Sacred place and sacred presence: A conversation between the Njelele Shrine in Zimbabwe and the action of Jesus in the Temple in John 2:13-22.

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Theology in the Graduate Programme in the School of Religion, Philosophy, and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Gilbert Zenda declare that

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCE	Before the Common Era
CE	Common Era
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
LMS	London Missionary Society
YHWH	Yahweh
SAHO	South Africa History Online

ABSTRACT

The Shona people of Zimbabwe who have found a new home in Christian churches, generally carry with them their cultural and social identities in terms of sacredness. These Africans sometimes have difficulties appropriating biblical realities connected to sacred space and sacred presence. This research project is aimed at creating a bridge between the Shona understanding of sacred places and the biblical interpretation. The purpose of this study is to assist the Shona people who have embraced Christianity, to appropriate the biblical sense of sacredness using their cultural heritage as a steppingstone. This study is steeped in African biblical scholarship, that utilizes the tri-polar theoretical framework. The framework is composed of three poles: the reader's context (the Njelele shrine in Zimbabwe), the biblical text (John 2:13-22) and the ideo-theological pole (inculturation hermeneutics). A literature-based investigation on the socio-anthropological contexts of the Jews and the Shona people will be carried out. Inculturation hermeneutics will be used as a bridge to bring the two poles into a dialogue. This interpretation will point out their similarities, dissonances and aspects that the biblical text and the Shona people can learn from each other. The Shona Christians who are the ordinary readers of the Bible will appreciate the personal and societal transformation that is brought about by this kind of engagement. This method of interpretation will enhance the quality of their Christian lives.

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Chapter One

Organization of the Study

1.1 Aim

Sacredness is a phenomenon that is central to all religions and adherents approach it with reverence and awe. The aim of this study is to illustrate through literature review (print and electronic) that by fully embracing their own sacred places ('sacred texts') the Shona people of Zimbabwe will have an upper hand in understanding and appreciating the Christian sacred places. In this manner the African belief systems become the foundation on which Christianity is built. I intend to demonstrate that the Shona Christians can use inculturation hermeneutics as an effective tool for individual and communal growth and transformation. This method of interpretation acts as a bridge between the sacred scriptures and the African culture (understood here as having its own 'sacred texts'). The interaction between the culture of the Shona people and Christianity will be that of equal partners as the two challenge and enrich each other as equals. Moyo (2013:231) asserts that good inculturation is when both religions expose to each other fully and this will be achieved as the Shona culture will interface with Western culture that produced the Biblical texts. In order to achieve the above, I will deliberately evaluate and refine the method outlined by Ukpong (1995a) because in African biblical scholarship, the concept of inculturation hermeneutics has come to be almost, if not always, linked to him (Masenya 2016). I also find him systematic and consistent in his methodology. After having looked at the aim of our study, I can now introduce the theoretical framework operating in this project.

1.2 Theoretical framework

This study is based on African biblical scholarship and tri-polar is our theoretical framework. The tripolar method is composed of three major poles, which are: the context of the biblical text (John 2:13-22), the reader's context (the Shona sacred places and the Njelele shrine in particular), and the ideo-theological pole of the interpreter (inculturation hermeneutics). For our study I shall use socio-anthropological tools[1] and separately investigate the Jewish and

[1] Social anthropologists strive to come to terms with how individuals survive in communities and how these people generate a livelihood that is meaningful. Anthropologists are seized with such questions as: Why do individuals act the way they act? How are groups coordinated? What aspects of their lives need to be heard? (https://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/social-anthropology/study/what-is-social-anthropology/). In this this case we have the sociology and anthropology tools at our disposal. This interdisciplinary tool will help us explore more about the contexts we have chosen for our study and help us to be more objective.

the Shona beliefs of sacredness. By so doing I will go back in time and point out how the two cultures perceived and constructed sacred places. The study will shed more light on these scared places and clearly indicate what they did with these places, how and why.

The ideo-theological pole that binds together the Shona context and the biblical text is inculturation hermeneutics. This is the mediation tool which brings into conversation the two aspects. The main reason for the intervention is to create a dialogue between the Shona cultural beliefs and the biblical text. In order to facilitate the dialogue I will use a four-step inculturation procedure adapted from Ukpong's (1995a) five-step method of interpretation. Step one will allow us to compare the Shona sacred places and the biblical text. I will point out the similarities between the two. In step two I will expose the areas of dissonance between the Shona culture and the biblical text. The third step explores and mentions what the biblical text can correct in the Shona sacred places if there are areas that are not lifegiving. In the fourth step I will point out what the ordinary Shona Christians can learn from their cultural heritage because their culture has a lot to teach and challenge the culture that produced the biblical texts. In all the four steps some form of transformation takes place as the two poles interact. By using inculturation hermeneutics in reading the Bible, it is hoped that the ordinary Shona Christians will improve their quality of faith without uprooting them from their cultural heritage. My method of interpretation seeks to make the ordinary Shona Christians appreciate their cultural heritage without feeling inferior to foreign cultures.

The method of this study is qualitative. This research heavily relies on print and electronic literature review and analysis. There are no interviews to be conducted in this study. The socio-anthropological[2] tools used in the research are meant to aid the researcher to practise distanciation. The use of such tools is crucial in trying to be systematic in this study. The reader/researcher has acknowledged his context (Shona in Zimbabwe) and is a committed Christian. It is strongly believed here that if the Africans are well aware and critically analyse their cultural heritage in terms of sacred places, they will find the biblical understanding of sacred places more inspiring. Their understanding of Christian beliefs is enhanced through inculturation hermeneutics. It is through inculturation hermeneutics that some kind of

[2] Ukpong (1995a:11) gives an example of the aspects that can be analysed by the interpreter: 1- phenomenological, 2- socio-anthropological, 3- historical, 4- social analysis, 5- religious. I have chosen the second example for it brings out the socio-anthropological aspects of the Shona people so that these can dialogue with the biblical text from the Gospel of John. I want to use the socio-anthropological tools because they will help me investigate the background of the Shona people and that of the environment that produced the biblical text.

transformation takes place, both on individual and communal level. How then is this study outlined?

1.3 Outline of the Study

Since this study is based on tripolar theoretical framework, our research outline will very much be influenced by this method of interpretation. Chapter one will introduce what the whole study is based on. It will clearly state the roadmap and the tools that will be employed here. The tripolar framework is made up of three poles (Shona context, John 2:13-22 and inculturation hermeneutics) and I will have a chapter dedicated to each of the poles. Thus in chapter two I will do a socio-anthropological analysis of the context of the biblical text (Ukpong 2000:24 calls it the text in its context). In chapter three I will also do a socio-anthropological study of the Shona people concentrating on their sacred places and what they do there (Ukpong 2000:24, regards it as the reader's context). The interpretation of John 2:13-22 will be done in chapter four. Chapter five brings us to inculturation hermeneutics, where I will create a bridge between the Njelele shrine and the Cleansing of the Temple. In this case I will use a four-step procedure for appropriation adapted from Ukpong (1995a). In chapter six I will summarize this study and propose areas for further research. After having outlined the scope of the study, I will briefly deal with the general anthropological approach to sacred places.

1.3.1 General socio-anthropological studies on sacred places

Davies (1994:1) argues that among the most noticeable traits of a set of beliefs are those sacred places, either built as ritual arenas or else selected from nature through association with the history and myth of a religion. Names that are given to some of these holy places are synonymous to some of the religions of the world. This reality points to the fact that holy places are foundations on which religions are built (Davies 1994:1).

In the introduction to his book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade (1957:10)[3] defines sacred as the opposite of profane. Objects and places that are sacred are not venerated by societies because they are stones or trees but because they manifest the divine presence. In Eliade's (1957:10) view, whatever does not manifest the divine is profane and chaotic, while the

[3] Eliade (1957) has done an extensive study on the sacred and the profane. His work is a classic reference in terms of what is holy and what is not holy. This is where his work fits in mine as I try to find a balance between his understanding and the African perception which is not polarised. He always defines the sacred as opposed to the profane, and yet the Shona people see the sacred not born out of the profane but from the natural elements that are neutral realities of life. Some of his views on the sacred still hold water today though others have been critiqued and are not applicable to the African situation as this study will reveal.

sacred is regarded as orderly and harmonious. According to him, it goes without saying that if an object does not manifest the divine in a certain culture or environment it is regarded as profane. It is the notion of divine presence and manifestation that transform these places from profane to the sacred realm (Eliade 1957:12). In this understanding, the profane can "graduate" to sacredness if it is made to manifest the divine by a particular religion. Different religions and cultures have their own ways of conferring sacredness to places and objects. This would seem to indicate that people do not have the liberty to select the sacred spot; all they need to do is to search for it and discover it through the assistance of divine manifestations (Eliade 1957:28). As far as Eliade (1957:14) is concerned, the holy and irreligious realities are two modes of being in the world. These two realities of existence are regarded by people as fundamental in their lives (Eliade 1957:14). In his view, Eliade (1957:21) sees the mysterious manifestations conveying a definite predetermined position that he calls the Centre. It is this centre that is synonymous with the sacred. Everything else that surrounds this sacred space or the centre and does not manifest the divine is referred to as the periphery or the profane.

While critiquing Eliade (1957:55), Smith (1978:97) disagrees with the notion of equating the profane to chaos, the formless, and the unmanifested. Eliade (1957) stresses that whatever is profane must be shunned while the sacred is embraced because of its intrinsic positive energy. Smith goes further and asserts that irreligious realities of life are not opposed to the holy realities. He does not consider the profane as chaotic but neutral. According to Smith (1978:97), it is the profane that sustains the sacred because the sacred cannot exist without the profane. Since Eliade regarded the profane as negative, Smith (1978:99) proposes that equal attention be given to both the 'Centre' (sacred) and the 'periphery' (profane) in religious discourses. After looking at the anthropological understanding of the sacred I will delve into the way the sacred was understood by the Jews.

1.3.2 Perception and development of the understanding of concepts of sacred places among the Jews.

According to Sunhee (2014:27), experts in biblical studies have classified various types of holy places in the Bible in a manner that facilitates proper discussions. She goes on to assert that in the Hebrew text two main kinds of holy places emerge; the decentralized models and the centralized (2014:66). The decentralized sacred places were also regarded as local models of sacredness because they were smaller places but connected to the patriarchs. Mountains, stones, trees and rivers are examples of some of these sacred places. The

centralized places on the other hand were just two: the tabernacle (the tent that contained the stone tablets on which the ten commandments were written) in the wilderness and the Temple in Jerusalem. These two sacred places brought everybody to one central place for worship even if the tabernacle was more dynamic since it was mobile. At all these places, whether decentralized or centralized there was a manifestation of hierophanies, epiphanies and theophanies (Eliade 1957:11:128, Sunhee 2014:38). The manifestation of the sacred is the place where heaven and earth meet (Eliade 1957:41), because the divine comes down to interact with humanity as humanity transcends to be in touch with the same divine.

As already indicated above, in Israel Yahweh was viewed as dwelling in the Tabernacle enthroned upon the Ark and was resident at that particular spot at that exact time. As the Jews wandered in the wilderness for 40 years, they carried the Ark with them. In other words, the glory of Yahweh followed his people wherever they went, and it was this Ark that was the symbol of his presence. Therefore, the holiness of that place came from the fact that Yahweh was present wherever the Ark was located. The understanding is gradually transformed as Israel begins in Deuteronomy to emphasize the glory of Yahweh, which is present, rather than Yahweh being physically present.

As the Temple was built in Jerusalem and the Ark was installed there, it meant that the highest level of his presence was now in the Temple. It became the most sacred place in Israel. Yahweh had made the Temple his dwelling place. The Rabbinic texts emphasized that Yahweh's glory could be present anywhere else in a lesser form but was always present in the Temple (Kunin 1994:128). This shift led to the understanding that the space that was occupied by the Jewish community whether in the synagogue or in their homes was also sacred (1994:131). Since the Jews were a chosen people, Yahweh dwelt amongst them, and their land was sacred. There is a great connection between the Jewish Temple and those that were constructed by the Greeks.

The Greek temples were generally built on hill tops and high places so that they could impress visitors from far. The architecture was meant to be admired. Normally each temple was dedicated to a particular god who was perceived as residing there. The inner chamber was the only sacred place though not much is known about what went on in there. Sacrifices to a particular temple god were offered outside the temple building. Valuables were kept in the temples, and they also acted as banks. Priests were in charge, and they also gave loans. The Romans borrowed the temple architecture from the Greeks. The Roman temples were smaller, and their banks were operated by wealthy businessmen and merchants. The Romans

were the first to design bills of exchange that were similar to present day cheques. The modern-day bank architecture was inspired by these ancient temples. I have briefly explored the elements of sacredness as far as the Jewish, Greek and Roman temples were concerned. Below I cross over to the Shona understanding of sacred places.

1.3.3 The Shona sacred places

Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe there are a number of sacred places which they revere. I will put them into two categories: the local (family) and communal (clan) sacred places. The family sacred places are the hut (traditionally round with grass thatched roof, serving as family kitchen), the kraal (mainly cattle kraal), the animals (totems) and the ruins (an abandoned homes). These sacred Shona places are at the heart of their veneration as they honour Mwari through the family ancestors. The father as a local priest is central in the prayers and supplications that are conducted at these family based holy places. The communal sacred places are a level higher than the family sacred places. These places are dedicated to clan spirits (*Mhondoro*), which are an amalgamation of family spirits. The communal sacred place is visited for issues that are beyond the scope of the family spirits, for example prayers for rain. The clan gathers under a *muhacha* tree (cock tree: *parinari curatellifolia*) and conducts its rituals as a group. Sometimes a big tree in the forest can be chosen as a meeting point and that makes the forest around it sacred also. In some regions in Zimbabwe, the gravesite where a chief was buried is considered a sacred place for the community. Rituals and supplications to the clan spirit take place there under the leadership of the most senior ritual leader. The Shona Christians conduct their daily business in the midst of such an environment and this is part and parcel of their personal and national identity. The Shona indigenous knowledge systems carry the day in bringing out their cultural beliefs as I briefly introduce the Njelele shrine.

1.3.4 The Njelele shrine

The Njelele shrine is the greatest and most sacred communal shrine in Zimbabwe. It is the shrine of last resort in terms of spirit consultations. After all the other sacred places have failed to resolve an issue, whether it is personal or communal then the Njelele shrine is consulted. This shrine is situated in the Matopo hills. This area has been home to humankind for at least 40 000 years. These people were herdsmen and cultivators (Ranger 1999:2;

Bucher 1980; Gelfand 1966; Gelfand 1977).[4] The Njelele shrine of the Mwari (God) cult is in these hills, 50 km southwest of Bulawayo, (Zimbabwe's second largest city) south of the country (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232). These hills were home to tiny groups of Makaranga people before the arrival of the Ndebele people in 1837 (Gelfand 1966:15; Pagden and Summers 1970:32). The origin of this shrine remains controversial (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232). The main purpose of the shrine was for rainmaking ceremonies. However, some of the ceremonies held there included the blessing of the seed before planting, fertility rituals, first harvest offering, individual and communal cleansing. The Njelele shrine still operates as the most influential and famous Mwari centre in the country (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232).

Religion and politics meet in the Matopo hills (Gelfand 1966:33; Ranger 1999:3). When the Ndebele invaded and conquered the Karanga people they did not disturb their religious organization commonly known as uMlimo (Bhebe 1979:289; Gelfand 1966:33; Pagden and Summers 1970:73). The Ndebele people regarded these shrines as sacred, and they never visited them unless there was needed for consultation (Pagden and Summers 1970:75; Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:300; Rodewald 2010a:13). At the shrine there was always a succession of 'chief priests' in charge (Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:301; Pagden and Summers 1970:132). These successions were not always peaceful because they sometimes turned bloody due to conflicts. The post-independence period has not been without its challenges as the shrine custodians are accused of siding with national political figures instead of aligning themselves to the traditional chiefs. Ranger (1999:4) asserts that culture cannot be separated from shrines (nature) and the human society bears no meaning without the sacred rocks, pools and caves because the voice of Mwari was heard speaking from these rocks (Bourdillon 1979:249). It is evident that the beliefs of sacredness among the Shona people are enshrined in their everyday activities that culminate in the communal worship of Mwari at the Njelele shrine. These activities can be referred to as their 'sacred texts'. Here below I briefly introduce the Christian sacred text (Gospel of John) and related Temple texts.

[4] Gelfand (1966; 1977; 1984), Bourdillon (1979) , Ranger (1999), Schoffeleers and Mwanza (1979), among others have done an extensive study of the people of Zimbabwe and more among the Shona people. Their early research brings out classic studies on the Shona people in ways that expose the cultural heritage of these people. Their work is central to the socio-anthropological analysis of the Shona people that I am doing in this study. Accompanying these great authors are the African researchers who are going to make a huge impact also on this study as they are the custodians of the Shona culture. The blending of the early authors and the recent ones is going to enrich my study.

1.3.5 The Gospel of John and texts about the Temple.

Since the Temple built by Solomon had been destroyed by the Babylonians in 583 BCE, a second one was built by the Jews returning from exile. This is generally referred to as the second Temple. Herod took upon himself to renovate this Temple and for that reason the second Temple is also known as the Herodian Temple. This Temple was under renovation in Jesus' time. Generally, the Temple was perceived as Yahweh's dwelling place and that made it holy, as already mentioned. With the destruction of the Temple came the new understanding that the presence of Yahweh went beyond the Temple building.

The action of Jesus in the Temple must be understood within the context of the Gospel of John.[5] Within the structure of the Gospel of John the passage (2:13-22) is situated between two significant stories: the wedding at Cana and Nicodemus' question. According to Kerr (2002:69), an eschatological motif is what binds them together. This arrangement is not coincidental. In the cleansing of the Temple Jesus introduces the end-time nuances when he talks of the annihilation and building up of the Temple of his body after three days. The wedding at Cana is said to have taken place on the third day which is connected to Jesus' resurrection, another eschatological dimension. The abundance of wine intimates a fulfilment of Amos 9:13. In Nicodemus' story, the old order (Nicodemus represents the Jewish authorities) will give way to the new beginning (rebirth) (Kerr 2002:71). The three stories are seen as one unit and eschatology is the thread that runs through them.

Jesus in John's Gospel is said to have gone to Jerusalem several times. The first of such a journey occurs when Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and cleanses the Temple (Brodie 1993a:27). The synoptic Gospels put this incident at the end of Jesus' ministry as he faces crucifixion (1993a:177). Brodie (1993a:177) and Brown (1966:116) call this episode the rebuilding and replacement of the Temple. Jesus' action constitutes a severe

[5] Of all the pieces of literature attributed to John, only Revelation gives John as the name of its author (Rev 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8) (Moloney and Harrington 1998:1; Schnackenburg 1968:11). This is the internal evidence of the authorship of Revelation. According to modern critical scholarship, Johannine literature appears to have been written near the turn of the first century at Ephesus (ca 100 C.E) though this is still highly contested (Lightfoot 1956:28; Moloney and Harrington 1998:2). John's Gospel comes after the synoptic Gospels and does not depend directly on them (Moloney and Harrington 1998:2, Schnackenburg 1968:15; Lightfoot 1956:28). This Gospel was the fourth, and last to be admitted into the canon of the Christian scriptures and has always been known as the 'Gospel of John' (Schnackenburg 1968:11; Moloney and Harrington 1998:1; Lindars 1990:20). The Gospel of John was based on the Jewish beginnings of the Christian institution and yet accommodative to outsiders in strides that are not common to the other three Gospels (Moloney and Harrington 1998:3). On the one hand, Schnackenburg asserts that by comparison the Gospel according to John appears to be an 'outsider' (Schnackenburg 1968:14). On the other hand, he argues that there is indeed, a strong connection between the fourth Gospel and the synoptics, because of the common narrative passages and common logia (Schnackenburg 1968:26-43).

critique of the kind of commerce taking place at the wrong place (Brodie 1993a:179). The house of his father had been turned into a market (John 2:16). The zeal for his father's house urged him to cleanse this sacred place that had been defiled by those buying and selling stuff. Soon after cleansing the Temple, Jesus referred to his body as Temple that will be destroyed and resurrect on the third day. In his discourse with the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42) Jesus emphasized that the Temple would cease to be God's geographic dwelling place, but his risen body will become the spiritual presence of God (Brown 1966:114).

After outlining the scope of this study, as shown above, I will do a socio-anthropological investigation of the context of the Biblical text in the following chapter. I will delve into notions of space and place thereby deepening the theories related to the social construction of these two aspects. Eliade will be the main source as far as sacred space is concerned, though he will be critiqued by Smith who regards the sacred and the profane as equal players. The conversation by the two theorists will help us categorize the sacred places in the Hebrew text. I will dedicate a section to investigate Greek sacred temples because the Jewish daily life was very much influenced by the Greco-Roman culture. I will explain how sections of the Greek temples were used as banks and treasuries. Since the temples were considered as sacred, nobody would think of angering the gods by stealing 'what was under their protection.'

CHAPTER TWO

SACRED PLACE AND SACRED PRESENCE

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter special attention will be given to the notions of space and place. Space will be defined and how it is different from place. While defining these aspects, theories that govern social construction of space and place will be elaborated. Going further, I will also point out how Eliade defines sacred spaces and sacred places. According to Eliade once the divine/sacred has manifested itself in an object or place that area ceases to be ordinary because of the divine that dwells therein. He will be my guide too in bringing out what pushes man to long to live in sacred presence. In this section I will rationalize how holiness/sacredness manifest itself and how it is opposed to the profane/ordinary. Related to these aspects are other opposing power; order and chaos; the centre and the periphery. Eliade's interpretation will be used to find out how the sacred has power over the profane and how the sacred can regain its power after it has been desecrated or profaned.

In order to strike a balance between the notions of sacredness of space and place, Smith will critique Eliade's approach. Smith will start by disagreeing with Eliade and argue that the profane/secular is not the contrary of the holy. He will further posit that the sacred has no power over the profane because the two are equal. Smith will be categorical and explain that it is the profane that is the sustainer of the sacred, not the other way around. This perception of the sacred by Smith will shape the way sacredness is understood in this study. His understanding of the sacred dismantles the polarization that was created by Eliade. This new way of treating the sacred brings some fresh air into the way the sacred will be understood in this study.

Theories generated by Eliade and Smith on notions of sacredness in the Hebrew text will be applied here to identify how Israel defined these places. The centralized and decentralized categories of sacred places will emerge. An explanation will be given in order to see how Yahweh was present among his people through signs and wonders. As the Temple was built in Jerusalem, I will point out how the Jews perceived Yahweh's presence in that building. I will further elaborate the importance of the Greek Temples and how they were used as treasuries and banks.

2.1 Definition of space and place

According to Tuan (1979:387) ‘space and place together define the nature of geography’. Both lie at the core of geographic discipline and are inseparable in terms of this subject. Without space and place there is not much geography to talk about (1979:387). Even if they are the mainstay of geography, it is crucial to find out what each of them stands for. Place has sometimes been defined as a location, but Tuan (1979:387) posits that place has more value than the word location suggests because place has a history and meaning (Tuan 1979:387). Location is more abstract than a place because of its history and man’s actions in it (1979:387).

Maier (2007:119) defines space as a term that evokes geography, culture, body, and mind in relationship to a certain environment. Sunhee (2014:25) quotes Philip Sheldrake, in *Spaces for the Sacred*, who articulated the difference between space and a location. In this regard space is seen in concepts that are used in definitions and analysis, while location is always concrete, precise, and interactive (Sunhee 2014:25). It is the place that seems to give form to space, for without place space will not take shape. Place breathes life into space by making it tangible.

Sunhee (2014:25) refers to Edward S. Casey, the great thinker, who established the distinction between place and space by arguing that the understanding of place comes before the notions related to space. This is simply because the awareness of a precise place always takes precedence over space and abstract notions connected to it (Sunhee 2014:25). In order to understand principles that govern space one has to rely on place because it is concrete and real. Sunhee (2014:25) asserts that Walter Brueggemann, is one of the most celebrated Hebrew text specialists, who has further emphasized the difference between space and location. Going further with the discussion on space and place, Sunhee (2014:25) argues that place is a location which has historic connotations. It can be asserted that it is at these places that life events have taken place, and these events are reminisced as they give a sort of progression and character, generation after generation. It is clear that in some of these locations vital conversations take place and life changing trajectories are established out of those dialogues (Sunhee 2014:25). Space is more abstract while place is more particular or tangible because it is in a place that human life is expressed. Life is not experienced or expressed in a vacuum or empty space but in a place that is full of vitality.

According to Porton (1989), there are realities in life that are built up by humanity in order to serve a certain purpose or agenda. This theory further highlights that things that are proven

scientifically correct can sometimes be twisted by cultures and passed on from generation to generation. As these aspects are transmitted within or across culture, nobody stops to check whether they are real facts. Porton (1989) asserts that historically, humanity has labelled and classified certain ways of doing things and held them as true even if they lack objectivity. The main highlight of this theory is that objectivity and scientific realities are set aside as social realities and concepts are created, changed, and reproduced generation after generation in given institutions and cultures. People hold on to these social constructions of reality even if they are contradicted by empirical evidence.

In his introduction Leeds-Hurwitz (2016) asserts that collective invention of social realities presumes that people structure their opinion of the world and the connotations they give to experiences with others. Social construction similarly deduces that people invent these realities not as individuals but as a community. As far as social construction is concerned, every member of the community has to toe the line in terms of propelling what is culturally considered as the correct way of thinking. It is like musical instruments that blend together to produce a coordinated piece of music.

The scholarship of Plato and Aristotle on space has been the source from which scholars have drawn up theories on the construction of space. Among the most outstanding of these scholars, Soja[6] and Lefebvre will be singled out. These two are well known for identifying

[6] One of his objectives in his book *Spatial Injustice* Soja's (2010:5) objective is to stimulate new ways of thinking about and acting to change the unjust geographies in which we live. He sees injustice in the way the space is distributed mainly by those in privileged positions.
Even if I will not exhaust the discussion here I want to highlight that Soja (2010) does not see space as an empty void. According to him space is always filled with politics, ideology, and other forces shaping our lives and challenging us to engage in struggles over geography. In this manner of thinking, geography perceived as a contested phenomenon. Soja (2010:24) asserts that all those who are oppressed and economically exploited are to some extend suffering from the effects of unjust geographies or spatial organisations that have been manipulated.
Soja (2010) quotes Said who sees imperialism and colonialism as structures that were politically created to push the agenda for spatial injustice by creating subordinate and inferior beings (the colonised). Oppressive and unjust geographies are produced by the political organisation of space by the powerful ones in order to oppress the masses. Said is quoted asserting that these unjust geographies of political power are like a double edged sword: they can be both intensely oppressive and potentially liberating as well (Soja 2010:37). What happens is that people get to be oppressed and suffer as a group, but the same group can rise up and destroy the system that once oppressed them.
In order to liberate the oppressed these spatial structures that disadvantage the poor must be dismantled for the sake of peace and justice (Soja 2010:40). Soja (2010:53) sees everything on earth as spatial whether it is recognised as such or not. For him any kind of oppression or injustice is spatial because it is socially constructed to benefit a few.
Soja (2010:54) rephrased Martin Luther King's statement on injustice and declared that spatial injustice anywhere, at any geographical scale, is a threat to justice everywhere
Soja (Soja 2010:4) sees space as actively involved in generating and sustaining inequality, injustice, economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and discrimination.

space as a product of social construction (George 2007:25). The theories that operate around space and its construction are a result of human beings and their deliberate effort to push for a social perspective that is acceptable in that society.

Maier (2007:117) goes on to elaborate that space is now mostly understood as produced by human activity in a given culture and social setting. Casey (2001:404) tends to define space as a phenomenon that permits other things to exist within it. He sees place as the closest setting of one's existence because in it are the historical, cultural and interpersonal codes of every person (Casey 2001:404). These codes are the lenses through which one connects to his surroundings. Along the same line, Berquist (2007:6) quotes Sack who defines place as the immeasurable parts of space that are limited and restricted by humanity. Places have an effect on creating and sustaining social projects in the society (Berquist 2007:6). According to Sack, uncontaminated places aid people to have an idea of the reality that surrounds them so that they can appreciate it (Berquist 2007:6). The construction and the setting aside of places for particular functions is consciously accomplished by humanity.

The places I will focus on are those that have been defined and set aside by a specific group of people. There is always a justification by groups of people for the choices they make in setting aside places for particular functions, thereby making them sacred. What then is sacredness?

2.2 Sacredness

The English word '*sacredness'* is derived from the Latin *sanctus*, and is defined as restriction, particularly pertaining to the gods (Hubert 1994:11). This means that in general terms, something that is defined as sacred, whether it be an object or site (or person), must be separated from everyday items and places, so that its special significance can be felt, and rules regarding it obeyed (Hubert 1994:11). It is the separation from everyday use that makes an object special, hence sacred. Vaux along the same lines has this to say about the subject:

> Holiness is regarded as a multifaceted reality which hinges on the mystery of the divine, however, it touches on reverence and virtue also. It comprises the concepts of holy and pure but surpasses them. Without mentioning God, there is no way that one can talk of holiness and yet it is the creatures that aspire to be holy. The Semitic word קֹדֶשׁ (qodes)

It is in this vein that the abuses in the Temple in Jerusalem and those at Njelele shrine were perpetrated by those in privileged positions as they manipulated the systems for their personal benefit.

> [sanctified entity, godliness], originated from a root which unquestionably points towards cutting off or detaching. The theme of separation cuts across the idea of sacredness for one cannot come in contact with holy objects unless they are ritually pure (Vaux 1973:236).

According to Otto (1917:5), sacredness or holiness is an area of understanding and assessment unique only to religious themes (Vaux 1973:236). Seebass (1978:223) concurs with Otto as he asserts that the expressions 'holy' and 'the holy' denoted at the beginning of the history of religion power *(mana),*[7] taboo, and then, generally the sphere of divine power which man felt to be superior and threatening (Seebass 1978:223). As far as Otto (1917:8) is concerned, 'the holy' is the feeling of a human being, totally engrossed in and overwhelmed by his own unworthiness in comparison to the creator. He further acknowledges that the holy always reveals itself as a condition of a completely unique form from the ordinary realities (Otto 1917:8). Otto (1917:6) asserts that there is no religion that does not have holiness at its centre and if the holy is absent no religion can stand or survive (Otto 1917:6). In this case it means that the sacred is equal to religion, for there is no discussion of religion that does not include the sacred.

Holiness is a universal term; in Hebrew is *qadosh* (Wright 1992:237), *agios* in Greek and *sanctus* in Latin (Otto 1917:6). The three languages connote good, absolute goodness when it is a notion that has ripened and reached the highest level in its development (Otto 1917:6). The Greeks used three different word-groups to denote the holy, *hieros*, with its numerous derivatives to it e.g. sanctuary, sacrifice, priest (Seebass 1978:223). In contrast, *hagios* – the most recurrent word-group in the Christian scriptures – comprises a moral aspect. The emphasis falls on duty to worship the holy, *hosios* also points to the same direction (Seebass 1978:223).

According to Seebass (1978:223), holiness signifies divine directive and providence. It goes without saying that it also demands human commitment and ethics as a response (Seebass 1978:223). Scott (2022) quotes Muilenburg (1962) who defines holiness as "the 'given' undergirding and pervading all religion, the distinctive mark and signature of the divine". Of all the terms, it is 'holiness' that gives expression to the essential nature of the 'sacred' (1962:616). Schleiermacher (1995:19-82) and Durkheim (1976:37) put the concept of holiness at the centre of the discussion on religion, and from that time onwards other biblical and theological disciplines have unpacked its general meaning (Hodgson 1992:249). Vaux

[7] A generalized, supernatural force or power, which may be concentrated in objects or persons, accessed at (https://www.dictionary.com/browse/mana).

(1973:236) asserts that the holiness of God is inaccessible to people and for people to realize it, God must be made sacred or prove himself as holy by openly displaying his greatness. After defining what sacredness is I now explore sacred places and sacred presence.

2.2.1 Sacred place and sacred presence

The place defined above is made holy/sacred by being set aside for worship and rituals associated with the divine. According the Eliade (1957:12), what sacredness entails is not the veneration of the stone or a tree in itself. However, the sacred tree, the sacred stone are not adored as stone or tree; they are venerated simply for the reason that they are *hierophanies*[8] since they now stand for realities far removed from their physical state (Eliade 1957:12). It is by exuding the sacred that an item assumes another identity even if it continues to exist within its original environment (Eliade1957:12). The status of such items change as soon as the sacred manifests itself in it. It is within its cosmic milieu that it shines over and above the rest of its surroundings, thereby becoming sacred. A consecrated stone maintains its nature and it will not be different from other stones around it. People who consider the stone sacred do not see it as any other stone because it exudes the divine elements (Eliade 1957:12). This means that the stone begins to participate in the supernatural world while the rest of the stones around it remain at their original level. Where the sacred is found, there too is the sacred presence. The divine dwells in places they have chosen as their abode. The presence of the divine in a place that is set apart only for the divine makes the place sacred. Without the manifestation there is no sacredness.

2.2.2 The manifestation of the sacred

Eliade (1957) quotes Otto (1917) who experiences an overwhelming emotion before whatever is holy. It is the holy that manifests a mysterious power that cannot be understood because it is way beyond the ordinary human experience (Eliade 1957:9). A human being who faces the fascinating power of the divine is left in a state of shock and fear (Eliade 1957:9; Vaux 1973:236). The supernatural presents itself as something 'absolutely other,' something basically and totally different (Eliade 1957:9). For Otto (1917) and Vaux (1973:236), the sacred will not be recognized unless it has revealed its power and sense of mystery. Thus, the sacred will be the one that induces these awesome emotions in an individual or community. Otto (1917) defines holiness (sacredness) as an experience of

[8] Sunhee (2014:38) asserts that the word "hierophany" comes from the Greek word whose root is *hieros*, denoting "hallowed" or "holy" and *phainein*, meaning "to appear" or "to bring to light". It represents the display of the divine or the holy.

mysterium tremendum et fascinans, a mysterious, awful experience. According to him this experience is the opposite of the profane, which is the human, non-religious experience (Otto 1917:26). For Eliade (1957:10), the principle meaning of the word holy is that it is opposed to the irreligious matters.

According to Eliade (1957:10), the sacred is far removed from human experiences and if one comes into contact with the holy, they soon realize their worthlessness. It is at that moment that people discover that they are like a drop in an ocean. It is this feeling of inadequacy in front of the sacred that makes the sacred powerful and mysterious. The sacred always manifests itself as a reality of a totally different order from 'natural' realities (Eliade 1957:10). It is interesting to note that Eliade is already implying that the 'natural' realities are not at all powerful as they are just neutral.

At the time of writing Eliade (1957:10) argued that Otto's analysis on the manifestations of the holy had not lost their value. Since Eliade is openly professing that he is a disciple of Otto, he does not hesitate to invite his own readers/followers to seriously consider Otto's work (1957:10). Eliade (1957:10) decided not to dwell on the irrational aspect of religion as Otto had done but on the sacred in its entirety. Eliade in defining the sacred always opposes it with the profane to the point that each time he elaborates the sacred it is always in opposition to the profane. Eliade (1957) dwells mostly on how the sacred manifests itself in different forms in the lives of the society. Eliade (1957) draws a lot from Otto (1917) as he develops the notions on sacredness in his study that is more inclined to the history of religions. In everyday living people encounter this strong energy that is overpowering. This reality seems to come from a world beyond the human imagination (Eliade 1957:11). The energies that are far beyond human explanation confront humanity all the time. It does not matter whether one acknowledges these forces or not and it is these forces that urge humanity to live in the sacred presence.

2.2.3 Humanity's quest to live in sacred presence

Eliade (1957:91) explains that the image of the centre is vital in religious themes. He further asserts that people yearn to reside at the centre of the world because of the energy that the centre generates (Eliade 1957:91). Humanity desires always to open up channels of communication with the divine. He goes on to argue that living close to the energies created by the centre is the same as residing near the deity (Eliade 1957:91). The abode of the gods is always depicted as above, in the heavens. In the city man is sure of communicating with the realm of the divine by stepping into a sanctuary, which he considers as a sanctuary per

excellence (Eliade 1957:43). He desires to dwell at a centre, where there is the possibility of communicating with the gods (Eliade 1957:172). A spiritual person finds fulfilment by living in a holy environment where he/she feels at home (Eliade 1957:172).

The spiritual person's inner longing is to reside in a world that exudes the holy and he/she wishes their dwelling was like that of the divine which is depicted in the sanctuaries like temples (Eliade 1957:65). In short, this spiritual longing displays the desire to live in an uncontaminated and sacred universe (Eliade 1957:65). Eliade (1957) wants to illustrate how spiritual people try to remain as long as possible in a holy cosmos. Their total experience of life proves to be in contradiction with the experience of people without religious feelings; those who live or wish to live in a desacralizing world (Eliade 1957:13).[9] The binary is maintained between those who long for sacred environments and those who live in a world that is not sacred (profane).

However, Eliade (1957:14) asserts that the reader will very soon recognize that the holy and secular are two means of existence in the world, two factual settings adopted by people in the unfolding of their history.[10] Eliade (1957:17) is chiefly concerned about pointing out the precise aspects of religious understanding and bring out the distinctions between it and the secular experience of the world. This is what Eliade sets out to do in his book *The Sacred and the Profane (1957)* and he has succeeded. Religious persons experience the manifestation of the sacred in their lives. They set aside places and spaces that are more special than the others so that special events can be marked in those sacred spaces and places.

Eliade (1957:22) goes on to argue that it is evident to what extent the unearthing of a space that is holy brings essential realities for adherents of a particular religion. He asserts that a religious person requires to fix the centre first so that everything else can fall into place (1957:22). Since this is the reality, a person cannot do anything before the central point has been identified and put in place (Eliade 1957:22). It is for this reason that religious persons have continually tried to fix their dwelling at the core of the universe. According to Eliade (1957:22), the world must be founded first if it is to be lived in. This implies that creation could not have come out of chaos but out of the sacredness that is orderly. Turner (Eliade 1979:9) concurs with Eliade as he regards sacred place as the centre of man's life and the

[9] It should be said at once that the completely profane world, the wholly desacralized cosmos, is a recent discovery in the history of the human spirit (Eliade 1957:13).

[10] It can be pointless to delve into holy space without giving a practical example on how space is socially generated and how it is different from the expanse that surrounds it (Eliade 1957:15).

navel of the earth. Turner (1979:9) goes on to assert that from the navel or centre, humanity takes its bearings and creates some system. These systems help people to appreciate the order that is created by the sacred as it abolishes the chaos that is associated with the unfounded world.

As the society continues to construct sacred space, Eliade also explores to which extent are people thirsty for a sacred universe and how wonderful it is for them to inhabit such an awesome environment (Eliade1957). A man who has stopped believing in the divine still tries to set aside special places and objects for particular functions. These places are made to be more valuable than their surroundings. If man longs to live in the sacred presence, what then is the opposite of this experience?

2.2.4 The profane and the sacred

Since Otto (1917) has already defined the term holiness, he perceives this experience as the opposite of the profane, which is the human, non-religious experience (Otto 1917:26). Along the same vein Eliade (1957:10) proposes that if the sacred were to be defined, one must begin by admitting that its opposite is the profane. He undertakes to illustrate and define this opposition between the sacred and the profane in his work (Eliade 1957:10). Seebass (1978:223) argues along the same line and declares that the opposite of holy was profane, the sphere of human life outside the realm of the holy. Wright (1992:237) concurs with Eliade and asserts that holiness is always associated with the divine, while impurity poses a great threat to it. Consequently, this in many ways affirms that Eliade (1957), Seebass (1978) and Wright (1992) have borrowed a lot from Otto in tackling sacredness, its definitions, and manifestations. Eliade argues that human beings become aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something solely different from the profane (Eliade 1957:11).[11] According to Eliade (1957), the history of religions is constituted by a vast number of hierophanies which are the manifestations of sacred realities.[12] It is clear that in each case people are confronted with the manifestation of a reality that does not belong to the natural world they live in even if these objects are part and parcel of the world (Eliade 1957:11). Whatever it is that does not exude elements of holiness is considered as natural and profane. In his cosmology, Eliade (1957) sees realities divided between those that belong to

[11] To designate the *act of manifestation* of the sacred, we have to propose the term hierophany (Eliade 1957:11).
[12] Eliade (1957:11) see no difference in the manifestation of the holy in items that are used in daily life and the Word that became flesh for Christians. It is interesting that a Westerner might have a problem in accepting that the holy can manifest itself in ordinary and natural objects.

the world (profane) and those that are sacred. What is found in the secular world is a radical secularization of death, marriage, and birth (Eliade 1957:186). According to Eliade (1957:186), for one to reach a certain level in spiritual growth, death to the unholy is required so that new life can be ushered in (Eliade 1957:201). Strong and significant space is considered sacred; while there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency (Eliade 1957:20).

Eliade (1957:25) elaborates that to an adherent of a particular religion, a church building does not share the same space with the other buildings where it is located. According to Eliade (1957:25), the exact place that divides the profane and the sacred mode of existence is the threshold 1957:25). It is the threshold that is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that separates and opposes two worlds. The passage from the profane to the sacred world is made possible by this threshold (Eliade 1957:25). With this understanding it is clear that the two modes depend on each other for existence. There is power in the sacred places that is directly transmitted by the gods themselves. Eliade (1957:26) further clarifies that every sacred space entails a manifestation of the divine that results in separating a territory from its nearby environment, thereby making it unique (Eliade 1957:26). The story of Jacob at Bethel is a shining example.[13] The threshold is the point of passage from the human mode of being to the divine abode.

2.2.5 The power of the sacred places

Davies (1994:1) argues that among the most outstanding characteristics of religions are those holy places. He makes a distinction between arenas for rituals and those natural places that are set aside and are associated with the past and holy stories of a religion (Davies 1994:1). Natural sacred places like mountains and rivers are viewed as potential bridges between heaven and earth and have long impressed human beings with a sense of awe and power (Davies 1994:4).

Eliade (1957:25) asserts that within the sacred quarters the unholy realities are surpassed because the sacred is powerful. Eliade (1957:25) and Turner (1979:10), argue that within the holy enclosure, conversations with the divine can take place. For this to happen there must be an entrance (sacred place) to the realities above and it is through the same entrance that the

[13] Eliade (1957:26) uses the Hebrew text to drive his point. He asserts that when Jacob in his dream at Haran saw a ladder reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending on it, and heard the Lord speaking from above it, saying: 'I am the Lord God of Abraham,' he awoke and was afraid and cried out: 'How dreadful is this place: this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' And he took a stone that had been his pillow, and set it up as a monument, and poured oil on top of it. He called the place Beth-el, that is, house of God (Genesis 28:12-19).

divine comes down so that humanity can soar up to heaven. Turner (1979:10) regards the sacred place as the one place where the divine dwells when they deal with people just as it happened with Jacob at Haran. It would seem as if the supplication cannot take place in places and objects that do not manifest the sacred.

Eliade (1957:27) argues that in most cases there is no need for a divine manifestation or a sign that authenticates the sacredness of a place or object. Something that does not belong to this world had to manifest itself irrefutably and in so doing has indicated the direction or a course of action to be taken. It is interesting to note that when there is no indication of divine manifestation, it must somehow be triggered (Eliade 1957:27). It is obvious that people do not have the liberty to choose the holy sites, they are assisted by mysterious manifestations to discover them (Eliade 1957:28). But since a religious person cannot reside except in a setting soaked with the sacred, it is much anticipated that a sizeable number of systems for sanctifying space will be found (through rituals) (Eliade 1957:28). A religious person seeks to live preferably in a world that is sanctified because it is the abode of power, the source of life and fecundity: it is a sacred space (Eliade 1957:28). Man feels safe under the wings and protection of the divine.

As far as Eliade (1957:29) is concerned, there is need to elaborate the methods of orientation, and he calls them procedures for the construction of sacred space. He asserts that the ritual by which a person constructs a holy space is helpful in the degree in which it regenerates the work of the gods (Eliade 1957:29). In this case people are regarded as semi-gods who create just as the gods have created the world. However, Turner (1979:10) argues that the sacredness of a place is not prompted by people's imagination or needs but is offered by the divine so that it serves as an imitation of the heavenly realm. It is justifiable to conclude that the sacred is impregnated with being. Sacred power means reality and at the same time enduringness and efficacity. This sacred power is regarded as orderly while the profane is downgraded to chaos.

2.3 Order and chaos

Order belongs to the gods while chaos is relegated to the profane/unmanifested realities of the world. Chaos is regarded as ungodly and the source of disorder in the world. Before order was put in place (at creation), the universe was formless and chaotic (Genesis 1:1-2). At creation God saw that all he created was good. Creation is here seen as a project to put order in the world. Eliade (1957:34) explains that any land that is not known, far away and not occupied still shares in the fluid and larval modality of disorder (Eliade 1957:34). It is clear

that life is not possible if there is no opening toward the heavens because human beings cannot exist if they stop communicating with the deities. We can then resolve together with Eliade (1957:34) that once the conversation with the divine has stopped, then life cannot continue to exist.

Eliade (1957:47) asserts that since "our world" is interconnected, interaction with the profane can pose threat to it thereby bringing in chaos. He further illustrates that enemies belong to the powers of chaos and destruction of a town is the same as ushering in chaos. Any victory over the attackers reiterates the paradigmatic triumph of the deities over the evil one (Eliade 1957:48). There are forces in the universe that display order, togetherness, fertility and originality. Eliade (1957:30) sees the sacred as revealing complete reality and at the same time making orientation possible; hence it founded the world in the sense that it sets the limits and establishes the order of the world. Eliade (1957:49) observes that the same imagery is still used in our world today to come up with the risks that threaten a particular kind of culture. The world will be overwhelmed by the chaos and disorder if they are left unchecked. For him all these aspects signify the eradication of a working system thereby plunging the whole world into chaos (Eliade 1957:49). It is in the formlessness that chaos, the disorder that threatens the orderly universe is found.

However, according to Eliade (1957:64), the mysterious space that goes beyond this world, this profane space represents absolute nonbeing for religious man. If, by some evil chance, he strays into it, he feels emptied of his real substance, as if he were dissolving in chaos, and he finally dies (Eliade 1957:64). Above all, the world exists, it is there, and it has a structure; it is not a chaos but a cosmos, hence it presents itself as creation, as work of the deities (Eliade 1957:116). When the gods brought order into the world it was their first act of founding it. I have explored on the essence of the order and chaos in the world. In the same manner the centre and the periphery need to be explained too.

2.3.1 The centre and the periphery

Eliade (1957:65) continue to argue that the ritual of the centre is a basic principle even for most humble human habitant. The principle does not apply only to countries, towns, holy places and palaces. Even when a nomad pitches their tent, they tend to establish the centre even in a place where the shelter is just temporary (Eliade 1957:65). Centre is precisely the place where a break in plane occurs, where space becomes sacred, hence pre-eminently real (Eliade 1957:45). The *axis mundi*: pillar, ladder, mountain, tree, vine are the places where

heaven meets the earth, the "navel of the earth"; it is the Centre of the World (Eliade 1957:37; Sunhee 2014:33).

In his perception (Eliade 1957:37), the centre of the World constitutes the sacred space, and this symbolism can be a house where ceremonies take place, a city, a world. In most cases this explains why a religious interpretation is given to any place that a religious person lives (Eliade 1957:37). As has been explained, the mountain appears among the images that express the connection between heaven and earth; hence it is believed to be at the centre of the world (Eliade 1957:38).

The same way of expressing the symbolism of the centre gives meaning to other aspects of the universe and spiritual beliefs (Eliade 1957:39). Eliade (1957:39) explains the three most important categories that are related to the centre and how they are represented in religious matters; (a) holy places and ritual arenas are believed to be oriented at the centre of the world; (b) temples are mimics of the cosmic mountain and hence it makes up the most well-known "connection" between this world and the heavens; (c) the foundations of temples go deep into the lower regions of the underworld (Eliade 1957:39). In the construction of holy places humanity goes back to the basic symbolism of the centre in order to bring the gods closer to them. The centre becomes the link between the earth and the heavens not the periphery. It is the periphery and the chaos that normally profane the sacred places. If that happens, there must be a way to restore the purity.

2.3.2 The profanation of sacred places and their restoration

Eliade (1957:59) is convinced that however impure it may have become, the world is continually purified by the sanctity of the sanctuaries. The transcendent models of temples enjoy a spiritual, incorruptible celestial existence (Eliade 1957:59). It is the sanctified sanctuaries that are constantly renewing the impure world according the Eliade (1957:59). The roots of religion lie in the efforts to separate the holy by means of cultic and ritual processes from the desecration and contamination caused by the profane (Seebass 1978:223). The power and sacredness bestowed upon the holy places give them an advantage over the natural and the profane realities. Smith (1978) begs to differ on these notions of sacredness and the power bestowed in it.

2.4 Smith's critique of Eliade and Otto

Smith (1978:88) acknowledges that Eliade (1957) has contributed a lot to the research on sacred time and sacred space since these have been central patterns in his thought process.

These have been the chief concern of most scholars who have dwelt more on the sacredness of time much more than on sacredness of space. Smith (1978:90) quotes Marcel Proust who argues that the truth about issues will not begin to appear until the moment when the writer will take two different objects and will place them in a relationship. Eliade has put the profane and the sacred side by side in order to bring the best out of this discourse. Smith surmises that the secular is not the opposite of the holy as strongly believed by Eliade. The contradiction between the profane and the sacred is overemphasized by Eliade in his deductions. If the profane is neutral, then it is not regarded as chaos or relegated to the peripheries as Eliade advocates for.

2.4.1 The irreligious is not the opposite of the holy

While analysing issues surrounding sacredness, Smith (1978:97) disagrees with Eliade who equates the profane to chaos. Smith suggests that chaos is never profane just because it is neutral. According to Smith (1978:97), it is the profane that sustains the sacred because the profane is as powerful as the sacred. The profane is regarded as negative because it is understood as the opposite of the sacred and yet it is the profane that gives life to the sacred.

Smith (1978:91) concurs with Eliade that there is a basic opposition between the sacred and the profane. Smith suggested that Eliade's book *The Sacred and the Profane* could have been entitled *The Sacred and the Chaotic* (Smith 1978:91). He sees in Eliade's work the positive side of the sacred as opposed to the negative, which is the profane, but he does not agree with him. Smith (1978:97) asks, 'is chaos best understood as the equivalent of the profane, that which is neutral, that which is unreal? It is not *chaos* in the archaic Greek meaning of the word: a 'gap,' 'yawning hole,' or 'void.' Rather chaos is a sacred power; but it is frequently perceived as threatening the sacred (Smith 1978:97). Smith here takes a stance that seems to challenge the definitions of the sacred and profane as given by Eliade. Smith understands chaos in a more positive sense as the potential that has not yet been revealed. Where there is chaos potential abounds.

Sunhee (2014:47) quotes Smith who argues that "there is nothing that is fundamentally holy or profane". According to him, the two aspects are not defined by their fundamental state, but by the situation in which they find themselves. It means that it depends on the situation and the people who determine whether an object is holy or not. For Smith, issues to do with sacredness are formulated (through rituals) and determined by people depending on who they are and where they are (Sunhee 2014:47). What is regarded as sacred in one situation can be regarded as profane in another realm. A ritual can confer sacredness to an object and the

same object can be subjected to another situation that can take that holiness away. Smith (1978) asserts that the profane is equivalent to the sacred. In that case let us see how it is rationalized in the following section.

2.4.2 The profane as equal to the sacred

Tuan (1979) views space as the locus of human fulfilment and asserts that when postulated as antagonistic of profane past, holy space becomes not only hypothetical but also dependent on the chaos (Kort 2007:34). In his view Kort (2007:34) is so much in agreement with Smith who advocates for the equal attention and the sanctification of the sacred by the profane. Kort (2007:34) asserts that Eliade's impact on the subject continues not because of the idealism of his phenomenology of holy space but, because he postulates holy space as antagonistic to modern history, which views everything as unholy. Eliade can be exonerated in his dichotomic view of space because he comes from an era in which modernity and Western history ignited the two World Wars and other atrocities. He sees the evil associated to modernity as profane. Eliade is a man who is interpreting his context and trying to find a way of going back to the era in which religion explained realities of life. It is interesting to realize that Smith does not give a clear-cut theoretical framework on how to put on the same platform the profane and the sacred. After having looked at the theories that define sacred space and sacred presence, I will use these theories to explore how sacred space plays out in the Hebrew text.

2.5 Sacred space in the Hebrew text

Sunhee (2014:66) sees two major types of holy space emerge in the Hebrew text; the dispersed and the unified models. Realities of sacred space as social constructs and how they develop have also been observed in the Hebrew text. The manifestation of the sacred in the Hebrew text includes hierophanies, epiphanies and theophanies (Eliade 1957:11:128, Sunhee 2014:38). Ordinary/natural places and objects are set aside as holy/sacred in the Hebrew Text. Sunhee (2014:27) argues that scripture experts have also put into categories different forms of holy places in the Bible so that these enable their deliberations on this topic. Scholars of the Bible have also classified the different forms of biblical sacred space in a way that their classification can facilitate their discussions (Sunhee 2014:27). The manifestation of the sacred is the place where heaven and earth meet (Eliade 1957:41). This section was meant to introduce how sacred space is understood in the Hebrew text. Below I explain how the decentralised sacred places operated and how they were identified in the Hebrew text.

2.5.1 Decentralized/local model of sacred space

Sunhee (2014:66) argues that the fragmented or local form is signified by a variety of smaller rituals arenas or holy places scattered in the Hebrew text. Yahweh revealed himself to the chosen people through ordinary objects like stones, mountains, rivers, stones and trees. Yahweh had a string of holy encounters with the Jewish forefathers as they wandered in the wilderness. They were on the move and once they met Yahweh, they marked the places and continued with their journeys (Sunhee 2014:66). These locations were scattered depending on where Yahweh chose to manifest his glory to them.

According to Sunhee (2014:261) these fragmented or scattered models of holy places were mostly popular in the former prophets and book of the Chronicles. These places were open ritual arenas, high places and sanctuaries (Sunhee 2014:261). Some of these places became popular national ritual arenas and sanctuaries among the Jews. These were Bethel, Dan, Mount Gerizim, Mouth Carmel, Gilgal, Shiloh and Shechem (Sunhee 2014:261). It is interesting to note that even when the Temple was functional in Jerusalem, some of these places continued to operate (Sunhee 2014:276). Even if the official sacred places were operating, the Jews never stopped going to these ritual arenas in order to offer sacrifices and burn incense (Sunhee 2014:276). For this reason, Hezekiah is seen trying to reform the worship of his time so that he could eradicate any competition with the Temple in Jerusalem (Sunhee 2014:295). It was Hezekiah who initiated a new way of worship by destroying the statues of the competing gods (the Asherah) (Sunhee 2014:295). Even if the decentralized sacred places flourished before the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, some of them continued to be recognized long after the establishment of the centralized worship. King Josiah also restructured the sacrifice worship which made people to celebrate the national Passover in the Holy City. The whole nation participated, and people went up to the Temple to pay homage to Yahweh and offer sacrifices (2 Kgs. 23:21-23; 2 Chr. 35:1-19) (Sunhee 2014:81). With the natural decentralized holy places there were multiple access points to the presence of Yahweh. The category below was more centralized and unified the whole Jewish nation around a single place for worship and sacrifices.

2.5.2 Centralized “dynamic/mobile/portable” model of sacred space

Sunhee (2014:66) argues that the unified model of the Hebrew text is basically signified by the portable model of the Tabernacle in the desert and the static model of the Jerusalem Temple (Sunhee 2014:66). It is clear that the mobile aspect of these holy places is also

pivotal to some examples of the scattered or localized model, especially in Genesis (Sunhee 2014:66). Sunhee (2014:66) asserts that the unified model of holy space operated as the focus of public worship and rituals among the Jews. This place was regarded as Yahweh's abode, for he lived among his own people (Sunhee 2014:66). If the portable model of the Tabernacle signified the movability of Yahweh's abiding presence, it then follows that the permanent model of the temple in Jerusalem signified his static dwelling presence of Yahweh (Sunhee 2014:66). Sacred places were depicted by the Tent of Meeting (outside the camp) and the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In all the models of sacred space in the biblical text the presence of Yahweh was felt, or his glory appeared (cloud by day and fire by night).

According to Sunhee (2014:84), the tent in the desert represented a sanctuary that was dynamic and portable. As the people of Israel proceeded on their journey in the wilderness, they also moved with the sanctuary. Since Yahweh's dwelling place was the Tabernacle, he also did not have a permanent place to stay for he always followed his people wherever they went until they reached the country that flowed with milk and honey (Sunhee 2014:84). In Exodus 33:7, Moses used to pitch a tent outside the camp a little distance from the camp. He named it the tent of meeting because he would have conversations with Yahweh there. Yahweh had declined to be close to the Jews (Exodus 33:3), and for that reason Moses had to pitch the tent outside the camp (Sunhee 2014:190).

Sunhee (2014:208) observed that the transformation from the dynamic model of sacred space to the static model happened during the reign of Solomon when the new Temple was built in Jerusalem (Sunhee 2014:208). This process was gradual as the dynamic model was converted into a permanent one, represented by the Temple worship (Sunhee 2014:208). Solomon's Temple became the central and unifying factor for worship in Jerusalem. Even if the Temple was a permanent structure, it was designed in the same fashion as the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Sunhee 2014:250). The Temple was not meant only for religious functions, but acted also as a political, social and economic centre of the Jewish nation (Sunhee 2014:254). The Temple as a static model of sacred space also started to chart the way for a national identity (Sunhee 2014:254). Constructed on Mount Zion, the Jerusalem Temple acted as the navel of the earth and the axis mundi for the Jews. The Jews considered the Temple Mount as the highest of all mountains and the peak of the world, where Yahweh descended to communicate with his chosen people. Yahweh's glory and presence can be traced in the Hebrew text as we shall see below.

2.5.3 The glory and presence of Yahweh in the Hebrew text

According to Beyer (1996), the Bible often talks of the presence of Yahweh in the history of mankind. It means that humanity has always found Yahweh present in all its dealings. There is a common Hebrew word for "presence" is '*panim'* which also signifies the "face," denoting a close and individual encounter with Yahweh. However, the Greek term *prosopon* has the same connotation. As far as Beyer (1996) is concerned, the Greek preposition *enōpion* also frequently comes up; several other Hebrew and Greek words appear only a few times. In the tent of the meeting Moses spoke intimately with Yahweh, for he spoke to him face to face, as a man speaks to a friend (Exodus 33:11).

Byer (1996) asserts that Yahweh's presence carries so many meanings. If the presence of Yahweh is something overwhelming, it might be something to be feared. In Genesis our first parents' misdeeds made them run away from the presence of the Lord (Gen 3:8). The holiness of Yahweh can cast a light on sinfulness as it did on Isaiah's misdeeds (Isa 6:5). It is also evident that many of those who had an encounter with Yahweh, or his messenger (an angel) thought something terrible would happen to them (Judges 13:22; Luke 1:11-12; 2:9). A story is also told of a man who tried to escape Yahweh's presence and ended up in the belly of a fish for three days and three nights (Jona 1:3). When Yahweh manifests his presence great signs are witnessed on earth and these make the earth to tremble (Judges 5:5; Psalm 68:8). It is clear too that before him fake deities become vulnerable (Isa 19:1). Terror and shuddering are responses proper before he who is in charge of the whole universe (Jer 5:22; Beyer 1996). However, the presence of Yahweh also brings consolation when things are in disarray (Joshua 1:5). Those who are troubled search for him, and they are strengthened from above (Psalm 42:5) (Beyer 1996). Types of reactions people experience once they come in contact with Yahweh have been elucidated here. It all depends on one's personal situation as they come in close contact with his 'face'.

The sign expressing the presence of Yahweh amid the people of Israel on their journey in the wilderness was the Ark of the Covenant, the memorial of the Sinai covenant (Grelot 1967:85; Kunin 1994:128).[14] It was the holiest structure among the wandering Jews.[15] As they settled

[14] According to Kunin (1994:127), throughout Genesis, there are other sacred places apart from the wandering Ark and the Temple in Jerusalem. Genesis 28:10-22 and 35:1-14 establish Beth El as a holy place. In 1 Kings 18:20-40 Elijah rebuilds the altar of Yahweh, hinting that Mount Carmel had already been set up as a holy shrine for the Jews (Kunin 1994:127).

in the promised land, the Jewish kings built palaces for themselves, but Solomon was the one who built Yahweh's house. The Temple in Jerusalem was the everlasting symbol of the Divine Presence in Israel (Margolis and Marx 1958:64). According to Turner (1979:50), the Temple in Jerusalem was not built so that Yahweh could dwell there but because Yahweh dwelt there, so the Temple was built. Besides being a place for religious functions or a centre for prayers and sacrifices, there were many other aspects of life of the whole Israel that found their focus here (Turner 1979:54).[16] The Jews believed that Yahweh was present wherever he wanted, but his presence was more accessible in the Temple, where he manifested himself and where he was worshipped (Grelot 1967:85). Kunin (1994:128) argues that the rabbinic texts emphasized that even though Yahweh was fully present in the Jerusalem Temple, that did not stop him from being present, maybe in a marginally less intense form, everywhere else. The Temple at Jerusalem became the sole centre where a sacrificial worship was celebrated (Grelot 1967:217). Even if the other sacred places were not immediately forbidden the Monarchy gradually centralized all worship around the sanctuary of the Ark and then the Temple at Jerusalem as it was the 'house of Yahweh' (Grelot 1967:85). After the conquest of Canaan and its occupation, the central sanctuary of the tribal confederation was the location of the Ark at Shechem and then at Shiloh (Grelot 1967:85). At the beginning of the reign of King David, the holy places in the north were finally dispossessed, for David transferred the Ark to Jerusalem where Solomon later built the Temple dedicated to Yahweh (Grelot 1967:85; Turner 1979:49). This section has explored the sacred space in the Hebrew text. I have explained the difference between the decentralised, and the centralised model of sacredness in the Hebrew text. We have discovered that it is in these places that the glory and presence of Yahweh was experienced. In the section that follows I want to investigate the Greco-Roman perception of the temples because this understanding had a great influence on the Jewish culture in terms of sacredness of places.

2.6 The Greco-Roman perception of Temples

Hemingway and Hemingway (2003) explains how the Greek temples were built in great consideration for aesthetics as they were supposed to be appreciated from outside. It looks like common folks were not permitted to enter inside the temples. If they managed to do so,

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[15] Since the wandering nation in its geographic sense had not been founded, the camp was the only territory occupied by and belonged to the Jews. This territory did not seem to have permanent boundaries as it was mobile and had the Ark at its centre (Kunin 1994:119).

[16] The Temple served as a national conservatory of music, as administration centre it was involved in taxation, a judiciary centre, place for pilgrimage, place for asylum/refuge and national archive (Turner 1979:55).

in most cases there would be not much to see apart from the large statue dedicated to the god that was honoured in that temple (Hemingway and Hemingway 2003). It is interesting to note that the ancient Greek temples were like the residence of a deity. As the temple was dedicated to a particular god, there would be as many gods as the number of temples. According to Beard (2009), each temple was a home of a particular cult and as people paid homage to that god, they would in turn offer their gifts. As far as the calendar for worship was concerned, these temples were entered once or twice a year, and it was only the priest of that particular temple who was allowed to enter in (Beard 2009). Since these temples were meant to be admired, they were constructed on hilltops, known as acropolises and this was solely to make an impression of visitors to the city (Beard 2009). Mountains and hills seem to have had symbolic meanings also. It would sound as if the higher the mountain the closer one was to the gods.

Hemingway and Hemingway (2003) asserts that the ancient Greeks paid homage to several gods, and each had a particular character and territory. In their mythology, the Greeks could elucidate where each came from and their relationship with humanity (Hemingway and Hemingway 2003). It means that each deity was worshipped in a shrine situated in accordance with the nature of that god. Some shrines were located in the urban centres while others were in rural areas (Hemingway and Hemingway 2003). An enclosure wall was set up to separate the temple areas from the rest of the buildings. The temple threshold also called a *temenos*, enclosed the temple building and the statue with the image of the particular god (Hemingway and Hemingway 2003). There was an altar outside, and thanksgiving gifts offered to the gods and in most cases, there would be sacred trees or water sources. A good number of temples took advantage of their physical environment, and this assisted them to bring out the spirit associated with that god and temple (Hemingway and Hemingway 2003). If the altar and the thanksgiving offerings were left outside, then it means that the sacrifices were carried out in the open.

Hollinshead (1999:189) argues that not much is known about what really took place inside the Greek shrines. Sacrifice was the main focal point of the communal religious observances, and it was performed outside the Temple. The interior of the Temple contained religious objects dedicated to the deity and the cult statue (Hollinshead 1999:189). A Greek temple had a single main interior room, but some had an additional small room behind it, accessible only through the main room. This subdivision of the interior space suggests that this inner chamber served a special function. In some places the room is referred to as *ádyton* (meaning

never to be entered), this sounds more like a restriction associated with sacred places and rituals. This reference gave rise among the scholars to consider *ádyton* as a place for cult mysterious rituals (Hollinshead 1999:189). Another term used by scholars for this inner room is *opisthodomos* (a place/room behind). This term is related to the repository; a place where valuables were kept (Hollinshead 1999:189). Hollinshead (1999:190) quotes Koldewey and Puchstein who assert that the movement (to holiness) is on a linear axis to a small holy place where events and rituals of a spiritual nature occur. I have explored the perception of the Greek temples in their structure and things that were done there. These temples also acted as some forms of banks as we shall explore in the segment below.

2.6.1 Temples as forms of banks and other functions

Moulton (1998) explores the early Greek banking system. These activities and transactions (provision of loans and holding deposits) took place inside the temples building, and it were the religious leaders (priests) that offered these services. Moulton (1998) points out that if people needed a place for keeping safe their money, the temple was the most ideal place. No one would ever think of robbing 'a bank' and in turn make the gods angry for the temple was regarded as sacred (Moulton (1998). It looks like the monetary dealings in the temple were generally done by the word of mouth; for nothing was written down. If there was need for a signed written declaration, it was done in the presence of witnesses as proof of a loan or deposit (Moulton 1998). Millet (2015) gave us examples of temples like Apollo on Delos, Castor and Pollux at Rome that took deposits and gave loans. The cash deposits made in the temple were not touched and the temple used its own funds for lending people (Millett 2015). Millet (2015) continues to weigh in and points out that people who changed money for a living and most likely bankers existed in the Greek world. Around 4th BCE there were about twenty well known bankers in Athens (Millett 2015). The banking system in the Greek world facilitated exchange of money, made people to obtain loans and accomplished other economic dealings (Millet 2015). Apart from the priests, there were also rich businessmen who usually catered for the financial dealings in the temple. Moulton (1998) asserts that as time progressed in the Greek world and the Roman Empire, private and public banks developed.

Moulton (1998) posits that as more Greek city-states started to mint coin money; the currency was not the same in all towns. The coming of the coins made skilled money merchants to emerge. Since they were experts in their business, they knew the value of a variety of coins, and they could organize reasonable conversions for those who needed it. There were tables

for money changers set up at common marketplaces in the cities all through Greece (Moulton 1998). There was need to deal with various foreign currencies throughout the Mediterranean region since there were merchants traveling for business everywhere. Apart from conversions of coins, money changers also took in deposits, transferred money between accounts, and gave loans (Moulton 1998). From this description it would sound as if the money changers started to operate like private bankers as they are known today. Even if they always worked as individuals, they sometimes formed small associations (Moulton 1998). Apart from operating from their tables at the marketplace, the money changers did some transactions in private residents also. They did not have the facilities of a bank like is the case today. It is interesting to note that by the 300s BCE, the money changers had taken a good number of financial transactions out of the temples (Moulton 1998). Money changers actually became the game changers in as far as financial transactions were concerned.

Moulton (1998) argues that during the Hellenistic period, some Greek cities came up with public banks in order to facilitate economic transactions of the city. A notable happening during that time was the establishment of a huge public banking system in Egypt initiated by the Ptolemaic dynasty (Moulton 1998). All the banking activities were put under the charge of this system which employed thousands of people in Egypt. This banking system carried out important duties like tax revenue collection for the kingdom and met the expenses of the monarchy (Moulton 1998). This system appears to have been very well advanced and sophisticated.

As far as Moulton (1998) is concerned, the Romans espoused certain banking systems from the Greeks and established new ones. It is interesting to observe that most Roman banks were small during the first centuries BCE and CE. Moulton (1998) goes on to assert that since there were no expert bankers, affluent entrepreneurs and traders performed most economic activities. New methods were introduced which put banking activities to another level, thereby improving the system (Moulton 1998). The launch of bills of exchange was one of the most notable improvements in the banking sector. These bills were written authorizations to pay a certain amount of money to a particular individual. This system can be compared to the present-day cheques. These bills of exchange became a means through which Roman bankers conducted their business instead of cash transactions (Moulton 1998). Gradually this system became the norm for business transactions in the Roman world. The bills of exchange meant that there was no need for one to carry any currency with them. Large amounts of money could now be transacted easily and safely.

Moulton (1998) argues that as the Roman Empire grew, owners of huge properties did most of the local banking enterprises. Because of this predicament, banks did not grow big. However, during the CE 200s, the Roman imperial government took control of some of the banking within the empire and created a better systematized structure (Moulton 1998). With the passage of time, the government passed regulations to control the banking sector, and some of these regulations influenced financial transactions throughout the Middle Ages and beyond (Moulton 1998).

According to Moulton (1998), temples in Rome, such as the temple of Saturn in the Roman Forum, served as public treasuries but did not function as banks. What has remained of the temple today, is only the northern façade which consists of eight columns (Moulton 1998). As this temple served as a public treasury, it was not a banking establishment with a credit scheme. The architecture of the present banks, with fortifications and heavy columns are all inspired by the ancient temples. As much as the banks have remained formidable, they had a very humble beginning. I have explained how the priests, rich businessmen, large estate holders and money changers were central in taking the banking system to greater heights, among the Greeks, the Romans and the Egyptians. In the following section I will explore how the Jewish Temple was destroyed and desecrated.

2.7 The desecration of the Temple and its destruction

Augustyn and Gaur (2013) recount that the first Temple was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylonia, who took away the Temple reserves in 604 BCE and 597 BCE. He finally brought the down and totally shattered the building in 587/586 (Augustyn and Gaur 2013). The complete demolition of the Temple and the deportation of Jews to Babylonia in 586 BCE and 582 BCE were seen as fulfilments of biblical prophecies. As far as Augustyn and Gaur (2013) are concerned, these events were also seen as moral boosting for the Jews as they hoped for the restoration of an independent Jewish state. The prophets were the hope keepers for the Jews as they kept prophesying about the fulfilment of Yahweh's promise.

Augustyn and Gaur (2013) asserts that the Persian and Hellenistic periods (4th–3rd century BCE), the Temple was somehow respected, and in part financed, by Judaea's foreign leaders. Antiochus IV Epiphanes, however, looted it in 169 BCE and defiled it in 167 BCE by directing that sacrifices be made to Zeus on an altar built for him (Augustyn and Gaur 2013). This is something that the Jews could not accept. The incident was the final act that made the Hasmonean uprising to erupt, during which Judas Maccabeus purified and reconsecrated the

Temple. This occurrence is commemorated in the yearly celebration of Hanukkah (Augustyn and Gaur (2013).

Worcester (2019) posits that Antiochus Epiphanes (168 BCE), who was king at Antioch, prohibited the keeping of the ordinances of Moses. He desecrated the Jerusalem temple by sacrificing pigs to idols and ordered that the books of the law to be burnt (Worcester 2019). It is because of such an incident that miserable psalms were composed and used to express what had happened. According to Worcester (2019), such events spelled doom for the Jews as they anticipated total destruction of their religion. However, Worcester (2019) argues that this harassment was beneficial for it prompted the Jews to stand up for their beliefs. In the middle of such adversity, the Jews became more resolute.

During the Roman defeat, Pompey entered the Holy Sanctuary in 63 BCE but left the Temple untouched. The defilement of the temple and its demolition were continually understood as the fury of Yahweh against his people (Augustyn and Gaur 2013). According to Augustyn and Gaur (2013), in 54 BCE, Crassus also looted the Temple reserves. The prophets had already foretold of the destruction that awaited the Jews because they had failed to honour the covenant. The prophets kept proclaiming the word of Yahweh and this kept the nation going. Some of the prophets went into exile together with those who were captured.

2.8 Conclusion

Space and place have been defined while elaborating the differences between the two and how they are interrelated. As much as the two entities can be viewed in their abstract sense, they can easily be experienced in everyday lives of particular communities. Theories that govern the social construction of space and place have also been explored. With the help of Eliade what sacredness is and what it stands for have been pointed out. I have also elucidated on sacred places and sacred space thereby bringing to the fore what make ordinary places to be set aside for religious functions and rituals. Eliade elaborated that for the sacred to be manifested, the divine shows it by way of signs and wonders. While observing all that happens around him, man never stops to show the desire to live in sacred environment for it is pregnant with being. The polarization brought about by Eliade as he put side by side the profane and the sacred, order and chaos, the centre and the periphery have been highlighted. Smith, as a critique of Eliade, argues that the irreligious is not the opposite of the holy but the secular is equal to the sacred. He is convinced that it is the profane that sustains the sacred for the sacred is born out of the profane.

While still enlightened by Eliade aspects of sacred space in the Hebrew text were also brought to the fore. The sacred places in the Hebrew text can be put into two categories: decentralized and the centralized. In all these categories of sacredness the glory of Yahweh and his presence are manifested. Greco-Roman temples have also been an object of this study in this section. The kind of architecture that is involved and how these buildings were used as treasuries and banks in the olden days were explained. Finally the destruction and desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem were recalled.

In the following chapter I will do a socio-anthropological investigative study of sacred places and objects of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. My main focus will be on a national shrine in Matopo hills, called Njelele. I will use Mbiti's classical work to identify the five pillars that constitute African Traditional Religion[17] because these are steeped in the African indigenous belief systems as 'sacred texts'. The Shona and the Ndebele generated their own beliefs systems and identified sacred places where they venerated their ancestors and worshipped Mwari. The Njelele shrine was central to both the Shona and Ndebele people and so was the voice that spoke from the rock to all people without any segregation.

[17] During the 19th and 20th century Christian missionaries condemned African Traditional Religion and culture. This religion was dismissed as demonic and immoral, and it deserved to be banished from the face of the earth before Christianity could find its way into the hearts of the Africans (Ukpong 2000:12). This is the religion and culture that are now taking the centre stage in African biblical interpretation. This is the culture that is going to take the centre stage and be studied here so that it can interact with the biblical text as an equal partner. In this case the African context is seen as both, providing the critical resources for biblical interpretation and the subject of interpretation (Ukpong 2000:23).

Chapter Three

Anthropological study of sacred places and objects: the Njelele shrine

3.0 Introduction

While drawing his conclusions from the African indigenous knowledge systems, Mbiti (1975:11) identifies five areas that make up the African Traditional Religion. These are their beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, and religious officials or leaders. Together with Mensah (2024:1) who quotes (Amenga-Etego 2023:7) I would like to consider these five pillars as indigenous 'sacred texts.'[18] However, for the sake of the argument here I will continue to refer to them as pillars because of the position they hold at the heart of 'sacred texts' of the African Traditional Religion. Of the five pillars that constitute African Traditional Religion as elucidated by Mbiti (1975:11), sacred places and objects will be concentrated on. These holy objects are considered part and parcel of any religion for no religion can exist without holy places and objects as argued by Otto (1917:6) and Eliade (1957). These pillars are a product of a people who have passed these on from one generation to the next and colonialism has failed to dilute them. Since there is no religion that does not hold sacred places in high esteem, the Shona Mwari cult is included. For the cult is a fruit of the realisation of the sacredness of space. Since the sacred places and objects that will be investigated are those of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, I will briefly explore their origins and `beliefs system.

As I venture into the Shona beliefs and holy places, I will explain a historical relationship that exists between the Shona Mwari cult and the *Ndebele* people (people who duck behind their shield).[19] An exploration will be done on how the Ndebele people arrived at the Matopo Hills in June of 1836, adapted, and modified their belief systems without ignoring the sacred places that surrounded them. As for the Shona sacred places and objects, two categories will surface: the family centred holy places and those of the larger community.

[18] Mensah (2024:1) decries the lack of attention that has been given to the 'sacred texts' in African religion. He refers to Parrinder (1968:4) who admits of the existence of a kind of scripture, or tangible expression of African religion, that has been known for a long time but has not been given the importance it deserves by students. Mensah (2014:1) quotes Amenga-Etego (2023:7) who classifies the indigenous 'sacred texts' as follows: oral, material or performative, and include myths, legends, sayings, dance, totems, and symbols, to name a few. The five pillars proposed by Mbiti could be added to this list as they are 'sacred texts' generated by the Africans themselves. The list of 'sacred texts' in the African Traditional Religion is inexhaustible and I am just scratching the surface in this study.

[19] South Africa History Online (2011).

An explanation will be given on the role played by the awe-striking topology of the Matopo hills that makes it a home to about a dozen functional or semi functional Mwari shrines. Of all the communal shrines in the Matopo hills, the Njelele will be singled out for the sake of this study. This national shrine will be investigated in order to point out its origins, the purpose of establishing it and what is done there.

As already mentioned, the role played by the Njelele shrine in uniting the nation will be explained. This will help us point out how the Mwari cult came to influence the Ndebele daily lives.[20] It will also be interesting to discover how the Njelele shrine operates looking at the shrine offices and the procedure for consulting the *Voice* that emanates from the sacred rock. In conclusion, the mapping out of the influence of the shrine on the revolution that brought independence to Zimbabwe will be crucial. As I will be investigating the Shona belief systems shrouded in their everyday cultural practices, I will have recourse to the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).[21] Mapara (2009:140) defines indigenous knowledge systems as a body of knowledge, or bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of particular geographical areas that have survived for a very long time. It is beyond the scope of this study to engage the methods and theories that are used in the generation of IKS of the Shona people. The African scholars that are to be consulted in this work are considered as custodians of these indigenous belief systems. As we have already discussed the sacred places in the Hebrew text (in chapter 2), here below we explore the sacred places and objects in the African Traditional Religion.

[20] African Traditional Religion is a revealed religion, that is a result of human experience of the mystery of the universe. This religion is traditional not because it is dead and buried, but it originated from the peoples' environment and on their soil. Hence the term 'Traditional' helps in differentiating African Religion from any other religion brought by the missionary passion (cf. Dopamu 1991:21-22).
Parrinder (1969:8) makes it even clearer when he asserts that, there are three categories of living religions of Africa namely 'traditional religions', Christianity, and Islam. He goes on to assert that the term traditional religions is increasingly used to denote what former writers called 'fetishism', 'animism' and 'polytheism' (Parrinder 1969:8). It is of interest to realize that he uses capital letters for Christianity and Islam but uses small letter for traditional religions. Parrinder regards Islam and Christianity as traditional religions in Africa because they have long traditions on the continent. For his own study and for the sake of differentiation he will regard traditional religions as those preliterate original religions of Africa (Parrinder 1969:8).

[21] In his article entitled *Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Zimbabwe: Juxtaposing Postcolonial Theory* Mapara (2009) asserts that indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are also known as indigenous ways of knowing (IWK) and ethno-science. Mapara (2009) argues that these IKS have stood the test of time and remained unaffected by colonial oppression. The Africans here are seen as originators and custodians of their own knowledge systems.

3.1 Sacred places and objects in African Traditional Religion

Parrinder (1969:7) asserts that the term African religion is fairly new and previously it might have been doubted if there was any African religion just as some people had queried if there was any African history (Ikechukwu 2018:173).[22] If there was a doubt whether there was African religion, then the existence of African sacred places, objects and indeed their 'sacred texts' were also indirectly contested. Otto (1917:6) asserts that there is no religion that does not have holiness as its deepest core, and without it no religion would be worthy of the name. There is need to investigate the central role played by sacredness of places and objects in African Traditional Religion, so that these may be laid bare. African indigenous knowledge, according to Mapara (2009:144) aims at countering those who peddle the lie that Africa was backward and had no history or religion of her own. In a ploy to justify the conquest and parcelling of Africa, Europeans had to create a lie that Africa was in need of Western science and other forms of knowledge since she had none of these (Mapara 2009:144). The five pillars that are to be explored in the following segment are a genuine proof of the existence of African Traditional Religion.

3.1.1 The five pillars of African Traditional Religion

Upon being asked about the definition of African Traditional Religion, Mbiti (1975:11) admits that it is a big question. He did not however give a clear-cut definition but identifies five constituencies of African Traditional Religion which are namely, beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, and religious officials or leaders (Mbiti 1975:11). In order to properly understand this religion, Mbiti (1975:11) suggests that one has to study the five constituencies outlined above. He admits that focusing on these 5 constituencies makes the African religion to be pragmatic and realistic (Mbiti 1975:17). In this study these constituencies are going to be regarded as the five pillars of African Traditional Religion. It would seem impossible to talk about African religion and not investigate the shrines that have remained the visible signs of this religion (Gelfand 1965:116). The existence of spirits is acknowledged, and the spirits are thought to inhabit objects like trees, ponds, and rocks (Mbiti 1975:18). For the sake of this study I will explore only two of the five pillars, namely sacred places and objects.

[22] Parrinder (1969:8) defines African Traditional Religions as those older preliterate religions, mostly of tropical and southern Africa. Former writers had called this religion 'animism', fetishism, or polytheism because they did not understand the belief systems of this complex religion which did not have written sacred scriptures or history. This is no longer the case as I have indicated above that the visible and invisible aspects of the African Traditional Religion are now regarded as the 'sacred texts' of this religion.

3.1.2 Sacred places and objects as central to African Traditional Religion

As already mentioned above, religious/sacred places and objects have singled out in order to delve into the central role they play in African Traditional Religion. Musoni (2016:1) argues that sacred spaces serve as focal points in almost all the religious movements. This means that in African understanding, the sacred is never divorced from religious activities. The African worldview is based on a belief that every living and non-living object is holy to some extent; hence some are deemed more holy than the others (Olupona 2019; Musoni 2016:3). This worldview in sharp contrast with Eliade's (1957) argument that the profane is always contradictory to the sacred thereby polarising the two. The African worldview is fully alive to the fact that there are levels of sacredness rather than pitting the sacred against the profane.[23] These places and objects are not separated from the profane places and objects as stated by Eliade (1957). The holy is not the opposite of the profane in the African Religion. It is because of their special function that the sacred objects and places are set apart for special rituals. Let us now map out the sacred places and objects in African Traditional Religion.

3.1.3 Mapping of sacred places and objects in African Traditional Religion

Mbiti (1975:11) defines religious items and sites as things which people have set apart as being holy; they are not set apart from the profane realities as this does not exist in African cosmology. Mbiti (1975:11) goes on to assert that sacred things are those that are not commonly used except for particular religious purposes. Natural spaces that are regarded as sacred are normally set apart from daily uses such as grazing livestock, washing clothes, and growing crops (Olupona 2019). These sacred places and objects are utilized only for rituals, ceremonies, supplications, and offerings (Olupona 2019). Musoni (2016:3) goes further to assert that not all mountains and hills are revered in African indigenous religion except those that are declared sacred either by natural happenings[24] or by conversion[25] (Musoni

[23] Ukpong (2000:24) asserts that in Africa there is a unitive view of the world in which reality is not seen as made up of matter and spirit, sacred and profane. The world is viewed as *a unity with visible and invisible aspects, the divine origin of the universe and the interconnectedness between God, humanity and the cosmos*. The human person is identified with the community to which they belong (Ukpong 2000:24). This is in sharp contrast with Eliade who pushes for polarisation of the world view and realities of life.

[24] Places proclaimed as sacred due to 'natural happenings' are referred to in this study as such due to acclaimed divine manifestations that separate these places for religious purposes (Musoni 2016:3).

2016:3). In the same vein Mbiti (1975:11) argues that some of the sacred items and spots are made by humans while others are taken in their natural form and set aside for ritual purposes. This tallies with Otto's (1917) and Eliade's (1957) assertion that sacredness is found in manmade ritual arenas or places selected from nature as quoted by Davies (1994:1).[26] It is clear that in African Religion sacred places/shrines are manmade or selected also from natural places because *the divine would have manifested itself there* (Eliade:1957).

Sacred places are important arenas to connect with spirits of the departed (ancestors), with God, and with the celestial realm (Olupona 2019). These places are seen as convergence sites between heaven and earth, and between the physical and the unseen worlds (Olupona 2019, Eliade:1957). It is interesting to note that Africans regard such places as holy and sacred because that is where people meet with the Creator. According to Eliade (1957) heaven and earth converge at a sacred place because the divine has chosen to dwell there. Africans integrate this religious worldview into every aspect of life as they see divine presence in all spheres of life (Olupona 2019). Some of the ritual arenas, religious items, and sacred places are decorated with numerous styles, forms, and colours to convey religious ideas (Olupona 2019). Sacred places and objects are part and parcel of the heritage handed over from generation to generation and they are called traditional for this reason (Olupona 2019). With confidence it can be asserted that African religion finds its expression in shrines, sacred places, and religious objects. After exploring the African worldview in terms of sacred places and objects I will do a socio-anthropological analysis of the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

3.2 The origins of the Shona people of Zimbabwe

The people who are categorized as Shona constitute the bulk of the ethnic Bantu-speaking inhabitants of Zimbabwe (Bucher 1980:21; Bourdillon 1982:6). The Shona are concentrated in the north, south and eastern regions of the country (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:2). It is interesting to note that the term Shona is hardly applied by the people themselves. They would choose to call themselves instead by the name of the specific Shona-speaking group they belong to (Bucher 1980:21). The subgroups under the Shona umbrella are the Karanga

[25] When humans set aside ordinary places for religious purposes, it is referred to as sacred by conversion. If a chief is buried in an ordinary cave it ceases to be ordinary. A building not originally designed as a place of worship if it is selected as such it becomes a holy place (Musoni 2016:3).

[26] Human life and nature are considered as sacred in African viewpoint as they are understood to be primarily religious (Kalu 1991:16) When special places and objects are regarded and chosen for worship, it means that they are just more sacred than the rest that surround them.

and Kalanga in the south and south-west, the Ndau and the Manyika in the east, the Zezuru in the centre and in the north there are the Korekore and the Tavara (Bucher 1980:21). There is no tribe that is called Shona, but it is an amalgamation of these tribes that make up a people called the Shona. Bourdillon (1982:7) argues that the name was used and applied to all Shona speaking people only after the British colonization of the country. It would seem as if this classification came with colonisation. The classification of the Bantu speaking people of Zimbabwe is not my main interest here.

The Shona people are said to have come from the North of the Zambezi, probably from the Congo basin and their culture continues up to the present time (Bucher 1980:21). It was on the high fertile plateau between Limpopo and Zambezi rivers that they settled (Bourdillon 1982:6). However, the first inhabitants of the plateau were the stone-age Khoisan hunters (Bushmen). By 1000 CE the Khoisan had ceased roaming the plateau and at the same time the Bantu speaking people were well settled in agriculture and pastoralism (Bourdillon 1982:6). The first stone buildings at Great Zimbabwe could have been built around the same period and by the same group of people. Their influence politically, culturally, socially, and economically spread as far as the Zambezi River in the North, the Kalahari Desert in the west, the Mozambican channel down to the mouth of Sabi River and Limpopo River into the northern Transvaal (Bucher 1980:22). This enormous kingdom collapsed by the end of the 17th century due to internal rivalry and the meddling by the Portuguese in the internal affairs of the kingdom (Bucher 1980:22). What then are the religious beliefs of these Shona people in a nutshell?

3.2.1 Shona religious beliefs in brief

Gelfand (1966:1) asserts that it is almost impossible today to find a clan which is not affected by the white man's culture and civilisation. This means that it can be difficult to find a pure African religion, which has not interacted with the Western culture. It is interesting to note that after so many years of Western influence, the Shona beliefs still remain intact though with some variations. The Western civilisation has failed to destroy this African cultural heritage. According to their belief, the Shona acknowledge that there is a Creator (Mwari or Musikavanhu) (Gelfand 1968:2).[27] They believe that the beginning of humanity and spirits, the animal kingdom, planets, mountains, and rivers indeed everything

[27] The nature of God in African belief can be gathered from the qualities attributed to him (Parrinder 1969:39). In this case the nature of God is depicted from what he did which was the creation of people.

owes its beginning to the Creator. Prayers are made to the ancestral spirits from whom protection is sought. These spirits guard the homes of their offsprings from witches and, by virtue of the spiritual powers acquired after death they can help the living to be happy and content (Gelfand 1968:7; 1965:116). Omitting or neglecting rituals can anger the ancestors who must be appeased by making an animal sacrifice e.g. a bull, goat, and sheep. Mwari is worshipped through the spirits for they are the way to him/her. Shrines for religious purposes are part of the natural landscape e.g. under a tree or near a rock, while others are constructed in the homes. The Shona regard religion as "an integral, all-pervading element of their way of living, thinking, and acting" (Gelfand 1977:47). I have briefly explored the religious beliefs of the Shona people to prove that these are still alive today. We cannot talk of the Njelele shrine without talking of the early interactions between the Shona and the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe.

3.3 The Ndebele people arrive at the Matopo hills

Changamire Dombo of the Mutapa Empire waged a campaign as far as the Zambezi valley in 1692 in order to continue consolidating his influence, causing the Portuguese to flee to the safety of Sena and Tete. Unfortunately, disaster fell on the Changamire in the early 1830s when their country was overrun, first by the Ngoni, and shortly afterwards by Mzilikazi's Amandebele (Bucher 1980:22; Bourdillon 1982:12; Bourdillon 1982:14). These two groups of warriors wreaked havoc wherever they passed through. These warrior-like tribes had fled from the rising Zulu Empire of Shaka in the area of present-day KwaZulu-Natal. The ruling house of Changamire was wiped out and the remaining Rozvi descendants were scattered all over the country with no central political organisation (Bucher 1980:23).

Mzilikazi the Ndebele King then installed himself in Bulawayo (50km from the Matopo Hills) and his people took possession of what was to be known as Matebeleland. Lobengula, his son who succeeded him claimed sovereignty over the entire area lying between Limpopo and Zambezi rivers (Bucher 1980:23). In order to maintain their grip on power the two kings constantly sent raiding parties against mainly independent Shona chiefdoms into which the former Mutapa Empire had dissolved (Bucher 1980:23). This meeting point between the Ndebele and the Shona was just the beginning of a long history of suspicious interdependence and interaction of the two cultures. It is almost impossible to talk of the history of the Shona at the Matopo hills without also considering that of the Ndebele or vice versa. The real issue at play as far as their religious practices were concerned and how a

seemingly powerful Ndebele tribe was religiously conquered by the Shona tribes it had militarily defeated will be investigated.

The origin of the name Matopo is not altogether clear. The early missionaries used the word *Amatopa*, and it is obvious that in the native language, it was a plural form (Tredgold 1956:1). Probably it was originally *Matombo* or *Madombo* meaning simply 'the rocks in Shona.' There is a pleasant legend that the name '*Matobo'* was given to the hills by Umzilikazi. When he looked at the great dwalas and was told they were called 'Madombo,' he said, "But we will call them 'Matobo' meaning 'the bald heads." (Tredgold 1956:1). Matobo is now the official designation of the native district of the area (Tredgold 1956:1). It is among these bald and balancing rocks that the Njelele shrine is found and from where the 'voice' speaks. This shrine is a shining example of a national shrine that has influenced national, religious and political activities over the years. Its influence extends beyond the borders of Zimbabwe. In the following segment I will lay bare the Shona categories of sacred places and objects.

3.4 Sacred places and objects among the Shona people

According to Olupona (2019), shrines as the most celebrated religious structures, exist throughout the African continent. Mbiti (1975:11) states that some of the sacred places and objects are for individuals and families while others belong to the whole community in a given religion (Olupona:2019). The Shona have family and communal sacred places that are distinct from each other. Among the Shona people, sacred places where prayers and sacrifices are made to a spirit will depend on the kind of spirit concerned (Gelfand 1984:136).[28] If it is a family spirit (mudzimu) that is being honoured, family shrines are used in the home and within their property. If it is a communitarian spirit (mhondoro), they are venerating they will use the common sacred place, and communally appointed person takes charge. When it comes to national crises the national spirits are invoked at national shrines. Each sacred place is dedicated to a particular spirit that is honoured there.

[28] The Shona people are not animist, they do not pray to animals. Prayers said during the sacrifice of a bull are not said to the bull that is being offered. Prayers are said next to the bull and are directed to the spirit itself (Gelfand 165:111).

3.4.1 The hut (Imba yaAmai)

The main hut of the family is selected and regarded as sacred because the *mudzimu* (ancestral family spirit) dwells there (Gelfand 1984:136).[29] It is in this hut that prayers and sacrifices to the family ancestors are conducted by the father who is the 'head priest' of the family. The hut and all that it is connected with, is associated with sacredness by the Shona (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:6). Three important aspects of the hut need attention here namely: the *chikumbaridzo* (stoep), *choto* (hearth) and the *chikuva* (altar). A hut is a place where the family gathers, prepares meals, and shares them. The kitchen is where we find the pots, utensils, hearth, shelf and many other items (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:6). Demarcating the threshold is chikumbaridzo (stoep), that marks the entrance to the kitchen which represents the divine axis or threshold. The children born to the woman associated with the kitchen, have their umbilical cords buried under the stoep[30] (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:6). It is this place that bonds each Shona individual with their entire family, together with their forefathers (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:7).

Gundani and Mahohoma (2020: 7) asserts that members of the family sit around the fire that is lit at the hearth which is located at the centre of the kitchen.[31] In front of the hearth, and in a straight line from the stoep, is the *chikuva* (shelf) where cups, ladles, plates and pots are nicely organised (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:7). This shelf is erected above a raised platform that resembles an altar, and the Shona regard it as a holy place. In normal circumstances the kitchen is perceived as a mini temple where the family offers sacrifices and supplications to ancestors (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:7). The father as the head of the family presides over this altar whenever the family venerates its ancestors. Such veneration includes *mutambo webira* (ancestral atonement and appeasement rites), *kurova guva* (ancestor induction rites), and *roora* (marriage rites), just to mention a few (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:7; Rutsate 2010:83). The father is considered as the priest of the family for he mediates on their behalf. He squats in front of the altar and while clapping his hands he addresses the ancestors depending on the issue at hand. He calls the names of

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[29] The Shona do not pray to "Mwari", for Mwari is more of a Creator than one concerned with the problems of each individual on this earth. The Shona believe that the spirits of the dead relatives have an influence on their lives. They see them as a means of a way to Mwari. Mwari has given authority to the spirits to watch over the families and clans (Gelfand 1965:77-78).

[30] The sense of belonging is very much tied to the place where one's umbilical cord is buried *(pane rukuvhute rwake).* For this reason, the Shona attach a lot of value to the stoep of their mother's kitchen (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:7).

[31] The mother feels the honour as she prepares food for the family upon the hearth (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:7).

family ancestors by way of seniority (this like tracing the genealogy of the family). If an adult child goes out to seek employment, it is the duty of the father to ask the ancestors to look after him/her. He does this in front of the altar while squatting to show respect.

There are dedicated items which include the sacred axe (gano) and sacred plates (ndiro dzevadzimu) that are kept in the kitchen and set aside only for special traditional functions (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). These sacred objects are never used for anything else except for spiritual rituals and each family has its own set. Meals are sacred among the Shona, simply because ancestors partake of them and for that reason, the kitchen is perceived as a shrine for a woman (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). When the custodian is no more, the husband is forbidden from removing the utensils she was using when she was alive. If a man does that a curse will fall upon him, and he will be free from it only after a cleansing ritual has been conducted.

If it happens that there is a misunderstanding between wife and husband, a well-groomed wife will seek refuge in the kitchen shelf (chikuva) (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). A well initiated husband would not dare touch a wife who has taken shelter there. The place is revered as it is the altar where the invisible commune with the visible; the human and the spiritual find each other there. It is interesting to note that chikuva literally means a small grave. At this altar members of the family commune with the dead and commemorate their great deeds (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). The kitchen is the area where the family performs traditional songs and dance in honour of the ancestors. It is also the place where the family exercises silent moments in prayers to their ancestors (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). The hut is a symbol of heaven meeting the earth as there is no other house where this can happen. Outside the hut, the danga (kraal) stands out as an important sacred place as we shall see below.

3.4.2 Danga (Kraal)

According to Gundani and Mahohoma (2022:7), the Shona perceive domestic animals as a blessing and a gift from their forefathers. For example cattle and goats are used for appeasement and atonement rites (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). In each Shona kraal there is a bull *(gono)* consecrated to the ancestors which is a sign of family fruitfulness and fertility. However, the kraal and all the wealth is believed to be under the protection of the *mhondoro* (lion) spirits (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). It is believed that this mhondoro is a re-incarnated senior ancestor who appears in the form of a lion. Even if it is a lion, it does not attack animals or people. It is actually its duty to protect the family and all they

own (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). The kraal is regarded as holy place since members of the family also spend quiet moments in remembrance of their ancestors there. If it happens that the family slaughters the gono, they are required to replace it with another one (Gundani and Mahohoma 2022:7). The kraal must never be left without a protector that guarantees fecundity. Apart from the kraal, some animals too are regarded as sacred as the following segment will elaborate.

3.4.3 Animals

Shona people recognise some animals as sacred. Gundani and Mahohoma (2020:8) quotes Chitakure (2016:150), who asserts that these animals are either holy because of their nature or because they have been consecrated to ancestral spirits. According to Taringa (2006:205), "The Shona, like many other people on the continent, acknowledge that spirits work in the human world through animals, birds and fish" (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:8). Each Shona clan has a special animal it values and honours as its totemic emblem. Some of these animals are domestic while others are wild. These will include the lion, monkey, eland, baboon, zebra, python and many more (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:8). The main aspect of these animals is that they are associated with the founding of a clan. All members of the clan without an exception are not allowed to eat the animal associated with its founding clan. Reverence is supposed to be accorded to one's totemic animal by bowing down to the ground when they happen to encounter it (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:8). Normally the elderly women ululate and rehearse the totemic verses (chidawo), which outline the background of the clan and ask for protection and favours. As for men, they normally squat as they praise and ask for benedictions from their forefathers and God (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:8). Tied to the totems, is a taboo for people of the same totem never to marry each other. If they insist then a ritual to dissolve the relationship (cheka ukama) has to be performed. It is only after the ritual has been carried out that they can go ahead and marry. Some parts of the bodies of these animals are used for rituals also. As the animals are regarded as sacred, a place that was once a home (dongo) is also considered as holy.

3.4.4 Dongo (a ruin)

This is a vacant piece of property upon which a family once lived and where it is believed their spirit still hovers. It means that nobody should go close to these sites or even neighbouring woods, forests, and hills to disturb their peace (Gelfand 1984:120). So this is another example of a sacred place because while the family lived there it was a shrine for supplication to the spirits. Even if there is no structure standing on this property, respect and

reverence must be accorded to the ruins. This seems to indicate that 'once a shrine always a shrine.' In the sections above I have explored the family sacred places and explained what they are and how they are used. Here below I will look at the communitarian sacred places and see how families are part of a wider community of believers.

3.5 Communitarian shrines

When an amalgamation of families (clans) meet to offer prayers and ask for rain from the *mhondoro* (clan spirit), the ceremony would be held under a *muhacha* tree (cock tree: *parinari curatellifolia*) (Gelfand 1984:136; Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:12; Rodewald 2010b:23).[32] This tree and forest around it are regarded as sacred and should be revered. In some cases the rain ceremony is conducted under a tall tree just outside the residential area. The big tree is regarded as the abode of the spirits hence sacred (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:12). The surrounding area can be fenced off, and in it small clay pots are kept which are consecrated to the spirits (Bourdillon 1982:250). These clay pots are used for nothing else apart from the clan rituals. The ritual for rain making is not a family matter because it is the clan spirit that is responsible for that.

Some of the shrines consist of permanent or temporary thatched shelters built in the bush, a little far from where people dwell (Bourdillon 1982:250). The Manyika people in the eastern part of the country build temporary thatched shelters over chiefly graves (Bourdillon 1982:250). Gundani and Mahohoma (2020: 8) quotes Masoga and Nel (2014:71) who stresses that gravesites are holy on account of their historic and cultural standing. Since the graves bear the remains of the ancestors, the Shona consider them sacred (Gundani and Mahohoma 202:8). According to Mbiti (1991:149), graves are usually regarded as sacred sites, and they are sometimes used as ritual arenas (Gundani and Mahohoma 2020:8). This means that the graves are revered and regarded as sacred. A grave is considered a sacred shrine for it not only carries with it the danger associated with death, but it has a sacred character (Bourdillon 1982:196).[33] According to Gundani and Mahohoma (2020:8), it is normal for the Shona to offer tobacco and traditionally brewed beer at the gravesite when a spirit of the departed is being inducted to the land of the ancestors. The two items play an

[32] The spirit of the founder of a clan is generally referred to as *mhondoro* (lion spirit) (Gelfand 1984:112). So it means that each and every clan has its mhondoro that looks after the interests of the clan members. It is from this spirit that the clan seeks intervention when things go wrong.

[33] The salutation at the funeral party before they leave the grave, is reminiscent of salutations at spirit shrines, and it is intended as an honour to the deceased. Graves are always avoided except for ritual purpose and occult powers are said to linger around any grave (Bourdillon 1982:196).

important role as this ritual is performed. We have gradually seen that a crescendo of sacred Shona place and object has been built up as I now introduce the Matopo shrines at the apex of all holy places.

3.5.1 The Matopo shrines

Bhebhe (2019:2) quotes UNESCO (2006) which states that Matobo Hills is the centre of the Mwali religion. He goes further to assert that the Matobo rocks "are understood as the dwelling place of god and ancestral spirits. Mwali dwells in the Matobo hills hence the need for a seat. It is clear that the sacred shrines within the hills are places where contact with the spiritual world can be made. According to Bhebhe (2019:4) Mwali or Ngwali cult acknowledges the following sanctuaries, amongst others: Dula,[34] Njelele, Neyile, Wililani, Manyangwa and Ntogwa. The shrines mentioned here are not going to be our main concern. Some of these shrines like Dula and Wililani are within the Matopo hills range while the rest are outside the range. This means that the Mwari/Mwali/Ngwali cult, which is linked with the Njelele shrine, is not restricted to Matobo only (Bhebhe 2019:2).

There are a dozen shrines around the Matopo hills, but half of these are said to have ceased to exist (Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:298). Schoffeleers and Mwanza (1979:298) assert that there is one that is dormant, which means that the shrine structure still exists, but that it is not currently operating, and only four are known to be active. Schoffeleers and Mwanza (1979:298) argues that the dormancy of the one shrine and the demise of six others are indicative of the decline of the cult as a whole (Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:298). However, this might be the way it looks like and yet the influence of the shrines and the Mwari cult is still prevalent to this day. It is not known how many shrines operated originally in this area to be able to fully ascertain the speed of the decline (Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:298). Out of the twelve shrines mentioned, half are or were located within and half outside the Matopo Range (Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:298). All the shrines outside the Matopo hills have ceased to exist with the possible exception of one (Schoffeleers and Mwanza 1979:298). This means that there is something about the Matopo hills that keeps these shrines alive and active. The majority of those within the Matopo hills are still active, one is dormant while the other one is dead (Schoffeleers and Mwanza

[34] Dula is regarded as the Red Axe (Impi yehloka elibomvu) shrine, which is associated with war, especially the 1896 Ndebele Anglo War (Bhebhe 2019:2).

1979:298).[35] Among all the shrines in Matopo and surrounding areas, the Njelele Shrine stands out.

3.5.2 The Njelele shrine

The Njelele shrine of the Mwari cult is a renowned rain-making sanctuary situated outside the southwestern peripheries of Matobo National Park in the Khumalo communal area, roughly 100 kilometres south of Zimbabwe's second largest city of Bulawayo (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232; Makuvaza 2008:164). The sanctuary is part of the Matobo hills, that is situated in a granite kopje that looks solid and is comparable to several others in the same area. The rocky outcrop is located on a mountain range that runs from east to west (Makuvaza 2008:164). There are three naturally hidden entrances that wind up and down among overhang granite boulders into the shrine (Makuvaza 2008:164).

It is evident that the main attribute of the Njelele sanctuary is not the cave but the gallery in the rocks. Makuvaza (2008:164) observes that there are also several small tunnels, which lead to the shrine's various compartments from the narrow entrance between two tall rocks. A collection of skulls and horns of big game, iron hoes, clay pots containing water, cloth and beads, piles of tobacco, hatchets, and spears are kept in one of the caves at the Njelele shrine. Nobbs (1924) as quoted by Makuvaza (2008:164) believed that these objects were offerings to the residing deity. Mwari, as he is known among the Shona-speaking people, and Mlimo among the Ndebele, is thought to have resided at the Njelele sanctuary (Makuvaza 2008:164). The personal presence of Mwari/Mlimo at the Njelele shrine was displayed by the voice. As far as the Shona are concerned, Mwari was the highest and final authority behind their ancestors (vadzimu), asserts Daneel (1970) as he is cited by Makuvaza (2008:164). There are powerful cultural heritage values embodied by the Njelele shrine for the people of Zimbabwe, and the values associated with the site (Makuvaza 2008:164). Ethical and moral values always go hand in hand with established shrines. Having given the topography of the Njelele Shrine, I will now explore its origins.

3.5.3 The origins of the Njelele shrine

The exact origin of the Njelele shrine remains uncertain and contested, though it is believed to have been the most senior and influential Mwari shrine during the 19th Century within southwestern part of Matebeleland. According to Rozvi oral history, the origins of the

[35] Schoffeleers and Mwanza (1979:298) have made a very detailed analysis of the shrines while analysing the data they had collected. This will not be dealt with here.

Njelele shrine dates back to about 14th century when the Mbire tribal group trekked from around Lake Tanganyika southwards and finally established themselves at Great Zimbabwe and established a proto-Shona settlement occupied between 1250–1450 CE (Makuvaza 2008:165). It is possible that the Mwari cult was first established at Great Zimbabwe (Daneel 1970; Garlake 1973). Daneel (1970), as quoted by Makuvaza (2008:165), argues that the creation of the Mwari shrine in the Matobo hills could have been connected or coincided with a move of the Rozvi organizational power from Great Zimbabwe to the Matobo hills.

According to Makuvaza (2008:165), there is not just one version of the origins of the Njelele shrine. Another one posits that the Mlimo (Ndebele word for God) shrine was set up in the Matopo hills. This was after Great Zimbabwe was involved in a religious confrontation, during which a splinter group of religious leaders moved away from Great Zimbabwe and eventually established the Mwari cult in the Matobo hills (Makuvaza 2008:165). Nobbs (1924) who is quoted by Makuvaza (2008:165) opines that on the other hand some argue that the Njelele shrine was established as a Mwari shrine in the Matobo hills earlier than 1560 CE.

Since there are so many voices on this issue, there is another tradition that advances the theory of the Mwali cult in Matobo having been brought by two Venda brothers. The two advanced along the Tuli River into Kalangaland and built sanctuaries, one of which was the Njelele shrine (Bhebhe 2019:5). Njenjema and his brother are said to be the ones who introduced the Ngwali/Mwari cult to the Kalanga people. Legend has it that they were directed by the Ngwali/Mwali cult to come to the new shrine of Njelele (Bhebhe 2008:5). A deeper investigation into the matter of the origins of the Njelele shrine is beyond the scope of this study. It has been established that the debate has been inconclusive on the origins and dates of the establishment of the shrine. The section below discusses the purpose of the Njelele shrine.

3.5.4 The purpose of the Njelele shrine

Bhebhe (2019:1) asserts that the site of the Njelele shrine is of highest spiritual importance in Zimbabwe, and it is visited every year between August and September, for ritual purposes just ahead of the rain period (Bhebhe 2019:1). Even if there has not been one voice on the origins of the shrine as already indicated, the main purpose was for national rainmaking ceremonies (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232). In an interview he conducted, Bhebhe (2019:7) records that one of the stimulating oral testimonies to that effect was provided by

Ndlovu (1981). He recounted that there was no rain after the arrival of the Ndebele people and then Mr Thomas (the Native Commissioner around 1911) approached Manyanga and Njenjema. He gave a bag of grain to the two to brew beer and then asked them to perform the rain ritual (Bhebhe 2019:7). It was observed that during the ritual, the rain mediums would not return to their homes before the rain fell (Bhebhe 2019:8). However, some of the ceremonies held there included the blessing of the seed before planting, fertility rituals, first harvest offering, individual and communal cleansing. The Njelele shrine still operates as the most influential and famous Mwari centre in the country (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232).[36] One of the most important aspects of the shrine is that it acted as a worship unifier.

3.6 Shrine worship as unifier

When the Ndebele arrived at the Matopo hills they could not shake off the feeling of awe amid the grim solitudes of the Matopo Mountains (Hole 1929:65). They must have regarded these mountains as the abode of the gods or devils (Hole 1929:66). They were amazed by the huge boulders that were balanced in ways that seem to defy laws of gravity. Large numbers of Shona people resident in what later became Matebeleland were incorporated into the state even if they were considered socially inferior by the Ndebele people (Bourdillon 1982:14). They had to learn to speak Zulu, and their clan names were translated into Zulu (Bourdillon 1982:14). It is worthwhile to note that the Kalanga continued to enjoy immunity and seclusion from attack because of their connections with the Matopo spirits (Hole 1929:68).

The Ndebele soon realised that the Matopo hills acted as a headquarters of a religious organization, spread throughout the whole country, as there was no expedition or chief appointed without the advice from Mwari mediums that were in charge of the shrine (Hole 1929:68). The Ndebele adapted the principal religious cult of the Mwari, which was fitted into the Ndebele spirit world (Bourdillon 1982:14).[37] In times of rejoicing and sorrow the people from Zululand venerated their ancestral spirits (Becker 1962:6). This means that there was nothing new here for it was a continuation of the spirit veneration. The Ndebele

[36] (Chronicle, Njelele cleansing hailed) https://www.chronicle.co.zw/njelele-cleansing-hailed/

[37] Gelfand assumes that the Ndebele people had to admit and therefore accept that the first rulers were of Shona origin, and their spirits had to be accepted. If these spirits were annoyed, they could withhold the rain (Gelfand 1966:15). The founding spirits of the Shona at the Matopo hills had to be honoured in order to maintain a balance in the spiritual and physical worlds.

God had to be called UNkulunkulu (the Highest One), the Creator of the country, all creatures, plants, rivers, and hills (Becker 1962:6; Bhebe 1979:28). The Ndebele cosmology had no high supreme God but a hierarchy of ancestral spirits. When they were introduced to Mwari the supreme God they just made Mwari the highest of all their ancestral spirits.

In the days when Lobengula was king, the Europeans in the country knew and wrote about the Voice in the Matopo hills (Gelfand 1966:33). Mzilikazi the father of Lobengula was also aware of the Voice that emanated from the depth of the cave, and which spoke on important matters of concern to the people as a whole (Gelfand 1966:33). The belief in *Mlimo* (or *Umlimo* as the Ndebele referred to God) was essentially *Karanga* by origin, but for reasons not clear Mzilikazi accepted the cult at the Matopo hills (Gelfand 1966:33). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:75) concurs that among the roles assumed by the king Mzilikazi, rainmaking and leading in ancestor rituals and veneration were included. Lobengula followed his father's footsteps and accepted a ritual black cloth from Mlimo, which he wore around his waist (Gelfand 1966:33). With this he was accepting to be a priest of the cult thereby literally taking with him the whole state to the shrines as it were. As the shrine unified the whole country the Mwari cult influenced the Ndebele worship and way of life.

3.6.1 Mwari cult's influence on Ndebele worship

One of the manifestations of the Ndebele-Shona cultural fusion was the Ndebele adoption of Mwari cult as they did not completely displace the Shona in the areas they had occupied (Bhebe 1979:287; Bozongwana 1983:51). The Ndebele nation largely depended for its population expansion on the incorporation of the people they had defeated in battle. Some Shona chiefs were given the king's cattle to look after and many of them frequented the Ndebele headquarters to pay tribute (Bhebe 1979:287). Shona young men went to the king to seek employment as soldiers. All these political, social, and economic links served as ways for Shona influence on the Ndebele way of life (Bhebe 1979:287). On their part, the Ndebele, like the Zulu, believed in a supernatural Creator, *Unkulunkulu* who played a very prominent role in day-to-day human affairs. The real guardians of the society were the *amadlozi* (ancestral spirits), especially the king's, which enjoyed nation-wide respect (Bhebe 1979:287). This is particularly evident in the rain-making ceremonies which were centred around the royal graves (Bhebe 1979:287). The royal graves were regarded as sacred and worth of respect and honour.

It is obvious that when they left Zululand, the Ndebele were cut off from their sacred places which were mainly the royal graves (Bhebe 1979:287). Now that the ancestral graves were

no longer there, the rainmaking ceremonies could not be performed as before (Bhebe 1979:287). It is well understood that the Nguni rain-making ceremonies were successful as long as the Ndebele remained in the Zululand (Bhebe 1979:288). The chief priests and their advisers had for many centuries studied the clouds and other forecasts of the weather and they could tell in advance when rain would be coming. With this secret knowledge they could carry out their ceremonies just before the rain fell and claim the credit of having made the rain (Bhebe 1979:288). Since Mzilikazi could not interpret these climatic conditions in this new environment, he naturally turned to the local people (Bhebe 1979:288).

Bozongwana (1983:51) argues that it was because of the successive droughts that the Ndebele turned to the Shona rainmaker for salvation. The Shona were more knowledgeable in matters of their climate and surroundings than their conquerors (Bhebe 1979:288). Although like the Ndebele, they venerated *midzimu* (ancestral spirits), the Shona had a High God, Mwari, who was omnipotent and controlled, among other things, rainfall (Bhebe 1979:288). The cult that grew up around Mwari was well organised and related to the people by means of a system of priests. There is no documented evidence as to how the Ndebele first came to believe in Mwari, but it is believed that Mzilikazi was introduced to the cult by the people he had conquered (Bhebe 1979:288). Within a short while the Mwari cult had permeated all the facets of the Ndebele ways of life and indeed the whole state. I have explained how the Ndebele people were gradually influenced by the Mwari cult. Here below I will investigate the central role that the cult played in everyday life of the ordinary people.

3.6.2 Mwari cult in daily life practice

It is significant to note that by 1859 Mwari's popularity was growing rapidly among the Ndebele (Bhebe 1979:289). Mwari's priests were visiting villages and were being accorded considerable respect by the people. Villagers were consulting the shrines as centres of divination, and they were observing the rules and regulations hedging the sanctity of these temples with due reverence (Bhebe 1979:289). Regardless of the popularity of the Mwari cult, it did not replace some of the Nguni religious beliefs and practices, but this Shona deity became a superstructure over the *amadlozi* (spirit mediums) veneration (Bhebe 1979:289). The Mwari cult institution was linked to the ordinary people through the king. Mzilikazi demonstrated this relationship by going to Mwari priests only after the spirit mediums had failed to give rain (Bhebe 1979:289). This was always taken as a royal appeal. The coming of the missionaries to Matebeleland and the death of Mzilikazi with its accompanying

succession crisis of 1868-70 helped intensify Ndebele worship of Mwari and to expand their ideas about the Creator God (Bhebe 1979:289).

The missionaries were seen as invading the land while the succession crisis was going to pose a security threat to the kingdom and destabilize it. The succession crisis left the power vacuum that was filled up by the religious institutions (Bhebe 1979:289). The Mwari institution was consulted on the issue of succession and the choice of God fell upon Lobengula (Bhebe 1979:289). Before the 1880s it seems, the new king remained to some extent dependent on Mwari for his power to rule the Ndebele and their subjects (Bhebe 1979:289). Lobengula is said to have been keeping at his headquarters some of the cult's priests who worked with him during rain-making ceremonies (Bhebe 1979:290). By cooperating very closely with the officials of the Mwari, the Ndebele monarch improved, or developed, his talent for making rain (Bhebe 1979:291).

Thomas Morgan Thomas (LMS Missionary)[38] observed that the Ndebele God in 1866 had evolved as they 'prayed to one god and not to many, that God was above and not below' (Bhebe 1979:292). When challenged about their God, the Ndebele were aware that Mwari was a Spirit and could not eat or require beef because he was the giver of all things and that he was the one who fed them and kept them alive (Bhebe 1979:292). This was a new development in the cosmological understanding of the Ndebele God (Bhebe 1979:292). Lobengula was an enlightened defender of traditional faith and his initial involvement with the missionaries shaped much of his theological thought (Bhebe 1979:292). Before coming to power he had been a catechumen of the LMS veteran missionary William Sykes. Due to his keen interest in the missionary teachings there grew up a myth that he was literate (Bhebe 1979:292).

Lobengula ordered the execution of a Mwari priest in 1880 (Bhebe 1979:293). Bhebe argues that Lobengula and the Ndebele had moved a long way in religious ideas that they separated God from the priests, who as human beings were helping people to communicate with Him (Bhebe 1979:292). Lobengula who was a priest himself knew that the priests were not

[38] Missionaries from the London Missionary Society (LMS), founded in 1795, came to Zimbabwe, in 1859, during the reign of King Mzilikazi Khumalo in Matabeleland and the Midlands. On request for land, the missionaries were offered Inyathi for their first mission station. The Pioneer Missionaries of the LMS comprised William Sykes, Thomas Morgan Thomas, Robert Moffat and John Smith Moffat. Their difficult journey to Matabeleland and their acceptance by King Mzilikazi was made easier by the fact that Robert Moffat had already made friends with King Mzilikazi, accessible online at - (https://uccsa.org.zw/history/#:~:text=Missionaries%20from%20the%20London%20Missionary,for%20their%20first%20mission%20station).

infallible and therefore were not above the law of the land. Acting against a subversive priest was not an offence against God (Bhebe 1979:293). This was a major step in articulating who God was for them and how Mwari was to be worshipped. Having looked at the role of the Mwari cult in people's daily life, I will expound how the Njelele shrine operates.

3.7 How the Njelele shrine operates

In African Traditional Religion offerings and prayers are made at sacred places, and they are conducted by a ritual elder (priest) or a chosen member of the community (Mbiti 1975:20). This also happens at the Njelele shrine. These special people are the ones who are set apart to look after the holy places and protect them (Mbiti 1975:20). In African religion, people, who live on earth, are considered to be at the centre of the world (Mbiti 1975:36). They are also the priests of the universe as they link the universe with God, its Creator. It is people who turn parts of the universe into sacred objects and use other items for sacrifices or offerings (Mbiti 1975:36). Ray (1987) asserts that ritual experts, such as seers, diviners, priests, and sacred royal officials, serve a common religious objective: to link the human and the sacred world. It is interesting to note that sanctuaries and temples assist this process by connecting together the two worlds around an altar. It is the work of the priest to offer prayers and sacrifices that carry people's desires to the supernatural world; the priest, in turn, relays the will of the gods to the people (Ray 1987).

These aspects are closely linked to the way the Njelele shrine operates. There is a system that is in operation at the Njelele shrine. If the shrine has to operate it must have some people who hold offices either on an appointed or a voluntary basis. These people must have specific functions that tally with their job descriptions. As people visit the shrine there must be a process that is followed as much as there are procedures also at the family and communal shrines. In places where people gather to worship there are some sort of formats that are followed and the Njelele shrine is no exception. There is a form of organisation that runs the affairs of the shrine and special people have special offices designated to them.

3.7.1 The Njelele Shrine Offices

The organisational setup at the Njelele shrine is made up of the high priests and priestesses (a brother and a sister who inherit their positions and communicate directly with the oracle), a keeper of the shrine (a senior man from the lineage related to the high priest's family) and the 'voice' (an elderly woman married into the high priest's family) (Bourdillon 1982:269). Delegations from surrounding chiefdoms go to consult the 'voice' over matters of public

and national importance, such as appointment of a new chief, acceptance of a new spirit medium, drought or some other communal disasters (Bourdillon 1982:269). It is the duty of the chief or senior spirit medium to give authority to the consulting delegation to visit the voice at the cave (Bourdillon 1982:269). Some sources argue that the selection of the priests was done through spirit possession and tests were conducted by spirit mediums to ascertain their authenticity (Munyukwi 2015:29).

Apart from the officials mentioned above, there are also some boys and girls, usually children of cult messengers who in their youth were dedicated by their parents to Mwari and they grow up at the shrine (Bourdillon 1982:270). They have chores to perform in connection with the care of the shrines, but their main function is to dance in honour of Mwari on ritual occasions (Bourdillon 1982:270).[39] Officials at the shrines maintain communication with all the surrounding chiefdoms and spread its network up to 400km to the east and south (Bourdillon 1982:269). All these shrines are connected in the sense that they serve the same purpose namely, the facilitation of communication with the Mwari spirit world (Bourdillon 1982:269). This network of shrines dedicated to Mwari makes sure that all regulations and taboos are observed throughout the country. Since the Njelele shrine is a sacred place, not everybody is allowed into its threshold. There are some people who are not allowed to visit the shrine e.g. witches, wizards, and thieves. If they happen to reach the vicinity of the shrine, they would be stoned to death (Munyukwi 2015:29). The officers who are appointed at the shrine run all the affairs there and there is a procedure for consultation for those who come for help.

3.7.2 Procedure for consultation

When a consulting party arrives at the Njelele shrine, they remain at the village below the shrine where the officials/custodians live (Bourdillon 1982: 269). They state their business at a formal meeting of all the officials with the keeper of the shrine presiding over the situation (Bourdillon 1982:269). It is only after this meeting that the party is taken to the shrine (in the meantime the 'voice' (High Priestess) has already positioned herself secretly in the cave) and sits at the mouth of the cave (Bourdillon 1982:269). By the time the party reaches the cave the 'voice' will be ready to address all their concerns. The high priestess is the one who sits closest to the mouth of the cave and is the first one to address the oracle

[39] While in service of the oracle, they observe a number of taboos including sex taboos but do eventually leave the shrine and marry under the direction of the oracle (Bourdillon 1982:270).

(Bourdillon 1982:269). Next to her is the high priest, who takes the initiative in communicating with the oracle and he also mediates between the two (Bourdillon 1982:269). This procedure is the one that is used at the Njelele shrine, and it is not clear how much it corresponds with the procedures at the other shrines. It is beyond the scope of this study to capture the procedures that take place at the other Mwari shrines. The voice that spoke at Njelele shrine was of paramount importance.

3.7.3 The voice from the Sacred Rock

As already elaborated, the most prominent feature at the Njelele shrine was the voice of Mwari that was perceived as speaking from the rocks by the pilgrims to the shrine (Ranger 1999:3; Bourdillon 1982:269). These words and messages influenced hundreds of thousands of people throughout Matebeleland and beyond thereby making the voice a national phenomenon (Ranger 1999:3). In some cases, one had to make a journey (like the svikiro of the Karanga) to *Matonjeni* (Ndebele word for the Njelele shrine) in the Matopo hills where the Great Spirit 'lives.' What one sought was the confirmation when they felt called to be a spirit medium. At the rock in Matonjeni a voice confirmed that one was indeed the true medium of the people. There is a close link between the centre and the surrounding spirits of the clans or tribes. The voice that spoke from the rock gave advice even to Europeans (Gelfand 1966:8). It is interesting to note that even the neighbouring white farmers paid tribute to the voice when they became anxious about the rain coming late or during years of drought (Bourdillon 1982:269).

If the spirit medium (mhondoro) of the clan has been consulted and issues cannot be resolved, the people concerned can consult the Great Voice at Matonjeni in order to seek guidance from Mwari. There is no annual pilgrimage to Matonjeni, and it is only necessitated by need in the community (Gelfand 1966:12). Any person can consult the Rock even a *n'anga* (traditional healer) to find out if their services will be appreciated or not (Gelfand 1966:13). The Njelele shrine and the voice were central in the armed revolutions that brought independence to Zimbabwe in 1980.

3.7.4 The shrines and the revolutions

As I have already explored, the cave was situated at the Njelele shrine when the Ndebele people arrived, and it was from this rock that the Voice is said to have issued orders for all the Shona and Ndebele people to rebel against the European invasion in 1896 (Gelfand 1966:33; Tanser 1950:12). As a response to the invasion of the white settlers, a revolution erupted as Ndebele people rose against their colonial masters in 1896. The Shona joined in

and maintained a resistance that lasted long after the Ndebele war had come to an end (Bourdillon 1982:15). It was observed that the spirit mediums provided unity during the 1896/7 uprising (Bourdillon 1982:263). The most outstanding national spirit mediums were Kaguvi and Nehanda. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:5) quotes Ranger 1967; Ranger 1968; 1977 who believed these religious leaders offered inspiration that was ideological and prophetic. Their spirits are still invoked in matters that concern the nation at large. Tanser (1950:12) asserts that the spirit mediums received messages from Mwari that they must rise against the settlers. The settlers had to go to Matopo in order to make peace with the Ndebele people. So it was at Matopo that peace between the settlers and the Ndebele was brokered (Tanser 1950:13).

During the struggle of the 1970s the spirit mediums were instrumental in mobilising support for the guerrilla fighters, providing them with spiritual and moral support (Bourdillon 1982:265). The status of the spirit mediums increased with the rise of nationalism (Bourdillon 1982:264). Spirit mediums provided a connection with the past glory of the Shona; they became political by involving themselves in the nationalist movements (Bourdillon 1982:264). It was the mediums who were regularly consulted by guerrilla fighters and in some cases, they acted as coordinators between civilians and guerrillas. Their oracle played a central role as also elucidated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:3). Apart from that, they also acted as centres of information on military activities (Bourdillon 1982:265). The spirit of Nehanda and Kaguvi as symbols of resistance against dominating rule and the culture of the whites was revived (Bourdillon 1982:266). As a national figure/heroine Nehanda has been honoured by having her statue erected at a monument in Harare by the Government (Madzimure and Zinyuke (2021). However, this narrative of the revolution (Chimurenga) has been contested by Cobbing and Beach as argued out by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:6-7). According to the two scholars, the liberation war panned out as uncoordinated and fragmented without any central organisation. Cobbing and Beach articulate that the presentation of the war having been led by spirit mediums was a creation of Terrence Ranger whose sources were used for political furtherance (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011) is convinced that there was a selfish political ploy in pushing for a unified front of the Chimurenga struggle.

The shrine at the Njelele shrine was the heart of the nation. As already discussed, religion in Africa permeates all facets of human life and nothing exists that is not affected by the

sacred. The Njelele shrine is still venerated to this day as people flock there for consultation or seeking the right path to take in life.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter a socio-anthropological study of sacred places and objects of the Shona people of Zimbabwe has been done, while concentrating on the Njelele shrine in Matopo hills. In order to better understand the working of these holy places, the overall role played by sacred places and objects in African Traditional Religion was pointed out. Of the five pillars that constitute African Traditional Religion, only sacred places and objects were selected and used as 'sacred texts'. A discovery was made that these aspects are part and parcel of any religion for no religion can exist without holy places and objects. It has been pointed out that there is no religion that does not hold sacred places in high esteem, the Shona Mwari cult included. The belief systems of the Shona people of Zimbabwe have been explored in order to investigate their sacred places and objects.

By venturing into the Shona beliefs and holy places, a historical relationship between the Shona Mwari cult and Ndebele people has been established. It has been pointed out how the Ndebele people arrived at Matopo hills in June of 1836 and how they adapted and modified their belief systems by taking note of the sacred places that surrounded them. The two categories of the Shona sacred places and objects have been explained. The role played by the awe-striking topology of the Matopo hills that makes it a home to about a dozen functioning or semi functioning shrines has been discovered. The Njelele shrine has been singled out of all the shrines in the Matopo hills. It has been discovered that its origins are contested though the main purpose was for rainmaking.

The role played by Njelele shrine in uniting the nation under one cult has been ventured into. This has assisted in coming to terms with how the Mwari cult came to influence the Ndebeles' daily live. An explanation has been given on how the Njelele shrine operates and how the officers conduct their business as they consult the voice. The mapping out of the influence of the shrine on the revolution that brought independence to Zimbabwe was done in conclusion. Two theories have emerged: the fragmented approach to the revolution and the united one.

In the following chapter I will do a socio-anthropological analysis of the context of Jesus, which is the context of the biblical text. The second Temple will be the main focus in delving into its main functions as a sacred place. An exegesis of John 2:13-22 as my chosen

biblical text will be done. It shall be seen how the presence of Jesus as a new Temple becomes a universal dwelling place.

Chapter Four

Understanding sacred space in Israel and Exegesis of John 2:12-23

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will shall start by going back in time to explore notions of sacredness among the Jews in an effort do a socio-anthropological analysis of the context of Jesus. This exploration will mainly focus on the Temple in Jesus' time, called the second or the Herodian Temple. This Temple study will explore the main functions of this sacred place. While investigating what made this Temple special, the levels of sacredness in Israel and how these were mimicked in the Temple divisions will be pointed out. I shall explain how these divisions kept the Jews separated from the Gentiles instead of uniting them. The presence of Yahweh in Israel will be explored in order to realise that the Temple was Yahweh's abode. It will be interesting to find out how the Shekinah of Yahweh came to dwell in the synagogues, in homes and in the hearts of dedicated Jews.

After having done the background study of the Temple in Jesus' time, an exegesis of John 2:13-22 (the cleansing of the Temple) shall follow. The story will be located within the larger context of the other Gospels. In John, the story of the Wedding in Cana comes before the Cleansing of the Temple and the story of Nicodemus after. The actions of Jesus in the Temple shall be investigated in order to interpret how John presents this event. It will be realised that it is the commercialisation of the Temple that displeased Jesus as he approached his father's house. It will be interesting to take note of the method that Jesus uses to cleanse the Temple and put to an end its defilement. As Jesus cleanses the Temple it was the zeal of his father's house that was propelling his actions. Jesus will explain the reason why he was cleansing the Temple and how his father's house should not be turned into a marketplace.

In conclusion the words of Jesus will be explained as he talks of the Temple that will be destroyed and be built up in three days. This Temple of his body will become the spiritual presence of God. Jesus was preparing his audience for a time when the physical Temple will be no more. It is going to be clear at the end that Jesus as the new Temple will dwell among people of diverse backgrounds. Now is the time to look at the Jerusalem Temple in the time of Jesus and see how it was organised.

4.1 The Jerusalem Temple in Jesus' time

The Temple in Jerusalem was the heart of Jewish religious practice (Kerr 2005:34). In Jesus' time this Temple was known as the Herodian Temple or the second Temple, which was restored on the foundation of the first one (Solomon's Temple 1 Kings 6-7). Herod the Great[40] is the one who renovated and expanded this Temple, rebuilt by the Jews returning from their Babylonian captivity (Ezra 6:15; Edelcopp and Patrich 2013:342). Herod rebuilt the Temple not so much as to facilitate Israel's worship, but as an attempt to reconcile the Jews to their Idumaean king (Deffinbaugh 2004). This Temple was the chief feature of the city of Jerusalem in Jesus' time. The Herodian Temple was not just a centre for worship, sacrifices and other religious activities, it represented the political centre of the Jewish ethnic group. It is assumed that governmental administrative institutions were established in the Temple's courtyards (Porton 1989:263). It was moreover the meeting place and headquarters of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Jewish law during the Roman era (Lotha 2022). Even if it did not have the glory of the first Temple built by Solomon, it ought to have surpassed the magnificence and majesty of the second Temple (Ezra 3:12; Mark 13:1; Deffinbaugh 2004).

Many other aspects of life of the whole Jewish nation found their focus in the Temple (Turner 1979:54). Economically, the Temple treasury, which is described as large and sufficiently funded, financed the expenses of the Temple and the communal needs of Jerusalem (Porton 1989:263). Porton (1989:263) quotes Safrai who claims that the Temple was "a place for the cultivation, safeguarding and propagation of the holy scriptures and of historical chronicles and lineages" and that the Temple housed the "official" version of the scripture against which all other copies were evaluated. In this case the Temple version acted as a validator.

The construction of the Temple initiated by Herod the Great started in 20 BCE and went on for 46 years. The area of the Temple Mount was doubled and surrounded by a retaining wall with gates. The Temple was elevated, enlarged, and decorated with white stones. It looks like the new Temple square operated as a meeting area, and its porticoes sheltered people who changed money and the merchants. A stone boundary (*soreg*) and a fortification (*ḥel*) enclosed the sacred area prohibited to the Gentiles (Lotha 2022). The Temple was largely

[40] The dates for his reign are contested, though it had always been believed that Herod ruled from 37BCE to 4BCE. However, Steinmann (2009:1) has reconstructed that Herod reigned in Jerusalem from 39BCE to 1BCE. Ours is not to enter into this debate but to acknowledge the reconstructed dates.

complete in the time of our Lord but was fully completed a mere 6 years before it was destroyed in 70 CE (Deffinbaugh 2004). Josephus (*J.W book iv*) has a detailed account of this war and how the Temple was brought down to its knees. It is beyond the scope of this study to follow on all the leads detailing step by step the destruction of the Temple. Before it was destroyed, this Temple was organised in a such way that its levels of holiness depended on the holiness of the individuals and groups that worshipped there.

4.1.1 Levels of sacredness of the Jewish Temple

Looking at the levels of holiness as depicted by the Mishnah, sacred space was connected to cultural organisation, hierarchy, and status in Israel (Kunin 1994:118). The Jews were aware of these levels of sacredness and how they functioned. It was clear to them that their land was more sacred than the rest of the world. Jerusalem being more sacred than other cities, and the Temple being holier than Jerusalem (Kunin 1994:116; Turner 1979:21). The biblical model of sacred space ends up making a comparison between Israel and the rest of the world, thereby bringing to the fore its holiness and the lack of it in other nations (Kunin 1994:118). The divisions in geographic models tend to mimic implied divisions within humanity (Kunin 1994:119).[41] This in so many ways brought about segregation based on where one was placed on the graph of sacredness in Israel.

It is interesting to note that within the Temple, the gradation of holiness was also well elaborated and at play. The Temple was structured in such a way that less and less people were allowed to approach the most holy place, thereby enhancing and upholding its holiness: the less the human contact the greater the holiness of an item (Kunin 1994:116). The most sacred place was the holy of holies that no one was allowed in except the High Priest on the day of Atonement or Yom Kippur once a year, to mediate between Yahweh and men (Kunin 1994:116). This was the earthly locality of Yahweh.

Even if Gentiles would wish to bring offerings to YHWH, they most likely could not approach the altar. This finds expression in post-biblical times in the fact that Gentiles could not move past the outermost rampart of the Temple Mount (Porton 1989:262). Leviticus 22:25 states that Jews should not bring offerings from foreigners to the altar which implies that access to the Temple altar was limited only to Jews. A plaque threatening with death the

[41] Kunin (1994:120) develops a structural model of humanity that is organized from the centre, where there is the High Priest followed by priests, Levites, Jews and has other nations at the periphery. It means that the other nations are profane, for holiness ends with the Jews. Nations from beyond cannot marry Jews as they were impure. As one moved further from their kinship, they would encounter people who are less holy. So marriage was only encouraged between people who were inside the closest circles (Kunin 1994:121).

Gentiles who trespassed into the inner chambers served as a warning (Zion 2015). The temple structure was considered holy because Yahweh dwelt in there among his own people. Access to him from the temple point of view was limited hence the restrictions to reach the highest level of his presence in the tabernacle. Even if Yahweh was present in the Temple, he was also present among his own people.

4.1.2 The presence of Yahweh among his people

The Temple in Jerusalem was the everlasting symbol of the Divine Presence in Israel (Margolis and Marx 1958:64). According to Turner (1979:50), the Temple was not built so that Yahweh could dwell there but because Yahweh dwelt there, so the Temple was built. The Jews believed that Yahweh was present wherever he wants but his presence was especially accessible in the Temple where he manifested himself and where he was worshipped (Grelot 1967:85). However, the rabbinic texts emphasized that even though Yahweh was present in the Temple in Jerusalem, this did not stop Him from being also present, maybe in a somewhat less intense form, in all places (Kunin 1994:128).

One of the best-known sayings in rabbinic literature is attributed to a high priest, the Zadokite Simon the Righteous, who remarked that the world stands upon three things: the Torah, the Temple, and the deeds of loving kindness (Hayward 1996:1). This clearly shows the importance placed on the Temple by the Jews simply because Yahweh was present in there. The Rabbis were convinced that the presence of Yahweh in other holy places did not diminish his presence in the Temple (Kunin 1994:129). This way of viewing sacred space made the Jews believe that Yahweh went with them into exile, as Yahweh's presence was no longer tied to a specific place, but to the presence of Yahweh's people (Kunin 1994:129).

The 'people of Yahweh' were the only ones who could enjoy his presence and glory. The explanation is that 'If the two men sit together and occupy themselves with the words of the Torah, the *Shekhinah*, ('Yahweh's presence in their midst ...') would dwell among them (Mishnah, Avot 3: 2). Thus, the sacredness of the place also depended on the presence of a community that allowed Yahweh, or Yahweh's *Shekhinah* to dwell among them (Kunin 1994:130). This shift led to the understanding that the space that is occupied by the Jewish community whether in the synagogue or in their homes was also sacred (Kunin 1994:131).[42]

[42] The rabbis call the house a *mikdash maat*, a 'small sanctuary', using the same word, *mikdash*, which is used in the biblical text to refer to the Temple and the Tabernacle. In some ways, the home was replacing the Temple as the central locus of sacred space. It was believed that the home was sacred because through living in it, eating in it, one can fulfil Yahweh's laws (Kunin 1994:132).

Kunin (1994:132) argues that the change of holy space from one to many, from Temple to specific homes and synagogues, reveals a general shift in the Jewish culture. There is no doubt that with the destruction of the Temple Israel had to transform its means of communicating and relating with Yahweh (Kunin 1994:134). The rabbis were so innovative after the fall of the Temple that they declared that the service of the heart was equivalent to the service in the Temple (Kunin 1994:134). This clearly indicates that even if the Temple was gone the sacrifice of the heart would continue being offered wherever a Jewish 'heart' could be found. According to Kunin (1994:134), this kind of sacrifice was more associated with the synagogue than the home. Everywhere on Sabbath Day the Jews gathered in the synagogue for common prayer and to hear the reading and commentary of Scripture (Grelot 1967:217). Viewing communication with Yahweh like this would entail that the synagogue was replacing the Temple as another sacred space where one could converse with Yahweh through a gathering around Yahweh's written word (Kunin 1994:134).[43]

Turner quotes Seneca who sums up his understanding of the presence of God:

> We do not have to raise our hands up to heaven or implore the attendant of the Temple to allow us to let us reach for the ears of his idol... God is close to you, he is with you, he is in you (Turner 1979:76).

The sentiments of Seneca resonate with those of Philo, who asserted that, 'For what more fitting dwelling could be found for God throughout the entire world... than a soul that is impeccably cleansed' (Turner 1979:76). The statements are bold in describing the level which the Jews had reached in their interpretation of the presence of Yahweh and their relationship with him. Philo and Seneca's perspectives resonated strongly with the theology that was developed at Qumran.[44] This community seems to have been inspired by the indwelling of Yahweh among them and found themselves as a 'place' where his presence

[43] According to Kunin (1994:134), the synagogue has a partition for men and another one for women. The main reason women are excluded from men, is the fear that their voices may be seductive and draw men's mind away from prayer. This would look like a reminder of the fall of Adam in Genesis. The main focus in the synagogue is the Ark that is placed on the eastern wall (Kunin 1994:134),

[44] Apart from the defilement and authenticity of the priests, the Qumran community observed a different liturgical calendar from the one in Jerusalem (Allegro 1957:112-113). Basically, three things were wrong in Jerusalem; the Jerusalem sanctuary as defiled, its priests were false and its calendar unorthodox (Cross 1995:101, Edmund 1960). The Qumran Community was abandoning the Temple to live in the wilderness and could not offer sacrifices since no sacrifice was permitted by the Law in any other place than the Temple in Jerusalem (Sutcliffe 1960:82; Grelot 1967:85). Given this reality, they believed that the dutiful offering of the lips was like a sweet savour; uprightness and perfection of conduct were like a free-will offering for (Yahweh's) acceptance (M 9:4f) (Sutcliffe 1960:82). By complete separating oneself and their possessions from the world, salvation would come to the individual (Allegro 1957:107).

dwelt (Sutcliffe 1960:82). Having looked at the Jewish Temple during the time of Jesus, I give the background to the interpretation of the cleansing of the same Temple below.

4.2 The cleansing of the Temple: John 2:13-22

The cleansing of the Herodian Temple in the Gospel of John[45] takes place during the time of the Passover. Moloney and Harrington (1998:75) calls it is the purification of the Temple. This episode occurred in the Court of the Gentiles. The author of the book of John places the cleansing of the Temple in the second chapter soon after the first sign at Cana. According to Moloney and Harrington (1998:76), there is also a structural link between this story and the purification of the temple.

Chronologically Jesus cleanses the Temple at the beginning of his ministry, and nobody touches him or accuses him of any crime. The synoptics use this narration as the immediate reason why Jesus is crucified, but according to John, Jesus gives up his life on his own accord (John 10:17-18)[46] (Sanders 1968:115). Sanders (1968:115) argues that the reason John puts the episode at the beginning of Jesus' ministry is due to his general methodology; it was 'theologically' the right thing for Jesus to open his ministry this way (Sanders 1968:115). This signals that John cares more about the theological confession than the chronological precision (Clendenin 2009). A theological reason why John brings this episode at the beginning of Jesus' ministry is that Jesus brings a New Covenant that replaces the institutions of Old that are represented by the Jewish authorities (Hahn 2003:21). In his own understanding, Harris (2004) asserts that none of the synoptic narrations are as long and as detailed (detailed facts, including notes of time [Passover] and place [Jerusalem]) as the Johannine account. It will be necessary here to give an outline of John 2:13-22 so as to see how this passage is organised.

[45]Theories that have risen, in as far as the authorship and date, are not contemplated in this study. Lack of space in this work, will inhibit the detailing of the arguments that have arisen in favour of different theories concerning the origins of the Gospel of John, and the intended audience. However, according to modern critical scholarship, Johannine literature appears to have been written near the turn of the first century at Ephesus (ca 100 C.E), though this is still highly contested (Lightfoot 1956:28; Moloney 1998:2). Since John's Gospel comes after the synoptic Gospels, it does not depend directly on them (Moloney 1998:2, Schnackenburg 1968:15; Lightfoot 1956:28). As this Gospel was the fourth and last to be admitted into the canon of the Christian scriptures, it has always been known as the 'Gospel of John' (Schnackenburg 1968:11; Moloney 1998:1; Lindars 1990:20).

[46] Ratzinger (2011:21) asserts that the witness (Mk 14:58) who accused Jesus of having said he will destroy the Temple and build it up in three day was mistaken because it is not Jesus who will destroy it, but those who had turned it into a den of robbers, and who abandoned it to destruction, just as in Jeremiah's day.

4.2.1 Outline of John 2:13-22

Kerr (2002:67) asserts that John 2:13-22 is a crucial passage to examine the Temple theme in the Gospel of John. He gives three reasons why this passage is so important: 1- the Temple is central to the narrative and to the exchange between Jesus and the Jews, 2- the explanatory remarks in 2:21 (but he was speaking of the Temple that was his body), makes an explicit link between Jesus and the temple (Kerr 2002:67), 3- the episode in the Temple occurs early in the Gospel; it is the second of Jesus' public acts. Kerr (2002:67) sees the cleansing of the Temple as signalling that the day of the Lord has come or is very near. In the same vein he is also convinced that judgement will begin at the house of the Lord and a new Temple will be raised. According to Kerr (2002:67), this action is an eschatological event. It is this eschatological motif that binds together John 2:13-22, 2:1-12[47] (Wedding at Cana) and 3:1-21[48] (Nicodemus' story). There is unity of purpose in these three consecutive stories.

The story of the cleansing of the Temple has an outline that is well elaborated by Moloney (1998:75). The narrator of this episode, according the Moloney (1998:75), provides an obvious introduction (verse 13) and a conclusion that serves to close this episode and leads into the story of Nicodemus (verses 23-25). Though Moloney included three concluding verses in the structure of this passage, he puts them in brackets. He regards these verses as a conclusion to the story of the cleansing of the Temple. Moloney (1998:75) clearly maps out the outline of the episode and I have adapted it so that it goes as follows:

a) Verse 13: *The scene is set as the narrator gives the time, location, and the explanation for Jesus' movement from Galilee up to Jerusalem.*
b) Verse 14: *The situation of the Temple is pointed out: people selling cattle, sheep, and doves. Money changers sitting there.*
c) Verses 15-17: *Jesus performs the cleansing action by driving out of the Temple the sheep and cattle, scattering money changers' coins, and reprimanding the dove sellers. The disciples remember Psalm 69.*

[47] The first half of John 2 tells of Jesus turning water into wine. The eschatological overtures are: 1- this happens on the third day, signalling the resurrection of Jesus, 2- the sheer abundance of wine (120-180 gallons) intimates a fulfilment of Amos 9:13, 3- the setting is a wedding because the wedding theme is found in John 3:29 where the bridegroom is Jesus himself (Kerr 2002:69).

[48] Nicodemus is a Pharisee, a leader of the Jews. He represents the old order. He comes to Jesus by night, and this represents secrecy, the darkness of the night in John signifies ignorance and unbelief. If Nicodemus is to see what God is doing, then he must be born again. This signifies a radical new beginning. Nicodemus can only be reborn from above when Jesus is gloried (Kerr 2002:71). There must be an end of an old era if there is going to be a new beginning.

d) Verses 18-20: *A verbal exchange between Jesus and the Jews that is punctuated by direct speech followed the actions.*

e) Verses 21-22: *The narrator comments to inform the readers of the true meaning of Jesus' words and the limited nature of the disciples' faith.*

[f) Verses 23-25: *A closing passage both concludes the narrative of Jesus' stay in Jerusalem and launches the next event by commenting on the limits of a faith based on signs.*]

The outline given above will now lead into the interpretation proper of John 2:13-22.

4.3 Interpretation

The interpretation of John 2:13-22 (cleansing of the Temple) will not cover the whole narration, but I have selected aspects that resonate with defiling and cleansing of sacred places. The sacred place (the Temple) that Jesus is cleansing has been defiled by the commerce that Jesus has encounters. The house belongs to his father since it is his dwelling place. The same house had taken 46 years to build; it has been made by human hands. The cleansing and purification was prompted by the zeal for his father's house. It is this zeal that made him fearless in upholding what he considered central to worshipping. As the story concludes Jesus explains how his risen body will become the new presence of Yahweh, as it replaces the old Temple.

The Jewish context is the setting in which the whole episode of the cleansing of the Temple in John unfolds (Moloney 1998:76). This is evidenced by the reference to the Passover of the Jews in verse 13 as this was taking place in the Jerusalem Temple.[49] The feast of the Passover is the reason for Jesus' going up to Jerusalem and his presence in the Temple at that time of the year (Moloney 1998:76; Schnackenburg 1968:345). Harris and Perkins 1978:26; McPolin 1979:28; Brodie 1993a:27) argue that this could have been the first of at least three Passovers mentioned in John's Gospel (2:13, 6:4, 11:55).

The expression 'the Passover of the Jews' serves to prove only that the Evangelist (narrator) did not or had ceased to share in the Jewish Passover (Schnackenburg 1968:345; Lindars 1981:137). Sanders (1968:116) concurs and further elaborates that the expression may wish to remind the readers of the Christian Passover (1 Cor 5:7) which had superseded the old one. However, this disassociation of the narrator from Judaism is characteristic of John (cf.

[49] This feast was celebrated on 14 and 15 Nisan (March-April) (Moloney 1998:76).

John 5:1; 6:4; 11:55).[50] Each time the Passover is mentioned it is impressed upon the reader that this was a Jewish feast. This would imply that by the time of writing the narrator wanted to make a clear distinction between the Jewish Passover and that of the Christians. This means that the narrator and the community to which he/she belonged did not want to create any confusion concerning the celebration of the Passover Feast of the Jews and the Christian version. The commercialisation of his father's house by the merchants as the Jews prepared for the Passover Feast desecrated the Temple.

4.3.1 The defilement by commercialising his father's house

Jesus is here portrayed as one who is in conformity with the Jewish traditional laws as he went up to Jerusalem for the Passover feast (verse 13) with other pilgrims (Schnackenburg 1968:345; Casciaro 1987:65).[51] In the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and doves and the money changers sitting there (verse 14). Some scholars have justified the business transaction taking place in the Temple.[52] According to Schnackenburg (1968:346), so much was at stake for both vendors and pilgrims in order to meet the demands of the feast. Those doing business here had set up stalls and tables in the court of the Gentiles. Moloney (1998:76) sees the merchants' business as necessary for the Temple cult.[53] This is so because

[50] Reference has already been made to members of the Qumran community who had physically and spiritually separated themselves from all that was taking place at the Temple in Jerusalem (Sanders 1968:116).

[51] According to the Law of Moses (Ex 34:23, Deut 16:16), on those feast days every male Jewish had to 'appear before the Lord' – hence the pious custom of making a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem (Casciaro 1987:65). Lindars (1981:138) commends John for being geographically correct as Jerusalem is set on high ground and this implies that John does not imagine Jesus as normally resident in Jerusalem. Ratzinger (2011:1) is more daring as he acknowledges that the Sea of Galilee is situated about 690 feet below sea level, while Jerusalem is on the average, 2500 feet above. Since the Passover was said to be near, Jesus and the other pilgrims could have gone up to Jerusalem in advance in order to get ready for the feast (Moloney 1998:76).

[52] Adam Smith is quoted by Boer (2015:34) theorizes that there is a natural propensity for human beings to truck, barter and exchange a thing for another for the sake of profit. This is what distinguishes human beings from animals, for they cannot transact in a deliberate manner. Boer (2015:35) has recourse to Adam Smith as he goes on to assert that at his core man lives by exchanging or becomes a kind of a merchant and he attributes the commercialisation of the society to this in-born trend. This sounds more like what a man lives for and the sellers in the Temple seem to be engaging in something that is ideally normal and natural.
Boer (2015) quotes Adam Smith who goes on to explain that once a man has realised that they can spare something out of their abundance, the next thing is to trade what they have for what they lack or desire. The merchants in the Temple had an abundance of animals and birds which they were selling to a willing buyer. The element of profiteering and taking advantage of the situation is what does not impress Jesus.
Boer (2015:36) declares that human beings are capitalists at heart, they are merchants who are constantly exchanging things with one another. So what Jesus is fighting here is not just exchange of goods in a prohibited place, but he is against unfair trade deals that disadvantage the masses or the marginalised. Jesus is condemning what is really at the heart of human existence.

[53] The business they were engaged in was also involving oxen, sheep and pigeons that were needed for the sacrifices. The merchants were also changing Roman money into Tyrian money so that people might pay the Temple money (cf. Ex 30:13) with coins not bearing impure images of pagan rulers (Sanders 1968:116, Casciaro 1987:65, Moloney 1998:76). Because of the imperial Roman portraits they carried, Roman denarii and Attic drachmas were not permitted to be used in paying the half-shekel Temple-tax. The money-changers in the

the animals sold here were all approved by the Temple authorities (Sanders 1968:116). The money changers and the traders were providing services that were of great convenience to the worshippers (Sanders 1968:116). They were even doing this in the section of the Temple that could accommodate those kinds of transactions: the court of the Gentiles. Jesus was against this kind of business. The money changers had no choice but to set up an exchange facility that would remove the Roman coins and convert them into the sacred and acceptable Temple currency. Jesus would have none of that because it was still wrong to do that in the Temple no matter how much one could justify it.

Jesus condemns the enterprise which was taking place 'in the sanctuary' (or 'Temple') (Schnackenburg 1968:346; Patterson 1989). The Temple authorities made money out of the trade that was going on in the court of the Gentiles (Casciaro 1987:65; Ratzinger 2011:12). However, in the synoptics Jesus' objection is levelled against the dishonesty of the traders, but in John Jesus is against such trade within the Temple (Sanders 1968:116). The Temple that had been defiled needed to be cleansed so that it is ready for the worship worth of Yahweh.

4.3.2 The cleansing action and purification of the Temple

Stedman (1983) argues that during the Passover Feast, Jewish households would take a day to prepare for the celebration by carefully checking their house for any form of yeast or anything that could cause fermentation. Once anything like that was found it would be thrown away from their homes (Stedman 1983). There was a great need to prepare for the feast so that nothing would stop them from fully enjoying the Passover. The cleansing needed for the homes did not match the cleansing at the Temple. The homes were more prepared for the Feast than the Temple for it needed some cleansing. When Jesus entered the Temple, he found it filthy, and nobody seemed to care (Stedman 1983).

Jesus decides to act; making a whip out of cord, he drove out the traders, sheep, and cattle (verse 15). He also scattered the money changers' coins and knocked their tables over. Jesus' actions speak volumes: the Jewish authorities have tolerated this kind of business, but he disapproves of it. Jesus' reaction is punctuated by verbs whose actions (made a whip, drove out traders, sheep, and cattle, scattered their coins and knocked their tables over) are harshly directed to the traders and their merchandise. The Johannine Jesus rejects any form of trade in

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Temple courts exchanged these coins at a small profit (Harris 2004). Jesus objected the outward show of piety which insisted on a 'pure' coinage without corresponding purity of heart (Lindars 1981:138).

the Temple, whether fair or corrupt (Hahn and Mitch 2003:21). Schnackenburg (1968:346) and Harris 2004) argue that weapons or sticks were forbidden *in the Temple area* but did not include such things as whips. Jesus did not enter the Temple with the whip, but he made one out of a cord which he used on the sellers and the money changers. These cords should have been readily available in the Temple as they could have been used for handling animals that were on sale (Lindars 1981:138).

Sanders (1968:116) justifies Jesus' reaction saying that John wants the reader to understand that he is against sacrificial worship of the Temple. Sanders (1968:116) further suggests that the use of the whip indicates that Jesus' actions were resisted, and that resistance was overcome by force and presumably with the help of his disciples and sympathizers. Even if Jesus does not say any word up to now, his actions are described as taking place in rapid succession (Moloney 1998:77).

The expulsion of the sheep and cattle (John 2:15) signifies the termination of animal sacrifice in the Temple as Jesus taught the Samaritan Woman (John 4:21-24) (Hahn and Mitch 2003:21). Jesus' symbolic action and criticism of the corruption in the Temple is reminiscent of the Hebrew text prophets (e.g. Jeremiah 7:11, Zechariah 14:21, Isaiah 55:7) (Perkins 1978:27). Jesus denounces the combination of worship and trade in the Temple (Ratzinger 2011:20).

Of interest here is the fact that John describes Jesus as acting only against the sellers not the buyers (Schnackenburg 1968:346). He sees the sellers as the ones defiling the Temple by doing business at the wrong place. We may conclude that according to the Johannine Jesus, without the merchandise and the sellers, there would be no chaos in the Temple. What made Jesus to act like that in the middle of all this chaos in the Temple was the zeal he had for the house of his father.

4.3.3 Consumed by the zeal for his father's house

According to Schnackenburg (1968:347) Jesus' reprimand (verse 16) is directed towards the sellers of doves who refused to be dislodged by the whip, but this action did not arouse any opposition (Schnackenburg 1968:347). There is complete silence from the audience as if all agreed with him. In fact, those he drove out did not seem to speak in opposition to his actions. All this could have happened so quickly that there was no time to air views.

By calling the Temple 'my father's house' indicates that Jesus still held the Temple as worthy of respect (Sanders 1968:116). By calling God his Father and acting so energetically, Jesus is

clearly proclaiming that he is the Son of God (Casciaro 1987:66). The word 'Temple' is used to speak of the Temple as a whole not just the court of the Gentiles (Moloney 1998:77). What Jesus did not want to see was this kind of business in a place he called the house of his father. It would seem as if the words of Jesus attack the abuse of the Temple that has been made into a marketplace (Moloney 1998:77). There is a major shift here as the Temple is now called a house.

Jesus' disciples[54] are said to have been the first ones to react to the claim by way of remembering the words of Psalm 69:9 *'I am eaten up with zeal for your house' (verse 17)* (Moloney 1998:77; Sanders 1968:117; Schnackenburg 1968:347). According to Moloney (1998:77) and Casciaro (1987:66) the disciples accepted what was said by Jesus and saw him as having fulfilled the scriptures as they interpreted the words of the Psalm 69:9. It is at this point that the disciples realized the implications of Jesus' actions; he will lead a life of struggle and eventually face death (Moloney 1998:77). What will cost his life is not these actions and the destruction of the Temple but his zeal - zeal of self-giving love - for the house of God (Ratzinger 2011:22). In a way this is an echo of the passion that was to come but they make no comment about Jesus' major claim that the Temple of 'the Jews' is in fact the house of his Father[55] (Moloney 1998:77; Schnackenburg 1968:347).

According to Moloney (1998:77), the Temple is not only an area where people gather to worship God but a place among men and women where the God of Israel whom Jesus calls 'my Father' has his dwelling.[56] As for the Jews, they related to Yahweh through the Temple, but Jesus tells his listeners that their Temple belonged to him in a special way; it is the house of his Father (Moloney 1998:77). In a way Jesus is reclaiming the 'temple' from the 'marketplace' to the 'house of my father' (Moloney 1998:77). This is a new meaning that Jesus is giving to the temple. If his body was going to be the new Temple then Jesus would not want to be identified (to be one) with the chaos and defilement he had witnessed. Since he

[54] The comment that the disciples believed is characteristic conclusion to a Johannine narrative (Sanders 1968:120).

[55] Jesus' parents presented him, as a babe, to God within the Temple courts. At the age of twelve years, he is found in the Temple, the prophet-light on his face, as he heard and questioned the rabbis. The Temple was to him "My Father's house (Vaughan 1910:193).

[56] The synoptic tradition takes another understanding in which Isaiah 56:7 is cited claiming that the Temple is 'my house' (cf Mark 11:17; Matthew 21:13; Luke 19:46) (Moloney 1998:77). The Johannine Christology does not adopt this Jesus-centred focus. It is interesting to observe that as Jesus challenges the Jews on the abuse of the Temple, he actually goes beyond himself (Moloney 1998:77). He points all to God, his Father whose house had been defiled.

had declared that the Temple was his father's house, his body was going to be the new Temple of God's presence.

4.4 Jesus' body as the new Temple/presence of God

It is only in verse 18 that the Jews appear from nowhere in this passage (Moloney 1998:78; Schnackenburg 1968:348).[57] If the Jews had been there all along, they appear only to intervene, asking Jesus to show them a sign for acting in that manner. According to Moloney (1998:78) they demand that he gives them a sign, a miraculous proof in order to guarantee belief, but Schnackenburg (1968:348) argues that the Jews called Jesus to account and demand a sign to prove his right to act as he did.[58] In his view Sanders (1968:117) is not surprised that the Jews asked for a sign because if Isaiah could offer Ahaz a sign (1 Isaiah 7:11ff) Jesus might as well be expected to offer a similar authentication. In response Jesus answers them, *'Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up'* (verse 19) (Moloney 1998:78). More than a building is in question, as Jesus speaks of a temple that will be destroyed and raised up in three days; these words baffled the Jews (Moloney 1998:78).

Moloney (1998:78) goes on to argue that Jesus is not talking of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem or building up a Temple of stone, but of an impending occasion when in a very brief moment after its destruction, he will raise up the Temple. As far as Schnackenburg (1968:349) is concerned, tearing down and building it up refers both to the building as well as to the body of Jesus. Kerr (2002:49) argues that the crucifixion of Jesus amounts to the destruction of the new Temple (his body). However, we well know that the Temple building was never rebuilt after the 70 CE destruction. Jesus identifies the Temple of Jerusalem with his own body (Casciaro 1987:66). The levels at which Jesus and the Jews are communicating are totally different, hence the misunderstanding (Schnackenburg 1968:350). While the Jews have remained on the level of the physical Temple, Jesus is already talking of the Temple of his own body. Instead of seeing Jesus as the Temple they apply his words literally to the visible Temple made of stones, which rose before their eyes (Moloney 1998:78). Using Jesus' words, they speak of the 46 years it took to build up the Temple (Moloney 1998:78).[59] The Jews had failed to make a distinction between the temple that Jesus will raise after three

[57] For Perkins (1978:26), Lindars (1981:141) and McPolin (1979:28) the particular reference to the Jews here represents the Jewish religious authorities who were at loggerheads with Jesus.
[58] To the Jews, it meant a miraculous apologetic for his actions— a Mark of divine credence. Jesus never obliged such a request (Harris 2004).
[59] The Jews object to what Jesus is saying because they are concerned about this physical Temple in existence, the 2nd Temple built after the exile, so magnificently extended and decorated by Herod the Great that it could be said to have been re-built (Schnackenburg 1968:351; Sanders 1968:119).

days, and a temple made of stone (Moloney 1998:78; Sanders 1968:118). The Jerusalem Temple will be razed to the ground while the body of Jesus Christ will be raised from the grave (Hahn and Mitch 2003:22).

Harris (2004) asserts that John is pointing to the reality that the site where the Jews go in order to encounter God, the Temple, has been superseded and replaced by Jesus himself. It is in his risen Person that people would now meet God (cf. 1:18, 14:6). God's presence is no longer limited to the house of Israel but to all those who uphold the resurrection of Jesus in their hearts and communities.

According to Sanders (1968:120), it is clear in John that the body of Jesus is the focus of God's presence among people and so the reality which the Temple foreshadowed. This in a very close sense prefigures the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, things that the Jews could not grasp. Schnackenburg (1968:352) sees Jesus becoming the 'place' where God is to be adored, the true 'house of God' (John 1:51). It is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus that this spiritual Temple comes into being (Schnackenburg 1968:352). According to Sanders (1968:120), the Gospel replaces the law as Jesus replaces the Temple as the place where God dwells among people. He further sees the new as the old that is purified (Sanders 1968:121).

Perkins (1978:27) emphasizes that the cleansing and purification of the Temple was often associated with the new age. There shall be a time when there will no longer be a Temple in Jerusalem. The believing readers of the Gospel of John will encounter the presence of the crucified and yet risen Jesus as their 'Temple' (Moloney 1998:79). In that case the Temple ceases to be God's geographic dwelling place, but Jesus' risen body will become the spiritual presence of God (Brown 1966:114). This will be the new Temple.

With the purification of the Temple, there is hope that the whole humanity would come to worship God as he intended (Perkins 1978:27). To the Samaritan woman Jesus said, '... [T]he hour is approaching when you will pray to the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem' (4:21). The risen Lord becomes a 'place' of a new worship and through faith in him believers will enter into a new relationship with God their Father (McPolin 1979:29). According to Ratzinger (2011:22) with Jesus' resurrection, a new way of worshipping God begins. The problem of pointless sacrifices to Yahweh was emphasized by prophets such as Isaiah (1:17): "Why do I need your many sacrifices? Says the Lord... Learn to do good, seek

justice, strengthen the oppressed, render justice for the orphan, plead for the widow" (Friedman and Herskovitz (2019:3).

4.5 Conclusion

We started in this chapter by going back in time to explore issues of sacredness among the Jews as we did a socio-anthropological analysis of the context of Jesus. The exploration mainly focused on the Temple in Jesus' time called the second or the Herodian Temple. This Temple study pointed out the main functions of this sacred place and explained why it was eventually destroyed by the Romans.

While investigating what made this Temple special, we also explained the levels of sacredness in Israel and how these were mimicked in the Temple divisions. We found out how these divisions kept people separated instead of uniting them. We discovered that the presence of Yahweh in Israel and realized that the Temple was Yahweh's abode. We have explored how they came to see how the Shekinah of Yahweh came to dwell in the synagogues, in homes and in the hearts of the dedicated Jews (John 8:31–38).

After having done the background study of the Temple in Jesus' time, we then did an exegesis of John 2:13-22 (the cleansing of the Temple). We also realized that the Wedding at Cana, the Cleansing of the Temple and Nicodemus' story have the eschatological motif binding them together. We realized that it was the commercialization of the Temple that stirred up Jesus' zeal as he approached the Temple. We saw the method that Jesus used to cleanse the Temple and put to an end its defilement. As Jesus cleansed the Temple, we realized that the zeal for his father's house propelled his actions. Jesus explained the reason he was cleansing the Temple and how his father's house should not be turned into a marketplace. I have also explained the words of Jesus when he talked of the Temple that would be destroyed and be built up in three days. This Temple of his body was to be considered as the spiritual presence of God. We also found out that Jesus was preparing his audience for a time when the physical Temple would be no more. We also realized that Jesus as a resurrected Temple will dwell in the hearts of believers of diverse cultures and colours.

In the following chapter I will explain how inculturation hermeneutics is important and how it will be applied to this study. It will be crucial too to validate that our theoretical framework is tri-polar within the contextual African biblical studies. It is this tripolar method of interpretation that will facilitate a dialogue between the Njelele shrine and the biblical text. Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics will take a centre stage in the discourse. Owing to this

method, the Shona people will have a dialogue with their Christian counterparts in terms of sacredness.

Chapter Five

Conversation on notions of sacredness between John's Gospel and the Njelele shrine

5.0 Introduction

It is crucial at this point to position inculturation hermeneutics and appreciate the central role it plays in this study and adequately articulate what we are doing in this chapter. As already mentioned, our theoretical framework is tri-polar in nature, and our work is steeped in contextual African biblical studies. We already have the socio-anthropological analysis of the Jewish sacred places and sacred presence in chapter two, the socio-anthropological exploration of the Shona sacred places in chapter three and the interpretation of John 2:13-22 in chapter four. These have prepared the foundation for our process of interpretation, in which I as the interpreter will adopt inculturation hermeneutics (the ideo-theological pole) that will facilitate a dialogue between the Njelele shrine and the biblical text.

The Shona context and the biblical text will enrich each other through the interaction that will be initiated by inculturation hermeneutics. This method of interpretation is going to be the bridge, through which John 2:13-22 and the Shona context will converse. The inculturation process is important, for without it the study would have been a mere comparative study of the reader's context and the biblical text.[60] What inculturation seeks to achieve is to make biblical truths part and parcel of everyday life among the Shona Christians, without making the African lose their cultural identity. This method of interpretation aims at creating an objective interaction between the socio-anthropological realities of the Shona people and the Christian faith that is based on the biblical passage.

For us to proceed with the interpretation, it is crucial to trace the method and procedure that was proposed by Ukpong (1995a:10-13). There are many other ways of employing inculturation hermeneutics, but I have chosen the method that was explored by Ukpong. I will here expose how he lays down some ground rules and presents his five-step procedure for inculturation. I will evaluate his method and propose a four-step procedure that will be used here. My first step will allow us to identify similarities between the biblical text and the Shona context. In the second step I will do the opposite and point out the dissimilarities

[60] West (2018:248) quotes Anum (2000:468), Ukpong (2000a:12) and Holter (2002:88-89) who portrayed a bi-polar approach (comparative method) in which the biblical text and the African context interpreted each other.

between the two. In the third step I will allow the biblical text (message of the Gospel) to critique the Shona context. The fourth step will give a chance to the Shona context to enlighten and challenge the biblical text. At all the four stages of the interpretation, some form of appropriation (change of understanding and behaviour) will be taking place, since the Shona context and the biblical text will be given a chance to interact and enrich each other. The end result of this process (inculturation hermeneutics) is changing the African context, in which the Shona Christians will be encouraged to develop and improve their approach to sacred spaces.

5.1 Ukpong's procedure for inculturation

Mensah (2024:1) asserts that the key dimension of the new approach to biblical interpretation on the continent has been the call by African scholars for greater dialogue with elements of African culture and tradition. This is the gap that is here being filled in by Ukpong's inculturation hermeneutics where the Shona context is forming the subject of interpretation of the Bible (Masenya 2016). Masenya (2016) quotes Ukpong (2002) who argues that the biblical text must not be studied as an end in itself but rather as a means to an end. Ukpong (2002:18), quoted by Masenya (2016) advocates for inculturation hermeneutics, where the past collapses into the present, and exegesis fuses with hermeneutics. The emphasis here is on the ordinary readers[61] of the Bible in the communities who working with individual theologians begin to interpret the biblical texts for the sake of societal transformation (Masenya 2016). According to Ukpong (2001b), who is quoted by Masenya (2016),[62] the theologians should be willing to share their tools with ordinary readers and be ready even to be taught by them. Biblical scholars cannot predetermine how the reflection will turn out for this is an ongoing process that requires humility on the part of the biblical scholars. Moyo

[61] Ukpong (2000:11) calls these ordinary readers *communities that receive the tex*t. Ukpong (2000:23) identified the ordinary readers as non-biblical scholars who are important partners in the academic interpretation of the Bible. He sees them also as distinct from those who produced the biblical text itself.

[62] Masenya (2016) asserts that the elite/biblical scholars need to pause and find out if their scholarship is committed more to the (elitist) peers than to people on the grassroots. Masenya (2016) goes on to point out a situation in South Africa, where upward mobility remains critical for all academics, including those in the disciplines of Biblical Studies. She then wonders if the scholars' commitment to a biblical hermeneutic from below could prove rewarding. She poses another question: do ordinary people whom Ukpong puts on a pedestal have access to what the elite write about? (Masenya 2016). Masenya (2016) is justified to pose such a question because Ukpong (2002b:23) profiles ordinary readers as people who live by the world-view provided by their traditional cultures, they are poor and marginalised, they suffer economic, social and political disadvantage, and are found in both rural and urban areas, they are not trained theologically, they are illiterate, they have a low social status, and scars of the struggle mark their lives. These ordinary readers need to be emancipated from all these ills while using their context and the Bible as a stepping stone to their transformation.

(2013:209) weighs in and asserts that inculturation is the ideal for the church where there is respect for the other as an equal creation of God.

In inculturation hermeneutics it is required that the reader be an insider in the culture that is the subject of interpretation (Ukpong 1995a:5), as he remains accountable to his context (West 2018:258). The reader should not be a mere uncommitted or objective scholar. According to Ukpong (1995a:10), a preliminary requirement for doing inculturation hermeneutics is recognition of, and loyalty to, the inculturation hermeneutics which pursues robust interaction of the Christian faith with all facets of African life and thought. Ukpong (1995a:10) further recommends that the interpreter should critically review their situation and biases for the purpose of using them critically and creatively (Ukpong 1995a:10). The third condition is that the interpreter must also be dedicated to the Christian faith, and to the process of actualizing the biblical message within the context (Ukpong 1995a:10). Ukpong (1995a:5) asserts that interpreting a biblical text is a complex process that involves an interpreter in a certain context, making meaning of a biblical text for a specific purpose, utilizing a definite conceptual framework and its method.

Ukpong (1995a:10-13) draws up a five-step procedure for inculturation hermeneutics as follows: in step one he explores the historical aspects of Palestine and those of West Africa, in step two he analyses the interpreter's contemporary context, in step three he scrutinizes the historical context of the text in Jesus' time, in step four he draws up similarities between the biblical text and the contemporary African context, in step five he speaks of gathering the fruits of the discussion and actualizing the message into life situation. His context is West Africa, and African in general (though he does not give a specific location), Luke 16:13 and Luke 8:40-56 are his model texts, and he uses inculturation hermeneutics as his ideo-theological pole. In the following sections, I will give a detailed account and step by step methodology of Ukpong's (1995a) inculturation hermeneutics.

5.1.1 First step

According to Ukpong (1995a:10), the *first step* in the analysis process is recognizing the interpreter's definite context, that vigorously relates or approximates to the historical background of the text and explaining his or her perception in relationship to the text. He goes on to state that the process of identifying the interpreter's specific context and perspective involves a dialogue between the total context of the interpreter and the historical context of the text (Upkong 1995a:10). Here are some of the helpful questions that Ukpong (1995a:10) asks: what societal, cultural, political, commercial or spiritual setting does the text

reflect and what situation in my context relates to it? (Ukpong 1995a:10). Ukpong (1995a:10) questions how and why would the text have been important and significant in its historical context, and what issues in my context does this reflect? He then picks up historical aspects in Palestine that are related to the story of the Shrewd Manager (Luke 16:13) and the Woman with the flow of blood (Luke 8:40-56), which correspond to his contemporary situation (Ukpong 1995a:11). Ukpong uses two biblical texts for his illustration and yet one could have been sufficient since each text has its unique socio-historical setting. However, using two unrelated biblical texts can be confusing and make one miss the target. My biblical text for interpretation in this case is going to be John 2:13-22.

5.1.2 Second step

In the *second step* Ukpong (1995a:11) analyses the interpreter's context, which is to form the background against which the text is to be read. He gives an example of the aspects that can be scrutinised by the reader: 1- phenomenological, 2- socio-anthropological, 3- historical, 4- social analysis, 5- religious (Ukpong (1995a:11). At all these five aspects Ukpong searches for components that correspond to his situation in West Africa, since this is his contemporary environment/the context of the reader. He suggests that the five aspects can be investigated depending on the reader's context and what he/she wants to arrive at (his/her objective). Here he allows some flexibility so that the reader can utilize aspects that only apply to his/her context. West Africa is vast, Ukpong (1995a) could have chosen a particular cultural context and make it specific. I will use socio-anthropological tools to analyse the cultural context of the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

5.1.3 Third step

In the *third step* Ukpong (1995a:12) analyses the historical context of the two texts in the time of Jesus. He argues that insights about the text are brought to the fore by studying the historical context of the text. At this level he emphasizes how the historical analysis of the text helps to sharpen the focus of the text, in relationship to a contemporary context (Ukpong 1995a:12). At this level Ukpong places the biblical text in the context of the historical Jesus. This brings life back to the text as it is analysed within its particular context. I will follow suit and analyse the context of the historical Jesus basing ourselves on John 2:13-22.

5.1.4 Fourth step

Ukpong (1995a:12) regards the *fourth step* as the interpretation of the biblical text in relationship to the contemporary context that has already been analysed. He points out that this has many components. However, they are listed as: 1- a serious assessment of current

interpretations, 2- textual examination using a range of tools dependent on the nature and theme of the text, 3- engaging the text in its wider settings within the canon for the purpose of further expounding the focus of analysis (Ukpong 1995a:12). In his attempt in this, Ukpong (1995a:12) identifies immediate and mediate contexts of the text and locates each of his selected texts within the general framework of Luke's style and theology. After all this he embarks on interpretation, whose goal is to come to the meaning of the text with passion in a present situation (Ukpong 1995a:12). In this case he brings into interaction the two texts and the contemporary African context by drawing similarities between the two. By so doing some form of interaction begins to take place. The similarities between the text and the contemporary African context help demystify the relationship between the two entities. The two are brought close to each other in this way.

5.1.5 Fifth step

The fifth step, according to Ukpong (1995a:12), is gathering together the fruits of the discussion and a commitment to actualizing the message of the text in concrete life situation. Ukpong does not specify how the gathering of the fruits is done. He leaves it to the interpreter to apply only what suits his or her situation. This is the place where transformation can take place.

Ukpong (1995a:13) concludes the procedure by asserting that,

> It is important to remark that in actual exegesis it may not be necessary to follow all the above steps as we have analysed them – two steps could be telescoped into one. Also it is not necessary to follow the order of the steps as presented here. The nature of the text may dictate a different order. What is, however, important is that analysis of the text of interpretation is given at the beginning as it is what should condition the valuation of the discussion in the other steps.

In these remarks above, it is clear that Ukpong's procedure of inculturation hermeneutics is not cast in stone. It is from his encouraging remarks that I will attempt to re-arrange his procedure and come up with something that will be applicable to this study.

5.2 My process of inculturation

As already encouraged by Ukpong (1995a:10), I am aware of and are committed to inculturation hermeneutics. I (representing the Shona people) have already critically reviewed

my conditioning and biases and are using them critically and creatively.[63] As already mentioned, inculturation is the bridge that is built between the biblical text and the reader's context and allows the biblical text and the reader's context to dialogue (West 2018:247). West (2018:247) calls it the pole of appropriation. I acknowledge together with Ukpong (1995a:5) that the process of inculturation hermeneutics is complex. However, I am going to attempt this process by drawing from the procedure he has laid down (Ukpong (1995a:10-13). I intend to work around his method of inculturation hermeneutics and come up with a procedure that works for my context. The context of the biblical text has already been analysed in chapter two, the interpretation of John 2:13-22 (biblical text) is in chapter four and the reader's context (the Shona cultural beliefs) has been dealt with in chapter three. With these three poles, John 2:13-22, the Shona people and inculturation hermeneutics of the interpreter in place, the tri-polar theoretical framework is set.

5.2.1 First step

In the *first step* I will identify socio-cultural aspects of sacredness that are similar in the context of the biblical text (John 2:13-22) and the Shona cultural context. As Ukpong (1995a:10) poses probing questions in his first step, so I shall ask the following questions: 1- which socio-cultural and religious situation does the context of the biblical text reflect, which approximates with the context of the Shona people? 2- what concerns in the Shona context does the context of the biblical text reflect? I draw answers to these questions from the socio-anthropological analysis of the biblical text, the socio-anthropological analysis of the cultural beliefs of the Shona people, and the interpretation of John 2:13-22. Pointing out corresponding similarities, gives the Shona context and the biblical text a chance to interact, thereby making the concerns of the Shona community a subject of interpretation. Here I will list the similarities that are present in both contexts. Another level of enrichment also takes place at this stage as the contextual reader realizes that they share some things in common.

5.2.2 Second step

In the *second step* I will do the opposite of step one. In this section I will bring the biblical text and the Shona context again into conversation, by pointing out conflicting aspects between the two. The dissimilarities should not threaten any of the two but should make them recognize each other's uniqueness and strengths. This is a shift from the traditional inculturation hermeneutics where comparative tools were used to sanitize the interaction

[63] As Ukpong (1995a:10) recommends, we are committed to the Christian faith (as Catholics), and to the process of actualising the biblical message within the context.

between the text and the reader's context (West 2018). Proper dialogue begins when these two poles are viewed in their uniqueness.

5.2.3 Third step

In the *third step* I will acknowledge that the biblical text is the sacred Word of God, and it stands as a critique to the reader's context (Ukpong 1995a:6) and in this case the Shona Christian of Zimbabwe. The aspects of the Shona cultural beliefs that need to be adjusted will be pointed out. The main aim of inculturation hermeneutics is for changing the African context (West 2018:248). Ukpong (1995a:9) quotes Stendahl (1984:4), who asserts that for Christians the Bible is seen as the Word of God containing norms for Christian living. It carries with it this authority throughout the interpretation exercise. Transformation happens here as the Shona cultural norms are critiqued and put in line. The Gospel message will challenge the Shona context, *for the Bible is seen as sacred text, a book of devotion and norm of morality* (Ukpong 2000:25). Not all that is in the Shona cultural context needs to be maintained as it is. Some things need to be changed so as to embrace the Gospel message with openness. In the same vein (Masenya 2016) asserts that African women theologians in their biblical hermeneutics critique some of the African cultures for their lifedenying elements in African women's lives (Masenya 2016). The same is critical in our interpretation at this step for there is no culture that is perfect or innocent.

5.2.4 Fourth step

In the *fourth step* our inculturation hermeneutics will help us to point out how a Shona Christian's perspective can be enlarged or enriched by their context (1995a:6). There are aspects of the Shona culture in terms of sacredness that can help open up the Christian mind. In this segment Ukpong (1995a) believes that some aspects can be adopted into Christian fellowship, if they help one to be fully alive. The life-giving cultural aspects of the Shona people can prove to be essential to Christianity. Some form of transformation takes place at this level, as a Shona Christian adopts into his/her way of life some of his/her cultural practices that enrich the Gospel message. The Gospel message finds in these cultural values a home to prosper and thrive.

After having stipulated our road map for the inculturation process I am now going to open up the engagement by pointing out notions of sacredness that are similar in John's Gospel and the Njelele shrine.

5.3 Notions of sacredness that are similar in John's Gospel and the Njelele shrine

At this level of interpretation, I will be looking for areas where there are similarities. There are many concepts of sacred places in the Gospel of John (2:13-22) that resonate with those of Shona people who practice their traditional religion and honour the Njelele shrine. In this section I have come up with four similarities.

5.3.1 Yahweh's dwelling place/Mwari's dwelling place

The Jews regarded the Temple as Yahweh's house (Grelot 1967:85). It has already been seen that the Temple in Jerusalem was Yahweh's dwelling place (Moloney 1998:77). The honour and respect accorded to Yahweh in the Temple among the Jews, was simply because this was his dwelling place. Jesus calls it my 'father's house' (John 2:16). The same too has been observed of Mwari who dwells at the Njelele shrine (Makuvaza 2008:164) and in Shona worship in general. At the national shrine at Njelele offerings were left in the cave because that was Mwari's dwelling place. Respect and reverence are accorded to the shrine in Njelele because it is the residence of Mwari who does not tolerate disrespect. The voice that speaks at the Njelele shrine is the voice of Mwari. If Mwari did not dwell there the voice would not have been heard. In both the Temple and at the Njelele shrine there is a Creator who dwells among the people. God is close to them since God dwells in their midst.

Catholic Christians pay homage to and have high regard for the Church buildings where God dwells. In the Church they also regard the altar and the tabernacle as the most sacred places. The presence of God is felt more in Church or in a Chapel compared to other places. The presence of Christ in his risen body should also be felt in individuals and communities of believers. This should follow the way the ancestors' and Mwari's presence is felt in the homes (especially the hut). The Shona people culturally believe that the ancestors are present at the stoep, the hearth and the raised platform in the round kitchen. The Shona Christians need to incorporate this by venerating their Saints and making their presence felt locally and in their homes. The corners that are culturally dedicated to ancestor veneration can be turned into prayer corners for the family. Just as in the Shona culture the father (or significant other) could take the leading role in leading prayers for the family. In most cases, it is the mothers who lead prayers in the Shona Christian homes. Pious pictures, the Cross and other Christian materials can be used to decorate the homes so that they can be visible symbols of unseen realities. Holy water kept in small containers and Bibles need to take a centre stage in the homes. As children go to bed they can be sprinkled with holy water by the father or the

mother so that they are sanctified as they go to bed. Christian homes should be surrounded by this sacred air that is felt in traditional homes. This is the place where these ordinary Christians can reflect on their Christian journey and find inspiration for faith growth.

5.3.2 The sacredness of the Temple/The sacredness of the Njelele shrine

Mbiti (1975:11) has been arguing that some of the sacred objects and places are made by people, while others are taken in their natural form and set apart for religious purposes. The Njelele shrine is regarded as a sacred place that was taken from its natural form and dedicated to Mwari. It is at this place that the voice of Mwari was heard speaking and giving advice to those who went to consult on national and individual issues (Ranger 1999:3; Bourdillon 1982:269). The voice adds something to the sacredness of the shrine because it is regarded as the voice of the Creator. At Njelele those consulting Mwari would stand at the entrance of the cave barefooted because they are at the threshold of God's presence. Taboos and restrictions were put in place so as to maintain the order as prescribed by Mwari. The mountain that houses the cave too is regarded as sacred and no one cuts trees there for it is a taboo. It is a serious crime to be at the precinct of the shrine in Njelele without having been summoned.

It has already been discovered that the Temple in Jerusalem is a good example of a sacred place that was made by human hands, though it was built on Yahweh's dwelling place. Nobody was allowed into the Holy of Holies except for the High Priest on the day of Atonement. Since the Temple was sacred, those praying to Yahweh from all over the world would do so while facing the direction of Jerusalem, and while in Jerusalem they would pray facing the direction of the Temple. While in the Temple the Jews would face the direction of the Holy of Holies.

The Jews had a sacred Temple in Jerusalem, and the Shona people have the holy shrine in the Njelele. The need to keep the Temple pure and uncontaminated is very much experienced at the Njelele shrine also. The sacredness must be maintained at the shrines at all costs. Jesus emphasized the importance of keeping the Temple pure as he cleansed it.

The Shona Christians going to Church should have the same reverence and respect for God's house as much as is accorded to the traditional shrines and holy places. The generality of the Shona Christians must sense an affinity for natural holy places like the Chigona Mountain in Mutemwa in Mashonaland East Province, where people go for night vigils to pray the rosary and the Way of the Cross. It is said that miracles have happened at this sacred place, and they are connected to John Bradburne, a missionary who was martyred there (Mokgoatšana and

Mudyiwa 2020:5). Local people believe that he was a holy man, who risked his life taking care of lepers there. The Shona Christians should not focus only on the sacredness of the Church buildings as the only place where God dwells. Most Christian celebrations and rituals take place within the walls of the church buildings, but a way should be found to incorporate more of the natural sacred places into the fold of Christian holy places.

5.3.3 Pilgrims to Jerusalem Temple for feasts/Pilgrims to the Njelele shrine for rain-making ceremonies/celebrations

Pilgrimages are a prominent feature at both the Temple in Jerusalem and the cave shrine in Njelele. Jews made pilgrimages to Jerusalem Temple three times a year, for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths.[64] They were not supposed to appear before the LORD empty-handed (Deut. 16:16). According to rabbinic literature, one of the purposes of the pilgrimage was to study the Torah.[65] The Njelele shrine is open to receive pilgrims from March to November.[66] Representatives of communities are selected to go on a pilgrimage to the Njelele shrine for the rain-making ceremony (Rasmussen and Rubert 1990:232). They remain there for a period long enough to brew beer that is taken during the ceremony while some is poured in libation. At the Temple in Jerusalem pilgrims were expected to offer burnt offerings of sheep, cattle, and doves. At the Njelele shrine bulls are slaughtered and the meat eaten by the pilgrims. Pilgrims to the Temple in Jerusalem came from diaspora in order to honour Yahweh. The same is still obtainable at the Njelele shrine, as people from as far as Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa go to pay homage to the shrine.

Going on a Christian pilgrimage is not new among the Shona people as they had this experience long before Christianity was introduced to them. They only need to intensify their pilgrimages to Churches and other designated Chapels for their spiritual enrichment. More and more there are local Christian places for pilgrimage that attract huge numbers, like Chigona Mountain[67] (Mokgoatšana and Mudyiwa 2020:2). They should own these places as much as they identify themselves with their Church buildings. Miracles have also been recorded at some of these holy places (Mokgoatšana and Shoko 2020:5), as already

[64] Shmuel Safrai https://www.jerusalemperspective.com/2392/
[65] (Shmuel Safrai, Pilgrimage in the time of Jesus) https://www.jerusalemperspective.com/2392/
[66] (Marizani, Njelele is not just a rain-making shrine) https://kalanga.org/culture-and-travel/njelele-not-just-a-rain-making-shrine/
[67] (Mbanje, Of the mysteries, miracles and a martyr…) https://www.newsday.co.zw/news/article/69641/of-mysteries-miracles-and-a-martyr

mentioned above. Places for pilgrimages can sometimes bring inner or physical healing, renewal and conversion too.

5.3.4 Defilement of the Temple in John followed by cleansing/The desecration of the Njelele shrine followed by cleansing

Defilement of a sacred place happens when a consecrated object is used or comes in contact with the profane. In John 2:13-22 there is a glaring example of Temple defilement. At the Njelele shrine there too have been incidents of sacrilege.[68] In the case of the Temple this was brought about by the commercial acts of the sellers of cattle, sheep and doves, and the trade of the money changers. According to Jesus, a house that was meant for prayer, had been turned into a marketplace. During the 1896-1897 uprising against the colonial rule, the priests at the Njelele shrine were taken into custody and some were killed (Munyuki 2015:39). The shrine was left with no one to take care of its affairs. It is claimed that Njenjema the High Priest was killed, and this made the white settlers to boast that they had killed Mwari. In the aftermath of this uprising, Africans were not allowed to continue with the pilgrimages, shrine consultations or rain-making ceremonies (Munyuki 2015:39). As a way of provoking the local people, the white settlers started surveying and cultivating areas around the shrine (Munyuki 2015:41). As far as the calendar is concerned, the settlers imposed that the resting day was going to be Sunday, as opposed to Wednesday which was the traditional day (Munyuki 2015:42). All these were elements that defiled the shrine and made the ancestors angry as they could no longer be honoured at the shrine.

In the 1940s Nkobambwe cleansed and restored the sacredness of the shrine. From that time onwards life came back to the shrine. From all over the country, people started to flock back to the holy place and the rain-making ceremonies were recommenced. Even if the shrine custodianship was contested, the revival of the shrine as a national phenomenon was welcomed everywhere (Munyuki 2015:44).

When Jesus saw the mayhem in the Court of the Gentiles, he made a whip and drove out of the Temple the sheep and cattle. He also scattered the money changers' coins and knocked their tables over. He then instructed the dove sellers to get their stuff out and stop using his father's house as a market. This is how Jesus cleansed the Temple so that it could go back to its original use as a house of prayer. At the Njelele shrine the cleansing of the defilement was

[68] The defilement is real and serious at the same time. It is actually on two levels. The contamination of the environment and the ritual contamination of the shrine, accessed at, https://www.thepatriot.co.zw/old_posts/christianity-and-the-desecration-of-njelele/

done through a ceremony and the white settlers asked for forgiveness. After the war of independence, a couple of cleansing ceremonies were carried out for groups that presented themselves to the custodians (Munyuki 2015:60; 2015:77). It is recorded that a group of liberation struggle veterans went to the shrine to cleanse themselves without the approval of the custodians. Carrying out such an enterprise on their own brought defilement to the shrine. An official cleansing ceremony had to be conducted to purify and restore the shrine so that it could continue to be used again. Traditional chiefs, traditional healers and the rain-makers (the hosana) are the ones who cleansed it. The ceremony was conducted at night.[69] There is a perception that a national cleansing ceremony should have been carried out soon after Zimbabwe became independent in 1980. The rationale being that a lot of blood was spilled during the armed struggle and innocent souls lost their lives. This was regarded as some form of national defilement. Some people use this omission to justify why there have been persistent droughts in the country.

A Shona Christian who accepts that they have done something that tarnishes the image of the community, or the Church should find it easy to appreciate restoration and forgiveness. In Christian settings, particularly Catholic, there is a Sacrament of Reconciliation that cleanses the individual and restores their relationship with God and their neighbour. Peace making and restoration of relationships that are damaged should be the work of every Christian.

5.4 Dissimilarities on notions of sacredness between John's Gospel and the Njelele shrine

Aspects of dissonance and disagreement on notions of sacredness between the Gospel of John and the Njelele shrine need to be pointed out. This is important because the two entities have to display their unique features that make them different. Even if there are places where they agree there is need to be sincere and point out the conflicts between the two contexts.

5.4.1 Jerusalem Temple as general in outlook/The Njelele shrine specifically for rain-making

The Jerusalem Temple catered for a cocktail of Jewish spiritual needs to all. The Temple had a broader scope in matters of worship and was not founded specifically for one particular function. As a central shrine, it was founded as the house where Yahweh could dwell. It was

[69] (Chronicle, Cleansing hailed) https://www.chronicle.co.zw/njelele-cleansing-hailed/

a place for worship, prayers and sacrifices. Major festivals and ceremonies were held there, and the law was taught there also. It was also a place where disputes could be settled.

The Njelele shrine is concerned about specific practical issues of life. It is a shrine specifically and originally established for rain-making ceremonies. The other services not offered there are delegated to the local/family and communal shrines, except for extreme cases. As a national shrine, the Njelele shrine caters for the rain needs for the whole country. Agriculture plays a great role in the Shona culture and provision of rain is understood as one of Mwari's prime duties. Like most of the cultural ceremonies, rain-making ritual is also performed at night.

When Shona Christians conduct public prayers for rain each, congregation does it on their own. Sometimes clusters gather together and have a day to pray for rain. They do not have a Church building that is dedicated only to rain-making. Even if they pray for rain, they do not perform any rain-making ritual, neither do they have specially trained rain ministers. Their traditional counterparts have the Njelele shrine, dedicated only to rain-making. Delegates are selected from different parts of the country if a prolonged dry spell or drought persists. There are special custodians whose specialty is interceding on behalf of the nation in terms of rain needs. Mwari sometimes withholds rain to send a message or if not happy with the moral conduct of the nation. Christians do not have such an outlook.

5.4.2 The Temple in Jerusalem was manmade/the Njelele shrine is a natural cave

On the one hand, as already mentioned, the ground on which the Temple in Jerusalem was built was sacred, that is why the Temple was erected there. According to Eliade (1957) it is the hierophany or theophany that makes a place or object sacred, whether manmade or from nature. The sacred Temple was built by human hands and the instruction to do so came from Yahweh himself (2 Samuel 7:1–17). The Herodian Temple that has been studied here was built on the foundation of Solomon's Temple on Mount Moriah or Temple Mount. The Temple built by Solomon was destroyed and rebuilt again by the Jews as they came back from exile. Since Herod the Great wanted to make peace with the Jews, he offered to renovate the Temple. It is the same Temple that Jesus cleansed, and it looks like the renovations were completed in 66 CE, only four years before it was razed to the ground in 70 CE by the Romans. The Herodian Temple was said to have been more glamorous than the one built by the returning exiles. It was made of expensive ornaments, and gold was used in most of the decorations. It took 46 years to complete the renovations.

On the other hand, the Njelele shrine has a shaky history about its inauguration, as it has already pointed out above. There are no written records that chronicle how it was established. What is available are oral traditions that indicate that the whole area of Matopo, the district in which the shrine is situated, was considered somehow sacred. The shrine is housed in a cave among the mountains made up of huge rocks. Nothing about the shrine shows signs of human manipulation. It was created by Mwari like that, and Mwari made a dwelling place out of it.

5.4.3 The Temple worship in Jerusalem had written scripture/the Mwari cult relies on oral traditions as their 'sacred text'

It is indicated already that there was a copy of the Sacred Scriptures in the Temple that was used as a validator of all other copies that had been made. The Jews had scripture written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek. These books were regarded as the word that Yahweh had spoken. The books of scripture were also believed to be sacred since they were inspired by Yahweh himself. As the Temple was destroyed the Jews kept the tradition of listening to the word of God in the synagogues. The adherents of Mwari cult at the Njelele shrine do not have any written scripture though it is expressed in the 'sacred texts' (the five pillars are not a composition in one written form). Their religion is unwritten oral sacred traditions that have been passed from one generation to the next. This is done through beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, and religious officials or leaders that Mbiti (1975:11), has identifies as the 'sacred texts' of the African Traditional Religion. The other way of keeping the culture was in the values that were promoted by the elderly. Even ceremonies for rain-making that were performed at the shrine were another bank of information about this Shona religion.

The Shona Christians have Sunday school programs that are specific and geared towards attaining a certain goal. Once that goal has been achieved the Sunday school training ends there. Catholic Christians follow such programs in preparation for sacraments such as the First Communion and Confirmation. A register is kept at the Parish and a set of questions are asked. As children pass the tests, they 'graduate' and the training stops as soon as the Sacrament has been administered or celebrated. Their counterparts have a continuous program that is not structured though effective in instilling values of sacred places in the children. Catholic Christians could be encouraged to draft programs that keep the children interested in the Bible stories. Sunday School programs must be compulsory for all children and these programs should be pushed into the homes where the parents oversee their Christian development. Once these stories are repeatedly recited, children become

repositories of the sacred scriptures, which they would in turn hand over to future generations.

5.5 What the Shona Christians can learn from the biblical text

Ukpong states that the biblical text is the inspired Word of God, hence it is meant to critique cultural practices that need purification and cleansing. In our case the critique aims at bringing light to some aspects of the Shona context. There are cultural aspects in our context that may go against the gospel message, and these would need to be liberated.

5.5.1 Jesus challenges the stoning of trespassers at the Njelele shrine

It has been recorded that trespassers at the Njelele shrine are stoned to death. This is rather harsh considering that in some cases it might be strangers who find themselves in such a predicament. The value attached to life cannot be erased by a transgression of this nature. There must be other ways of punishing and correcting the offender or allowing them to be heard first so as to defend themselves. Jesus of the Gospel of John would have condemned this practice for it is not life-giving. Every human being has the right to life. If Jesus had taken the same stance at the cleansing of the Temple, then nobody would have survived on that day, for both the traders and their clients were equally guilty. The treatment of the traders in the Temple could be given to the Njelele shrine offenders too. Jesus corrected a situation that had seriously gone out of hand, and he did it without threatening anybody with bodily harm or injury. The sentence proffered on the transgressors at the Njelele shrine is rather too harsh. As already noted, it is important to note that the inscription on the wall in the Temple also threatened with death any Gentile that went beyond their own court. The two cultures took the preservation of their sacred places as an extremely serious offense, worthy of capital punishment.

5.5.2 Jesus condemns power hungry leaders

Leadership squabbles are an issue at the Njelele shrine. The position of the High Priest is still not resolved. Some people at the shrine seem to be more interested in what they get from the system commercially. The leadership at the Njelele shrine has been accused of using their position to acquire personal wealth as they are said to have accepted gifts and presents (Munyuki 2015:48). It is asserted that they have also been demanding a fee from people who go there for consultation, a service that must be rendered free of charge. Some of these custodians have also been accused of siding with national politicians instead of aligning themselves to the local traditional leaders. This siding with the wealthy and the powerful has made them lose credibility and relevance in the eyes of the people.

It is alleged that some of the custodians of the shrine have made the Njelele shrine a succession battleground. Sitwanyana and his wife Ngcathu were at one point custodians of the shrine before their marriage turned sour. Ngcathu was sent away, and the husband took charge of the custodianship. The local traditional leaders never approved the move because Sitwanyana was siding with powerful national political leaders, and they considered Ngcathu (his estranged wife) as the rightful custodian. By allowing politicians into the shrine, Sitwanyana compromised the sacredness of the shrine. This political interference was considered as defilement of the shrine (Munyuki 2015:59). The custodians found themselves in this mess because they were after personal gains that came with being puppets of the politicians. The government officials wanted to have influence on the shrine so that they could use it for political expediency.

Jesus would condemn the greed (Matthew 23:25)[70] that is openly displayed by some of these custodians. As Jesus condemned the vendors in the Temple, he would still put in line those leaders who do not care about serving others. Servant leadership will in many ways repair the damage that is caused by corruption. He would not be impressed by the way the poor people are abused by the politicians of the day. This shrine was not established for personal enrichment. The same thing that Jesus condemned at the Temple in Jerusalem is also being experienced at the Njelele shrine.

The Shona Christians should shun from any behaviour that undermines the dignity of every person. Since Jesus has made a Temple/dwelling in the hearts of all people, they must regard each other as bearers of Christ. Each person must see themselves as God's Temple. Any act that dehumanizing the human body must be avoided and be condemned if it happens. Since the human race is regarded as the bearer of Christ, so injuring one is causing harm to humanity. What has caused so much pain in communities is the polarization between 'them' and 'us' and yet everybody was created in the image and likeness of God.

5.6 A time for enlarging perspectives (what the Shona context can teach a Christian believer)

This section in our hermeneutics helps us to see how a Christian's perspective can be enlarged by the Shona context. There are aspects of the Shona culture that can help enrich the Christian mind. Some of these life-giving cultural practices can help enhance one's life as a

[70] 'Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of cup and dish, and leave the inside full of extortion and intemperance' (Matthew 23:25).

Christian. In this segment Ukpong (1995a) believes that some aspects can be adopted into Christian fellowship if they help one to be fully alive.

5.6.1 African Traditional Religion practiced at the Njelele shrine is holistic

The beliefs of the Shona people in their traditional religion are not a one-day-of-the-week business as some Christians do. The Shona people are notoriously religious, just like the rest of the Africans (Mbiti 1969). They eat, smell, touch, hear and taste religion. There is no set aside time or place to approach or not to approach Mwari, for Mwari is in all they do. They prepare the seed for sowing under Mwari's directions, they plant as Mwari instructs, they tend their crops as Mwari looks after them, they harvest under Mwari's supervision and celebrate to thank the Creator for the harvest. In the Shona cultural setting, there is no particular day set aside for worship (e.g., Sunday, Saturday or Friday for others) for every day is a day where religion plays a crucial role.

The Shona people who have embraced Christianity could adopt the same mentality, so that they honour God all the days of the week. In this case this would strengthen their commitment to God and his people. Most Christians see worship as reserved to a Church building only and yet in Shona cultural context nothing happens, which is not connected to Mwari. Every step of the way is directed by Mwari. Religion is central in everything that an African does for he/she cannot survive without his/her religion. How many Shona Christians would feel like fish without water when it comes to Christian beliefs? There is need to intensify the home (where ordinary readers of the Bible reside) as a cell from which the Church is built. If the homes are strong and committed to their Christian roots and values, the Church as an institution will in turn become strong. The Shona Christians should stop taking Christianity as a part time occupation reserved to only a few minutes on Sunday. It is not something to be worn only on Sunday like 'the Sunday best' and be taken off as soon as the services is over. The presence of the Christians should be felt in places they reside so that it would be said of them as it was said of the early Christians (Acts 5:4:34-35).

5.6.2 The profane does not always oppose the sacred

Eliade, as already seen always posits the profane as the opposite of the sacred. Each time he mentions the sacred, he gives the profane as its opposite. For him, in terms of religion, there are two opposing forces: the sacred/positive/religious and the profane/negative/secular. This is mainly the world view of the context of the biblical text. As far as the Shona people

understand creation, everything in it is sacred.[71] There are only levels of sacredness depending on the issue at play. Items and things that are used for religious functions occupy a higher place on the plane of holy things. There is a thinking and philosophy in Africa in general and among the Shona in particular that appreciates all creation as holy. The understanding in Africa closely follows the philosophy that all He created was good (Genesis 1:31).

The perception among the Shona people is that reality is not viewed in dualistic form but as a unit. In that case reality is not seen as composed of matter and spirit, profane and sacred, secular and religious. Rather reality is perceived in visible and invisible dimensions (Ukpong 1995a:8). This approach will go a long way in helping Shona Christians to appreciate the oneness of the cosmos instead of separation that promotes division. This view is in line with Jesus' teaching on unity and oneness (John 10:30).

5.7 Conclusion

It was crucial to point out the position of inculturation hermeneutics and appreciate the central role it has played in this study. It has been applied here because it is a component of the tri-polar theoretical framework. The other two components were the Shona cultural notions of sacred places and the biblical text from the Gospel of John. Inculturation hermeneutics is normally regarded as the third pole that facilitates a dialogue between the reader's context and the biblical text. The socio-anthropological study of the Shona context and the biblical text prepared the foundation for our process of inculturation in this section.

My endeavour was to have the Shona context, and the biblical text enrich each other through the interaction that was initiated by inculturation hermeneutics. In order to proceed with the interpretation, the method and procedure that was proposed by Ukpong (1995a:10-13) were traced. Some of the ground rules and his five-step procedure for inculturation were exposed. His method was evaluated, and a four-step procedure was applied here.

The first step allowed us to identify four similarities between the biblical text and the Shona context. The four are as follows: the Njelele shrine and the Temple as dwelling places for the divine, the sense of holiness experienced at the Njelele shrine and the Temple, the Njelele shrine and the Temple as destinations for pilgrims and the need to cleanse the Njelele shrine and the Temple after they were defiled. In the second step I did the opposite and pointed out

[71] The human being is not seen as composed of body and soul, but as one person with visible and invisible dimensions (Ukpong 1995a:8).

two dissimilarities between the two sacred places. These were: the Jerusalem Temple was a structure built by hands while the Njelele shrine is a natural cave, the worship at the Temple was regulated by some written scripture while at the Njelele shrine oral traditions are at work. The third step allowed the biblical text to critique the Shona context. In this regard it was discovered that Jesus would condemn the stoning to death of the Njelele shrine trespassers and greedy custodians who are power hungry. The fourth step gave a chance to the Shona context to enlighten the Shona Christians. On this one the Shona religion was seen holistic and there is need for Christians to make their following of Christ a way of life not just a part time enterprise that happens only once a week.

In this section the Shona Christians have been challenged to open their eyes and see sacredness beyond the Church buildings. They have also been advised to make Jesus' presence felt in their homes by making their homes the dwelling place of the Risen Lord. In the same vein they have been encouraged to make their homes places of prayer in which everybody become a custodian of the Christian values and praxis.

It has also been realised that at all the four stages of our interpretation, some form of appropriation (change of understanding and behaviour) can take place, since the Shona context and the biblical text were given a chance to interact and enrich each other. The end result of this process (inculturation hermeneutics) is changing the African context, in which the Shona Christians are encouraged to be more committed to their Christian life. The inculturation process is important, for without it the study would have been a mere comparative study of the reader's context. If ordinary readers of the Bible are to be engaged, the route of inculturation has to be taken, so that the biblical texts may find a home in the hearts of all Christians. The incarnation of Christ in the hearts of believers is the beginning of the process of personal and societal transformation.

The following chapter shall sum up the findings. There shall be a recap of the main elements of the study and see how effective were the tools that were employed here. A couple of suggestions for further research will be pointed out at the end.

Chapter Six

Study Summary and proposed Areas for further Research

6.0 Introduction

This concluding chapter is going to sum up the study and make conclusions. This section will help in recapping what has been done in this study and how it has been done. The tools that have been put to use in this study will also be pointed out and be evaluated to test their effectiveness. As a way of concluding this research, some areas of further study will be pointed out. At the end a conclusion to the study shall be given.

6.1 Summarizing the project

In chapter one I laid the foundation for the study by presenting the theoretical framework and methodology. I explained that this study is based on African biblical scholarship, and I used the tri-polar theoretical framework. As a method it is composed of three major poles, which are: the biblical text (John 2:13-22), the reader's context (the Shona sacred places and the Njelele shrine in particular), and the ideo-theological pole of the interpreter (inculturation hermeneutics). Socio-anthropological tools were used so that I could separately investigate the Jewish and the Shona notions of sacredness. By so doing I went back in time and pointed out how they both perceived sacred places.

I pointed out that the ideo-theological pole that binds together the Shona context and the biblical text was an inculturation hermeneutics. This is the mediation tool which brings into conversation the two aspects. The main reason for the intervention is to create a dialogue between the Shona cultural beliefs and the biblical text. In order to facilitate the dialogue, I explained that I were to use a four-step inculturation procedure adapted from Ukpong's (1995a) five-step method of interpretation. Step one allowed us to compare the Shona sacred places and the biblical text by pointing out the similarities between the two. Step two exposed the areas of dissonance between the Shona culture and the biblical text. The third step explored and mentioned what the biblical text can correct in the Shona sacred places. The fourth step pointed out what the Shona Christians can learn from their cultural heritage. In all the four steps some form of transformation takes place in the perception of the readers as the two poles interact. By using inculturation hermeneutics in reading the Bible, it is hoped that the Shona Christians will inculturate more deeply their faith and the praxis it demands.

The method of this study was stated as qualitative. The research heavily relied on print and electronic literature review and analysis. No interviews were conducted. The socio-anthropological tools used in the research were meant to aid the researcher to practice distanciation. The use of such tools was crucial in trying to be systematic. The reader/researcher acknowledged his context (Shona in Zimbabwe) and is a committed Christian. It is strongly believed here that if the Africans are well aware and analyse their cultural heritage in terms of sacred places, they will find biblical understanding of sacred places more inspiring. Their understanding of Christian beliefs is enhanced through inculturation hermeneutics. By use of inculturation hermeneutics some kind of transformation takes place, both on personal and societal level.

In chapter two I defined space and place while elaborating the differences between the two and how they are interrelated. I have also discovered that as much as the two entities can be viewed in their abstract sense, they can easily be experienced in everyday lives of particular communities. Theories that govern social construction of space and place were also explored. With the help of Eliade (1957) I also pointed out what sacredness is and what it stands for. I also elucidated on sacred places and sacred space thereby bringing to the fore what makes ordinary places set apart for religious functions and rituals. Eliade (1957) elaborated that for the sacred to be manifested, the divine shows itself by way of signs and wonders. While observing all that happens around him, a human person never stops expressing the desire to live in sacred environment for it is pregnant with being. I also came to terms with the polarization brought about by Eliade as he put side by side the profane and the sacred, order and chaos, the centre and the periphery. Smith as a critique of Eliade, argued that the profane is not the opposite of the sacred but the profane is equal to the sacred. He was convinced that it is the profane that sustains the sacred, for the sacred is born out of the profane.

While still being enlightened by Eliade (1957) I also brought out aspects of sacred space in the Hebrew text. I observed that sacred places in the Hebrew text can be put into two categories: centralized and decentralized. In all these categories of sacredness, the glory of God and his presence are manifested. Greco-Roman temples were also an object of our study in this section. I discovered how this kind of architecture was involved and how these buildings were used as treasuries and banks in the olden days. At the end I explored the facts surrounding the destruction and desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem.

In chapter three I did an anthropological study of sacred places and objects of the Shona people of Zimbabwe, while concentrating on the Njelele shrine in the Matopo hills. In order

for us to dig deeply into these holy places, I had to endeavour to find out the overall role played by sacred places and objects in African Traditional Religion. Of the five pillars that constitute African Traditional Religion, I picked only sacred places and objects. I discovered that these aspects are part and parcel of any religion, for no religion can exist without holy places and objects. I also discovered that there is no religion that does not hold sacred places in high esteem, the Shona Mwari worship here included. I explored the origins and the belief systems of the Shona people of Zimbabwe in order to investigate their sacred places and objects.

By venturing into the Shona beliefs and holy places, I also learnt that there is a historical relationship between the Shona Mwari cult and Ndebele people. I explained how the Ndebele people arrived at the Matopo Hills in June of 1836, and how they adapted and modified their belief systems without ignoring the sacred places that surrounded them. I managed to put the Shona sacred places and objects into two categories: the family centred places and those of the larger community. I discovered also the role played by the awe-inspiring topology of the Matopo hills that makes it a home to about a dozen functional, or semi functional Mwari shrines.

As I proceeded, the Njelele shrine was singled out of all the shrines in the Matopo hills and discovered that its origins are contested, though its main purpose was for rain-making. I also ventured into the role played by the Njelele shrine in uniting the nation under one cult. This helped us to come to terms with how the Mwari cult came to influence the Ndebeles' daily live. I also pointed out how the Njelele shrine operates and how the officers (custodians) conduct their business as they consult the voice. By way of conclusion I mapped out the influence of the shrine on the revolution that brought independence, and self-rule to Zimbabwe.

In chapter four I did an exegesis of the John 2:13-22. In order to do justice to this exercise, I went back in time and explored issues of sacredness among the Jews as I did a socio-historical analysis of the context of Jesus. The exploration mainly focused on the Temple in Jesus' time, called the Second Temple or the Herodian Temple. The Temple study explored the holistic function of this sacred place and pointed out reasons why it was eventually destroyed by the Romans.

While investigating what made this Temple special, I also pointed out levels of sacredness in Israel and how these were reflected in the Temple divisions. I found out how these divisions

kept people separated instead of uniting them. I also explored the presence of Yahweh in Israel and realized that the Temple was Yahweh's abode. I discovered how the Shekinah of Yahweh came to dwell in the synagogues, in homes and in the hearts of dedicated Jews.

After having done the background study of the Temple in Jesus' time, I then did an exegesis of John 2:13-22 (the cleansing of the Temple). I realized that it is the commercialization of the Temple that made Jesus indignant as he approached the Temple. I came to terms with the method that Jesus used to cleanse the Temple and put to an end its defilement. As Jesus cleansed the Temple, I realized that the zeal for his father's house propelled his actions. Jesus explained the reason he was cleansing the Temple and how his father's house should not be turned into a marketplace.

I also explained the words of Jesus when he talked of the Temple that would be destroyed and be built up in three days. This Temple of his body was to be considered as the spiritual presence of God. I also found out that Jesus was preparing his audience for a time when the physical Temple would be no more. I also realized that Jesus as a resurrected Temple will dwell among people of diverse backgrounds.

It was crucial to point out the position of inculturation hermeneutics and appreciate the central role it played in chapter five. I used it because it is a component of the tri-polar theoretical framework. The other two components were the Shona cultural notions of sacred places and the biblical text from the Gospel of John. Inculturation hermeneutics is normally regarded as the third pole that facilitates a dialogue between the reader's context and the biblical text. The socio-anthropological study of the Shona context and the biblical text prepared the foundation for our process of inculturation in this section.

My undertaking was to have the Shona context, and the biblical text enrich each other through the interaction that was initiated by inculturation hermeneutics. For us to proceed with our interpretation, I traced the method and procedure that was proposed by Ukpong (1995a:10-13). I exposed some of the ground rules and his five-step procedure for inculturation. I evaluated his method and proposed a four-step procedure that I used in this study.

The first step allowed us to identify four similarities between the biblical text and the Shona context. The four were as follows: the Njelele shrine and the Temple as dwelling places for the divine, the sense of holiness experienced at the Njelele shrine and the Temple, the Njelele shrine and the Temple as destinations for pilgrims and the need to cleanse the Njelele shrine

and the Temple after they were defiled. In the second step I did the opposite and pointed out two dissimilarities between the two sacred places. These were: the Jerusalem Temple was a structure built by hands while the Njelele shrine is a natural cave, the worship at the Temple was regulated by some written scripture while at the Njelele shrine oral traditions are at work. The third step allowed the biblical text to critique the Shona context. In this regard I found out that Jesus would condemn the stoning to death of the Njelele shrine trespassers and also the greediness and hunger for power of the custodians. The fourth step gave a chance to the Shona context to enlighten the biblical text. On this one I saw that the Shona religion is holistic and there is need for Christians to make their following of Christ a way of life not just a part time enterprise that happens only for a few minutes and once a week. In the same vein the Shona Christians have been challenged to open their eyes and see sacredness beyond the Church buildings. They have also been advised to make Jesus' presence felt in their homes by making their homes the dwelling place of the Risen Lord. In the same vein they have been asked to make their homes places of prayer in which everybody become a custodian of the Christian values and praxis.

I discovered that at all the four stages of our interpretation, some form of appropriation (change of understanding and behaviour) can take place, since the Shona context and the biblical text were given a chance to interact and enrich each other. The end result of this process (inculturation hermeneutics) is changing the African context, in which the Shona Christians are encouraged to let the Christian message to be embodied in their own culture. The inculturation process is important, for without it the study would have been a general and uninvolved comparison of the Njelele practices and the passage from John's Gospel. If I need to engage the ordinary readers of the Bible, I have to take the route of inculturation, so that the biblical texts may find a home in the hearts of all Christians. The incarnation of Christ in the hearts of believers is the beginning of the process of personal and societal transformation.

6.2 Proposed areas for further research

I do not claim in this project to have exhausted all that has to be studied in terms of sacred places and sacred presence. What I have done in this study is just to scratch the surface in our bid to search for precious stones in terms of sacredness. Some of the areas I mentioned in passing or recognized as footnotes could be developed into full scale studies. Here I will propose a few areas for further study and deepening.

- More work could be done on the history of the Mwari cult to explore its origins.

- The work of Ukpong could be further integrated with the tri-polar approach and see how bet the ordinary readers of the Bible can be incorporated into the hermeneutics of inculturation and reading of the Bible.
- How can the Christian pilgrimages draw on the sense of pilgrimage in the Shona tradition?
- The sense of sacred space and place for the African Independent Churches who have no buildings.
- How to make ordinary Catholic readers the centre of biblical hermeneutics.

7.0 Conclusion

While working on this project, I realized that drawing on the culture of the readers of the biblical text can become more touching and more powerful for personal and societal transformation. By so doing, I realized that the personal and societal transformation was enhanced. As the Shona people embark on reading the Bible, they will now be more confident, knowing well that they have a foundation, on which to build their Christian lives in terms of sacred places. The reading of the Bible that takes into consideration the culture of the reader is the best thing that can happen to our ordinary readers of the Bible. One of the challenges in inculturation hermeneutics will be bringing to the same table, as equal partners, biblical scholars and the ordinary readers of the bible and have an equal and non-threatening reflection on the bible and African ‘sacred texts.’

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