertility if appeased with some religious enactments. Bull, being a wild and strong animal on the field during agriculture exercise was chosen to represent *Baal*, the storm-god of fertility.

The sacred places in Canaanite religion ranged from holy grounds to moulds, altars raised with images, *massebahs*, trees, waters and mountains. De Vaux was of the opinion that “the nature-religion of Canaan saw a manifestation of divine presence or action in the springs which made the earth fruitful, in the wells which provided water for flocks... and in the high places where the cloud gathered to give their longed-for rain”.⁶ Canaanite

⁴Childs, B. S. 1960. *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, 83; Van Der Leeuw, 1963, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 393.

⁵Albright, W. F. 1957. “The High Place in Ancient Palestine”. *Suppliments to Ventus Testamentum*, IV 242ff. See the contribution of Cleveland, H. C. 1987. “Altar”. In *New International Bible Dictionary*, Ed. Douglas, J. D. et al. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 36-38.

⁶De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institution*, 277.

religion was firmly affiliated with sacred places and their veneration. Their gods were honoured with these sacred places as their abode. They ruled and gave order from places regarded as sacred. Certain religious enactments were practised in order to elicit blessings of rain, fertility, fecundity and victory from these gods.

The patriarchal age also witnessed the veneration of sacred places. It started with Abraham who first of all had contact with the Canaanites and their religion. Abraham also imitated them by building “an altar to the LORD” after the fashion of the people of the land or the prevalent cultural practice of his environment. It could be said that the erection of altar was common to all Semitic related religions. By building altar to the LORD, he established a sanctuary at Shechem which was later patronized by his generations (cf. Gen.12:7-8; 33:18-20; 35:18-20; Jos. 24:21-24). This altar was first erected after theophanies (Gen.13:14-18; 26:24-25; 28:18-22; 33:20), and after which they erected a physical objects for memorial and future contact. The order of identifying the sacred places in the patriarchal age was: the theophany, message, covenant, erection of altar or setting up of a stone, planting of trees and sanctuary.⁷ Wherever the patriarchs experienced the appearance of God, there they recognized a location for their God as His abode or place of manifestation.

All the sacred places during the patriarchal age were marked with altars, sacred trees like Oak or *terrebinth*, stones, pillars and moulds. The places where these were situated were given different names as means of remembrance. Originally, these names were the Canaanite gods’ names or associated with them. But the patriarchs did not see it wrong to give their tribal God names and attributes of the gods of their neighbours. So their God has the name, *El* of the Canaanites as a prefix to His names and attributes. The religion of this tribal God was practised in association with sacred trees, altars, moulds, stones and pillars as their neighbours did worship their gods.

The patriarchs did not see anything wrong in worshipping the God that had called them under trees like Oak or *terrebinth*, or on altars and setting up of stones in His memorial as Jacob did (Gen. 28:18-22). Pillars could be raised in His name and stone as an object could become His house as a place or worship. The patriarchal contact with these sacred places was mainly as a result of the theophanies they had. From antiquity man had been seeking a spatial reality as point of contact with the Divine because of the

⁷De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institution*. 277.

belief that the abode of the divinities could not be as common as dwelling abode of the mortal. The giving of names to sacred places in the patriarchal age was due to the experience and the belief in the antiquity that gods must have names like human beings. The gaining of the knowledge of the names of gods bestowed on the worshippers an opportunity of knowing who the gods are, what power they have and what they are capable to do. In the time of liturgy and worship, the gods could be invoked for prompt response, securing their blessings and protections. This is the position of Von Rad⁸ and we quite agree with him. Even in Christianity, the name of Jesus Christ is partly given for liturgical purposes and worship (cf. Mk. 16:17-19; Phil. 2:5-11). The patriarchs have names of their tribal gods closely affiliated with the names the Canaanite gave to their gods. The names of their God were attached to sacred places for invocation and witness among others as in the cases of Abraham and Abimelech (Gen. 21:22-23) and the saga of Jacob (Gen. 31:44-53).

It is evident that sacred places during patriarchal age were allowed to be associated with trees, pillars, stones, planting of trees, or worship under existing “sacred trees” of the Canaanites and grounds. They were sacred places without any official priest officiating but the patriarchs. The Levitical offering materials classified as clean and unclean in the Priestly Code were not there. Nature, one could say dictated the materials for the offerings during this era and it was accepted to the tribal God.

Ancient Israel moved from this stage to another angle and development during the Mosaic period. The idea of sacred places also prevailed during the Mosaic era but it has to shift from “totemic” or “animistic” nature that characterised the patriarchal age to deified places where Moses had encounters with God. Yahweh who introduced Himself as “the God of the fathers” showed that He has a ground and mountain as places of theophany and contact. The territory of this ground and mountain was called “a holy ground” in the Pentateuchal tradition (Exo. 3:1-5). Therefore, putting on a sandal for a wandering nomad like Moses was an abomination and not allowed in His holy precinct. From this moment onward, hills, rocks, grounds and mountains began to play major roles in the ancient Israelite liturgy as sacred places. Like the era of the patriarchs, theophany of this God was the central factor and determinant indicator of sacred places. With the theophany of God

⁸Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*. Trans. Stalker, D.M.G. 179-187.

to Moses, ancient Israel began to place her God on the mountains like her neighbouring Canaanites.⁹

Yahweh was viewed from the religious lens of the Canaanites who could ride on the wings of the clouds, speak from the top of a mountain, choosing a particular mountain as His abode or place of theophany and contact (Exo. 3:1, 12). Atmospheric features and phenomenology were ascribed to Yahweh henceforth. The mountains and the rocks played major roles in the life of the ancient Israel as wilderness tradition portrays.¹⁰ Especially, Sinai-Horeb, “the mountain of God” was a revered mountain as a result of the Mosaic affiliation with it and traditional place of the giving of the Torah in the ancient Israelite traditions.

It was evident that the neighbouring religions around ancient Israel definitely influenced her by placing her God on mountains and hills during Mosaic era. These topographical plateaus forced its aesthetic value into the mind of the antiquity and were given religious interpretations. This should call our attention to the fact that people serve God or gods according to the world of nature nearest to them. It has been observed that the riverine people have not had mountain gods and cults or the people in the mountainous regions have had water goddesses as their tutelary gods. Ancient Israel could easily observe her world of nature and began to place her God around on characteristic and geographical locations such as ground, hills and mountains around her. A super sensible location around her could undoubtedly be a place for her God inside her physical world. Besides, her immediate neighbours had gone ahead of her to realize this religious in-depths and she religiously followed the path.

From the sacred hills, rocks and mountains, the sacred place and objects in ancient Israelite liturgy moved to the Ark of the Lord, the Tent of meeting and the Tabernacle. These are attributed to the wilderness experience of the ancient Israel (cf. Exo. 25:9; 10-22; 26:1-37; 27:9-19). These were mobile sacred objects from where God appeared to Moses and spoke with him. It was an era which ushered in portable and mobile sacred

⁹Andrew, M. E. 1972. “Israelite and Canaanite Religion”. In *ORITA Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*; See Clifford, R. J. 1972. *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and The Old Testament*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 107-122; Wright, G. E. “Sinai, Mount”. In *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, IV* New York: Abingdon, 376-378; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus. trans.* Israel Abrahams Jerusalem: The Magnes Press. 232ff.

¹⁰For detail of this position, see Noth, M. 1972. *A history of pentateuchal traditions.* trans. By Anderson, B. W. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. 136-145.

objects. Riggren¹¹ and De Vaux¹² have called our attention to portable sacred objects in the pre Islamic and Bedouin periods. Whenever the tribes were moving from one camp to another, they always carried it on camel and it used to be the last object they would carry. Oracular activities were taking place from there and it used to be in care of a sheikh. During the times of war, it used to be carried to the war front and sacrifice was made to the divinity believed to be dwelling inside (cf. Exo. 26:18; 33:17; Num. 25:8).

“The Ark of the Lord”, “the Ark of the Covenant” or “the Ark of Testimony” as it was variously called, was another sacred object in the times of Moses. It was a common trend in antiquity to have a *mobile shrine* or cultic *box* which was believed to be abode of the tribal gods. The Ark of the Lord was constructed according to the dictates of Yahweh and was regarded as “house” of Yahweh. It also symbolized His throne and presence in the midst of the camp of Israel. The Ark of the Lord was a crucial sacred object both in the wilderness period and during early life in Palestine in ancient Israel (Num. 10:35; Joshua 3:5; 1 Sam. 1-6). In actual fact, there was a cultic recitation that was often repeated by Moses whenever the Ark was raised up and ancient Israelites were on the move. When it was raised: “Let the LORD arise and let Your enemies be scattered” and when it was placed on the ground: Return, Oh Lord to Your countless thousands of Israel” (Num. 10:35).

During the time of the Judges, it was the sacred object to the twelve tribes and it was placed at certain sacred places. Wherever the Ark of the Lord was placed, it was believed that Yahweh was present there on “His throne”. Anytime the Ark was raised, Yahweh rose up to go before the ancient Israelites. Whenever the Ark was put down, Yahweh would go back to His “portable and mobile throne”. According to Thompson “the capture of the Ark by the Philistines at Aphek portended religious and cultic dangers to the ancient Israelites with its attendant destructions done to Shiloh.¹³ Its return back to Israel was with an elaborate celebration simply because the cultic life of the ancient Israel revolved around the Ark.

¹¹Riggren, H. 1974. *Israelite Religion*. Trans Green, D. London: S.P.C.K., pp. 39-40. This same view is rightly substantiated by Morgenstern. J. “The Ark, the Ephod and the Tent of Meeting”. *Hebrew Union College Annual*, XVII 1942-1943. 153f.

¹²De Vaux, R. 1991. *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions*, 294-302.

¹³Thompson, J. A. 1965. *The Bible and the Archaeology*, Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing, 81.

On one hand, there was an indication that ancient Israel followed the tradition of the day in their time to make a mobile *box* called the “Ark of the Lord”. She “placed” her God inside it as a sacred object and it was revered. Moses served as the sacred functionary in charge of the box in the camp. This should not be a strange thing to us because a wandering tribe in the wilderness like Israel would always need the presence of her God. One of the ways to give the assurance of His ever abiding presence was to make “a mobile house” for Him. Though, ancient Israel claimed a theophany instruction for the making of such an object according to Exodus traditions (Ex. 25:9, 10-22; 26:1-37; 27:9-19; 37:1-9).

The Tent of Meeting on the other hand served another purpose. It was a sacred tent pitched outside the Camp. It was a point of meeting between Yahweh and Moses. Yahweh made His appearance from heaven known and manifested Himself “in the cloud” as a sign that He was in the camp for a purpose. The cloud would rest on the Tent and the door of the Tent. This theophany occurred anytime the tribal God wanted to speak to them in the wilderness or ancient Israel needed definite instructions. The Tent was a place where audio-visual oracular activities took place between Yahweh and Moses face to face or mouth to mouth (Exo. 33:11; Num. 12:8). The Tent of Meeting as a sacred object and the camp of the ancient Israel in the wilderness could not be separated. Anywhere the ancient Israel settled in the wilderness, there the Tent of Meeting was also pitched. It served the purpose of oracular activities and theology of divine manifestations outside the camps of the ancient Israel. After the settlement of Israel in Canaan, the Tent of Meeting disappeared to give room for local sanctuaries as new developmental sacred places in the early life in Palestine.

The Tabernacle which later became the combination of both the Ark and the Tent of Meeting was also a sacred object.¹⁴ And wherever it was placed was also a sacred place. The Tabernacle was a place where expiation for sins was made in the wilderness. At the same time, it functioned as a place where Yahweh spoke to the Israelites in the wilderness (cf. Num. 7:89). The Tabernacle was a holy object with its innermost place, popularly called, “The Holy of holies” (cf. Num. 1:51). Its sacredness was revered to the point that it should be entered once in a year by the chief priest of the nation after rigorous rites have been observed by him (cf. Lev. 26:1f). The Tabernacle vessels and all other parts of the Tabernacle were considered sacred and holy and must be protected from all profane

¹⁴Von Rad, G. 1975. *Old Testament Theology Vol. 1*, 238.

touches or contacts (Num. 4:15). In a nut shell, it is glaring that the Ark, Tent of Meeting and Tabernacle were objects placed in sacred places in the camp of the ancient Israel. They also played prominent roles in the ancient Israel liturgy.

The nature of sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy was a diversified and fluid one as one could see from the above. Considering the influence of her close neighbours, the Canaanites and their religion on the ancient Israel, sacred places could be established anywhere. The sacred places ranged from planting of trees, raising altars, grounds, hills under green trees and special mountains. Altars were first mentioned and associated with the patriarchs. The patriarchs erected altars after the order of the Canaanites around and subsequent generation followed (cf. Gen. 12:5-7; 26:25; 35:1, 7). Altars as sacred places were common in the Semitic world and many altars were raised in honour of gods and as meeting places. Also, in a region where there was scarcity of rainfall and trees, the few greenish ones were considered as sacred and symbols of long life, fertility and protection. Trees were planted and regarded as sacred and gods were also worshipped under them (cf. Gen. 12:6; 13: 18; 18:4, 8:21:33).

Altars were other sacred objects that played major roles in ancient Israelite liturgy. Before the legislative commandment regarding the raising of altars (cf. Exo. 20:24-26; 27:1-8; Deut. 27:5), the patriarchs had learnt the spiritual usage of altars as sacred objects and places of meeting the God who appeared to them. After the raising of altars, they called on the name of the LORD God which they knew (Exo. 6:2-3). The secret of knowing God's name was to invoke the name in a cultic manner in order to gain His attention and procure His blessings. The altars raised by the patriarchs and Moses in the wilderness were regarded as meeting places with God(s) of the patriarchs and Yahweh who redeemed His people from the Egyptian slavery. This was as a result of His faithfulness to the covenant He made with them. The patriarchs of ancient Israel erected altars in the manner of the Canaanites around them. In each instance, they experienced the theophanies of their tribal God. They called on the name of this God as a peculiar way of securing His favour, protection and blessings of this God.

The Sinaitic traditions were a shift in the ancient Israelite conceptions of sacred places in her liturgy. Ancient Israel began to place her God on the mountains from the Horeb-Sinai episodes (cf. Exo. 3:1; 19:1-3). The vicinity of the mountains also became sacred area where a mortal man was not expected to wear shoes because of its holiness

like the cases of Moses and Joshua (cf. Exo. 3:5; Jos. 5:13-15). Certain atmospheric features were ascribed to Yahweh as God who dwelt on the mountains. Characteristics like cloud, darkness, smoke, wind, thunder, lightning, blowing of trumpets, and shaking of the mountains were ascribed to Yahweh due to Canaanite influences.

However, sacred places in ancient Israel played major functions in her liturgy. For instance, sacred places were regarded as meeting places with divinities in Canaanites religion. The Canaanites believed that, grounds, hills, rocks, mountains, green trees and so on were meeting places with the gods where mortal man could make contact with the immortal. Likewise, ancient Israel also believed that places regarded as sacred were meeting points with God, even some were regarded as His permanent “house” (cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 13:4, 18; 21:33; 28:16-22; 35:1). Often in the Mosaic traditions, we read “and the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Come up to the mountain...” There God spoke with him and gave him instructions to Israelite community.

Sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy were places of cultic activities. Sacrifices were made to Yahweh during the covenant making (Exo. 24:4-6); burnt offerings were made to Yahweh at cultic sites (Exo. 27:1-8); incense was burned to Him on the altar (Exo. 30:1-10); on the day of atonement, the Ark of the Testimony and Tabernacle played major roles as sacred places (Lev. 16:1-24). The centrality of the ancient Israelite life was her cultic activities and sacrifices. These sacrifices could not be offered at any ordinary place but places regarded as sacred meeting places with her God (Exodus 20:24; Deut. 12:1-28; Exo. 15:13). Invocations were also part of the activities that took place at sacred places in ancient Israel. The instruments of horns were to be engaged during certain invocations on holy days and during wars. Most especially, the name of Yahweh was to be called upon and be invoked while in need (Num. 10:1-10; 6:22-27).

Besides, oracular activities also took place at sacred places in ancient Israel. Prominent of these places were under the tree of Oak or *Terebinth* which was planted by Abraham (Gen. 12:6; 13:18; 21:33). During Mosaic era, it was the Ark of the testimony and the Tent of Meeting that played oracular roles mostly. The Tent of Meeting eventually got the significance of its name through the oracular activities that took place there between Yahweh and Moses (Exo. 33:7-11). There, Moses had an experience of audio-visual oracle and contact with God unlike other prophets who received their messages

through visions and dreams (Exo. 33:11; Num. 12:5-8). Also, sacred places in Bethel, Shiloh, Gilgal and Shechem were the central foci of the tribal leagues during the times of Joshua and the Judges (Jos. 24; Jud. 20:1; 21:12; 1 Sam. 1:9; 3: 20-21). Blessings were equally pronounced at sacred places as well as imprecations. The blessings attached to obedience to the Law were to be pronounced on Mount *Ebal* (Deut. 27:11-26). All the issues mentioned above show functions of sacred places in ancient Israelite liturgy.

On the same hand, African Traditional Religion demonstrates beliefs in sacred places. There are shrines, sacred places and religious spots that are revered and venerated. Certain places like grounds, rocks, hills, mountains, and objects like waters, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, lagoons, seas, plants, trees and the likes are regarded as being sacred. There are also sacred animals that used for ritual purposes in times of need and ceremonies. For example, bats are regarded as sacred animals known for peace wherever it is found. Also, cat fish, *eja àrò*, are regarded as sacred fish which are used during marriage ceremonies and for sacrifices in Yoruba traditional religion for appeasing the gods. Africans believe that there are gods, divinities and personified forces inhabiting all these places. There is a belief in water gods and goddesses who live inside the waters, streams, rivers, ponds, lakes, lagoons and seas. These gods and goddesses are revered and worshipped for the benefits of individuals and the society at large.

Many myths, saga, legend, sayings, folktales and stories lie behind these sacred places. According to Madam Fehintola Ige,¹⁵ some sacred places originated as a result of the war experience of the people in the pre-literate era like *Oloke* Mountain cult. There are specific materials that are peculiarly demanded by each of these gods and goddesses. For instance, *Oloke* mountain cult is notably known for *esuru* and palm wine as sacrificial materials. The chief priest of *Obo* mountain cult, chief Philip Olojaegbe,¹⁶ claims that pigeons, ram, goat and hen besides other specified sacrificial materials according to the needs of the clients are sacred materials to the cult. Sacred *Omi Agbólú* cherishes *eyelé*, pigeons which must be given a local name *èrukùkù* in Ekiti dialect during worship. According to the aged women who are the general priestesses of the sacred *Omi Àlilà*, it is known for kola nut with three halves and the like during worship. There are certain spiritual functions attached to these scared objects in traditional worship in Yorubaland. These range from fertility to healing of fever in children, prevention of pestilence, defence

¹⁵ Fehintola Ige, *The Priestess of Oloke Cult*, an oral interview granted during the course of this research.

¹⁶ Chief Philip Olojaegbe is the incumbent chief priest of *Obo* Mountain cult in Egbe Quarters at Ikole Ekiti.

of towns during war, providing solutions to protracted problems, procuring wealth for the worshippers and so on.

Indigenous churches in Ekitiland also show the same belief in the sacred places in their religious practices. They patronize the sacred places for many reasons. Many of the traditional sacred places such as waters and mountains were Christianized and converted for use for prayers. The indigenous church leaders though claimed divine guidance and revelation for their patronage of sacred places,¹⁷ were influenced by African traditional beliefs in and patronage of sacred places. Both Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church and Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi were partly influenced by African traditional beliefs in and patronage of sacred places. Both of them (Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church and Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde of African Apostolic Church) established and consecrated certain places like hills, rocks, mountains, streams, rivers and waters as sacred.

Christ Apostolic Church as an indigenous church boasts of many sacred streams, rivers, waters, grounds, hilltops and mountains in her liturgy and practices. For example, sacred plains and ground such as Babalola Memorial International Miracle Camp, Ikeji-Arakeji, *Omi Óni* at Efon Alaaye, *Omi Olúwánifise* at Erio, *Omi Babalolá* at Ido-Ile, and mountains like *Ori Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye, *Ori Òkè-Áánú* at Erio Ekiti, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti among others are peculiar to the denomination. Each of these sacred places has its peculiar spiritual functions. These spiritual functions include spiritual endowment of power from above, curing of various sicknesses, fertility, victory over power of darkness, prompt answers to prayers, promoting social harmony, economic buoyancy, and the like. Sacred waters in Christ Apostolic Church are great and peculiar features of the denomination. Sanctified waters played leading roles in the liturgy of the church, especially *Omi Àyò* at Oke Ooye, Ilesa, River *Òni* at Efon, *Omi Olúwánifise* at Erio, *Omi Babalola* at Ido-Ile among others. They are being patronised till date by all and sundry in the church and outside the church. Diverse miracles, healings, signs and wonders, solutions and comforts have been wrought through these sacred waters.

¹⁷Adewale, S. A. 1986. "The Cultic Use of Water Among the Yoruba". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies XVIII/I June*, 36-37. See also Olushey, E.H.L. 2004. *The Mysterious Legacies of Apostle J.A. Babalola*. Ibadan: Gideon Global Publications, 32-34; Ojo, J.O. 2008. *The History and Ministries of Some Past Leaders of CAC*. Ile-Ife: Tinuade Ventures, 2-3.

African Apostolic Church as a peculiar indigenous church in Ekitiland also has sacred places such as *Ilè-Àánú*, *Ilè-Agbára*, *Orí Òkè Ajaye* and the likes. There are sacred waters like *Odò-Joridani*, *Omi-Amúbiiná*, *Olútokín* stream, *Omi-Ìbùkún* and *Omi-Arárómí* in the denomination. Adherents of this denomination strongly hold the belief that these sacred waters are great instruments of fertility, miracles, instantaneous healings, power to confer male children, prosperity and wealth from the hands of God to those who have faith in their patronage.

A critical look at these sacred waters shows that they originated as common elemental objects in nature. But a time came when their status changed due to the prophetic utterances by the pioneers of the indigenous Churches. They also claimed divine guidance, revelations and spiritual encounters which led to the sacralisation of these waters in these selected indigenous churches. Water cult, sacralisation, hydrotherapy and massaging had been known on African soil before the advent of the indigenous churches.¹⁸

Just as there had been sacred waters in African culture, so also there were water goddesses who were consulted for various needs by the Africans. When the indigenous churches sprang up and patronised some places and waters as being sacred for healing and solutions to diverse problems, these ideas were welcome by their followers.¹⁹ Another factor was that this was seen as being African in nature in the garb of Christianity and emphasis was laid on healing and efficacy of prayers. This led to the mass conversion of the indigenous people to these indigenous Churches.²⁰ But one danger that should be avoided by adherents of these denominations is that they should see God and not these sacred waters as ends in themselves. They should not approach these sacred places and waters as if they are coming to the gods and goddesses in the shrines but the living God.

The patronage of sacred places has some socio-religious effects both on the people and the cities that host these places. The patronage of sacred places has brought many

¹⁸Adamo, D. T. 2005. *Reading and Interpreting the Bible in African Indigenous Churches*, 51. Further study on the therapeutic measures among the Yoruba could be read in the submission of Jegede, C. O. 2006. "From Disease Etiology to disease Treatment: An enquiry into Religion and the Yoruba Therapeutics". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XXXVIII, June and December, 167-186.

¹⁹See Olayiwola, D. O. 1987. "The Aladura: Its Strategies for Mission and Conversion in Yorubaland, Nigeria". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XIX/1 June, where he argues that the Aladura in Yorubaland employed both religious and social strategies to gain converts.

²⁰See Owoeye, S. A. "Advent of the African Churches in Nigeria and the Rise of Nationalism". In *The Humanities, Nationalism and Democracy* eds. Sola Akinrinade et al. Ile-Ife: Cedar Productions, 305-307.

improvements to the economic standard of the host communities. Anytime there is a religious event that brings people to any of these sacred places, it is business galore for the food vendors, commercial motorists, sachet water vendors and other categories of people. Many youth of these host communities who were jobless before could find one or two things to do in the town due to the influence of people that patronise the sacred places in their communities. Today, many cities without some economic activities before have come alive due to the influence of the sacred places in their communities. In return, the cash flow in these sacred places has increased. Some commercial houses have come and built branches of their companies in many of these communities for business transactions. This was due to the influence of the patronage of the sacred places around. For instance, there are many motorcyclists now in the town taking the people to the locations of these sacred places where motors could not reach. Petty trading has kept some young ladies busy around the sacred places as sources of living in a situation where they could not continue their education.

There have been some religious interactions among various Christian sects at sacred places due to the influence of their patronage. Many adherents of other Christian sects have come across the adherents of Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church at sacred places. As a result, the liturgy and mode of worship of these selected indigenous churches have influenced other Christian sects. This influence is noticeable in the areas of prayers, gesticulations, shouting in prayers, clappings, observance of hours of prayers, Africanized music and revivalistic songs, incessant conduction of prayers meetings and revivals and so on. Pentecostal and prophetic features of these selected indigenous churches are being exercised at these sacred places. Adherents of Christian sects that are not accustomed to these prophetic gifts in their local churches have the grace to benefit from these spiritual gift exercises as they are put into use by those who are endowed with them.

The abuse of such gifting on sacred places cannot but be mentioned. Some of the sacred personages on these sacred places abuse the authority and the gifts they are endowed with. Elemental objects like waters, olive oil, sands of these sacred places are sometimes commercialised. The use of oil has been turned to magical instruments, capable of procuring wealth to the buyers. Nevertheless, people still patronise these sacred places because of economic hardship in the nation, personal problems, marital crises and spirit-

related attacks and other reasons without minding the abuses that are going on the sites. This is due to the fact that people want solutions to their problems at all costs.

The urbanization and industrialisation that are going on in the world also have effects on sacred places. Sacred places that were once regarded as ancient and primitive in outlook are now receiving facelifts. Motorable roads, modern building constructions, electricity supply and pipe borne water are now feasible on these places. However, the effects of urbanisation and industrialisation on sacred places have witnessed the destruction of certain sacred ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. Certain sacred trees and waters too have been destroyed in the name of building and road constructions and civilisation. Also there were some sacred stones that have been levelled down during the constructions. These trees and stones could have served as the source of both academic research and historical points of references. One thing that should be borne in mind of the people is the fact that sacred places are conservatory places of ancient trees, stones and animal species that are for good academic research and preservation for posterity.

Oriye has expressed serious concerns about the rate of changes, industrialisation and urbanization in the cities nowadays without taking into cognizance the importance of sacred places and making adequate preparations for these places. He argues, “land use planning has not consciously taken into consideration the need for sacred places because of the desire of government to create a secular society”.²¹ Reep Richard is also of the position “that sacred place is important enough people to do something about consciously, accommodating sacred spaces in city development programmes”.²²

With all these issues, there are some Christians who do not believe or patronise sacred places. They argue that though sacred places existed in the Bible times, but Jesus Christ did not tell us that we should patronise them. One interesting about them was they did not deny the existence and realities of patronage of sacred places and the results people get there.

²¹Oriye, O. 2010, “Land Use and Sacred Spaces in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria”. In *International Journal of Issues on African Development Vol. 2 No 4*, 250.

²²Richard. R. *Can Sacred Space Revive the American City?* Retrieved Sept. 9, September 2010, from <http://www.newgeography.com>.

7.2 Data Analysis

A total number of ten Christ Apostolic Church assemblies and ten African Apostolic Church assemblies were purposively selected. Out of these assemblies, we selected 20 church leaders, that is, the ministers, elders and deaconesses from these assemblies. Also, we selected 20 leaders of groups and 35 members from each of these selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland, covering 3 local government areas- Efon Alaaye, Efon Alaaye local government area, towns under Ekiti West local government area-Ido-Ile Ekiti, formerly Ido-Ajinare; Erio Ekiti and Ajaye Ekiti and Ikole Ekiti, in Ikole local government area. The interviews conducted were subject to content analysis.

7.2a Socio-Economic Backgrounds of the Respondents

Table 1: Sex Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	Denomination		Percentage	Total
	Frequency			
	Christ Apostolic Church	African Apostolic Church		
Male	50	53	68.7	103
Female	25	22	31.3	47
Total	75	75	100.0	150

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 1 shows the sex distribution of the respondents; 50 male members of Christ Apostolic Church and 53 male members of African Apostolic Church were interviewed, totalling 103 (68.2%); while 25 female members Christ Apostolic Church and 22 female members of African Apostolic Church, totalling 47 (31.3%) were our respondents in this work.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents by Denomination

Age	Denominational Affiliation				Total
	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church		
30-50	43	57.3%	49	65.3%	92
51-70	22	29.4%	24	32.0%	46
Above 70	10	13.3%	2	2.7%	12
Total	75	100.0	75	100.0	150

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 2 is about the age distribution of the respondents; those who were between age 30-50 from CAC and AAC were 92 (61.3%), those who were between age 51-70 from the selected churches were 46, (30.7%) while respondents > 70 from the churches were 12 (2.7%). This indicates majority of the respondents ranged within 30-50 years of age.

Table 3: Educational Background of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Primary School	24	16.0
Secondary	37	24.7
NCE/OND	22	14.7
HND/BSc	50	33.3
Above BSc	17	11.3
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 3 shows the educational background of the respondents. Those who were primary school leavers 24, (16%); secondary school holders 37, (24.7%); holders of Nigerian College of Education and Ordinary National Diploma respondents 22, (14.7%); the Higher National Diploma and first degree holders 50, (33.3%) and finally holders of degree higher than first degree were 17 (11.3%). The first degree holders formed the highest percentage of our respondents.

Table 4: Status of the Respondents from the Selected Churches

Status	Denominations		Total	%
	Christ Apostolic Church	African Apostolic Church		
Clergy	11	4	15	10.0
Elder	6	23	29	19.3
Deaconess	9	0	9	6.0
Leader	14	13	27	18.0
Civil Servants	7	2	9	6.0
Trader	8	11	19	12.7
Artisan	2	5	7	4.7
Unemployed	3	2	5	3.3
Others	15	15	30	20.0
Total	75	75	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 4 shows the status of the respondents in the selected churches. The clergy 15, (10.0%), the elders of the churches 29 (19.3%), the deaconesses 9 (6.0%), leaders of groups in the churches 27, (18.0%), the civil servants 9 respondents (6.0%), traders and artisans 19 (12.7%), 7 (4.7%) respectively, unemployed 5 (3.3%) and finally other categories of respondents were 30 (20.0%).

This indicates that men are more than women in the church leadership positions in these selected churches, yet women are not allowed to hold leadership positions. Also, the respondents cut across many social classes of people in the society, even the unemployed.

Table 5: Distribution of Locations of the Respondents

Locations	Frequency	Percentage
Efon Alaaye-Ekiti	38	25.3
Ido-Ile Ekiti	24	16.0
Erio-Ekiti	10	6.7
Ikole-Ekiti	12	8.0
Aramoko-Ekiti	17	11.3
Ajaye-Ekiti	42	28.0
Others	7	4.7
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 5 shows our areas of coverage in this research in 3 local government areas in Ekitiland. Respondents from Efon Alaaye Ekiti were 38 (25.3%), respondents from Ido-Ile Ekiti were 24 (16.0%), Erio-Ekiti respondents were 10 (6.7%), respondents from Ikole-Ekiti were 12 (8.0%), respondents from Aramoko Ekiti were 17 (11.3%), Ajaye-Ekiti has 42 respondents while others whose opinions matter to enrich this research were 7, forming 4.7%.

Ajaye-Ekiti 28.0%, followed by Efon Alaaye Ekiti 25.3% and Ido-Ile Ekiti 16.0 % have high percentage among the respondents. The sheer reason behind this was that majority of the sacred places in the selected churches are concentrated in these areas. Also, most popular sacred places of the selected indigenous churches under this research are located in these three areas.

Table 6: Income Level of the Respondents

Income	Frequency	Percentage
25, 000-50, 0000	80	53.3
51, 0000-75, 000	58	38.7
Above 75,000	12	8.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 6 is about the economic level of the respondents. As the table indicates, those who earned within 25,000 to 50,000 constituted 53.3% of the respondents, earners within 51,000-75,000 were 38.7% and earners greater than 75,000 was the least as they formed 8.0% of our respondents. This showed that majority of the respondents earned the least in the society.

7.2b Beliefs in Sacred Places among Adherents of Selected Churches in Ekitiland

Table 1: Respondents' Beliefs in Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you believe that sacred places exist in Ekitiland?	Yes	72	96.0	71	94.6
	No	2	2.7	3	4.0
	No Response	1	1.3	1	1.4
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

According to table 1, 96% members of Christ Apostolic Church and 94.6% members of African Apostolic Church strongly agreed to have beliefs in the sacred places, but 2.7% members of Christ Apostolic Church and 4.0% of members of African Apostolic Church said they do not hold such a Christian view of the sacred places while 1.3% and 1.4% of Christ Apostolic Church and African Apostolic Church respectively have no response to the idea of having beliefs in sacred places. It is glaring that majority of the adherents of the selected churches have beliefs in the spatial realities and non-homogeneity of space. These adherents would have no problems in holding such faith because they were familiar with such in the cultural practices around them in Ekitiland.

Table 2: Confirmation of Patronage of Sacred Places in Ekitiland

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you prayed at any of the sacred places in Ekitiland before?	Yes	72	96.0	71	94.7
	No	1	1.3	4	5.3
	No Response	2	2.7	-	-
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 2 shows that 96.0% members of Christ Apostolic Church and 94.7% members of African Apostolic Church have patronised sacred places in their domains and offered prayers at sacred places in their denominations. Only 1.3% Christ Apostolic Church members and 5.3% of African Apostolic Church adherents have not done so and 2.7% adherents in CAC have no specific answer to this. This suggests that adherents of these two churches still go outside the conventional places of worship for many spiritual reasons best known to them.

Table 3: Use of Elements from Sacred Places by Respondents

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Have you used any of the elements like waters or olive oils taken from the sacred places?	Yes	75	100	73	97.3
	No	-	-	-	-
	No Response	-	-	2	2.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

According to table 3, the use of elements such as waters and olive oils or the common Goya oil from sacred places appeared to be a common phenomenon among the respondents, 100% and 97% respondents from CAC and AAC respectively gave positive response that they have used such elements from sacred places but 3% members of African Apostolic Church gave no response on this. The use of elements from sacred places could be viewed as special due to the influence of their placement on sacred sites. Some who did not go there to fetch sacred waters could ask their neighbours who have such sacred elements for the elements.

Table 4: Reasons for Patronising Sacred Places by Respondents

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you go to Sacred Places for spiritual reasons or solutions sake?	Yes	64	85.3	70	93.3
	No	8	10.7	3	4.0
	No Response	3	4.0	2	2.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

As table 4 indicates, 85.3% members of Christ Apostolic Church and 93.3% adherents of African Apostolic Church patronised sacred places for spiritual reasons. This shows that both leaders and members of the selected churches patronised sacred places in order to meet their spiritual needs. Only 10.7% of CAC and 4.0% AAC respondents claimed that they have not done so. We have 4.0% respondents in CAC and 2.7% respondents from AAC who gave no response to the patronage of sacred places. This means that some respondents from the selected churches did not only hold beliefs in sacred place, they go there for other spiritual purposes.

7.2c Effects of Sacred Places on Prayers and Miracles

Table 1: Respondents Response on Speed by which Prayers are Answered at Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do prayers offered in	Yes	67	89.0	65	86.7
	No	4	5.0	8	10.7

sacred places get quicker answers than those offered in regular places of worship?	No Response	4	6.0	2	2.6
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 1 shows the respondents' answers to the effects of sacred places on prayers. A total of 89.0% of Christ Apostolic Church faithful and 86.7% respondents from African Apostolic Church strongly agreed that sacred places have effects on prayers offered there. This total number of respondents believed that prayers offered at sacred places get quick answers than those one offered in the regular places of worship. Only 5% Christ Apostolic Church respondents gave a negative answer while 10.7% respondents from African Apostolic Church did not believe in the higher effects of sacred places on prayers offered there than in the regular places of worship. It is noted that 6.0% and 2.6% from each churches remained neutral and gave no response. This reveals that respondents believed that sacred places have effects on prayers of the believers.

Table 2: Respondents Response to Healings and Miracles on Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are uncommon miracles associated with sacred places?	Yes	58	77.4%	49	65.3
	No	7	9.3	6	8.0
	No Response	10	13.3	20	26.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 2 shows 77.4% respondents from Christ Apostolic Church who believed that uncommon healings and miracles are associated with sacred places while 9.3% respondents contradicted this opinion and 13.3% respondents remained neutral on this. This is so because healings and miracles are attached to sacred places. Only 65.3% respondents from African Apostolic Church attached healings and miracles to the sacred places while 8.0% gave negative response to this and 26.7% gave no response to this opinion.

Table 3: Level of Seriousness in Prayer on the Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you tend to pray more while on sacred places than in the regular places of worship?	Yes	54	72.0	48	64.0
	No	18	24.0	22	29.3
	No Response	3	4.0	5	6.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009

Table 3 shows a total of 54.0% respondents who agreed that people tend to concentrate and pray more while on sacred places than in the regular places of worship in Christ Apostolic Church but 24.0% respondents disagreed on this opinion while 4.0% has no answer to this. Respondents from African Apostolic Church, 64.0% agreed that the level of their seriousness in prayer increased while at sacred sites while 29.3% disagreed and 6.7% remained neutral. This could be as a result of the mindsets of the people and worshippers that they are in special grounds for prayers.

7.2d Beliefs in the Potency of Sacred Places over Regular Places

Table 1: The Potency of Sacred Places over Regular Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are sacred places more powerful than regular places of worship?	Yes	63	84.0	54	72.1
	No	10	13.3	21	27.9
	No Response	2	2.7	-	-
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Among our respondents from Christ Apostolic Church, 84.0% agreed that sacred places are more potent than regular places of worship but 13.3% did not believe in this while 2.7% have no response. About 72.1% respondents from African Apostolic Church agreed with this view but 27.9% disagreed. This indicates that respondents from the selected churches strongly believed in the potency of sacred places. Regular places of worship could be regarded as common places for conventional services, ceremonies and the rest.

Table 2: The Rate of Solutions Derived from Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you get more solutions to your difficulties in sacred places than in regular places of worship?	Yes	64	85.3	66	88.0
	No	8	10.7	4	5.3
	No Response	3	4.0	5	6.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 2 shows that 85.3% respondents indicated that they got more solutions to their difficulties when they patronised sacred places in Christ Apostolic Church. In African Apostolic Church, 88% respondents agreed they equally received more solutions to the problems at sacred sites than church auditoria. This could be said to be one of the reasons people patronise sacred places, believing that they would get more solutions to their dire needs. Yet 10.7% from CAC and 5.3% from AAC disagreed that they got more solutions at these places than regular places of worship. We have 4%, CAC, and 7% AAC who did give any answer to this.

7.2e Responses on the Functions of Sacred Places in the Selected Churches

Table 1: Functions of Sacred Places by Respondents and the Problems taken there

S/N	Responses	Christ Apostolic Church						African Apostolic Church					
		A		DA		NR		A		DA		NR	
		Fq.	(%)	Fq.	(%)	Fq.	(%)	Fq.	(%)	Fq.	(%)	Fq.	(%)
1	Sicknesses/Diseases	73	97.3	2	2.7	-	-	69	92.0	4	5.3	2	2.7
2	Confirmation of Calling	55	73.3	5	6.7	15	20.0	41	54.7	27	36.0	7	9.3
3	Spiritual Empowerment	72	96.0	3	4.0	-	-	67	89.3	2	2.7	6	8.0
4	Electoral Victory	45	60.0	30	40.0	-	-	35	53.3	40	46.7	-	-
5	Male Child Births	57	76.0	11	14.7	7	9.3	69	92.0	2	2.7	4	5.3
6	Marital issues	60	80.0	7	9.3	8	10.7	57	76.0	10	13.3	8	10.7
7	Evil Attacks	68	90.7	5	6.7	2	2.6	72	96.0	3	4.0	-	-
8	Festering sores	45	60.0	10	13.3	20	26.7	75	100.0	-	-	-	-
9	Rain making	-	-	-	-	-	-	75	100.0	-	-	-	-
10	Divine Mercy/Favour	69	92.0	-	-	6	8.0	60	80.0	3	4.0	12	16.0
11	Fertility	69	92.0	-	-	6	8.0	72	96.0	-	-	3	4.0
12	Church Resolutions	48	64.0	6	8.0	21	28.0	42	56.0	22	29.3	11	14.7
13	Economic Empowerment	49	65.3	15	20.0	11	14.7	53	70.7	8	10.6	14	18.7

14	Visa Procurement	57	76.0	10	13.3	8	10.7	37	49.3	14	18.7	24	32.0
15	Contract Award	44	58.7	21	28.0	10	13.3	48	64.0	17	22.7	10	13.3
16	Academic breakthrough	57	76.0	12	16.0	6	8.0	30	40.0	20	26.7	25	33.3

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

This table shows the beliefs of the respondents from the selected churches on the special functions of sacred places in their denominations. On the issues of sicknesses, diseases and other forms of infirmities, 97.3 %-CAC, and 92.0%-AAC, agreed that sacred places in their denominations function in the healings of sicknesses, 2.7% CAC and 5.3% AAC respondents contradicted this while 2.7% gave no response. This confirmed the claims that sacred places are effective in bringing healing to the people. Here *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Omi-Babalolá* at Ido-Ile (CAC), *Omi Olútokín*, *Omi Amúblíná* and *Odo Jórídánì* (AAC) at Ajaye specifically function effectively in this regard.

On the confirmation of pastoral calling, 73.3 % respondents-CAC, and 54.7% respondents-AAC attested to the fact that those who wanted to confirm the call of God upon their lives patronised the sacred places, in order to seek the face of God on this, while 6.7% CAC and 36.0% AAC disagreed. About 2.0% respondents from CAC and 9.3% respondents-AAC remained with no answer. *Ori Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye and *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* Ido-Ile Ekiti-CAC and *Òkè-Àjàyè* were allotted to this function

We have 96% respondents from CAC, and 89.3% AAC respondents who agreed that patronage of sacred places lead to spiritual empowerment. Sacred places are partly sought in order to draw spiritual power from God while on patronage the places. Yet we have 4.0% respondents, CAC and 2.7% respondents, AAC who did not believe this while 8.0% respondents from AAC remained neutral on this. *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* Ido-Ile Ekiti and *Òkè-Àjàyè* are known for this function.

The patronage of sacred places cuts across all classes of people. Our investigation revealed that politicians sought political victory in prayers as they patronise sacred places, as 60.0% CAC, and 53.3% AAC respondents respectively agreed that it has led to electoral victory of many politicians who patronised the sites. About 40.0% CAC and 53.3% of AAC agreed on this while 46.7% AAC disagreed. *Ori Òkè-Àánú* at Erio-CAC and *Òkè-Àjàyè* are attached with this function.

Births of male children were believed to be another function of sacred places as 76.0% CAC and 92% AAC respondents agreed to this. About 14.7% respondents from CAC and 2.7% from AAC respondents disagreed, leaving it to chance and providence,

while 9.3% CAC, and 5.3% respondents from AAC have not answer. On this, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Omi Babalolá* at Ido-Ile Ekiti in CAC, *Omi Aráròmi* in particular and *Omi-Amúbíiná* in AAC are notable sacred waters for this function.

Social issues like marital problems are believed to be resolved at sacred places; hence 80.0% respondents from CAC and 76.0% respondents from AAC agreed that sacred places provided solutions to marital issues. On the other hand, 9.3% CAC and 2.7% AAC respondents disagreed while 10.7% CAC and 10.7% AAC respondents did not have any response to this. *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu*, Ido-Ile, and *Ori Òkè-Àánú* at Erio-CAC and *Òkè-Àjàyè*-AAC are known for this through the mediatory interventions of the gospel ministers there.

The potency of sacred places are displayed according to the belief of the people, as 90.7% respondents from CAC and 94.0% respondents from AAC agreed that evil attacks and spirit related problems are solved when taken to the sacred places. In this arena, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti, *Ori Òkè-Ìségun* at Efon and *Ori Òkè Àánú* at Erio Ekiti, CAC and *Òkè-Àjàyè*-AAC, were believed to be potent on this. At the same time 6.7% from CAC respondents and 4.0% from AAC respondents professed that they do not belong to that school of thought while 2.6% respondents from CAC did not have any response to that.

On the healing of festering sores, 60.0% respondents from CAC and 96.0% respondents from AAC hold the belief those sacred waters heal festering sores. *Omi Babalolá*, *Omi-Olúwánífise* and *Omi Kòsehuntì* at Erio-Ekiti perform this function according to our findings. As the percentage indicates, African Apostolic Church patronises sacred waters, *Olútokín* and *Amúbíiná*, which are believed to be capable of healing festering sores. But 13.3% CAC and 4.0% AAC respondents found it difficult to believe such an idea.

Rain-making is another major belief of African Apostolic Church respondents that they enjoyed from one of the sacred places in the Holy City of the denomination. 100% of our respondents indicated that sacred *Ilè- Àánú* of AAC could bring rain fall when you stand on it and pray for rainfall. It was believed that it was a covenant that God made with the founding fathers of the churches that any time they want rain around them; they could come to the site and ask for rain. Till date, no one stands on the sacred site and talk about rain fall unnecessarily. Christ Apostolic Church does not have a special sacred site like that but they could pray to God in any of the sacred places for rain.

Ori Òkè Àánú at Erio-Ekiti and *Ilè-Àánú* at Ajaye-Ekiti are sacred sites that adherents also believed that engendered the receipt of mercy. A total of 92.0%

respondents from CAC and 96.0% respondents from AAC agreed that these places served the places one could patronise and receive mercy. A few 8.0% in CAC and 4.0% interviewed people were having no response to this.

The social significance of sacred places were brought to the fore when someone considers the fertility purposes of nearly all the sacred places in the selected churches in Ekitiland as our respondents revealed. About 92.0% respondents from CAC and 96.0% respondents from AAC believed that sacred mountains and waters, in particular *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Omi-Babalolá* at Ido-Ile Ekiti, *Orí Òke Àánú* at Erio-Ekiti, *Omi Aráròmi* and *Omi-Amúbiiná* at Ajaye functioned as fertility sacred mountains and waters in these selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. On the other hand, 8.0%-CAC and 4.0%-AAC respondents could not give any answer to this function of the sacred places.

Sacred places are also significant places in both social and religious places to foster peace, as 64.0% respondents from CAC and 56.0% respondents from AAC agreed that these places function as places of church resolutions in times of crises. *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Orí Òke Àánú* at Erio Ekiti served this purpose in CAC, while *Orí-Òkè Àjàyè* in AAC did the same. About 8.0% respondents CAC, 29.3% respondents from AAC disagreed on this while 28.0% and 14.3%, CAC and AAC respectively among our respondents did not have response to this.

Prayers for economic growth and business boom were offered at sacred places, just as 65.3% CAC, and 70.7% AAC respondents attested to this. On this, *Ilè Àánú* in Ajaye and *Orí Òke Àánú* in Erio Ekiti were strongly believed to do this. Taking part of the sand of *Ilè Àánú* at Ajaye and mix it with the sand in your house or business area would perform the wonders. Yet we have 20.3% in CAC and 10.6% in AAC who did not agree while 14.7% CAC and 18.7, AAC respondents have no response.

Another function and socio-significance of sacred places which people believed that they derived from the patronage of the sacred places was answer to the prayers to procure international Visa in order to travel abroad. In this regard, 76.0% respondents from CAC agreed to this. *Orí Òkè Ìségún*, *Efon Alaye* and *Orí Òkè Àánú* Erio-Ekiti -CAC are believed to be potent to perform this and 13.3% -CAC respondents held a contrary view and 10.7%-CAC have no response to it. In AAC, 64.0% agreed to this function, while 22.7% respondents held contrary view and 32.0% have no response. The sacred *Ile-Aanu*-AAC at Ajaye was believed to do this when someone patronises it.

The economic empowerment of the sacred places to boost their businesses bordered on answers of the respondents to our investigations. people to boost their

business profession. Many contractors have patronised the sacred places for the contract awards, as 58.7% respondents in CAC believed this, but 28.0% disagreed on this while 13.3% have no response. *Ori Òkè Àánú* at Erio-Ekiti, and *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile are known for this in CAC. In AAC, 64.0% respondents agreed that business promotion through contract awards to the contractors, *Ilè Àánú* and *Ilè Agbára* functioned in the arena while patronising the sacred sites, but 22.7% disagreed while 13.3% did not have any response.

The academic careers of students are also taken care of at the sacred sites. Many students from various institutions across the country patronised sacred sites as 76.0% respondents from CAC claimed. On the contrary, 16.0% negated this claim while 8.0% have no response. In regards, *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* in Ido-Ile and *Ori Òke Àánú* in Erio-Ekiti-CAC are the most patronised sacred places. In AAC, 40.0% positively agreed to this, but 26.0% did not while 33.3% have no response.

7.2f Socio-Religious Effects of Sacred Places on People and Churches

Table 1: Response on Sacred Places and Family Harmony

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Does the patronage of sacred places enhance social harmony of the families?	Yes	71	94.7	66	88.0
	No	4	5.3	6	8.0
	No Response	-	-	3	4.0
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Table 1 show that sacred places also have positive social effects on families as 94.7% respondents from CAC agreed that peace and harmony have returned to many families as a result of their patronage of the sacred places. More families have been able to stay together stronger than before as a result of this. In AAC, 88.0% respondents agreed that many families have known peace after their patronage of sacred places in the site. Issues like infertility, sterility, only female births and sickness of a spouse could lead to misunderstanding and actual quarrel but response from the table above indicated that sacred places enhance social harmony in the families but 4.0% in CAC contradicted this and 8.0% in AAC did the same while 4.0% gave no response. *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* and *Ori Òke Àánú* in CAC are known for this function.

Table 2: Respondents response on Harmony in Sacred Places in Denominations

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Does worshipping in sacred places bring about harmony among people of different denominations?	Yes	73	97.3	73	97.3
	No	2	2.7	1	1.3
	No Response	-	-	1	1.3
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009

This table 2 shows the response to socio-religious significance of sacred places among people of different denominations, 97.3% in CAC agreed that patronage of sacred places led to harmony among people of many Christian sects and 97.3% AAC also agreed to this. Only 2.7% in CAC and 1.3% in AAC disagreed while 1.3% in AAC has to response. This shows that denominationalism has no place when people from different assemblies and Christian sect were on the sacred sites. *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* Ido-Ile and *Orí Òke Àánú* Erio and *Orí Òkè-Ìsegun*, major sacred places that Babalola established are notably known for this influence in CAC. *Àjàyè ni ò*, meaning, “Victory is sure” was reported to be the common slogan of those who patronized sacred *Òkè-Àjàyè* from within and outside the denomination. People from Lagos, Benin, Cote D’Ivoire, and Port Harcourt are familiar with this slogan as our participatory observations revealed.

Table 3: Response on the Influence of Sacred Places on Liturgy of Other Christian Sects

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Does the patronage of sacred places influence the liturgies of other denominations?	Yes	55	73.3	53	70.7
	No	3	4.0	7	9.3
	No Response	17	22.7	15	20.0
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Patronage of sacred places in the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland has positive religious effects on the liturgies of other Christian sects. This was witnessed to as 73.3% respondents from CAC agreed that other denominations around them especially

mainline churches and new age churches have been greatly influenced in their prayers, mode of worship, singing of choruses and clappings in line with CAC practices. As indicated in the table above, 73.3% of the respondents agreed that coming to the CAC sacred places has successfully transformed many Christian sects around them, at least as experiences have shown. Respondents from AAC, 70.7% also agreed to this. Both respondents from the two selected churches pointed to their attendance register that showed many church leaders from other denominations that had patronized the sacred places in the two denominations. Nevertheless, 4.0% negatively responded to this claim in CAC while 22.7% respondents from the church gave no response. Meanwhile, 9.3% from AAC held contrary opinion while 20.0% respondent remained neutral.

Table 4: Response on the Influence of Ekiti Topography on Proliferation of Sacred Places in the Selected Churches

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you belief that the topography of Ekitiland influences the number of sacred places ?	Yes	73	97.4	62	82.7
	No	1	1.3	8	10.6
	No Response	1	1.3	5	6.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

The influence of Ekiti topography was partly believed to influence the proliferation of sacred places in the selected churches. Ekitiland is culturally rich with gifts of nature such as water falls, springs, lakes, ponds, streams, rivers, rocks, hills and mountains. In CAC, 97.4% respondents agreed that the topography such as waters and mountains in Ekitiland influenced the proliferation of sacred places there. Only 1.3% held the negative position and 1.3% gave no response from CAC respondents. Efon Alaaye in particular, Erio-Ekiti and Ido-Ile are towns with hills and mountains. This was believed to be able to influence the establishment of sacred mountains in the church. In AAC, 82.7% respondents also agreed on the influence of Ekiti topography on the proliferation of sacred places. The sacred waters at Ajaye had been there before God instructed Ajagunigbala, Adeyemi and Omotunde to go there. Only 10.6% respondents held negative idea on this while 6.7% have no response to this.

Table 5: Response on Specific Functions of Specific Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Are you aware that specific sacred places have specific solutions to challenges?	Yes	68	90.7	66	88.0
	No	5	6.7	1	1.3
	No Response	2	2.6	8	10.7
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

Our findings have revealed that people held the belief that there are specific sacred places for specific functions. In CAC, 90.7% respondents agreed that there are specific functions for specific sacred places in the denomination. As this implies, *Orí Òkè-Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye Ekiti is believed for victory over all evil attacks, *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile is known for miracles and spiritual empowerment while *Orí Òke Àánú* at Erio is termed “the mercy seat of God”, where people come for mercy of God over all outstanding issues and challenges in their lives. *Ilè Àánú* and *Ilè Agbára*, *Omi Amúbíiná*, *Olútokín* and *Aráròmí* among others have specific functions of miracles, rain-making, male-child births to mention just a few at Ajaye, as 88.0% respondents attested to this claim. However, 5.7% in CAC held a contrary opinion while 2.6% have no answer. In the same vein in AAC, 1.3% held a negative idea and 10.7% respondents had no answer on this.

Table 6: Response on the Abuse of Sacred Places

Question	Response	Christ Apostolic Church		African Apostolic Church	
		Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you think ministers have abused sacred places with excessive demands?	Yes	43	57.3	45	60.0
	No	17	22.7	14	18.7
	No Response	15	20.0	16	21.3
	Total	75	100.0	75	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2009-2010

The table above shows the percentage of abuses at sacred places. Respondents, 57.3% from CAC agreed that there are noticeable abuses at sacred places, but 22.7%

respondents disagreed on this while 20.0% gave no response at all. In the AAC, 60.0% respondents agreed that people perpetrated certain abuses at sacred places but 18.7% respondents did not agree while 20.7% respondents refuse to comment on this.

It is certain that there are abuses that are going on in the sacred places such as fund raising by “voluntary compulsory method” in the name of prosperity overnight. Besides, inasmuch Africans believe in vision, forth-telling and foretelling, prophets who visited these places also played on these religious mindsets of the people. There are abuses of spiritual gifts going on in some of these places that need to be curbed.

7.3 Findings and Contributions to Knowledge

In the course of this research, we have discovered some findings that are pertinent to the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places in the ancient Israelite religion and selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. The following among others are our findings in this research:

i. The Animistic Nature of the Beginning of the Ancient Israelite Religion

Man in antiquity saw spirits dwelling in some of the super sensible objects such as unique lakes, special stones, architectural rocks, waterfall, uncommon trees, hills, caves, and imposing mountains around him. These incorporeal beings were identified with the objects in the world of nature. They were viewed not only as residual places of the divinities; there were times they were equally viewed as symbolic representations of these divinities. Most of the world religions started with crude representations of the religions through some of these natural elements. We found out that the ancient Israelite religion did not reach its climax at once but passed through developmental or evolutionary stages. The patriarchs also had “animistic stages” or “animistic conceptions” of the worship of God that appeared to them. Hence, they worshipped Him under trees that were identified with supernatural elements in their days and represented His presence and manifestation with stones like the case of Jacob and mountains such as Sinai-Horeb, *Gerizim* and *Ebal*. Though, this was later condemned by the prophetic guilds in Israel as a result of their Canaanite influence during the monarchical era.

ii. The Cultic Anchoring and Protection of the Ancient Israelite Religion in Nature

Another issue found in the course of this research was the fact that ancient Israelite religion was “anchored” in nature through the actions of the patriarchs and even Moses. This was demonstrated by planting trees such as Oak of *Mamre*, *Terebinth* tree, raising of stones and calling on the name of the LORD. The idea of calling on the name of the LORD was definitely an invocation for the perpetuity of their posterity on the Promised Land they were yet to inherit but possessing it for the posterity. They worshipped God that had called and promised them the Land of Canaan. These elements are durable elements in nature and their inherent features and potencies were transferred to reality through invocations which was regarded as calling on the name of the LORD.

As the progenitors of their tribe, they were establishing certain cultic foundations and blessings for their future generations. It is just like what Yoruba people refer to as *wón gún èsì*, meaning, making a perpetual invocation on something or for a course that cannot be easily or ordinarily broken or revoked. This was also reflected in the blessing of Jacob, Moses on children of Israel and Joshua calling on stones as witnesses; whereby they invoked natural forces such as heaven and earth, rains and anchored the blessings in them (Gen. 49:1-28; Deut. 33: 13-26; cf. Deut. 32:1).

iii. The Inseparability of the Ancient Israelite Cultus and Sacred Places

It was discovered in this research that the ancient Israel could not do without sacred places in her liturgy. Just as it was not lawful for anyone else to stand in the priesthood office if he was not from the lineage of Aaron, so also liturgy could not be performed without a sanctuary. The sanctuary would be where there had been theophany or places ordained by God.

iv. Religion and Geographical Topography: People Worship God According to their Environments

Another finding we discovered in this research work was the fact that religion and its immediate environments cannot be separated. We discovered that people from antiquity served their gods according to their geographical terrains. It follows that people in the desert areas cannot have waters gods and

goddesses; people in the thick forest areas cannot have mountain cults or people in the hilly and mountainous areas cannot have gods of the forest. Also, people in riverine areas could have mountain cults or Earth cults but water cults because that is what their environment permit them to have. People in mountainous areas would have mountain cults as their environment allows. In the selected indigenous churches, Babalola and Omotunde did not establish any sacred mountain in Lagos or Ilorin or sacred waters in the northern part of the country. This was due to the topographical terrain of these areas but in the places where waters, rivers, hills and mountains were available. This shows that religion finds ample expressions through its geographical environments. Ekiti people have mountains and waters, so Babalola and Omotunde used these topographical opportunities and established sacred waters and mountains for their followers and adherents of Christian faith.

v. Neither Theophany nor Hierophanies in all Cases but Prophetic Revelations

Through this research, it was discovered that not all the sacred places in these selected indigenous churches originated as a result of theophany of God or angels as it was in the ancient Israelite religion. On the other hand, they did not become sacred as a result of “hierophanies”-the revelation of the mystery of nature as Eliade has generalized it to all sacred places in religions. Many of the sacred places in the selected indigenous churches originated as a result of the prophetic utterances received and audible voices heard by these leaders without seeing any angel. Some came up as a result of search for place of prayers because of the crowds thronging around them. Providence even led them to some as they saw the places as being useful and capable of helping their ministry such as *Ori-Òkè Àánú* at Erio-Ekiti before it was consecrated through prayers and prophetic messages from God. Prophetic indicators and providence from nature were even used by God to confirm that He has chosen some places as sacred like the rain that fell when Babalola and his entourage were at Efon Mountain. Also, God used rain to confirm to Prophet Ajagunigbala that He has called and empowered him. Also, the mountain he was standing upon has been chosen as a sacred place for prayer for the whole world.

vi. Specific Sacred Places with Peculiar Functions in the Selected Indigenous Churches

It was also found out in this research that there are specific sacred places that exist for specific spiritual functions in the beliefs of the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. For instance, in Christ Apostolic Church, places like *Ori-Òkè Ìségún* is proclaimed for the functions of fertility, confirmation of pastoral calling and victory over all problems; *Ori-Òkè Àánú* is attached with the receipt of mercy from God; sacred waters such as *Omi Olúwánífise* at Erio-Ekiti is for the healing of epilepsy, lunacy and bodily diseases; *Ori Òkè Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile is for spiritual empowerment. In the African Apostolic Church, *Ilè-Àánú* has its peculiar functions of pulling the crowd to a church that is experiencing stagnation, completion of building that has a set and the like and it also performs rain-making function. Sacred *Omi-Amúbíiná* is for instantaneous healing of specific disease; *Omi Arárómí* is for fertility of male children in particular, *Omi Ibúkún* is for financial blessing in the church beliefs. The benefit of these attachments of specific functions to specific sacred places could easily help to direct people to where they believe they could get solutions to their problems without wandering about.

vii. Everything in African land is not Evil or Fetish

Further still, it was discovered in the course of this research that not everything in African land-Yorubaland or Ekitiland in particular is evil or fetish as early investigators or Europeans thought when they came and colonised Africa. Rather than seeing evils in their environment, the founding fathers of these selected indigenous churches saw gifts of God in nature and consecrated them for God's use. Through this effort, they sanctified Ekiti topography for God. Dreaded waters and mountains were *converted* for evangelistic purposes.

viii. People Go Spiritual while Seeking Solutions to Socio-Economic and Political Issues

It was discovered that no stone was left unturned by people who sought for solutions to the socio-economic and political issues bothering them. *Orí Òkè Ìyanu* and *Orí-Òkè Àánú* Erio-Ekiti belonging to CAC, and *Ilè-Àánú* belonging to AAC are much patronised for socio-economic purposes while *Orí-Òkè Ìségún* and *Orí-Òkè Àánú* belonging to CAC and *Òkè-Àjàyè* belonging to AAC are much patronised for socio-political reasons by politicians. Family issues were taken to sacred places for crises-resolutions through prayers on these sites.

ix. Sacred Places Versus Economic Development of the Communities

It is surprising to find out that some of the communities that host the sacred places saw this as an avenue to develop their communities. As a result, they cooperated with the churches that lay religions claims to these places as owners. In many communities there are standing committees commonly called *Ìgbìmò Orí-Òkè*, taking care of the sacred places. Members of these committees are drawn from leading members of the communities and Church representatives. The positive contributions of these committees have been felt on these sacred places by providing certain developmental projects. For instance, many developmental projects at sacred places at Efon Alaaye, Ido-Ile and Erio Ekiti were as a result of the efforts of these committees.

At the same time, the communities take their share from the offerings raised and collected during special programmes organized at these sacred places. This share is used to do one project or the other on the sacred places like road construction to the site of the sacred and electricity supply as our trips to *Orí-Òkè Àánú* at Erio Ekiti, *Orí Òkè Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile *Oke Iyanu* and *Orí-Òkè Ìségún* at Efon Alaaye showed.

x. Patronage of Sacred Places versus Level of Education and Civilization

It has also been discovered that the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places have nothing to do with the level of education, social status and level of civilizations. Those who patronised sacred places are mostly the social classes

of the society besides the clergies. Politicians, business men/women, lawyers, medical doctors, bankers, civil servants, contractors, students, artisans and professionals as well as farmers patronise these places as the attendance register/records shown at these sites.

Also, it was discovered that civilization had affected the sacred places. Places once feared and regarded as “primitive” are now wearing modern outlooks and modern amenities are being provided on these sites in order to make them look attractive. Notable among these sacred places that are receiving developmental changes are *Ori Òkè Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile, *Ori-Òkè Àánú* at Erio-Ekiti and *Ori-Òkè Ìségún* and *Omi-Òni* at Efon Alaaye Ekiti.

Our contribution to knowledge in this research include among others the following:

- i. This work is the pioneer academic research that attempted to document the beliefs in and patronage of sacred places in the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland where the two churches have many sacred places belonging to them. Existing works only mentioned these places in passing but this research exceedingly succeeded to document the existence of sacred places in the selected churches in the academic circles.
- ii. The research work has positively contributed to knowledge by tracing the prophetic and ecclesiastical origins of the sacred places in the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. Many would have thought that these sacred places originated through theophanies of God or Angels. As the findings have shown, they originated through prophetic voices, instructions, providential signs and needs for more spacious places for prayers for the founding fathers.
- iii. This is the first research work in Christ Apostolic Church world and African Apostolic Church worldwide that documents the history of sacred places in these classical indigenous churches in Ekitiland.
- iv. By reading this research work, the populace has been exposed to the opportunities of knowing sacred places in these two foremost selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. As a result, they could go there for visitation and spiritual retreats.
- v. Through the documentation of this research, the owners of these sacred places are challenged to appreciate the more the legacy bestowed on them by their

founding fathers through the consecrations and establishment of these sacred places. Also, the society is exposed and challenged to take advantages of the spiritual healing powers of these places for their benefits.

- vi. This research has laid the foundational work for scholars such as archaeologists, historians, psychologists, sociologists, theologians, phenomenologists and the rest by exposing them to the existence of these places with rigorous research. They can take further advantages of these places by studying them in order to know their impacts and contributions to human existence from their academic perspectives.
- vii. The research is significant to the world of academia by providing informative investigations to researchers to go forward from where it has stopped. Also, Christian sects and the society are exposed to the benefits inherent in spiritual sensitivity to one's environment and incorporating it to Christianity where it is compatible with biblical teaching.

7.4 General Conclusion

From this research work so far, we have demonstrated that there are spatial realities and places are of more quality and potent than others. This has been from the antiquity till date. The sacred places served cultic places for communion and making contact with God, gods and divinities in religions for the adherents. Ancient Israelite liturgy was woven around her sacred places beginning from the time of the patriarchs to the mosaic era. Different objects and places were consecrated and sacralised for the purpose of worship. There were various functions of the sacred places in the ancient Israelite liturgy, ranging from cultic activities, invocations, communion with Yahweh, oracular activities, cutting and renewal of covenant, pronouncement of blessings, curses, imprecations and social communal interactions among the tribes.

The selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland also hold the beliefs in the sacred places and patronise them. Sacred places and their patronage are crucial aspects of the liturgical practices in these selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland. These religious places exist for diverse socio-economic and religious reasons. Prominent among these reasons are “spiritual houses” for prayer retreat, communion with God, healings, miracles, fertility, blessing, defence and solutions to spirit-related problems. The reason for the patronage of the sacred places is undoubtedly as a result of the contact of the founding

fathers of these selected churches who were regarded as sacred personages. Nevertheless, other Christian sects are of the view that the patronage of sacred places in indigenous churches was due to the influence of traditional religion but tracing the origins of the establishment of the sacred places in the selected indigenous churches, it has been discovered that they had prophetic instructions, audible voices and divine guidance before they consecrated and established them.

Ancient Israelite sacred places performed certain spiritual, economic and social functions and their liturgies revolved around them. Also, the adherents of the selected indigenous churches in Ekitiland believed that sacred places in their denominations have the similar socio-economic and religious significance to them; hence, their patronage. Thus, it reveals the link of the sacred places in the selected indigenous churches with the ancient Israelite sacred places and their liturgies. Sacred places in the selected indigenous churches only serve as where religious activities could be carried out between the physical and the spiritual, man and God. God is Spirit, He lives in the heart of man and He is omnipresent.

Bibliography

- Abe, G.O. 1986, "Sacrificial Rites in Israelite Religion and the Ancient Near East". In *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*.
- Abogunrin, S. O. et. al. 1984, *Christian Presence and West African Response through the Years*, Ibadan: WAATI Publications.
- Adamo, D.T. 2005, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies*, Benin City, Nigeria: Justice Jeco Publishers.
- _____ 1988, *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*. San Francisco: Christian University Press.
- Adegboyega, S.G. 1978, *Short History of the Apostolic Church in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Rosprint Industrial Press.
- Afolabi, O. 1966, *Yoruba Culture*. University of London Press.
- Aharoni, Yohanan, 1961, "Kadesh-Barnea and Mount Sinai" in *Beno Rothenberg ed. God's Wilderness: Discoveries in Sinai*, New York: Thomas Nelson.
- Akurgal, Ekrem. 1962, *The Art of the Hittites*, trans. CMC Nab New York: Abram.
- Alokan, A. 1991, *The Christ Apostolic Church 1928-1988*. Lagos: Ibukunolu Printing Nig. Ltd.
- Ajayi, J.F.A. 1965, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841-189: The Making of a New Elite*. London: Longman.
- Alberty, R. 1953, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel 3rd ed.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Anati, E. 1985, "Has Mount Sinai Been Found?" in *Biblical Archaeology Review XI, no. 4*.
- _____ 2001, *The Riddle of Mount Sinai: Archaeological Discoveries at Har Karkon Vol. 21*, Capo di Ponte: Edizioni del Centro.
- Anderson, B.W. 1973, *The Living World of the Old Testament 2nd ed.* London: Longman.
- Ayegboyin, Deji and Ademola, Ishola. 1997, *African Indigenous Churches*. Lagos: Great Heights Publications.
- Babalola, E.O. 1988, *Christianity in West Africa*. Ibadan: Book Representation and Publishing Co.
- Baur, John, 1994, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 1792-1992*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications.
- Bausman, B. 1861, *Sinai and Zion: A Pilgrimage through the Wilderness to the Land of Promise*. Philadelphia: Reformed Church Publication Board.
- Bediako, Kwame. 1995, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Beegle, D.M. *Moses the Servant of Yahweh*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Beetham, T.A. 1967, *Christianity and the New Africa*. London: Pall Mall.
- Beke, C. 1878, *Sinai in Arabia and of Midian*. London: Trubner & Co.
- Biata, B.C.G. ed. 1968, *Christianity in Tropical Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bright, J.A., 1981, *History of Israel 3rd ed.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.
- _____ 1972, *A History of Israel*. Great Britain: the Westminster Press.
- Cassuto, U. 1951, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Trans. I. Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.
- Childs, B.S. 1974, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological commentary, the Old Testament Library*. Louisville, Kentucky: The Westminster Press.
- Clarke, P.B. 1986, *West Africa and Christianity*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Clements, R.E. 1972, *Exodus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Clifford, Richard J. 1972, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and Old Testament*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Clifford, R.J. 1971, "The Tent of El and the Israelite Tent of Meeting". *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol. 33, 221-227.
- Coats, G.W. 1972, "The Wilderness Itinerary". In *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* Vol.34, 135-15.
- Cornuke, R. & Halbrook, D. 2000, *In Search of the Mountain of God*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman.
- Cribb, R. 1991, *Nomads in Archaeology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cross, F.M. & Freedman, D.N. 1955, "The Song of Miriam". In *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*; Vol. 14; 237-250.
- _____ 1975, "Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry Vol. 21". In *SBL Dissertation Series*. Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature.
- _____ 1998, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*. Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- _____ 1962, "Yahweh and the Gods of the Patriarchs". In *Harvard Theological Review* Vol.55, 225-259.
- _____ 1973, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Dada, A.O. 2002, "Vestige of Israelite Cultic Practices in the Activities of some Nigerian Indigenous Churches". In *Papers in honour of Tekena Tamuno at 70*. Ibadan: Oputuru Books.
- Davies, E. 1992, "Wilderness Wanderings". In *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, ed. D.N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 912-914.
- _____ 1992, "Sinai, Mount" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, ed. D.N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 47-49.
- Drivers, S.R. 1901, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy". In *International Critical Commentary*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Durkheim, E. 1915, *The Elementary Forms of the Religions*. London: E.T.
- Eckenstein, L. 1921, *A History of Sinai*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.
- Eliade, M. 1954, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- _____ 1958, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York.
- _____ 1957, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Task. New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Foherer, George, 1972, *History of Israelite Religion*, Trans. David Green. Nashville: Abingdon.
- _____ 1968, *Introduction to the Old Testament* Trans. David Green. Nashville: Abingdon.
- Freedman, D.N. (ed.) 1992, *Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 volumes)*. New York: Doubleday.
- Friedman, R.E. 1980, "The Tabernacle in the Temple". In *Biblical Archaeologist* Vol. A3, no.4; 241-248.
- Garbini, G. 1988, *History and Ideology in Ancient Israel*. New York: Crossroads.
- Gardiner, A.H. and Peet, T.E. *The Inscriptions of Sinai*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Gbenga, J.S. *African Religion & Christianity in a Changing World, A Comparative Approach* Nsukka: Chuka Educational Publishers, 2006.
- Gehman, R.J. 2001, *African Traditional Religion in the Light of the Bible*. Nigeria: African Christian Textbooks.

- Gelb, I.J. et. al. (eds.), 1956, *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Gifford, P. 1998, *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. London: Hurst and Co.
- Greenwood, N.H. 1997, *The Sinai: A Physical Geography*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Grimley, J.B. and Robinson, C.E. 1966, *Church Growth in Central and Southern Nigeria*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans.
- Halpern, B. 1988, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Harrison, R. K. and Hoffmeier, J. K. 1988, "Sinai". In *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, eds. G. Bromiley, et. al. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 525-528.
- Harrison, R.K. 1969, *Introduction to the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub.
 _____ 1970, *Old Testament Times*. Grand Rapids: Williams E. Eerdmans Pub.
- Hastings, A. 1976, *African Christianity*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- Hayes, J.H. and Miller J.M. (eds), 1977, *Israelite and Judean History*. London: SCM.
- Hazleton, L. 1980, *When Mountains Roar: A Personal Report from Sinai and Negev Desert*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Hess, R. 1993, "Early Israel in Canaan: A Survey of Recent Evidence and Interpretations". In *Palestine Exploration Quarterly (PEQ)*, Vol. 125, 152-142.
- Hicker, R. 1987, *Two Thousand Years of African Christianity*. Ibadan: Daystar Press.
- Holladay, W.L. (ed), 1988, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Netherlands: E.J. Brill.
- Houtman, C. 1996, *Exodus: (4 Vols.) Historical Commentary on the Old Testament*. Kampen: KOK Publishing House.
 _____ 2003, *The Miracles of Exodus*. New York: Harper San Francisco.
- Hyatt, J. P. 1971, *Exodus*. London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott.
- Idowu, E.B. 1976, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. London: SCM.
 _____ 1996, *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief (Revised and Enlarged)*. Lagos: Longman Nigeria PLC.
 _____ 1965, *Towards an Indigenous Church Role*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ige, O. 1965, "Joseph Babalola in a Twentieth Century". In *African History Vol. 13*. Ibadan.
- Jacobs, A.B. 1977, *A Textbook on African Traditional Religion*. Ibadan: Aromolaran Press, Ltd.
- Jarvis, C. S. 1933, *Yesterday and Today in Sinai*. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, Ltd.
- Kaiser, W. 1998, *A History of Israel from the Stone Age through the Jewish Wars*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman.
- Kalu, O. *Christianity in West Africa: The Nigerian Story*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, n.d.
- Kalu, O. 1980, *The History of Christianity in West Africa*. London: Longman.
- Kapelrud, A. 1952, *Baal in the Shamra Texts*. Copenhagen: Gad.
- Kaufmann, Yehezkel. 1972, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginning to the Babylonian Exile*. Trans. Moshe Greenberg. New York: Schocken Books.
- Kayode, J. O. 1979, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition*. Ile-Ife: University Press.
- Keil, C.F. and Delitzsch R. 1983, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes, Vol. 1 Pentateuch, Pat 2 Reprint*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1869-1870.
- Kelm, G. 1991, *Escape to Conflict: A Biblical Archaeological Approach to the Hebrew Exodus and Settlement in Canaan*. Fort Worth: IAR Publications.

- Kitchen, K. 1960, "Some Egyptians Background to the Old Testament". In *Tyndale Bulletin* Vol. 5, 4-19.
- Kristensen, W. Wrede. 1960, *The Meaning of Religion*. Trans. John B. Carman. The Hague: Nijhoff, Martinus.
- Lambert, W. G. 1960, *Babylonian Wisdom and Literature*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- LaMoreaux, P. and Idris, H. 1996, *The Exodus: Myth, Legend, History*. U.S.A: Word Way Press.
- Lemche, N.P. 1994, "Is It Still Possible to Write a History of Israel?". In *Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament*, Vol. 8; 164-190.
- Lucas, J. O. 1948, *The Religion of the Yoruba*. Lagos: CMS Bookshops.
- Lucas, A. 1938, *The Route of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt*. London: E. Arnold and Co.
- Manus, C. U. 2002, "Towards an African Methodology for Biblical Research". In *Orita, Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* Vol. XXXIV/1-2 June & December, 49-67.
- Marshall, Ruth. 1993, "Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria: An Overview" In *New Dimension in African Christianity*, ed. Paul Gifford. Ibadan: Sefer.
- Mbiti, J.S. 1977, *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.
- Meek, T.J. 1936, *Hebrew Origins*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Merriam. A. P. 1974, *An African World*. London: Indiana University Press.
- Murdock, G.P. 1959, *Africa: Its People and their Culture History*. New York.
- Munoz, L.J. 2003, *A Living Tradition: Studies in Yoruba Tradition*. Ibadan: Bookcract Ltd.
- _____ 2007, *The Past in the Present: Towards A Rehabilitation of Tradition*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, Ltd.
- Nabofa, M.Y. 1988, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*. Ibadan: Distance Learning Center, University of Ibadan.
- Nakhai, B.A. 2001, *Archaeology and the Religions of Canaan and Israel*. Vol. 7 ASOR Book.
- Nicholson, E.W. 1973, *Exodus and Sinai in History and Tradition*. Virginia: John Knox Press.
- Niditch, S. 1997, *Ancient Israelite Religion*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nielsen, E. 1966, *The Old Testament World*, trans. Victor, I. Gruhn. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- Noth, Martin. 1972, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*. Trans. Bernhard W. Anderson. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Palmer, Edwin H. (ed.) 1964, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*. National Foundation for Christian Education.
- Peel, J.D.Y. 1968, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Pobee, J. S. and Oshitelu, G. S. 1999, *African Initiatives in Christianity*. Geneva: W.C.C. Publications.
- Oduyoye, M. *The Planting of Christianity in Yorubaland*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, n.d.
- _____ M. *Yoruba Religious Discourse*. Ibadan: Daystar Press, n.d.
- Omoyajowo, J.A. ed. 1995, *Makers of the Church in Nigeria, 842-1947*. Lagos: C.S.C. Bookshop Ltd.
- Oshitelu, G.A. 2002, *Expansion of Christianity in West Africa*. Ibadan: Oputuru Books.
- Otto, R. 1946, *The Idea of Holy*. Trans. J.W. Harvey. London: Oxford University Press.

- Parrat, J.K. 1969, "Religious Change in Yoruba Society". In *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. II.
- Parrinder, G. 1962, *Africa Traditional Religion 2nd ed.* London.
- Parrinder, G. 1976, *Africa's Three Religions*. London: Sheldon Press.
- Parrinder, G. 1978, *West African Traditional Religion*. London: Epworth Press.
- Peel, J.D.Y. 1969, *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among the Yoruba*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. 1987, "Christianity". In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 5, eds. Mircea Eliade et. al. New York, 348.
- Pope, Marvin. 1955, "El in the Ugaritic Texts". In *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum II* Leiden Brill.
- Pritchard J.B. 1969, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament 3rd ed.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Reider, J. 1937, "The Origin of Deuteronomy". In *The Jewish Quarterly Review, New Ser.* Vol. 27, No. 4, 349-371, available online at <http://links.jstor.org.sici>.
- Riggren, H. 1966, *Israelite Religion*. Trans. David E. Green. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.
- _____ 1973, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*. Trans. John Sturdy. London: SPKC.
- Samuel Noah Kramer, 1961, *Sumerian Mythology*, Rev. ed. New York: Harger.
- Robinson, H.W. *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament*. London: SCM Press,
- Sanneh, Lamin. 1983, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*. New York: Orbis.
- Sarna, N. 1986, *Exploring Exodus*. New York: Schocken.
- Shorter, A. 1978, *African Culture and the Christian Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- _____ 1979 *African Spirituality*. London: Geoffrey Chapman.
- Smith, Mark S. 1990, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. SAN Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
- _____ 2001, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Soggin, J.A. 2001, *Israel in the Biblical Period: Institutions, Festivals, Ceremonies. Rituals*, Trans. John Bowden, Edinburgh & New York: T&T Clark.
- Speiser, E.A 1953, "The Hurrian Participation in the Civilizations of Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine". In *Journal of World History*, 1, 311-327.
- Turner, H.W. 1967, *History of an African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord {Aladura}*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Walls, A.F. "African Independent Church". In *Eerdmans's Handbook of the History of Christianity*, eds. Tim Dowley et. al. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Walsh, J.T. 1977, "From Egypt to Moab: A Source Critical analysis of the Wilderness Itinerary". In *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* vol. 39, 20-33.
- Walsh, R. 2001, *Mapping Myths of Biblical Interpretation*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
- Webster, J. B. 1964, *The African Churches Among the Yoruba: 1888-1922*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Westernmann, D. 1937, *Africa and Christianity*. London: O.U.P.
- Weinfeld, M. 1975, "Covenant vs. Obligation". In *Biblical Vol.* 56. 124-125.
- Whybray, R.N. 1987, "The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study". Vol. 53, *JSOT, Supplement Series*. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
- Zevit, Z. 2001, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Paralactic Approaches*. London: and New York: Continuum.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Dear Sir/Ma,

This is a structured interview designed to carry out a research and to obtain information on the Significance of Sacred Places in Selected Indigenous Churches in Ekitiland. The research is a Doctoral Thesis to be submitted to the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

As a result, your cooperation is solicited and your sincere and accurate response to these questions will contribute, in an important way, to the advancement of knowledge in this vital area of research.

Information given will be treated as strictly confidential.

Thanks for your cooperation in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

Alabi, David O.

APPENDIX 2

STRUCTURED AND ORAL INTERVIEW FORMAT RESEARCH STATEMENTS

Respondent's Reaction to Research on Significance of Sacred in Selected Indigenous Churches in Ekitiland.

A. Beliefs in Sacred Places

1. Do you believe that Sacred Places exist in Ekitiland?
2. Have you prayed in any of the Sacred Places in Ekitiland before?
3. Have you used any elements such as waters or olive oils taken from Sacred Places?
4. Do you go to Sacred Places for spiritual reasons or solutions

B. Effects of Sacred Places on Prayers and Miracles

1. Do prayers offered in Sacred Places get quicker answers than those offered in regular places or worship?
2. Are uncommon miracles and healings associated with Sacred Places?

C. Potency of Sacred Places or Regular Places

1. Do you get more solutions to your difficulties in Sacred Places than in regular places of worship?
2. Are Sacred Places more powerful than regular places of worship?

D. Socio-Economic Significance of Sacred Places in the Selected Churches

1. Do you believe that sacred places function as healing and miracle places by healing any of these: Sickness/diseases, evil attacks, festering sores, lunacy, epilepsy, aches, pains, infertility etc?
2. Do sacred places have socio-economic significance in the following areas: business boom, employment, promotion, rain making, divine mercy/favour, fertility, electoral victory, male childbirth, marital issues, economic empowerment, visa procurement, contract award, academic breakthrough etc.

E. Socio-Religious Significance of Sacred Places

1. Does patronage of Sacred Places enhance social harmony of individual families?
2. Does the patronage of Sacred Places bring harmony among people of different denominations?
3. Do sacred places have effects on achieving the following: church crises resolution, confirmation of calling, spiritual empowerment,

4. Does the patronage of Sacred Places enhance the liturgies of other denominations or other Christian sects?
5. Does the topography of Ekitiland influence the proliferation of Sacred Places?
6. Do you believe that there are specific functions performed by specific Sacred Places?

F. Sacred Places and their Abuse

1. Are there noticeable abuses in the sacred places?
2. Could you mention some of the abuses in the sacred places?
3. Do prophets and caretakers in sacred places manipulate people at the sites?

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

APPENDIX 3

RESPONDENT'S PERSONAL DATA

Please tick [] or fill each section correctly as applicable:

1. Age: (a) 30-50 [] (b) 51-70 [] (c) 51-70 [] (d) 71 and above []
2. Sex: (a) Male [] (b) Female []
3. Occupation: (a) Clergy [] (b) Elder [] (c) Deaconess [] (d) Leader [] (e) Civil Servant [] (f) Trader [] (g) Artisan [] (h) Health worker [] (i) Teaching [] (j) Farmer [] (k) Retiree [] (l) Unemployed [] (m) Others []
4. Academic Qualifications: (a) Primary [] (b) WASC/GCE [] (c) NECO/OND/ [] (d) HND/BSC [] HND/BSc and above []
5. Economic Income of the Respondents: (a) ₦25,000 – ₦50,000 [] (b) ₦51,000 – ₦75,000 [] (c) ₦76,000 and above []

APPENDIX 4

Oral Interview with Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in Christ Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1.	E.H.L. Olushey	Pastor	M	74	Ibadan	20-02-2009
2.	Caleb Oluwadare	Pastor	M	90	Efon Alaaye	20-02-2009
3.	Ben Aboyeji	Pastor	M	45	Efon Alaaye	20-02-2009
4.	Adetayo	Pastor	M	72	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
5.	Isaac Ojo	Pastor	M	78	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
6.	J.B. Afolayan	Pastor	M	65	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
7.	J.A. Iridayo	Pastor	M	55	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
8.	M.A. Adewumi	Leader	M	38	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
9.	J.O. Falua	Leader	M	40	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
10.	Iranloye Temidayo	Leader	M	43	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
11.	Olaniyan	Leader	M	55	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
12.	Matthe\$w Idowu	Leader	M	52	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
13.	Emmanuel Adebusuyi	Leader	M	61	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
14.	Felix Toyese	Leader	M	59	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
15.	Paul Damilare	Leader	M	47	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
16.	James Obiwale	Pastor	M	74	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
17.	Gideon Obiwale	Pastor	M	51	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
18.	Peter Ilesanmi	Pastor	M	48	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
19.	Timothy Ikudayisi	Pastor	M	67	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
20.	James Okeowo	Leader	M	61	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
21.	Noah Kehinde	Elder	M	44	Efon Alaaye	06-04-2009
22.	Agboluyi	Elder	M	38	Efon Alaaye	06-04-2009
23.	Gabriel T Omojadegbe	Elder	M	81	Ido-Ile	06-04-2009
24.	Hezekiah Oni	Elder	M	63	Ido-Ile	06-04-2009
25.	E.A. Afolami	Elder	M	77	Ido-Ile	21-05-2009
26.	J.B. Adedun	Elder	M	73	Ido-Ile	21-05-2009
27.	Dorcas Ojibutu	Leader	M	60	Ido-Ile	21-05-2009
28.	Sarah Bamgbade	Leader	F	55	Efon Alaaye	20-08-2010
29.	Adeseluca Tofunmi	Leader	F	61	Efon Alaaye	20-08-2010
30.	Bidemi Tomilola	Leader	F	33	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
31.	Morenike Adeseluca	Leader	F	37	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
32.	Anike Aderinto	Deaconess	F	45	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
33.	Felicia Olakunbi	Deaconess	F	76	Ido-Ile	12-09-2010
34.	Rebeca Omotayo	Deaconess	F	43	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
35.	Deborah Omolola	Deaconess	F	54	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
36.	Felicia Igbalajobi	Deaconess	F	49	Erio-Ekiti	23-08-2010
37.	Sefunmi Pelumi	Deaconess	F	47	Erio-Ekiti	23-08-2010
38.	Omolara Adebayo	Deaconess	F	53	Ido-Ile	23-08-2010
39.	Omowumi Ifetayo	Deaconess	F	61	Ido-Ile	23-08-2010
40.	Nifemi Omotunde	Deaconess	F	50	Ido-Ile	23-08-2010

APPENDIX 5

Oral Interview with Members of Christ Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	Mrs Oteniya	Teaching	F	45	Efon Alaaye	
2	Michael Ofere	Teaching	M	43	Efon Alaaye	
3	Bosun Ajayi	Engineer	M	44	Ikole	
4	Dele Ogunsuyi	Civil servant	M	53	Ikole	
5	Fehintola Ige	Priestess	F	96	Ido-Ile	
6	Abraham Temidire	Farmer	M	67	Erio-Ekiti	
7	Oba Adesoba Adetoyinbo	Traditional Ruler	M	60	Erio-Ekiti	
8	Adewale Adedokun	Trader	M	43	Erio-Ekiti	
9	Oluwasegun Ojo	Unemployed	M	40	Efon Alaaye	
10	Isaac Oluwadara	Civil servant	M	67	Efon Alaaye	
11	James Iselowo	Health worker	M	56	Efon Alaaye	
12	Abraham Temidire	Transporters	M	46	Efon Alaaye	
13	Olufunmilayo Taiwo	Unemployed	F	50	Efon Alaaye	
14	Felicia Igbalajobi	Teaching	F	47	Efon Alaaye	
15	Peter Oluwaseun	Teaching	M	41	Ido-Ile	
16	Olusegun Orioye	Teaching	M	54	Ido-Ile	
17	Gbenga Ojo	Teaching	M	38	Ido-Ile	
18	Ajayi Olusegun	Nurse	M	42	Ido-Ile	
19	Deborah Omolola	Trader	F	40	Ido-Ile	
20	Rebecca Omotayo	Trader	F	37	Ido-Ile	
21	Francisca Funmilayo	Artisan	F	39	(Catholic) Ikole	
22	Paulina Sefunmi	Trader	F	40	Efon Alaaye	
23	Josephine Olanike	Banker	F	41	Efon Alaaye	
24	Monika Jumoke	Trader	F	45	Efon Alaaye	
25	Theresa Jumoke	Journalist	F	39	Efon Alaaye	
26	Ojo Morounfoluwa	Graphic Artist	F	38	Efon Alaaye	
27	Gbenga Temidayo	Sportsman	M	38	Efon Alaaye	
28	Michael Ojo	Trader	M	56	Efon Alaaye	
29	Matthew Oluwaseun	Trader	M	46	Efon Alaaye	
30	Elijah Temitope	Artisan	M	50	Efon Alaaye	
31	Michael Ojo	Trader	M	47	Efon Alaaye	
32	Matthew Oluwaseun	Journalist	M	41	Efon Alaaye	
33	Elijah Temitope	Farmer	M	39	Erio-Ekiti	
34	Philip Ajibade	Unemployed	M	35	Erio-Ekiti	
35	Adewale Adedokun	Teaching	M	40	Erio-Ekiti	

APPENDIX 6

Oral Interview with Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in African Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1.	Joshua Alademomi	Pastor	M	62	Ajaye	21-04-2010
2.	Isaac Ayegunle	Pastor	M	59	Ajaye	21-04-2010
3.	A.A. Atobatele	Pastor	M	60	Ajaye	21-04-2010
4.	Ezekiel A. Ajagunnigbala	Pastor	M	49	Ajaye	21-04-2010
5.	Elijah Temitope	Pastor	M	61	Efon Alaaye	
6.	Adesina Temitayo	Pastor	M	33	Aramoko	
7.	Emmanuel Adebusoye	Pastor	M	37	Aramoko	10-07-2010
8.	Adekunle Kiyesola	Pastor	M	45	Aramoko	03-10-2009
9.	Oluwatoba Ekundayo	Pastor	M	76	Aramoko	10-07-2010
10.	Idowu Matthew	Pastor	M	43	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
11.	Fisayo Oluwagbade	Elder	M	54	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
12.	Adetoro Adekunle	Elder	M	49	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
13.	Lekan Oluranti	Elder	M	47	Aramoko	20-03-2009
14.	Ayodele Tukesi	Elder	M	53	Aramoko	10-07-2010
15.	Ayobami Afolabi	Elder	M	61	Ido-Ile	03-10-2009
16.	Adeleye Saani	Elder	M	50	Ajaye	20-02-2009
17.	Job Kehinde	Elder	M	61	Ajaye	20-02-2010
18.	Bamidele Paul	Elder	M	33	Ajaye	20-02-2010
19.	Olufemi Bamitale	Elder	M	37	Ajaye	26-02-2009
20.	Ayodele Sanyaolu	Elder	M	45	Ajaye	26-02-2009
21.	Feyisara Adegoke	Elder	M	60	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
22.	Agboluyi	Elder	M	56	Ido-Ile	23-08-2010
23.	Noah Kehinde	Elder	M	48	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
24.	Dele Owoeye	Elder	M	60	Ajaye	
25.	Olajide John	Elder	M	49	Ajaye	
26.	AanuOluwapo Thomas	Elder	M	61	Ajaye	
27.	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Elder	M	33	Ajaye	
28.	Adetiba Beatrice	Leader	F	37	Aramoko	10-07-2010
29.	Moren Saanuolu	Leader	F	45	Aramoko	10-07-2010
30.	Catherine Kolawole	Leader	F	76	Ajaye	10-07-2010
31.	Titilayo Damilola	Leader	F	43	Ajaye	03-10-2009
32.	Olayinka Dunsin	Leader	F	54	Ajaye	
33.	Elizabeth Moradeke	Leader	F	49	Ajaye	
34.	Lydia Oduleke	Leader	F	47	Aramoko	
35.	Bose Aina	Leader	F	53	Aramoko	10-07-2010
36.	Iyabo Adewumi	Leader	F	61	Ajaye	10-07-2010
37.	Bolade Jacobs	Leader	F	50	Ajaye	10-07-2010
38.	Ajisafe Bimbo	Leader	F	46	Ajaye	26-02-2009
39.	Semilore Tolulope	Leader	F	57	Ajaye	26-02-2009
40.	Omowumi Adebanjo	Leader	F	39	Aramoko	26-02-2009

APPENDIX 7

Oral Interview with Members of African Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	Adesina Temitayo	Teaching	M	46	Ajaye	20-08-2010
2	Temidayo Omodara	Teaching	M	50	Ajaye	20-08-2010
3	Sefunmi Pelumi	Farmer	F	47	Ajaye	10-07-2010
4	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Trader	M	41	Ajaye	10-07-2010
5	Iranloye Temidayo	Trader	M	54	Ajaye	10-07-2010
6	Temidire Ojo	Artisan	M	38	Ido-Ile	12-09-2010
7	Sefunmi Pelumi	Trader	F	42	Aramoko	12-09-2010
8	Bangbade Omoniyi	Farmer	M	40	Aramoko	12-09-2010
9	Iranloye Temidayo	Farmer	M	37	Aramoko	23-08-2010
10	Temidire Ojo	Journalist	M	39	Ikole	23-08-2010
11	Adedire Irewole	Graphic Artist	M	40	Ajaye	23-08-2010
12	Omolara Adedayo	Sportsman	F	41	Ajaye	23-08-2010
13	Omowunmi Ifetayo	Trader	F	45	Ajaye	23-08-2010
14	Sunday Funmilola	Trader	M	39	Ajaye	24-09-2009
15	Oluwafunto Ikeoluwa	Artisan	F	38	Ajaye	24-09-2009
16	Nifemi Omotunde	Trader	F	39	Ajaye	12-09-2010
17	Idowu Matthew	Farmer	M	60	Ajaye	12-09-2010
18	Taiwo Ibitokun	Farmer	M	43	Ajaye	12-09-2010
19	Ige Ogundele	Unemployed	M	40	Ikole	23-08-2010
20	Emmanuel Adebusoye	Farmer	M	67	Ikole	23-08-2010
21	Felix Toyese	Graphic Artist	M	56	Ikole	23-08-2010
22	Paul Damilare	Sportsman	M	46	Aramoko	23-08-2010
23	Ogunjobi Olaoluwa	Trader	M	50	Aramoko	23-08-2010
24	Abraham Jegede	Trader	M	47	Aramoko	23-08-2010
25	Philip Toluwase	Artisan	M	41	Ikole	10-07-2010
26	John Iselowo	Trader	M	54	Ajaye	26-02-2009
27	Gbenro Adetayo	Farmer	M	38	Ajaye	26-02-2009
28	Francis Adeniyi	Farmer	M	42	Ajaye	26-02-2009
29	Paulina Adegoke	Unemployed	F	67	Ajaye	24-09-2009
30	Samuel A. Olaiya	Artisan	M	56	Ado-Ekiti	24-09-2009
31	Folasade Tumininu	Trader	F	46	Omoo-Ekiti	24-09-2009
32	Dada Ajiro	Farmer	M	50	Igede	24-09-2009
33	Olu Ajayi	Farmer	M	47	Ajaye	12-09-2010
34	Adedire Irewole	Trader	M	41	Ajaye	12-09-2010
35	Sunday Funmilola	Artisan	F	39	Ajaye	12-09-2010

APPENDIX 4

Oral Interview with Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in Christ Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1.	E.H.L. Olushey	Pastor	M	74	Ibadan	18-10-2010
2.	Caleb Oluwadare	Pastor	M	90	Efon Alaaye	18-10-2010
3.	Ben Aboyeji	Pastor	M	45	Efon Alaaye	18-10-2010
4.	Adetayo	Pastor	M	72	Efon Alaaye	18-10-2010
5.	Isaac Ojo	Pastor	M	78	Efon Alaaye	18-10-2010
6.	J.B. Afolayan	Pastor	M	65	Ido-Ile	
7.	J.A. Iridayo	Pastor	M	55	Ido-Ile	
8.	M.A. Adewumi	Leader	M	38	Ido-Ile	
9.	J.O. Falua	Leader	M	40	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
10.	Iranloye Temidayo	Leader	M	43	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
11.	Olaniyan	Leader	M	55	Ido-Ile	10-10-2010
12.	Matthe\$w Idowu	Leader	M	52	Ido-Ile	10-10-2010
13.	Emmanuel Adebusuyi	Leader	M	61	Ido-Ile	10-10-2010
14.	Felix Toyese	Leader	M	59	Ido-Ile	10-10-2010
15.	Paul Damilare	Leader	M	47	Ido-Ile	10-10-2010
16.	James Obiwale	Pastor	M	74	Efon Alaaye	
17.	Gideon Obiwale	Pastor	M	51	Efon Alaaye	
18.	Peter Ilesanmi	Pastor	M	48	Efon Alaaye	
19.	Timothy Ikudayisi	Pastor	M	67	Efon Alaaye	
20.	James Okeowo	Leader	M	61	Efon Alaaye	10-10-2010
21.	Noah Kehinde	Elder	M	44	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
22.	Agboluyi	Elder	M	38	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
23.	Gabriel T Omojadegbe	Elder	M	81	Ido-Ile	06-04-2009
24.	Hezekiah Oni	Elder	M	63	Ido-Ile	06-04-2009
25.	E.A. Afolami	Elder	M	77	Ido-Ile	20-03-2009
26.	J.B. Adedun	Elder	M	73	Ido-Ile	20-03-2009
27.	Dorcias Ojibutu	Leader	M	60	Ido-Ile	20-03-2009
28.	Sarah Bamgbade	Leader	F	55	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
29.	Adeseluca Tofunmi	Leader	F	61	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
30.	Bidemi Tomilola	Leader	F	33	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
31.	Morenike Adeseluca	Leader	F	37	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
32.	Anike Aderinto	Deaconess	F	45	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
33.	Felicia Olakunbi	Deaconess	F	76	Ido-Ile	03-10-2009
34.	Rebeca Omotayo	Deaconess	F	43	Erio-Ekiti	03-10-2009
35.	Deborah Omolola	Deaconess	F	54	Erio-Ekiti	03-10-2010
36.	Felicia Igbalajobi	Deaconess	F	49	Erio-Ekiti	03-10-2010
37.	Sefunmi Pelumi	Deaconess	F	47	Erio-Ekiti	03-10-2010
38.	Omolara Adebayo	Deaconess	F	53	Ido-Ile	03-10-2010
39.	Omowumi Ifetayo	Deaconess	F	61	Ido-Ile	03-10-2010
40.	Nifemi Omotunde	Deaconess	F	50	Ido-Ile	03-10-2010

APPENDIX 5

Oral Interview with Members of Christ Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	Mrs Oteniya	Teaching	F	45	Efon Alaaye	20-08-2010
2	Michael Ofere	Teaching	M	43	Efon Alaaye	20-08-2010
3	Bosun Ajayi	Engineer	M	44	Ikole	10-07-2010
4	Dele Ogunsuyi	Civil servant	M	53	Ikole	10-07-2010
5	Fehintola Ige	Priestess	F	96	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
6	Abraham Temidire	Farmer	M	67	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
7	Oba Adesoba Adetoyinbo	Traditional Ruler	M	60	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
8	Adewale Adedokun	Trader	M	43	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
9	Oluwasegun Ojo	Unemployed	M	40	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
10	Isaac Oluwadara	Civil servant	M	67	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
11	James Iselowo	Health worker	M	56	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
12	Abraham Temidire	Transporters	M	46	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
13	Olufunmilayo Taiwo	Unemployed	F	50	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
14	Felicia Igbalajobi	Teaching	F	47	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
15	Peter Oluwaseun	Teaching	M	41	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
16	Olusegun Orioye	Teaching	M	54	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
17	Gbenga Ojo	Teaching	M	38	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
18	Ajayi Olusegun	Nurse	M	42	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
19	Deborah Omolola	Trader	F	40	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
20	Rebecca Omotayo	Trader	F	37	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
21	Francisca Funmilayo	Artisan	F	39	(Catholic) Ikole	26-02-2009
22	Paulina Sefunmi	Trader	F	40	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
23	Josephine Olanike	Banker	F	41	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
24	Monika Jumoke	Trader	F	45	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
25	Theresa Jumoke	Journalist	F	39	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
26	Ojo Morounfoluwa	Graphic Artist	F	38	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
27	Gbenga Temidayo	Sportsman	M	38	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
28	Michael Ojo	Trader	M	56	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
29	Matthew Oluwaseun	Trader	M	46	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
30	Elijah Temitope	Artisan	M	50	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
31	Michael Ojo	Trader	M	47	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
32	Matthew Oluwaseun	Journalist	M	41	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
33	Elijah Temitope	Farmer	M	39	Erio-Ekiti	20-03-2009
34	Philip Ajibade	Unemployed	M	35	Erio-Ekiti	10-07-2010
35	Adewale Adedokun	Teaching	M	40	Erio-Ekiti	20-03-2009

APPENDIX 6

Oral Interview with Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in African Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1.	Joshua Alademomi	Pastor	M	62	Ajaye	21-04-2010
2.	Isaac Ayegunle	Pastor	M	59	Ajaye	21-04-2010
3.	A.A. Atobatele	Pastor	M	60	Ajaye	21-04-2010
4.	Ezekiel A. Ajagunnigbala	Pastor	M	49	Ajaye	21-04-2010
5.	Elijah Temitope	Pastor	M	61	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
6.	Adesina Temitayo	Pastor	M	33	Aramoko	26-02-2009
7.	Emmanuel Adebuseye	Pastor	M	37	Aramoko	10-07-2010
8.	Adekunle Kiyesola	Pastor	M	45	Aramoko	03-10-2009
9.	Oluwatoba Ekundayo	Pastor	M	76	Aramoko	10-07-2010
10.	Idowu Matthew	Pastor	M	43	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
11.	Fisayo Oluwagbade	Elder	M	54	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
12.	Adetoro Adekunle	Elder	M	49	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
13.	Lekan Oluranti	Elder	M	47	Aramoko	20-03-2009
14.	Ayodele Tukesi	Elder	M	53	Aramoko	10-07-2010
15.	Ayobami Afolabi	Elder	M	61	Ido-Ile	03-10-2009
16.	Adeleye Saani	Elder	M	50	Ajaye	20-02-2009
17.	Job Kehinde	Elder	M	61	Ajaye	20-02-2010
18.	Bamidele Paul	Elder	M	33	Ajaye	20-02-2010
19.	Olufemi Bamitale	Elder	M	37	Ajaye	26-02-2009
20.	Ayodele Sanyaolu	Elder	M	45	Ajaye	26-02-2009
21.	Feyisara Adegoke	Elder	M	60	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
22.	Agboluyi	Elder	M	56	Ido-Ile	23-08-2010
23.	Noah Kehinde	Elder	M	48	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
24.	Dele Owoeye	Elder	M	60	Ajaye	26-02-2009
25.	Olajide John	Elder	M	49	Ajaye	26-02-2009
26.	AanuOluwapo Thomas	Elder	M	61	Ajaye	26-02-2009
27.	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Elder	M	33	Ajaye	26-02-2009
28.	Adetiba Beatrice	Leader	F	37	Aramoko	10-07-2010
29.	Moren Saanuolu	Leader	F	45	Aramoko	10-07-2010
30.	Catherine Kolawole	Leader	F	76	Ajaye	10-07-2010
31.	Titilayo Damilola	Leader	F	43	Ajaye	03-10-2009
32.	Olayinka Dunsin	Leader	F	54	Ajaye	20-02-2009
33.	Elizabeth Moradeke	Leader	F	49	Ajaye	20-02-2009
34.	Lydia Oduleke	Leader	F	47	Aramoko	20-02-2009
35.	Bose Aina	Leader	F	53	Aramoko	10-07-2010
36.	Iyabo Adewumi	Leader	F	61	Ajaye	10-07-2010
37.	Bolade Jacobs	Leader	F	50	Ajaye	10-07-2010
38.	Ajisafe Bimbo	Leader	F	46	Ajaye	26-02-2009
39.	Semilore Tolulope	Leader	F	57	Ajaye	26-02-2009
40.	Omowumi Adebajo	Leader	F	39	Aramoko	26-02-2009

APPENDIX 7

Oral Interview with Members of African Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	Adesina Temitayo	Teaching	M	46	Ajaye	20-08-2010
2	Temidayo Omodara	Teaching	M	50	Ajaye	20-08-2010
3	Sefunmi Pelumi	Farmer	F	47	Ajaye	10-07-2010
4	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Trader	M	41	Ajaye	10-07-2010
5	Iranloye Temidayo	Trader	M	54	Ajaye	10-07-2010
6	Temidire Ojo	Artisan	M	38	Ido-Ile	12-09-2010
7	Sefunmi Pelumi	Trader	F	42	Aramoko	12-09-2010
8	Bangbade Omoniyi	Farmer	M	40	Aramoko	12-09-2010
9	Iranloye Temidayo	Farmer	M	37	Aramoko	23-08-2010
10	Temidire Ojo	Journalist	M	39	Ikole	23-08-2010
11	Adedire Irewole	Graphic Artist	M	40	Ajaye	23-08-2010
12	Omolara Adedayo	Sportsman	F	41	Ajaye	23-08-2010
13	Omowunmi Ifetayo	Trader	F	45	Ajaye	23-08-2010
14	Sunday Funmilola	Trader	M	39	Ajaye	24-09-2009
15	Oluwafunto Ikeoluwa	Artisan	F	38	Ajaye	24-09-2009
16	Nifemi Omotunde	Trader	F	39	Ajaye	12-09-2010
17	Idowu Matthew	Farmer	M	60	Ajaye	12-09-2010
18	Taiwo Ibitokun	Farmer	M	43	Ajaye	12-09-2010
19	Ige Ogundele	Unemployed	M	40	Ikole	23-08-2010
20	Emmanuel Adebusoye	Farmer	M	67	Ikole	23-08-2010
21	Felix Toyese	Graphic Artist	M	56	Ikole	23-08-2010
22	Paul Damilare	Sportsman	M	46	Aramoko	23-08-2010
23	Ogunjobi Olaoluwa	Trader	M	50	Aramoko	23-08-2010
24	Abraham Jegede	Trader	M	47	Aramoko	23-08-2010
25	Philip Toluwase	Artisan	M	41	Ikole	10-07-2010
26	John Iselowo	Trader	M	54	Ajaye	26-02-2009
27	Gbenro Adetayo	Farmer	M	38	Ajaye	26-02-2009
28	Francis Adeniyi	Farmer	M	42	Ajaye	26-02-2009
29	Paulina Adegoke	Unemployed	F	67	Ajaye	
30	Samuel A. Olaiya	Artisan	M	56	Ado-Ekiti	
31	Folasade Tumininu	Trader	F	46	Omoo-Ekiti	
32	Dada Ajiro	Farmer	M	50	Igede	
33	Olu Ajayi	Farmer	M	47	Ajaye	12-09-2010
34	Adedire Irewole	Trader	M	41	Ajaye	12-09-2010
35	Sunday Funmilola	Artisan	F	39	Ajaye	12-09-2010

APPENDIX 5

Oral Interview with Members of Christ Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	Peter Oluwaseun	Teaching	M	41	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
2	Olusegun Orioye	Teaching	M	54	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
3	Gbenga Ojo	Teaching	M	38	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
4	Ajayi Olusegun	Nurse	M	42	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
5	Deborah Omolola	Trader	F	40	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
6	Rebecca Omotayo	Trader	F	37	Ido-Ile	26-02-2009
7	Francisca Funmilayo	Artisan	F	39	(Catholic) Ikole	26-02-2009
8	Michael Ojo	Trader	M	56	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
9	Matthew Oluwaseun	Trader	M	46	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
10	Elijah Temitope	Artisan	M	50	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
11	Ojo Morounfoluwa	Graphic Artist	F	38	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
12	Michael Ojo	Trader	M	47	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
13	Mattew Oluwaseun	Journalist	M	41	Efon Alaaye	20-03-2009
14	Elijah Temitope	Farmer	M	39	Erio-Ekiti	20-03-2009
15	Adewale Adedokun	Teaching	M	40	Erio-Ekiti	20-03-2009
16	Bosun Ajayi	Engineer	M	44	Ikole	10-07-2010
17	Dele Ogunsuyi	Civil servant	M	53	Ikole	10-07-2010
18	Fehintola Ige	Priestess	F	96	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
19	Philip Ajibade	Unemployed	M	35	Erio-Ekiti	10-07-2010
20	Gbenga Temidayo	Sportsman	M	38	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
21	Paulina Sefunmi	Trader	F	40	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
22	Josephine Olanike	Banker	F	41	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
23	Monika Jumoke	Trader	F	45	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
24	Theresa Jumoke	Journalist	F	39	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
25	Mrs Oteniya	Teaching	F	45	Efon Alaaye	20-08-2010
26	Michael Ofere	Teaching	M	43	Efon Alaaye	20-08-2010
27	Oluwasegun Ojo	Unemployed	M	40	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
28	Isaac Oluwadara	Civil servant	M	67	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
29	James Iselowo	Health worker	M	56	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
30	Abraham Temidire	Transporters	M	46	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
31	Olufunmilayo Taiwo	Unemployed	F	50	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
32	Felicia Igbalajobi	Teaching	F	47	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010
33	Abraham Temidire	Farmer	M	67	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
34	Oba Adesoba Adetoyinbo	Traditional Ruler	M	60	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010
35	Adewale Adedokun	Trader	M	43	Erio-Ekiti	12-09-2010

APPENDIX 6

Oral Interview with Church Leaders and Heads of Groups in African Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	Adeleye Saani	Elder	M	50	Ajaye	20-02-2009
2	Olayinka Dunsin	Leader	F	54	Ajaye	20-02-2009
3	Elizabeth Moradeke	Leader	F	49	Ajaye	20-02-2009
4	Lydia Oduleke	Leader	F	47	Aramoko	20-02-2009
5	Elijah Temitope	Pastor	M	61	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
6	Adesina Temitayo	Pastor	M	33	Aramoko	26-02-2009
7	Ajisafe Bimbo	Leader	F	46	Ajaye	26-02-2009
8	Semilore Tolulope	Leader	F	57	Ajaye	26-02-2009
9	Omowumi Adebajo	Leader	F	39	Aramoko	26-02-2009
10	Dele Owoeye	Elder	M	60	Ajaye	26-02-2009
11	Olajide John	Elder	M	49	Ajaye	26-02-2009
12	AanuOluwapo Thomas	Elder	M	61	Ajaye	26-02-2009
13	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Elder	M	33	Ajaye	26-02-2009
14	Olufemi Bamitale	Elder	M	37	Ajaye	26-02-2009
15	Ayodele Sanyaolu	Elder	M	45	Ajaye	26-02-2009
16	Feyisara Adegoke	Elder	M	60	Efon Alaaye	26-02-2009
17	Lekan Oluranti	Elder	M	47	Aramoko	20-03-2009
18	Titilayo Damilola	Leader	F	43	Ajaye	03-10-2009
19	Adekunle Kiyesola	Pastor	M	45	Aramoko	03-10-2009
20	Ayobami Afolabi	Elder	M	61	Ido-Ile	03-10-2009
21	Job Kehinde	Elder	M	61	Ajaye	20-02-2010
22	Bamidele Paul	Elder	M	33	Ajaye	20-02-2010
23	Joshua Alademomi	Pastor	M	62	Ajaye	21-04-2010
24	Isaac Ayegunle	Pastor	M	59	Ajaye	21-04-2010
25	A.A. Atobatele	Pastor	M	60	Ajaye	21-04-2010
26	Ezekiel A. Ajagunnigbala	Pastor	M	49	Ajaye	21-04-2010
27	Emmanuel Adebuseye	Pastor	M	37	Aramoko	10-07-2010
28	Oluwatoba Ekundayo	Pastor	M	76	Aramoko	10-07-2010
29	Idowu Matthew	Pastor	M	43	Efon Alaaye	10-07-2010
30	Fisayo Oluwagbade	Elder	M	54	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
31	Adetoro Adekunle	Elder	M	49	Ido-Ile	10-07-2010
32	Ayodele Tukesi	Elder	M	53	Aramoko	10-07-2010
33	Adetiba Beatrice	Leader	F	37	Aramoko	10-07-2010
34	Moren Saanuolu	Leader	F	45	Aramoko	10-07-2010
35	Catherine Kolawole	Leader	F	76	Ajaye	10-07-2010
36	Bose Aina	Leader	F	53	Aramoko	10-07-2010
37	Iyabo Adewumi	Leader	F	61	Ajaye	10-07-2010
38	Bolade Jacobs	Leader	F	50	Ajaye	10-07-2010
39	Agboluyi	Elder	M	56	Ido-Ile	23-08-2010
40	Noah Kehinde	Elder	M	48	Efon Alaaye	23-08-2010

APPENDIX 7

Oral Interview with Members of African Apostolic Church

S/N	NAMES	STATUS	SEX	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
1	John Iselowo	Trader	M	54	Ajaye	26-02-2009
2	Gbenro Adetayo	Farmer	M	38	Ajaye	26-02-2009
3	Francis Adeniyi	Farmer	M	42	Ajaye	26-02-2009
4	Paulina Adegoke	Unemployed	F	67	Ajaye	24-09-2009
5	Samuel A. Olaiya	Artisan	M	56	Ado-Ekiti	24-09-2009
6	Folasade Tumininu	Trader	F	46	Omuo-Ekiti	24-09-2009
7	Dada Ajiro	Farmer	M	50	Igede	24-09-2009
8	Sunday Funmilola	Trader	M	39	Ajaye	24-09-2009
9	Oluwafunto Ikeoluwa	Artisan	F	38	Ajaye	24-09-2009
10	Sefunmi Pelumi	Farmer	F	47	Ajaye	10-07-2010
11	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Trader	M	41	Ajaye	10-07-2010
12	Iranloye Temidayo	Trader	M	54	Ajaye	10-07-2010
13	Philip Toluwase	Artisan	M	41	Ikole	10-07-2010
14	Adesina Temitayo	Teaching	M	46	Ajaye	20-08-2010
15	Temidayo Omodara	Teaching	M	50	Ajaye	20-08-2010
16	Temidire Ojo	Journalist	M	39	Ikole	23-08-2010
17	Adedire Irewole	Graphic Artist	M	40	Ajaye	23-08-2010
18	Omolara Adedayo	Sportsman	F	41	Ajaye	23-08-2010
19	Omowunmi Ifetayo	Trader	F	45	Ajaye	23-08-2010
20	Ige Ogundele	Unemployed	M	40	Ikole	23-08-2010
21	Emmanuel Adebusoye	Farmer	M	67	Ikole	23-08-2010
22	Felix Toyese	Graphic Artist	M	56	Ikole	23-08-2010
23	Paul Damilare	Sportsman	M	46	Aramoko	23-08-2010
24	Ogunjobi Olaoluwa	Trader	M	50	Aramoko	23-08-2010
25	Abraham Jegede	Trader	M	47	Aramoko	23-08-2010
26	Nifemi Omotunde	Trader	F	39	Ajaye	12-09-2010
27	Idowu Matthew	Farmer	M	60	Ajaye	12-09-2010
28	Taiwo Ibitokun	Farmer	M	43	Ajaye	12-09-2010
29	Temidire Ojo	Artisan	M	38	Ido-Ile	12-09-2010
30	Sefunmi Pelumi	Trader	F	42	Aramoko	12-09-2010
31	Bamgbade Omoniyi	Farmer	M	40	Aramoko	12-09-2010
32	Olu Ajayi	Farmer	M	47	Ajaye	12-09-2010
33	Adedire Irewole	Trader	M	41	Ajaye	12-09-2010
35	Sunday Funmilola	Artisan	F	39	Ajaye	12-09-2010

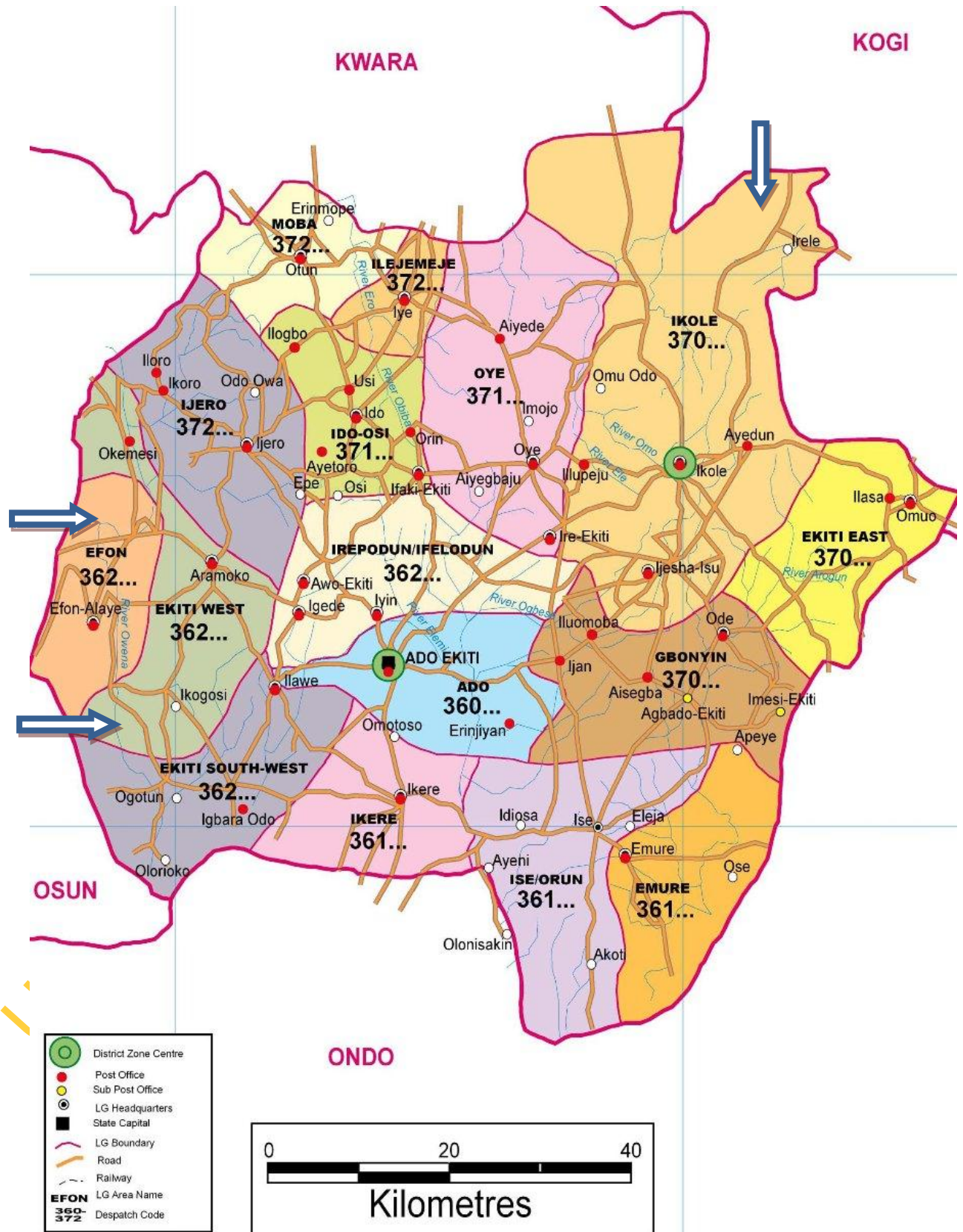
APPENDIX 8

A sample of Attendance Register on the Sacred Place in *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti

S/N	Personal Names	Status or Rank	Destination	Next of Kin and his phone no	Personal Phone no	Date of Arrival	No of Days to be spent	Date of Departure	Signature
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
7.									
8.									
9.									
10.									
11.									
12.									
13.									
14.									

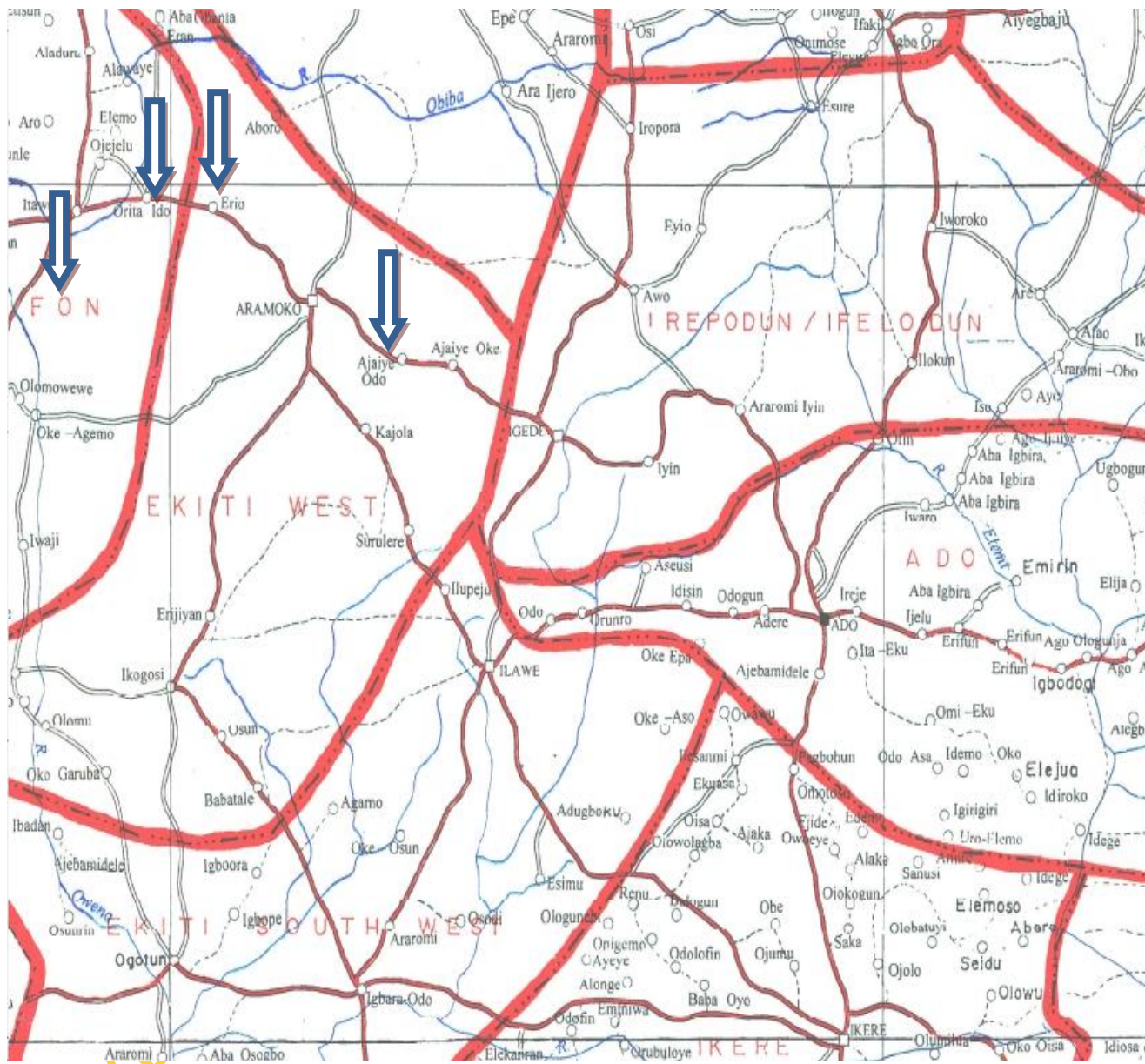
APPENDIX 9

Ekiti State Map Showing the Research Covering Local Government Areas



APPENDIX 10

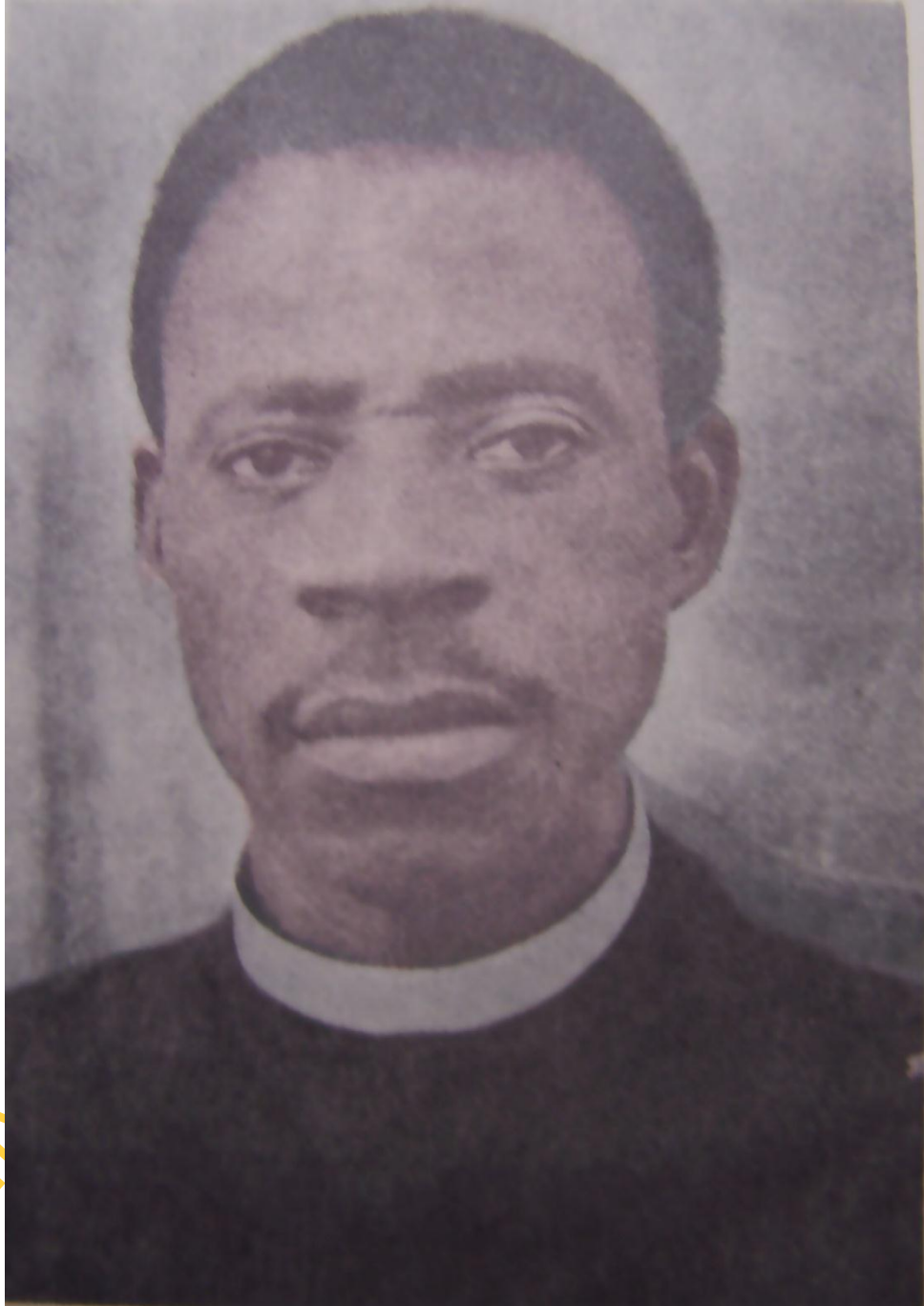
Ekiti State Map Showing Some Locations of the Research



This map shows the major towns of the concentration of this research in Ekitiland as indicated by the arrows.

APPENDIX 11

Picture of Late Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola of Christ Apostolic Church



Courtesy of Mrs. Wura Ogini (Daughter of Late Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola).

APPENDIX 12

Picture of Prophet Emmanuel Omoniyi Omotunde of the African Apostolic Church



Courtesy of Engr. Moses Oludele Idowu

APPENDIX 13A

Sacred Places in Christ Apostolic Church in Ekitiland

Pictures of the Sacred Place *Orí Òkè-Ìségún* (Mount of Victory) at Efon Alaaye Ekiti



APPENDIX 13B



These pictures show the sacred sites where Babalola and his followers placed their Bibles and clothes without being wet by the rain that fell in April 1931.

APPENDIX 14A

Pictures of the Sacred Place *Orí Òkè-Àánú* (Mount of Mercy) at Erio-Ekiti



Picture of the sacred mountain *Orí Òkè-Àánú* in Erio Ekiti

APPENDIX 14B



This picture shows the sacred site where Late Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola consecrated for prayers for himself and forbade the entry of women.

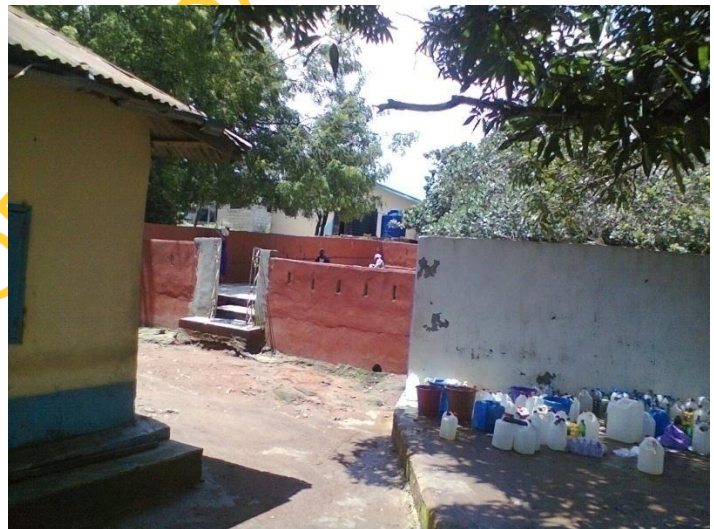
APPENDICES 15A, B, AND C

Pictures of the Sacred Place *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* (Mount of Miracles) at Ido-Ile Ekiti

The sacred site where Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola often prayed in *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti.



The sacred site *Ile Agbára* in *Ori Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti with waters, oils and prayer requests.



The sacred site *Ile Babalola* in *Ori Oke-Iyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti with waters, oils and prayer requests.



APPENDIX 16A

Pictures of the Sacred Water *Omi-Òni* at Efon Alaaye Ekiti



APPENDIX 16B



This sacred water *Omi Òni* is the most common sacred water sanctified by Apostle Joseph Ayo Babalola in Efon Alaaye. It is reputed for healings of various sicknesses.

APPENDIX 17

Picture of the Sacred Water *Omi-Olúwánífise* at Erio-Ekiti



This sacred water *Omi Olúwánífise* in Erio Ekiti is reputed for the healings of leprosy, lunacy and other bodily diseases.

UNIVERSITY OF

APPENDIX 18A

Pictures of the Sacred Water *Omi-Babalola* in *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti



APPENDIX 18B

The researcher is collecting the sacred water *Omi Babalola* in *Orí Òkè-Ìyanu* at Ido-Ile Ekiti.



This sacred water *Omi Babalola* is known for kinds of healings and miracles.

APPENDIX 19A

Sacred Places and Waters in African Apostolic Church

Pictures of the Sacred Mountain *Ori Òkè-Ajàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



APPENDIX 19B



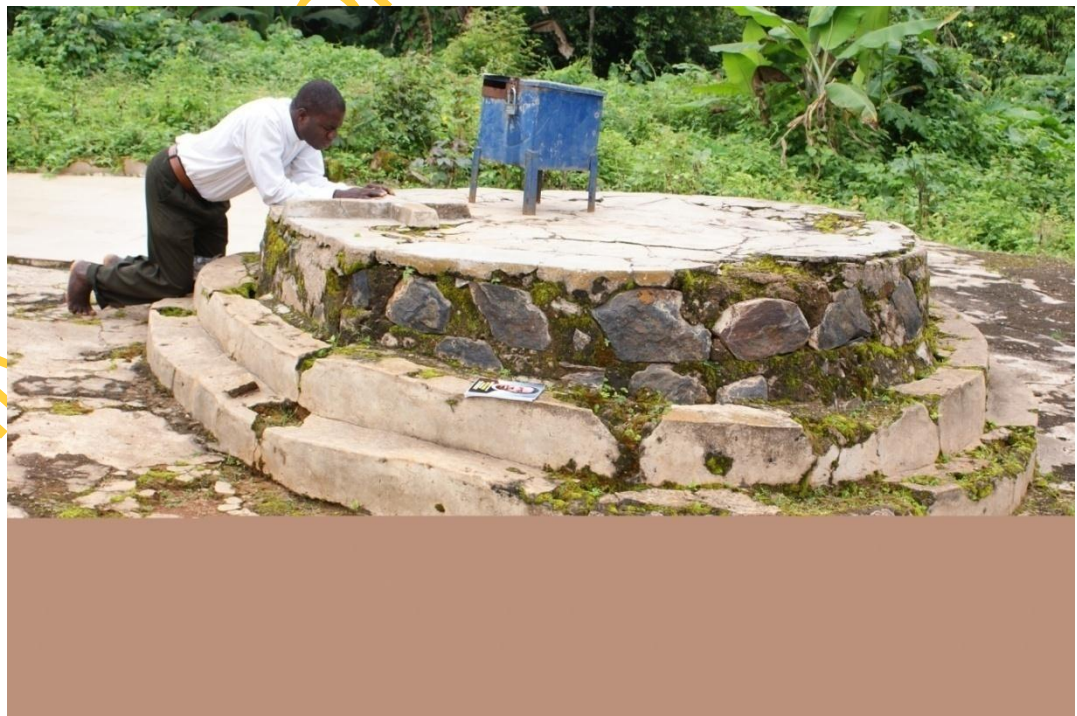
The researcher on the sacred site *Ori Òkè-Ajàyè* in Ajaye Ekiti

APPENDIX 20A

Pictures of the Sacred Ground *Ile-Agbara* in *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



APPENDIX 20B



This sacred site is believed to be potent for spiritual power endowment and miracles.

APPENDIX 21A

Pictures of the Sacred Ground *Ile-Aanu* in *Ori Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



Picture of sacred *Ilè-Àánú* in *Ori Òkè-Àjàyè*, showing a building, which represents the first structure used by the founding fathers of African Apostolic Church on the sacred site.

APPENDIX 21B



Picture of the sacred spot on *Ilè-Áánú* in *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti. It is known for rain-making and receipt of mercies from God.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

APPENDIX 22

Picture of the Sacred Water *Odò Jórídáni* in *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



This sacred water *Odò Jórídáni* is reputed for its healing power in African Apostolic Church

UNIVERSITY OF ILE

APPENDIX 23A

Pictures of the Sacred Water *Omi Amúbíiná* in *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



APPENDIX 23B



This sacred water *Omi Amúbíiná* is regarded to be as fiery as fire in healings and other miraculous releases.

APPENDIX 24A

Pictures of the Sacred Water *Omi Olútokín* in *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



APPENDIX 24B



This sacred water *Omi Olútokín* is believed to be the spiritual boundary of the sacred site in *Orí Òkè-Àjàyè* in Ajaye Ekiti. It is also reputed for the healing of festering sores and others.

APPENDIX 25A

Pictures of the Sacred Water *Omi Araromi* in *Ori Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti



Picture of the sacred *Omi-Araròmi*. It is reputed for its fertility and male child births in *Ori Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti.

APPENDIX 25B



Picture of the researcher, fetching the sacred *Omi-Araròmi* in *Ori Òkè-Àjàyè* at Ajaye Ekiti.

APPENDIX 26A

Pictures of sacred sites in *Ori Òkè-Áánú* at Erio-Ekiti



Picture of sacred site in *Ori Òkè-Áánú*, showing a building with a sacred spot for prayer requests, water bottles and anointing, waiting for power transference.

APPENDIX 26B



This sacred spot in *Ori Òkè-Áánú* in Erio-Ekiti shows prayer requests, water bottles, oils and pictures of people patronising the sacred place for power transfer and divine grants of their requests.

APPENDIX 27

Picture of a unique rock in Ilawe-Ekiti



This picture supports the topography of Ekitiland

UNIVERSITY OF EKITI

GLOSSARY

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY