

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING HOLY PLACES IN CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAN
CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE ATWEA PRAYER MOUNTAINS IN
ABASUA

DICKSON ANANE OKYERE

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

MAY, 2017

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CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE ATWEA PRAYER MOUNTAINS
IN ABASUA**

BY

DICKSON ANANE OKYERE

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY WITH MANAGEMENT**

DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

MAY, 2017.

DECLARATION

I, Dickson Anane Okyere, hereby declare that this Dissertation has been prepared by myself, that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree, that the work of which is a record has been done by myself, that all quotations have been distinguished by either quotation marks or indentation and all the sources of information specifically acknowledged by means of footnotes.

Signed:.....

Date:

Dickson Anane Okyere

(Student)

Signed:.....

Date:

Rev. Isaac Badu Danso

(Supervisor)

Signed:.....

Date:

Dr. Samuel B. Adubofour

(Head of Department of Theology)

DEDICATION

This work is first and foremost dedicated to the Lord God Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Rock of Ages and the Rose of Sharon, the giver of Life, for His protection and guidance in this program. He carried me on His wings and gave courage and hope when I almost gave up. Thank you my LORD and my God. To my beloved and most cherished wife Rev. Mrs. Vera Blessing Okyere for her prayer and maximum support, to my wonderful parents, Mr. and Mrs. Okyere for their encouragement, to my church, Eagles Revival Outreach for their support in prayer and for coping with my absence during my year of study. May God richly bless them.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----|------------------------|
| APM | Atwea Prayer Mountains |
|-----|------------------------|

Abstract

The idea of Christian spirituality and relevance for the life of every Christian cannot be overemphasized. Since the early days of Christianity, individuals have embarked on many pilgrimages for the purposes of strengthening their relationship with God and growing in the power of His Spirit. Some also, embark on Christian pilgrimages for the very purposes of, wanting to be closer with God in their relationship with Him. Particularly, this study focuses on the Atwea mountains as a sacred place. The study, mainly, discusses the challenges that confront the management of the Atwea Mountains as a sacred place. Since, its inception as a place of God's presence in Ghanaian Christianity, thousands of pilgrims embark on spiritual journey on the mountains every year. However, this massive development in terms of the number of pilgrimages that climb to the top of the mountain is not without challenges. This study investigates and proposes a number of ways through which some of these challenges can be managed. The study employs a phenomenological approach as a methodology in analyzing the issues that emerges in the study. Again, the study also discusses the Atwea Mountains as a sacred place. In drawing data extensively through observation and interviews from the various leaders of the camps on top of the mountains, the study outlines a number of challenges that confront the management of the place, and the various strategies that could be employed to deal with the situation.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| DECLARATION | ii |
| DEDICATION..... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT | iv |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS..... | v |
| Abstract | vi |
| CHAPTER ONE | 1 |
| GENERAL INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background to the Study | 1 |
| 1.2 Statement of the Problem | 4 |
| 1.3 Research Questions | 4 |
| 1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study | 5 |
| 1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study | 5 |
| 1.6 Methodology and Methods of Data Collection | 5 |
| 1.6.1 Method of Data Collection..... | 6 |
| 1.6.1.1 Primary Sources | 6 |
| 1.6.1.2 Secondary Sources | 6 |
| 1.6.1.3 Participant Observation..... | 6 |
| 1.6.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure/Technique | 7 |
| 1.7 Literature Review | 8 |

| | |
|---|----|
| 1.7.1 The Concept of the Sacred Space | 8 |
| 1.7.2 Christian Spirituality | 12 |
| 1.8 Significance of the Study | 17 |
| 1.9 Organization of the Study | 17 |
| CHAPTER TWO | 18 |
| HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ATWEA MOUNTAINS | 18 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 18 |
| 2.2 Brief History of Atwea Mountains | 18 |
| 2.2.1 Nana Yaw Obogya’s settlement and the institution of chieftaincy at <i>Yaase</i> | 20 |
| 2.2.2 Abasua: Corruption of <i>m’abesoε wo</i> | 21 |
| 2.2.3 Religion of Abasua Community | 22 |
| 2.3 Earlier Usage of the Atwea Mountains | 23 |
| 2.4 The Maiden Visit and Subsequent Religious Activities on the Atwea Mountains | 24 |
| 2.5 Significance of the Transfiguration Today for Christians | 26 |
| 2.6 Conclusion..... | 28 |
| CHAPTER THREE | 29 |
| ATWEA MOUNTAINS AS A SACRED/HOLY PLACE..... | 29 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 29 |
| 3.2 Sacred Space and Prayer Rituals..... | 29 |
| 3.3 Prayer Rituals in a Christian Sacred Space Context | 32 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 3.4 Atwea Mountains as a Sacred Space | 35 |
| 3.4.1 Other Prayer Camps and Christian Ministries on the Mountain | 35 |
| 3.5 Religious, Moral, Health and Environmental Sanitation issues on the Atwea Mountains..... | 37 |
| 3.6 Conclusion..... | 39 |
| CHAPTER FOUR..... | 40 |
| CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING THE ATWEA PRAYERMOUNTAINS AS A SACRED PLACE | 40 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 40 |
| 4.2 Challenges Confronting the Maintenance of Atwea Mountains | 41 |
| 4.2.1 Sale of food..... | 41 |
| 4.2.2 Extortion of Money | 44 |
| 4.2.3 Disobedience | 46 |
| 4.2.4 Theft Cases | 48 |
| 4.2.5 Occult Practices and Syncretism | 49 |
| 4.3 Strategies Needed to Avert the Challenges | 51 |
| 4.4 conclusion..... | 53 |
| CHAPTER FIVE | 54 |
| SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION | 54 |
| 5.1 Summary | 54 |
| 5.2 Conclusion..... | 54 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 5.3 Recommendations | 55 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 58 |
| INTERNET SOURCE..... | 60 |
| PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED | 61 |

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The sacredness of a place may be informed by the belief of the presence of the supernatural in that space. According to David Harlett, a Sacred Place can be defined as “that portion of the earth surface which is recognized by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem. Sacred Space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity by the way people define and characterize it through their culture, experience, and goals.¹In recent times, Jerusalem is now believed to be the city or dwelling place of God. Many people including presidents of various nations, ministers of state, and leaders of churches travel on daily basis to Israel on what is known as “Holy Land tour”. It is very interesting to note that, many organizations have been organizing such tours to the holy land and are making profits from such tours. Perhaps it is against this backdrop that John Rea and George Turner describe Jerusalem as the “spiritual capital of the world”.² Their description validates the United Nations’ resolution of 1947 which designated Jerusalem an international holy city.³The importance of sacred or holy places in the development of Christian spirituality is something that cannot be overemphasized. A holy place plays a very significant role in the exercise of people’s faith and helps them to get closer or commune with God in special ways. A closer look at the bible reveals a number of sacred or holy places that were set up by devoted men of God, and God himself for the purpose of worship or as a meeting place where God always communicated with His children. For example in the Old Testament, there are several biblical references of sacred places which Finely E. Harvey

¹ David Harlett, *Sacred Places in Asia and their Contemporary relevance*, Last modified December 2004: wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd44-11.html, Accessed 15th March, 2016.

² John Rea and George Turner, *Jerusalem: Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), 905.

³ Rea and Turner *Jerusalem: Wycliffe Dictionary*, 905.

believes were often chosen as the place for worship or divine revelation. Some of these places include Moriah (Gen. 22:2), Sinai (Ex. 19: 18 – 20; 24:9 – 18), Zion (Ps. 2:6; 48:1 – 2) and Carmel (1 Kgs. 18: 19 – 39).⁴ The New Testament (especially the Synoptic Gospels, that is, Matthew, Mark and Luke), also gives some references to Jesus' mountaintop experiences. Popular among these experiences include the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:1-7:29) and the Transfiguration (Matt. 17: 1-21; Mk. 9:2ff.Lk. 9:28-36.; II Pet. 1: 16-18).The mountain plateau where Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, according to Donald R. Sime, has often been referred to as the Mount of Beatitudes.⁵ Many scholars have compared the Mount of Beatitudes to Mount Sinai, where God, through Moses, first taught his moral codes by the law (Ex. 19 – 20).⁶ For instance, Delitzsch is cited by Donald R. Sime as having called the Mount of Beatitudes the “Sinai of the New Testament.”⁷ Delitzsch thus corroborates the view of Thomas Watson that the law was first given on Mount Sinai and on the Mount of Beatitudes Christ expounded it.⁸The evidence of this, in the opinion of the present writer, is underscored in Grant R. Osborne's view about the inseparability between the Old and New Testaments, as far as Biblical hermeneutics is concerned. Osborne points out that;

It is impossible to separate the two testaments, and any truly biblical theology must begin with the recognition of unity and demonstrate such. The simple fact that there are at least 257 quotes and over 1,100 allusions of the Old Testament in the New shows the extent to which the latter built upon the former. In terms of vocabulary, themes, religious emphases and worship, the two depend upon one another. In terms of redemptive history, a clear typological relationship of promise-fulfillment exists between the testaments, and any concept of the progress of revelation in history (the backbone of biblical theology) must build upon this deeper interdependence.⁹

⁴ Finely E. Harvey, *Mountain: Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), 1157.

⁵ Donald R. Sime, *Mount of Beatitudes: Wycliffe Bible Dictionary* (Massachusetts, USA: Hinderickson Publishers, Inc. 2003), 1155.

⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Sri Lanka: New Life Literature (Pvt) Ltd, 2000), 56.

⁷ Sime, *Mount of Beatitudes*, 1155.

⁸ Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes* (USA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 16.

⁹ Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (United States of America: Intervarsity Press, 1991), 277.

In the medieval period for example, some pilgrims travelled throughout Scotland to sacred sites such as holy wells, churches, shrines and other sites. Some of the sites were particularly associated with healing. Such quests for healing or well-being sprang not only from the desire to seek alleviation but also from understandings that the spiritual experience available at these sites would aid recovery. The relationship between place, spirituality and healing continues today as people still seek healing of body, mind and spirit in similar sites. Isaac Owusu-Ansah in his work, “*Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*” has also outlined and discussed some Christian sacred spaces in the context of Prayer Camps in Ghana: Grace Deliverance Centre for the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), Kusa Camp for the Methodist Church Ghana (MCG), Edumfa Prayer Centre for the Church of Pentecost and Atwea Prayer Mountain.¹⁰ His research “sought to evaluate the use of (APM) in Ghanaian Christianity.”¹¹ The traditional notion of APM as a place for worship, prayer and divine revelation was, thus, the bottom line of Owusu-Ansah’s study. The subsequent influx of Christian pilgrims to the Prayer Mountain is perceived to contribute not only to the enhancement of the pilgrims’ spirituality, but also an improvement in the material condition of both the Abasua people and the pilgrims. On the other hand, some respondents perceive the influx as a source of empowerment to both the pilgrims and Abasua people. In addition to prayer and renewal programs that pilgrims patronize on the mountain, the place also serves as a hub of various lucrative business activities for both the natives of Abasua community and the pilgrims who patronize the prayer mountain. It is against this backdrop that the researcher set out to examine the challenges that these activities generate to the running of the place as a holy ground for spiritual activities

¹⁰ Isaac Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain in Ghanaian Christianity*, Long Essay (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon 2005), 5-48.

¹¹ Owusu-Ansah, *Abasua Prayer Mountain*, 49.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In this present work, the researcher wants to examine the challenges in maintaining sacred places within contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. One of the greatest challenges that most prayer centres or camps are having currently in Ghana, is the inability to maintain the place as a holy ground for spiritual activity and development for believers. In recent times, a number of activities such as the cooking of certain foods (in some of the camps, the place for doing this cooking are unauthorized and restricted) by believers who have come to pray, and also, the increasing selling of certain type of foods which does not boost fasting programs by indigenes of the Abasua on top of the mountains has become a major issue of concern to many people who often goes there to pray. Certain activities such as the extortion of money from people in the bush by some so-called prophets, the stealing of people's items such as mobile phones, money, etc. are all issues that have become a major concern to the leadership of the prayer mountain. These and other ill health behavior of people who climbs the mountain every day to seek spiritual nourishment from the Lord is the concern of this study. The study seeks to address these problems by outlining some possible solutions that can be adopted by the leadership of the prayer centres or camps to curtail some of the challenges to make the place a holy ground for people who go there to seek the face of the Lord.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research questions that the researcher addressed in the study are:

- i. What challenges are the leaders facing in maintaining the Atwea Prayer Mountains?
- ii. What extent has these challenges affected the running of the place as a holy ground for Christian spirituality?
- iii. What strategies have the leadership put in place to manage these challenges?

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the challenges in maintaining holy places in contemporary Ghanaian Christian spirituality using Atwea Mountain as case study. To do this, the following were the specific objectives of the study:

- i. To find out the challenges in maintaining holy places with a particular reference to the Atwea Prayer Mountain.
- ii. To explore and examine the effects of these challenges in the running of the Atwea Prayer Mountains.
- iii. To suggest ways that can be adopted to manage the challenges in the running of the Prayer Mountain.

1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study

There are a lot of holy places for Christian spiritual activities in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity. However, the researcher has chosen the Atwea Prayer Mountain as the focus of the study. This is because, the Atwea Prayer Mountains serve as a center for many Christian pilgrims in Ghana. Not only that, the mountains more or less has become the representative face for sacred places in Ghanaian Christian spirituality. This and other things influenced the choice of the place for this study.

1.6 Methodology and Methods of Data Collection

In studying a sacred space such as Atwea Prayer Mountain, a multi-dimensional approach is deemed useful. Therefore, in this study, mainly historical and phenomenological approach was employed.

In chapter two of the study, the historical method was employed in the description and analysis of the history of Atwea Prayer Mountains. In chapter three of the study, the phenomenological method was employed to study the sacred or holy space in contemporary Ghanaian Christianity.

This method is basically an approach to the study of religion which requires the scholar of religion to suspend judgments about the phenomenon being studied, by bracketing out potentially distorting presuppositions stemming both from confessional Christian theology and from positivistic science in order that, by using empathetic methods, he or she could enter into the experiences of the believers or adherents to achieve understanding-in-depth.¹²

1.6.1 Method of Data Collection

The researcher employed the following as methods of data collection;

1.6.1.1 Primary Sources

In this study, the researcher used both structured and unstructured interviews as one of the main means of data collection. The personal interviews include having a personal interaction with some pastors and leaders at the Atwea Prayer Mountains. There was also an interview with some of the leaders or key people in different prayer camps. In addition, luggage carriers, and certain personalities in connection to APM which are relevant to the work were also interviewed. The main focus was centered on the leaders of the camps.

1.6.1.2 Secondary Sources

In looking at the focus and scope of the study, the researcher used different secondary sources which include books, thesis, journals, articles et cetera relevant to this work.

1.6.1.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation, according to Kumekpor, “involves the idea of being both a spectator and an actor at the same time when observing and recording information. The observer must find a means of

¹² James L. Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), 209.

integrating himself into the group in one way or the other and attempt to observe and record from within the group.”¹³ This enables researchers to share their experience by not merely observing what is happening, but also feeling it.¹⁴ In addition to the researcher’s several trips to the Atwea Prayer Mountain, gave him the opportunity to participate in some of the activities at the prayer site. These include church / divine services on Sunday mornings, all-night prayer sessions on Wednesdays, communal labor on Saturday mornings, and healing and deliverance services on Wednesday mornings. Other activities observed were luggage carrying and sale of items such as hot water, anointing oil, Christian literature and provisions, etc.

1.6.2 Sample and Sampling Procedure/Technique

According to Bryman and Bell, sample is the segment of the population that is selected for investigation.¹⁵ It is a subset of the population, and consists of the individual that form the population. Cohen also defines sampling as a procedure used to select some elements of a population in such a way that they represent the actual characteristics of the total population.¹⁶ In this study, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique to select his respondents. Tom K.B. Kumekpor in his work, *Research Methods Techniques of Social Research*, states that in purposive sampling, “the units of the sample are selected not by a random procedure, but they are intentionally picked for study because they satisfy certain qualities which are not randomly distributed but they are typical or they exhibit most of the characteristics of interest to the study”.¹⁷

¹³ Tom K. B. Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research* (Ghana: Son Life Press and Services, 1999), 72.

¹⁴ Mark Saunder, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, “*Research Methods for Bussiness Students*” (England: Pitman Publishing Imprints, 1997), 283-284.

¹⁵ Alan Bryman, and Emma Bell, *Bussiness Research Methods* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25.

¹⁶ Conhen L. Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2000), 147.

¹⁷ Kumekpor, *Research Methods and Techniques of Social Research*, 72.

The categories of people that were interviewed include luggage carriers, and certain personalities in connection to APM which are relevant to the work were interviewed. Much attention was centered on the leaders at the Prayer Camps.

1.7 Literature Review

A literature review is a search and evaluation of the available literature in a given subject or chosen topic area. It documents the state of the art with respect to the subject or topic that one is writing about. A literature review has four main objectives: first of all, it surveys the literature in your chosen area of study. Secondly, it synthesizes the information in that literature into a summary. It critically analyses the information gathered by identifying gaps in current knowledge, by showing limitations of theories and points of view, and by formulating areas of controversy. Lastly, it presents the literature in an organized way. A literature review shows your readers that you have in-depth grasp of your subject, and that you understand where your own research fits into and adds to an existing body of agreed knowledge.¹⁸

1.7.1 The Concept of the Sacred Space

According to Jeanne Halgren Kilde, religious space is powerful space. Within it the awesome power of the divine is often understood to dwell. Proximity to this power is deemed to yield authority and spiritual empowerment to individuals. The power of religious leaders is made manifest within religious space, their authority indicated in various ways.¹⁹ He argues that similarly, the relative influence of ordinary believers is embedded in religious space as are profound personal experiences of the divine. According to him, the most familiar way of thinking about religious space was

¹⁸ Royal Literary Fund, <https://www.rlf.org.uk/resources/what-is-a-literature-review/> (Accessed on 12th January, 2017)

¹⁹ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

elaborated by noted history of religions scholar Mircea Eliade in his landmark book, *The Sacred and the Profane*. According to Kilde, in this book, Eliade explores how cultures sense and respond to the presence of divine power within certain spaces. For Eliade, “every sacred space implies a hierophany” or an “irruption of the sacred.”²⁰ Places are deemed sacred precisely because a divine or supernatural power dwells in them. These powerful places help to center the community, orienting its members to the rest of the non-sacred, or profane, world. These holy centers orient individuals and groups “vertically”, creating a spatial link between heavenly power above and the more problematic, even evil, power of the underworld below. They also orient groups “horizontally”, dividing the landscape into sacred centers and profane fringes, imprinting a hierarchy of meaning onto the very earth itself. The presence of the divine, this axis mundi, or world center, broadcasts spiritual meanings that provide context for all other spaces and knowledge.²¹ In the view of Kilde, Eliade’s view is termed substantive because it emphasizes the substance of the supernatural or divine presence and views certain spaces as being inherently sacred due to that supernatural presence within them. This perspective, of course, is how believers have looked upon the sacred spaces of their cultures for eons. From indigenous peoples of the world to the ancient Greeks to the early Jews to many present-day Christians, many religious groups have believed and do believe that particular gods or powers exist or reside within certain places. Frequently, groups mark those places with buildings. For example, a temple is the quintessential building created to house a god. In the Hindu tradition, temples shelter stone or bronze sculptures (called murti), which the deities have been invited to inhabit. Within Hindu temples, priests perform numerous rituals, including the daily waking, bathing, and feeding of those deities, as well as the offering of prayers and praise. Worshippers bring offerings of food and materials

²⁰ Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 5

²¹ Ibid

for the god and perform other acts of worship called puja.²² Similarly, ancient Greek temples such as the Parthenon housed mammoth statues of gods Athena, for instance, in the Parthenon which were also understood to be inhabited by their divine presences. The Jewish Temple of Solomon can also be included in this category as it was constructed to house both the Ark of the Lord, the symbol of the covenant between the people and its God, as well as the divine presence, or Shekhinah. In contemporary times, similar perspectives remain central to the beliefs of many groups. Many Native American groups, for instance, base moral and legal claims to certain lands upon a substantive understanding of an indwelling spiritual essence within them. Similarly, Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, invest their temples with the belief that the divine is particularly present within.²³ Kilde recounts that, although many religious groups firmly believe in the physical presence of the divine within certain spaces, others have viewed the supernatural “presence” within sacred spaces as metaphorical although there is often a very fine line between “real” presence and metaphorical presence. In Christianity, the language of “real presence” of course, echoes language used to describe Jesus’s presence in the elements of the Eucharist, and, in many ways, the situations parallel one another.²⁴ For instance, Roman Catholics, who believe in the real (substantive) presence of the Lord in the consecrated bread and wine of the Eucharist meal, similarly tend to believe in a real divine presence within their churches. One feels close to God, many Catholics feel, within a shrine, church, or cathedral. Many believe that the grotto at Lourdes, for instance, commemorating the three appearances of the Virgin Mary to St. Bernadette beginning in 1858, is infused with the healing power of her continued, holy presence through the water that flows from the spring within it.²⁵ In contrast, many Protestants, although seeing churches as places of great spiritual importance, view neither the

²²Ibid

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

buildings nor the bread and wine of the communion service as necessarily filled with a real presence of God. Buildings shelter the worshipping community but are not necessarily infused with the divine.²⁶ Although Eliade linked sacred space to the presence of the divine, others have suggested that such a view is too narrow to account for the many human understandings of religious space. Scholar of religion Jonathan Z. Smith discusses a variety of attributes of Christian sacred space in his book *To Take Place*, an exploration of ancient Jewish and early Christian understandings of religious spaces. Smith points out that various types of sacred space carried various meanings.²⁷ For early Christians, the idea of space being imbued with holiness, or the presence of the divine, is illustrated in attempts in the fourth century to memorialize places important in the life of Jesus, including his birthplace and his tomb, venerated in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, respectively. Early Christians believed that these places, linked closely with crucial events in the life of Christ, were permeated with divine power.²⁸ Nevertheless, Smith argues, these memorials also demonstrate the opposite idea that societies create their sacred spaces, ascribing sacred meanings to spaces and places that previously had no such meanings ascribed to them. To illustrate this, he traces the processes through which such places were identified as important in the life of Jesus centuries after his death. Kilde asserts the need for one to keep in that although the idea of an indwelling sacred presence appeals to insiders, or believers, within a religious tradition, those on the outside of traditions tend to be more aware of how people within traditions work to establish and then maintain the sacred meanings they generate and connect to places, that is, how they work to consecrate certain places.²⁹ Kilde's work is very important to this study because it gives the researcher the understanding of how sacred spaces are constructed or reconstructed. It offers the

²⁶ Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 6.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space*, 6.

researcher an opportunity to understand and interpret most of the issues that emerges from the use of the Atwea Mountains as a sacred space.

1.7.2 Christian Spirituality

To begin with, Sandra Schneiders provides one of the most encompassing: Spirituality is “the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives”.³⁰ For Christians, the ultimate concern is God revealed in Jesus Christ, and experienced through the gift of the Holy Spirit.³¹ Self-transcendence moves one out of compulsive, addictive, obsessive patterns of behavior toward more healthy relationships with oneself, other persons, and God.³² In short, Christian spirituality is the conscious human response to God that is both personal and ecclesial. it is life in the Spirit.³³ Christian spirituality has been part and parcel of the early life of the apostles and church fathers. Alex Tang has argued that the early church was modeled after Judaism so that public, communal worship is central to their spirituality. He argues that the first Christians attended prayers in the Temple in Jerusalem while those outside Jerusalem is part of their local synagogue.³⁴ He is of the view that, most elements of Christian worship are inherited from the synagogue: Scripture reading, sermons and singing. However, the new addition is the weekly meal of bread and wine (The Lord’s Supper). Tang argues that baptism is another important feature in the early church spirituality.³⁵ Christian spirituality in the early centuries was communal spirituality, originating in baptism, rooted in the worship of the congregation, and nourished by weekly celebrations of the Supper instituted by Jesus.³⁶ According to

³⁰ Sandra Schneiders, “Spirituality in the Academy”, *Theological Studies* (1989): 684.

³¹ William Thompson, “Spirituality, Spiritual Development and Holiness”, *Review for Religious* 51, no. 5 (1992): 648.

³² Thompson, “*Spirituality, Spiritual Development and Holiness*”, 648.

³³ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method* (London: SPCK, 1991), 37.

³⁴ Alex Tang, “Christian Spirituality: From Acts to the Middle Ages”

http://www.kairos2.com/christian_spirituality1.htm (Accessed on 13th January, 2017).

³⁵ Tang, “*Christian Spirituality: From Acts to the Middle Ages*”

³⁶ Ibid

Tang, certain spiritual disciplines have long characterized the Christian life. They involve exercises in virtue and avoidance of vices. Together these exercises are called *accesses* or *asceticism*.³⁷ The idea is that of an athletic training for the races (1 Cor. 9:24-25). Later asceticism was developed to a call for total separation from the world and to spend one's time in prayer for one's sins, the sins of others and for closeness to God. Tang argues that it was in Egypt that men and women first entered the desert to live out the ascetical life they long for, but the practice soon spread to Asia and Europe. These ascetics who live in the deserts are called desert *abbas* or *maters*. They usually moved into the desert alone and are individual or anchorite type.³⁸ According to Tang, one of the early people who first embark on such a life is Anthony (about 250-353AD). According to Tang, information about Anthony comes from *The Life of Anthony* by Athanasius (296-373), Bishop of Alexandria. After the death of his parents, Antony heard the gospel read in church, "Sell all that you have and give it to the poor." Immediately he did that and went and stayed in a tomb. Later he went to live as a hermit in the desert. The motivation for such a life is to be close to God and to struggle with Satan in the desert.³⁹ The abbot Anthony said, "Who sits in solitude and is quiet hath escaped from three wars: hearing, speaking, seeing: yet against one thing shall he continually battle: that is, his own heart".⁴⁰ According to Richard Woods, "early Christian Wisdom like the Jewish spiritual tradition out of which it grew, Christian spirituality begins in the wonder of mystery and ends in the promise of glory."⁴¹ According to Woods, two great wisdom themes run throughout the earliest writings of the followers of Jesus first, how to live according to God's will in accordance with Jesus' teaching and witness, and second, the meaning of Jesus himself as God's final revelation, a self-communication felt and

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Richard J. Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence through the Ages* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 20.

interpreted as abiding presence, the brightness of divine glory: “We have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father” (John 1:14 NIV). He argues that “elements of midrashic wisdom are found throughout early Christian scripture, from the gospels to the letters of Paul, Hebrews, and Jude.”⁴² Again, wisdom themes are prominent in the infancy narratives (Matt. 2:1–12, Luke 1 and 2, NIV). As a young man, Jesus surprised his elders by possessing wisdom beyond his years and without benefit of formal schooling (Matt. 13:54, Mark 6:2 NIV). Later, following the tradition of the Book of Wisdom, Jesus himself described divine wisdom as a gift rather than an accomplishment, hidden from those who prided themselves on their learning, and given to mere children (Matt. 11:25, Luke 10:21 NIV).⁴³ Wisdom proved herself in deeds, not words (Matt. 11:19, Luke 7:35 NIV). Of all early Christian writers, Paul inherited the greatest enthusiasm for the wisdom themes of later Judaism. He, too, celebrated the connection of wisdom and God’s glory and saw in Wisdom the very presence of the hidden God made known (Rom. 16:27, Eph. 3:10 NIV). For Paul and his disciples, Wisdom was a gift of grace, not earned or acquired (Eph. 1:8; Col. 1:9; 1 Cor. 12:8 NIV). Paul also discerned the wide difference between what the world counts as wisdom and true Wisdom: “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17 NIV). He insisted, “I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom” (1 Cor. 2:1 NIV), yet “among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age . . .” (1 Cor. 6 NIV). Ultimately for Paul, as for the authors of the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews, Wisdom was revealed most perfectly in Christ and Him crucified. Before all ages, as well as in his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ is the logos, the eternal Word and true Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24 NIV).

⁴² Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God’s Presence through the Ages*, 8.

⁴³ Ibid

The cross of Jesus is a scandal only because the Wisdom of God must appear as folly to those who pit their wisdom against God's. Such merely human logic is the true and lasting folly.⁴⁴ Central to the meaning and message of Jesus as cherished and developed by generations of followers is the notion of presence. God's presence in Jesus himself, God's presence in the body of believers who unite in Jesus' name and teaching, and God's presence in each person not only as a Christian, but indeed as a human being.⁴⁵ Thus, the goal and meaning of human existence is the recognition and enhancement of the sense of Divine Presence, which in all three forms the person of Jesus as the risen Christ, the community of believers, and the individual human creature as a child of God is at once both hidden and manifest, which in religious terms is to say a mystery.⁴⁶ The subsequent development of Christian spirituality may therefore be best understood in terms of the particular forms in which the abiding presence of God was brought to ever fuller manifestation in the consciousness and activity both of individual persons and collectively.⁴⁷ As God's presence was the heart of Jewish spirituality, so also it formed the heart of early Christian spirituality. The theme is as equally and richly manifest in both early Christian and rabbinic writings of the same period. For example, the gnomic statement of Jesus in Matthew's gospel, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20 NIV), finds its parallel in the Mishnah "Two who sit together and occupy themselves with the words of the Torah have the Shekinah (the divine presence)."⁴⁸ In this light, the Christian text even more clearly proclaims that God was uniquely present in Jesus. For in later Judaism, the term Shekinah (from shaken, "to dwell or abide") had taken on all the richness of earlier references to the glorious manifestation of God in the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, over the Ark, and in

⁴⁴ Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence through the Ages*, 20.

⁴⁵ Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence through the Ages*, 7.

⁴⁶ Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence through the Ages*, 8.

⁴⁷ Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence through the Ages*, 9.

⁴⁸ Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence through the Ages*, 9.

the Temple. The question for Christians, ultimately, was not whether but how God was present in Christ. For the Jews in exile and later in Judea, after the departure of God's presence from the Temple (Ezek. 9:3–11:23 NIV), God did not merely disappear from history, but became even more present in a mysterious manner in the cosmos, in the midst of the devout, and especially in the fullness of time, on the Day of the Lord. Similarly, for early Christians, the bodily disappearance of Jesus with his Ascension did not mean his sheer absence from history but the expansion of his presence into the very structure of time and space, even to the "End Time," when he would return in the clouds of heaven to judge the living and the dead.⁴⁹ Like the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, the Ascension expressed Jesus' identification with the "hidden God" of ancient Jewish tradition—a God universally present in that very hiddenness. Just as Ezekiel believed in the eventual return of the Glory of God to the Temple, early Christians likewise believed that Christ's return in glory would restore the Reign of God, set things right. The Greek word they used for that was *Parousia*, which means not only "coming" but also, "presence." Before that Day, they also believed, Jesus would be present in Spirit among us not only in the community of disciples in Jerusalem or Galilee, but throughout the world. The Jewish feast of Pentecost, too, celebrates the universal presence of Christ's Spirit. Thus, for the poet-theologians of the early Church, the transcendent Christ of cosmic presence is no less the immanent Christ whose Spirit lives among and within us the Jesus for whom the apostles and martyrs searched the wide world and found wherever they looked. He is present in the mysteries of baptism and Eucharist, but also in the need of the suffering, oppressed, and poor: "Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you did it to me" (Matt.25:40 NIV). He is present also in the hearts of those who profess faith in the mystery of God's presence in Christ's body, the Church, for the Holy Spirit is poured out in our hearts and prays within us with inexpressible longing

⁴⁹ Ibid

when we do not even know what to say (Rom. 8:26 NIV). Christ's spirit is present, too, among those who pray and work for the coming of God's reign on earth as it is in heaven. Finally, with the words Matthew uses to conclude his gospel, Jesus promised, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20 NIV).

1.8 Significance of the Study

The main thesis that the researcher explored in the study is the extent to which a sacred space such as Atwea Prayer Mountains can be maintained as a Holy Space in contributing to the empowerment or disempowerment of those who patronize the prayer mountain. The work provides some vital pieces of information about Atwea Prayer Mountains which, the researcher perceives, have not received much intellectual attention.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The work has been organized into five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introduction to the study. The introduction is sub-divided into nine components. These are background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions and aims and objectives of the study. The others are methodology and methods of data collection, and significance of the study. The rest are literature review and the organization of chapters. In chapter two, the researcher examined the history of Atwea Prayer Mountain. Chapter three is devoted to a discussion of Atwea Mountain as a Sacred/Holy Place. In chapter four, the researcher examines and discusses the challenges in maintaining Holy Places in Ghana using Atwea Prayer Mountains as point of reference. Chapter five captures the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ATWEA MOUNTAINS

2.1 Introduction

Geographically, the Sekyere Central District in the Ashanti Region was created in the year 2007, with its capital at Nsuta. The District is endowed with many aesthetic features which have a high potential in the area of tourism promotion. Particularly, this chapter focuses on the historical background of the mountain and discusses how the mountain became a sacred place for Christian activities. Some of the issues this chapter looks at include the background history of the Abasua community, the religion of the Abasua people. The chapter also touches on the maiden visit of the first man of God to the top of the mountain and its significance for contemporary Christians.

2.2 Brief History of Atwea Mountains

In his work, “Reconstructing Sacred Space: The Place and Relevance of Atwea Prayer Mountain in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity”, Philip Kwadwo Okyere provides a very good background of the history of Abasua Community. Relying primarily on oral sources, Okyere traces the history of the Abasua community to the history of the Asante people. According to him, the historical background of the village is “inextricably linked to the history of the entire Asante people.”⁵⁰ Much of the history of the Ashanti people’s origins is shrouded in legends. According to traditional account, in the late 1600s, King Osei Tutu of the Ashanti Kingdom organized a rebel coalition of people who were subject to the Denkyira Kingdom, including Bekwai, Dwaben, Kokofu, Kumasi, Kumawu, Mampong, and Nsuta. This rebel group became known as the Ashanti, corrupted by Osanti – meaning those who

⁵⁰ Philip Kwadwo Okyere, “*Reconstructing Sacred Space: The Place and Relevance of Abasua Prayer Mountain in Contemporary Ghanaian Christianity*” MPhil thesis submitted to the University of Ghana (July 2012), 39.

have been brought together “because of war.”⁵¹ The Ashanti conquered the Denkyira in 1701. In the aftermath of the victory, King Osei Tutu converted the military coalition into a permanent political union with the help of Okomfo Anokye. He is said to have used his magic to persuade the coalition leaders to accept Osei Tutu as their ruler. According to the legend, Okomfo Anokye conjured a golden stool from the heavens, a stool which is believed to embody the spirit of the Ashanti Kingdom. This is the famous Sika-Dwa Kofi, (since it appeared on a Friday hence the day born name); or the Golden stool, which to this day symbolizes the unity of the Ashanti kingdom and people.⁵² Abasua is derived from the name of the small stream which is crossed at the outskirts before one enters the village; this is known as river Abasua.⁵³ According to Okyere, oral tradition has it that “the first settler came to settle at Abasua around 1692, long before Nana Osei Tutu acceded the Kumasi stool in 1697.”⁵⁴ The first settler was Nana Yaw Obogya. It has been argued that prior to his settlement, Nana Yaw Obogya and his sister, Nana Gyaaben migrated from Akyem-Ahwenease to Asante Mampong. A number of factors are believed to have precipitated their migration to Mampong. The first was the desire to break family ties, outbreak of epidemics and the upsurge of other natural disasters. Okyere narrates that their migration, according to Ampaw-Asiedu, was as a result of inter-tribal wars in the Akyem-Abuakwa area at that time.⁵⁵ According to him this is believed to be in the 17th century when the hegemony of Denkyira had culminated in wars and conquests at the Pra and Ofin basin and the overthrow of Adansi.⁵⁶ On their way to Mampong, Nana Obogya and her sister Nana Gyaaben allegedly reached Nsuta where, probably out of exhaustion, they decided to rest a little while under a certain tree. They meant to continue their journey afterwards. News about the arrival of these ‘strangers’ at the vicinity

⁵¹ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountains of God's Presence*, (Kumasi: Modern dynamics Printing and telecom services, 2010), 3.

⁵² Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountains of God's Presence*, 3.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 36.

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

of Nsuta got to the then *ɔmanhene* (that is, the Paramount Chief) of Nsuta, Nana Danso Abeam.⁵⁷ Due to the prevalence of wars and conquests at that time and the possibility of invasion by other assailants, the *ɔmanhene* allegedly dispatched some of his subjects to inquire about the mission of the strangers. Customarily, the strangers ought to have first reported themselves to the *ɔmanhene* and his elders who would then inquire of their mission. They did that perhaps because they did not intend any longer stay at Nsuta which, at that time, was their transit point to Mampong.⁵⁸

2.2.1 Nana Yaw Obogya's Settlement and the Institution of Chieftaincy at *Yaasɛ*

According to Okyere, it is said that Nana Gyaaben's brother, Nana Obogya, undertook some of his hunting expeditions in some of the nearby forests in the Nsuta traditional area. One of the forests in which he is said to have carried out these hunting expeditions was *Yaasɛ*. This is the place where *Yaasɛ boɔ*, one of the mountains of Abasua community, is situated.⁵⁹ It is said that Nana Obogya admired the serenity of the place and wanted it for a new settlement. As a result, he was believed to have asked Nana Danso Abeam, to allow him to use that forest area as a place for his new settlement. The *ɔmanhene* allegedly gave in to his request and Nana Obogya left the King's palace at Nsuta to settle at *Yaasɛ*.⁶⁰ It is said that when the first settler came to *Yaasɛ* to settle there, he found a river which took its source from the Atwea Mountains. He is said to have prayed and solicited spiritual assistance from the river in the following Twi prayers: *Nana, m'abɛsoɛ wooo, enti boa me na deɛ mɛyɛ wɔ aha biaranyɛ yie*, meaning Nana (referring to the river), I have come to you as a settler, therefore help me to be prosperous in all my undertakings here'. If the sacredness of a space is defined by the belief in the presence of a supernatural reality in that space and the possibility of human

⁵⁷Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 36.

⁵⁸Ibid

⁵⁹Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 38.

⁶⁰Ibid

interaction with that reality through rituals, then by the presence of the river and Nana Obogya's prayer to it for assistance, the sacredness of the place was implied.⁶¹ This prayer underscored the traditional religious orientation of Nana Obogya. He believed that the river was a deity in whom supernatural power resided. It could also be inferred from the prayer that he believed in the magnanimity of deities, as far as their ability to provide material and spiritual blessings were concerned. According to Okyere, this view is sustained by R.I.J Hackett as follows: In traditional pre-colonial societies, it was common for people to associate the deities with prosperity [because it] was believed that a harmonious relationship with the spiritual forces was necessary to ensure good health, long life and prosperity and to ensure that one's destiny was not altered for the worse.'⁶² As the first settler of the place, Nana Yaw Obogya customarily became the first traditional ruler (that is, the Chief) of *Yaase*. It is said that the *ɔmanhene* of Nsuta allowed his wife, Nana Gyaaben, to assist her brother, Nana Obogya, in his administration as the traditional leader of the place. She was, thus, to be the *ɔbaapanin* (that is, the Eldest Woman) of the place. It is believed that the *ɔmanhene* formed a stool for his wife and named it Gyaaben *akonwa* (that is, Gyaaben's stool). The stool was the symbol of Nana Gyaaben's authority and recognition as the *ɔbaapanin* of the place.⁶³

2.2.2 Abasua: corruption of *m'abesoε wo*

With the passage of time, it is said that the river to whom Nana Yaw Obogya allegedly prayed for assistance became known as *m'abesoε wo* (that is, I have come to you as a settler). This *m'abesoε wo*, it is believed, later became corrupted as Abasua river. The corruption eventually affected *Yaase*, which was the name of Nana Obogya's new settlement. The result was Abasua community. The implication is that *Yaase* forest area has also been reconstructed. It has been reconstructed from its former

⁶¹Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 39.

⁶²Ibid

⁶³Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 40.

identities as hunting and farming areas into a new area for human settlement (that is, Abasua community), just as *Krɔboboo* is also believed to have been reconstructed from its former identities as a place for hunting expedition and merry-making into a sacred space for prayer, healing and deliverance rituals.⁶⁴

2.2.3 Religion of Abasua Community

Just like many indigenous societies in Ghana, the religion that was practiced by the people of the Abasua community was the African Traditional Religion. Before the introduction of Christianity in the area, the people worshipped a deity in the community known as the *Atweaboo*. The *Atweaboo*, is one of the four mountains in the environs of Abasua.⁶⁵ The mountain was believed to be a very powerful deity or *ɔbosom*, whose overarching influence and power had resulted in the influx of many people to the place.⁶⁶ Most of the people who went there to search for solution to their problems through the deity's traditional priest (*ɔkomfoɔ*), later settled permanently in the community.⁶⁷ This was because the natives were very hospitable and kind in receiving them. According to Okyere, "one major influence of the *Atweaboo* is in the belief in its ability to provide protection to the natives of Abasua and other people, especially, the rich cocoa farmers who, because of their wealth, were afraid of being destroyed by witches and wizards."⁶⁸ The reality of *Abosom* (plural form of *ɔbosom*) and some people's ardent belief in their potency has been observed by Omenyo as follows:

Generally, they are perceived to provide solutions to many social problems, personal problems and mishaps as well as to reveal witches and to witness to the truth of an event. They are also believed to have powers that can destroy. The popularity of a deity depends largely on its reputed ability to perform by way of providing material and spiritual prosperity. Such deities attract devotees from far and near. However, they are abandoned if they fail to meet specific needs of groups or individuals.⁶⁹

⁶⁴Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 41.

⁶⁵Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 42.

⁶⁶Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 41.

⁶⁷Ibid

⁶⁸Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 42.

⁶⁹Omenyo, *Pentecost Outside Pentecostalism*, 27. Cited in Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 42.

Related to the above is the Akans belief in the malevolence of witches and wizards. Supernatural evil and witchcraft are prevalent in the worldview of Africans. Omenyo notes that, there is a strong belief among Akans in witches and wizards (*abayifo* and *abayibonsam*), who are perceived as enemies of the Akan society. They are believed to possess evil psychic powers that could, among other things, destroy life and property; cause sickness, barrenness or impotence, material poverty, drunkenness and death.”⁷⁰ This belief may have influenced the people who tramped to Abasua, specifically, *Atweaboo*, for security.

2.3 Earlier Usage of the Atwea Mountains

Before the commencement of religious activities on the Atwea Mountains, there were some previous activities that took place on the top of the mountain. For example, between the year 1959 and 1965, expatriates, mostly Lebanese and Syrian traders usually came and were led by one Kwame Boe of the Atwea village to the top of the mountain for tourist activities. They were persons who visited briefly, ate, drunk, made merry and took photographs of the scenery. In addition, there was a small cave at the tip of the mountains which overlook the village of Atwea. In the cave was a container which had a note book.⁷¹ This notebook was used as a chronicle on the top of the mountain by these expatriate tourists. In this visitor’s book all who climbed up wrote their names, place of birth, time of arrival on the mountain and time of departure. This was the normal activity of the mountain during this period. Kwame Boe therefore became a popular person as a result of this tourism activity and his link with white people in and around the mountain area. The container together with the note book had vanished from the top of the mountain. It is believed that a white man took it away in 1989 to Accra with the assurance that he will return it in a couple of days.⁷²

⁷⁰Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 42.

⁷¹Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea, The Mountain of God’s Presence*, 3.

⁷²Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountains of God’s Presence*, 3.

2.4 The Maiden Visit and Subsequent Religious Activities on the Atwea Mountains

The Atwea Mountains as a place of spiritual pilgrimage for most Christians in and outside Ghana today began with a visit of a Methodist minister known as Abraham Osei Asibey. The Rev. Abraham Osei Asibey was posted to the Ashanti Effiduase Circuit in 1963 from Sunyani Circuit as the Superintendent Minister. His Circuit covered a vast area. The then Effiduase Circuit extended from Konongo, and Achinakrom, around the lake Bosomtwe, Mampong, Atebubu, Wioso, and Yeji in the North, Ejura-Sekedumase, Asokore, and Dwaben. This vast area of land which in 2008 had been divided into twenty other circuits now forms the Effiduase Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana. The Atwea Mountains or Abasua Prayer site was discovered by the late Abraham Osei Asibey, who was then Superintendent Minister of the Effiduase Circuit in 1965. Even though the site had been found earlier on, the purpose then was more of tourist activities than for spirituality.⁷³ History from the Church and also of the communities around the mountains has it that, Osei Asibey was travelling to Mampong Ashanti, where the District Education office was located, on an official assignment as the local manager of Methodist schools. He was being driven in the Effiduase Circuit's car with the registration number GE 1308, driven Isaac Yaw Boamah then circuit steward, office assistant and also the Circuit driver. When they reached the Atwea village which was on their way to Mampong, the clergyman was moved by some spiritual urge to stop the driver. He felt drawn to the top of the hills which the pastor admired very much. Later in a chat with him, he confessed, "my heart was strangely warmed when I encountered the mountain".⁷⁴ He was sure that God was directing his attention to the top of the mountain. He therefore inquired as to the possibility of getting to the top of the mountain.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountains of God's Presence*, 7.

⁷⁴ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God's Presence*, 5.

⁷⁵ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God's Presence*, 6.

In February 1965, the clergyman, Abraham Osei Asibe, J. M. Quartey who hailed from Akuapem Mampong but was in charge of the Sekyere Methodist Society (now a Circuit in the Effiduase Diocese of the Methodist Church) and I.Y. Boamah, the driver, who happened also to be the Circuit Steward set off to meet the chief and elders of Abasua on the possibility of visiting the top of the mountain, this time for religious reason. The distance from Atwea to Abasua was about three kilometers, and that was the only accessible route to the top of the mountain.⁷⁶ Upon their meeting with the chief and elders of Abasua, some of whom were; Opayin KwasiBoc, Yaw Denteh and Kwame Kwayie; the pastor was advised by the chief of the village, Nana Kwasi Marfo to go back to Effiduase, prepare fully and come back to be led up to the top of the mountain another time.⁷⁷ The chief indicated to the clergyman that it would be a very difficult task to embark on the journey to the top of the mountain. The Pastor agreed and so in February 1965, the maiden trip was scheduled. The trip was led by two hunters of the village who were delegated by the chief, and included the two adult males who accompanied the pastor from Effiduase and the pastor himself. Before the delegation moved, two bottles of schnapps were presented to the chief by the Effiduase party and a farewell libation prayer was said to dispatch them. After the libation prayer was said by the linguist, the journey started around 10:30am.⁷⁸ They travelled with a pot of water and the pastor was given a walking stick, whilst the hunters had their guns. The others followed closely. The journey took them one hour forty-five minutes to complete. When they got to the top of the mountain, the two hunters sat at the outskirts of the forest reserve, whilst the three from Effiduase continued to the flat top of the mountain. It is said that when they reached the top of the mountain, immediately the pastor stepped forward, he was engulfed in a thick cloud.⁷⁹ Those looking on were frightened but kept this to themselves. Later on,

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God's Presence*, 7.

⁷⁸ Ibid

⁷⁹ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God's Presence*, 7.

when the revelation of the “transfiguration” (the clouds over the clergyman) was revealed to the Pastor by the other two, the Pastor confirmed that, he had also heard a voice from the clouds, assuring him of God’s presence at the mountains and so from that day onwards, that spot became an important point on the top of the mountain. Where the cloud engulfed the pastor is now the spot where a metal cross has been erected. It was originally a wooden cross.⁸⁰

2.5 Significance of the Transfiguration Today for Christians

The word “transfigured” is an interesting word. The Greek word is “*metamorpho*” and it means to transform, literally or figuratively to metamorphose, or to change. The word is a verb that means to change into another form. It also means to change the outside to match the inside. The prefix “*mea*” means to change and the “*morphe*” means form. Jesus’ divine nature was “veiled” in human form. The transfiguration was a glimpse of that glory. Therefore, the transfiguration of Jesus Christ displayed the Shekinah glory of God incarnate in the son. The voice of God attesting to the truth of Jesus’ sonship was the second time God’s voice was heard. The first time was at Jesus’ baptism into His public ministry by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:7; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).⁸¹ Therefore, the transfiguration of Abraham Osei Asibey was a unique display of God’s divine character and a glimpse of the glory, which the Lord had given him in human form. This truth is emphasized for us to in a passage in the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form (*morphe*) of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form (*morphe*) of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God also had highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:5-11).

⁸⁰ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God’s Presence*, 8.

⁸¹ Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God’s Presence*, 3.

The Son of God came on earth in the human form to be the true servant of God and as a gift for mankind. The transfiguration of Abraham Osei Asibey was a visible sign in the present of reliable witnesses of the two persons. This being a confirmation of the reality of the power of God and the glory, which the Atwea Mountains has shown over the years and will show in the years to come. The transfiguration of Abraham Osei Asibey was to show the supremacy and power of God to the persons who were at the scene, the persons who were with him on the mountains, including the Isaac Boamah could see a glimpse of God's glory, and God was there to confirm His word, on how the Lord was going to use the mountain for the salvation of humankind. That was not the place to settle down but a place from where to march forward to fulfill the vision and mission for which Jesus had come to visit His people once again. Jesus told his disciples after the transfiguration not to tell about this vision to anyone until the son of man is raised from the dead (Matthew 17:9b NIV).⁸² It was a glorious experience but the message discussed was serious. They had to keep quiet till the Son of man was lifted up on the cross, glorified and "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinance that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers, has made a public show of them openly, triumphing over them" (Colossians 2:14-15 NIV). Jesus died, rose again, glorified and declared, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of Hades and of death" (Revelation s 1:18 NIV). These persons who saw the transfiguration were witnesses of the glory of God. This transfiguration and vision, made us understand the message and how God was going to use the mountains to bless several people globally.⁸³

⁸² Ampaw-Asiedu, *Atwea: The Mountain of God's Presence*, 8.

⁸³ Ibid

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has touched on the various issues that led to the formation of the Atwea Mountains as an important sacred place for Christian ritual practices. The Atwea Mountains is an important area, which need special attention. It is currently the most famous mountain on which many Christians from all parts of the Ghana and beyond lodge for prayers. Almost every day pilgrims are found praying there. On a daily basis, the least number of people at the camp would averagely be a little over hundred and the highest is in and around December-January-February, and between July-August which is about four thousand.

CHAPTER THREE

ATWEA MOUNTAINS AS A SACRED/HOLY PLACE

3.1 Introduction

In many religious traditions of the world, there are designated places that are used as sacred or Holy places for ritual and prayer purposes. Such places serve as a site for people to visit and have direct communion with the divine. There is good reason to believe that the popularity of sacred sites, many of them today visited by pilgrims of one kind or another, offer a special reassurance about life today and the future. In this chapter, the researcher basically deals with the concept of prayer and sacred space in Ghana with a focus on the Atwea mountains. Particularly, the researcher discusses the use of the Atwea Mountains as a sacred place for prayer activities as well as the management of the place by the leaders on the top of the mountain.

3.2 Sacred Space and Prayer Rituals

In the background to this study, that is the chapter one, it was highlighted that the concept of sacred place is very prominent in all religious traditions of the world. This is possibly so because, almost all the religions we have in the world have special places designated as a sacred or holy, this to some extent encourages believers to visit such places for prayers and other ritual activities in his statement that suggest that all sacred spaces are quite pervasive in all religious traditions, Veikko Anttonen writes as follows:

Setting specific times and places apart as sacred is a fundamental structure in human cultures, without which no religion, nation-state or political ideology can insure the continuity of its power, hierarchy and authority. Such universal forms of religious behavior as fasting, pilgrimage, asceticism, celibacy, religiously motivated forms of seclusion and reclusion and various forms of meditation can also be comprehended in terms of the category of the sacred. These forms of religious

behavior are culturally constituted on the idea of marking one's physical and mental self as separate from the routines of everyday social life.⁸⁴

Very key in Anttonen's argument is the idea of sacredness, which is thought to be an essential part of all religious traditions. Historians and phenomenologist of religion such as Nathan Soderblom, Rudolf Otto, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach and Mircea Eliade, according to Anttonen, hold sacrality to be not only a hall mark of religion but its very essence.⁸⁵ These theorists assert that cultural systems of belief and practice cannot be given the title "religion" if there is nothing which is deemed sacred by their adherents.⁸⁶ In the methodological approach of these scholars, the sacred is treated as an ontological category, culturally schematized in human experience in the form of subjective feelings of the presence of what scholars refer to as *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum*,⁸⁷ that is, a mysterious something that both frightens and fascinates.⁸⁸ This position reinforces Geertz's notion of sacred symbols as some of the major characteristics of religious traditions.⁸⁹ A sacred space, therefore, is a place where people encounter the sacred, understood as something truly extraordinary and overwhelming. It is a place where people feel gripped by a reality that is "wholly other" than themselves; something mysterious, awesome, powerful and beautiful.⁹⁰ The word sacred is that which is the object of veneration and awe. The term comes from the Latin *sacer* meaning restricted or set off. A person may be designated as sacred, and so can objects or a place which is regarded as extraordinary or unique.⁹¹ In his book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, Mircea Eliade explains that, the sacred always manifests itself as a reality different from normal realities. We become aware of the

⁸⁴ Veikko Anttonen, Sacred, in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, (eds.) *Guide to the Study of Religion* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 272.

⁸⁵ Anttonen, *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 272.

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Daniel L. Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 164.

⁸⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 129.

⁹⁰ Daniel L. Pal, *Seven Theories of Religion*, 164.

⁹¹ Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe, *Sacred Places* <http://witcombe.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/sacredness.html>, Accessed on 12th January, 2017.

sacred when it shows itself as something different from the profane. The presumption is that the divine or some supernatural or spiritual force is manifesting itself to the beholder, who feels privileged thereby. It may be suspected, however, that it is often the case that the beholder who, perceiving something mysterious (inexplicable), a strange vision or event outside the normal, 'explains' it in terms of the supernatural and invests it with the sacred.⁹² The perception of the divine is usually completely convincing to the beholder, who can become instantly a believer in whatever supernatural force of divinity is being made manifest thereby. It is a feature of manifestations of the sacred that they are invariably interpreted or identified within the context of the religious beliefs of the beholder (or, in the case of people who are otherwise non-religious previous to their experience, with respect to prevailing religious beliefs of their culture).⁹³ It may be argued that most of the world's religions, from the most 'primitive' to the most highly developed were established through manifestations of the sacred. It is of vital importance to religion that the manifestation is perceived not as generated by the beholder but as the purposeful revelation of god (or some lesser deity or saint) to the mortal beholder. Fundamental to human psychology is the belief in the supernatural, of a world inhabited by spirits and gods and other powerful primeval forces beyond human comprehension. Eliade therefore chooses the term *hierophany* (something sacred shows itself to us) to describe and define the act of the manifestation of the sacred.⁹⁴ It has long been a tendency among human beings to perceive and believe the sacred to be present in anything, ranging from trees, or stones, to human beings. With respect to trees and stones, Eliade is at pains to point out that what is involved is not a veneration of the tree, or stone, itself. The sacred tree or sacred stone is not venerated as a stone or a tree but, because of *hierophany*, as something sacred. As a sacred tree, or a sacred stone, the tree is no longer

⁹² Witcombe, *Sacred Places*

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

a tree and the stone no longer a stone. The same applies when the sacred is invested in human beings; they are no longer human beings because of their sacredness. It is the central belief of Christianity, for example, that the sacred is manifest in the person of Jesus Christ and that Jesus Christ himself is in fact an incarnation of God.⁹⁵ According to Robert Scott, prayer rituals are needed to cause the transition from worldly Universe to the realms of transcendence also referred to in this work as sacred space.⁹⁶ If the sacredness of a place is determined by the belief in the presence of a supernatural force or a deity in that space and the possibility of human's interaction with that deity through rituals then a discourse on the sacredness of a space, in the opinion of the present writer, cannot be adequately handled without reference to prayer rituals. Prayer rituals, in the opinion of the researcher, are perceived to be some of the main activities or actions that inform and define the sacredness of almost all sacred spaces.⁹⁷ Thus, sacredness of a place and prayer rituals, in this context, are not mutually exclusive.

3.3 Prayer Rituals in a Christian Sacred Space Context

Ultimately, there is no gainsaying in the fact that the Atwea mountains of Ghana in the Ashanti region is a place where Christians both in and outside the country go on pilgrimage to wait on the Lord for the transformation of their lives through prayer and fasting. It is evident through countless number of testimonies of people who have visited the place that, the Atwea Mountains of Ghana is indeed a place that one can go to get his or her divine healing. Most importantly, one activity that people who goes to the Atwea Mountains engages themselves in is prayer. On the top of the mountain, one can come across different styles or kinds of prayers that people pray to supposedly attract the attention of

⁹⁵ Witcombe, *Sacred Places*. Accessed on 12th January, 2017.

⁹⁶ Robert A. Scott, Robert, *The Gothic Enterprise: A Guide to understanding the Medieval Cathedral* (California: University of California Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ Robert H. Dalton, (ed.), *Sacred Places of the World: A religious Journey Across the Globe* (India: Abhishek Publications, 2010), 11, 13.

the divine to come to their cause and deliver them from any problems in their lives. These prayer rituals, which sometimes include anointing with oil etc. are very common on the mountain. According to Dick Eastman prayer is the “Slender nerve of power” and “that marvelous mystery hidden behind the cloud of God’s omnipotence.”⁹⁸ To Eastman, “Nothing is beyond the reach of prayer because God Himself is the focus of prayer.”⁹⁹ Defining prayer as “divine communion with our heavenly Father”¹⁰⁰, Eastman postulates that “Prayer does not require advanced education” and that “Knowledge is not a prerequisite to engage in it. Only an act of the will is required to pray.”¹⁰¹ The implication of this is that prayer is not the preserve of a few selected individuals. Whoever has “an act of the will” could pray. David Cook corroborates Eastman’s view by underscoring prayer to be “an interactive communication with God.”¹⁰² Thus in prayer, Cook maintains, “The believer assumes God’s existence and prayer is the expression of a relationship with that God, not a means of establishing his existence.”¹⁰³ Highlighting on importance of prayer for a Christian, Stuart Robinson debates that the priority of prayer is stressed in the New Testament which is not surprising with Jesus’ emphasis on the preeminence of the Father especially in prayer (Matt 6:9, Luke 11:2). This kind of relationship progresses and deepens in intimacy; the more time is given to it.¹⁰⁴ The implication seems to be that for Jesus, prayer was found to be a communion with God which can be likened to the way a son can speak to his father. The son turns out to enjoy this relationship with his father and it inherently becomes part of his daily life. Paul’s presentation on prayer re-echoes the place of prayer in our lives. He does not present a systematic theology of prayer; however, his ideas on prayer glean from some of the passages he writes. Paul admonishes Timothy to lead the church in Ephesus to pray

⁹⁸ Dick Eastman, *The Hour That Changes the World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 11.

⁹⁹ Eastman, *The Hour That Changes the World*, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² David Cook, *Thinking About Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 95.

¹⁰³ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, 94 -95.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart Robinson, *Praying the Price*, (England: Sovereign Ltd. 1994), 25-26.

for ‘all men’, especially kings and those in high positions (cfr. 1Tim 2:1-2). He also instructs the church of the Thessalonians on how to pray (cfr. 1Thes 5:17-18) and offers all kinds of prayer for some churches (cfr. Gal 1:3; Phil 1:3-5). We can deduce from this, nobody is above prayer. Everybody needs prayer. Other New Testament writers who have taken stance on this subject are; Peter, who urges believers to be clear-minded and self-controlled-so that they can pray (cfr. 1Pet 4:7), James declares that prayer is powerful and effective (cfr. Jas 5:16). John assures us that God hears and answers prayers.¹⁰⁵ In the Old Testament, the efficacy of prayer is established through its stories; prayer served as a pattern of power in the early history of Israel. In Israel’s battle with the Amalekites, it was Joshua who was on the plain leading the Israelite army forward. The lesson drawn from this event is quite simple and clear. Joshua’s prevailing on his battlefield below was directly dependent upon Moses’ prayerful intercession from on top of his nearby hill with the support of Aaron and Hur (cfr. Exod 17:8-13).¹⁰⁶ The other striking motivation and essence of prayer is its perception as the “intensification of experience.”¹⁰⁷ This means that in prayer, “we have revealed to us the depth and breadth of what we otherwise overlook or take for granted life’s gratuity, fragility, terror, blessing, and interdependence. Such a revelation calls us to a more honest and authentic accounting of our lives.” The view of prayer as an “intensification of experience is expressed somewhat clearly in Cook’s five-fold functional description of prayer: “Prayer as dependence”, “Prayer as performance”, “Prayer as living”, “Prayer as contemplation” and “Prayer as relationship.”¹⁰⁸ The above discussion provides the avenue within which the researcher discusses the activities that goes on the Atwea Mountains and its importance as a sacred space in Ghanaian Christianity.

¹⁰⁵ Robinson, *Praying the Price*, 27.

¹⁰⁶ Robinson, *Praying the Price*, 25.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce Ellis Benson and Norman Wirzba (eds.), *The Phenomenology of Prayer* (America: Fordham University Press, 2005), 2.

¹⁰⁸ Cook, *Thinking About Faith*, 100 – 101.

3.4 Atwea Mountains as a Sacred Space

The Atwea mountains as a sacred site and Christians' appropriation of the space for prayer rituals is to be understood in the context of its discovery by the late Abraham Osei Asibbey, a Methodist minister who first visited that place and the experience of a supernatural phenomenon, as well the *Kristomu Anigye Kuo* (Joy in Christ Group) as the pioneers of pilgrimage to the mountains and the establishment of other Prayer Camps (PCs) on the mountain. Some parts of this have previously been discussed in chapter of this work. The other themes are the prevalence of relics and prayer accessories, sacredness through miracles and other related prayer ritual activities such as the sacred writings, preaching/Bible studies and Holy Communion.¹⁰⁹

3.4.1 Other Prayer Camps and Christian Ministries on the Mountain

As argued by Okyere, one of the justifications for the sacredness of Atwea Mountains is the emergence of other Prayer Camps (PCs) and Christian Ministries (CMs) on the mountain.¹¹⁰ In addition to camp three believed to be the site where the late Osei Asibbey was engulfed in a cloud when he was praying, the prayer camps and Christian ministries otherwise known as churches on the mountain has sprang to up to 10 in number. A situation which is worth mentioning is the observation that most of the founders of these camps or ministries are men of God who had, to some extent, patronized or used the camp three, the prayer camp of the Methodist Church on the mountain for some time. The Methodist camp, which is the premier camp on the mountain according to Okyere, is believed to have been “the spiritual power house” for those who have established their prayer camp and Christian Ministries. According to Okyere, someone like, Pastor Joseph Boaheng, the founder of Camp Seven (Word Faith Ministries International), was once one of the Caretakers of camp three. He

¹⁰⁹ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 58 – 60.

¹¹⁰ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 72.

is said to have served as a Caretaker from 1997 to 2001.¹¹¹ According to Okyere, in an interview with Boateng Fordjour, the founder of Camp Eight, which is the prayer camp of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, the late Antwi Boasiako, patronized camp three over a period of ten years before leading the Presbyterians to establish Camp Eight.¹¹² According to Okyere, “the establishment of this Camp is believed to have been preceded by some rituals which one considers to be of immense phenomenological significance. For instance, it is alleged that some of the Presbyterians went to fetch ordinary sand from (camp three) and spread it on the ground before they erected the physical structures at their prayer camp. This practice is perceived to have emanated from their belief in the potency and sacredness of [camp three], including the sand found there.”¹¹³ In the view of Okyere “if it is true that the Presbyterians went to fetch ordinary sand from camp three, then its phenomenological significance to the present an unconscious reinvention of relics in contemporary protestant church, the PCG.”¹¹⁴ At the Atwea Mountains, it is visible that the numerical naming or designation of the camp do not corresponds to the chronological order of the camp’s establishment. In explaining this, Okyere attests that the numerical designations are symbols of some historical events that are believed to have informed the establishment of those camps.¹¹⁵ For instance, the Methodist camp, believed to be the first camp on the mountain, is referred to as camp three. If it was the first prayer to be established on the mountain, why is it not Camp One? The name camp three according to Okyere in an interview with Fordjour Boateng, is as a result of the number of “prayer stops” Asibbey made on his way to the top of the Atwea Prayer Mountain. The “prayer stops” were the number of times the late pastor stopped to pray while climbing the mountain to the top. According

¹¹¹ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 73.

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 74.

to the historical facts, Asibbey made three “prayer stops” on his way. The first “prayer stop” is where a prayer camp has been established as Camp One. The second “prayer stop” is where Camp Two has been built. The third “prayer stop” is the place where Abraham Osei Asibbey is believed to have been engulfed in the clouds when he was praying. This is camp three, the premier prayer camp on the mountain. Thus, contrary to popular thinking, neither Camp One nor Two was built before camp three. In that sense, the numerical designations of these Camps did not necessarily correspond with the chronological order of their establishment, rather they were symbols of historical reality. The numerical designations of the prayer camps also imply the possibility of identity formation from the beliefs and practices of religious leaders.¹¹⁶

3.5 Religious, Moral, Health and Environmental Sanitation Issues on the Atwea Mountains

The sacredness of the Atwea Mountains is also observed from the strict religious, moral/ethical, health and sanitation rules and programs at the various prayer camps and Christian ministries. In all the prayer camps, attendance to religious programs is compulsory for all campers. These programs include morning devotions, all-night prayer sessions and divine services. Besides, strict moral/ethical rules feature prominently in all the prayer camps and ministries. At camp three, for instance, it is not allowed for males and females who were not married to sleep in the same room. According to Owusu-Ansah, Evangelist Asiamah, maintains that opposite sexes (who are not married couple) are forbidden to sleep in one room because there have been some incidence of sexual affair at camp three.¹¹⁷

Moreover, wearing of indecent clothes or sexually provocative dressing anywhere on the prayer mountain is not entertained. The wearing of such clothes is believed to have the potency of sexually luring or enticing people into some misconduct, thereby truncating and defeating the very essence of

¹¹⁶ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 74.

¹¹⁷ Ibid

the pilgrimage at the site. Again, as a sacred space, stringent rules and programs of sanitation permeate the entire activities of all the prayer camps. In all the Camps, littering, spitting, urinating and defecating in the open spaces are deemed serious offences by the culprits. All campers are required to fully participate in the regular clean up exercises. These include weeding, sweeping, scrubbing and disposal of refuse. In some of the prayer camps, waste disposal bins are placed at vantage points to augment cleanliness and awareness of environmental sanitation. Lavatory facilities for males and females as well as designated places for refuse dumping are perceived to augment sanitation activities at the various prayer camps. Arguably, the regulatory schemes put in place by the various leaders of the prayer camps to ensure sanity of the camps are not entirely new. This is at the very core of the appropriateness of biblical principles laid down in the book of Deuteronomy to check cleanliness. In Deuteronomy 23:9-14 RSV, for instance, the instructions on environmental sanitation at the military camp were unambiguous:

When you go forth against your enemies and are in camp, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of what chances to him by night, then he shall go outside the camp, he shall not come within the camp; but when evening comes on, he shall bathe himself in water, and when the sun is down, he may come within the camp. You shall have a place outside the camp and you shall go out to it; and you shall have a stick with your weapons; and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it, and turn back and cover up your excrement. Because the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to save you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent among you, and turn away from you.¹¹⁸

Commenting on this text, Luciano C. Chianeque and Samuel Ngewa posit that a nocturnal emission at the camp made a man ritually unclean. He was required to remain outside the camp till evening, when he could wash himself and return to camp. The legislation also laid down rules relating to hygiene. A specific area outside the camp ought to be set apart to be used as a toilet and needed to be kept clean by burying excrement. Such cleanliness was necessary to avoid offending the Lord God

¹¹⁸The biblical quotation was from the Revised Standard Version

who moved about inside the camp. The camp was to be kept holy in his honor and to prevent him from leaving. This regulation was perceived to contribute to the health of the campers (or soldiers) by removing one possible source of infection.¹¹⁹ In this vein, I agree with Okyere's assertion that the sacredness of a space such as the Atwea Mountains "is not a mere metaphysical or abstract apprehension. Rather, it is perceived to be an empirically verifiable religio-social reality which impacts on or conditions human behavior."¹²⁰

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the writer has looked at the Atwea Mountains as a sacred place of prayer. The chapter also touched on issues involving sanity and moral standard on the mountain. The discussion made in this chapter so far, served as an impetus to discuss the issues that confronted the researcher in the next chapter of the work.

¹¹⁹ Luciano C. Chianeque and Samuel Ngewa, *Deuteronomy in Africa Bible Commentary* (Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 240.

¹²⁰ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 75.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES IN MAINTAINING THE MOUNTAINS AS A SACRED PLACE

4.1 Introduction

From the beginning of human consciousness, men and women have experienced places that they have designated as sacred. Throughout recorded history, various groups have felt special attachment to places that they considered holy. The sacred texts of the great historical religions include accounts of specific places where individuals or groups experienced significant encounters with God. Holy places set aside in memory of these encounters with the divine are a part of the character of every religious tradition. The faithful are drawn to them out of reverence for the great events or personalities they commemorate, and as loci for especially fervent prayer. Each of the great religious traditions of humanity has places that it holds to possess special sanctity. Holy places are as much a common feature of the religious traditions of humanity as are sacred time or prayer. Paradoxically, one of the issues regarding the sustenance of sacred places is the challenges posed to such places by pilgrims who visit on daily basis. The previous chapter of this work has dealt with the processes that accounted for the use of the Atwea Mountains as sacred place. As the focus of this study, the writer aims to look at the challenges that are currently confronting the leadership of the various prayer camps in maintaining the place for Christian spirituality. In this view, Gordon S. Wakefield defines Spirituality as, ‘the personal relationship of man to God’.¹²¹ This word which has come much into vogue to describe those attitudes, beliefs, practices which animates people’s lives, those attitudes, beliefs, practices which animate people’s lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities.¹²²

¹²¹ Gordon S. Wakefield, *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (Great Britain: Richard Clay Ltd, Bungay, Suffolk, 1988), 5.

¹²² Gordon S. Wakefield, *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, 361.

Geoffrey Wainwright defines Spirituality as the ‘combination’ of Praying and Living. It is the embodiment of prayer in life that the New Testament writers describe in such phrases as ‘a living sacrifice’, ‘spiritual worship’ (Romans 12:1 NIV), and ‘a sacrifice of praise to God’, that is, the fruit of the lips that acknowledge his name (Hebrew 13:15 NIV). To him, Christians are to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5; cf, 2:9).¹²³ The issues raised and discussed in this chapter are mainly from personal observation and interviews the researcher had with some of the leaders of the various camps mainly camp three, five and seven. The researcher examines these challenges and also, offers the various means and strategies through which the challenges could be minimized.

4.2 Challenges Confronting the Maintenance of Atwea Mountains

As part of the study, the researcher came across many issues that have troubled the maintenance of the Atwea Mountains for over a decade. This issues came up as part of the researchers own observation and also, through the interviews with the various leaders of the camps. Particularly, the researcher had interview with the leaders of camp three (3), camp five (5) and camp seven (7). The following issues were some of the challenges that were indicated by the leaders of the camp.

4.2.1 Sale of food

Arguably, one of the challenge that is confronting the work of most people on the Atwea Mountains is the sale of food. As a place of pilgrimage where people go to fast, pray and wait on the Lord for several days and months, one would suggest or think that the activities of food vendors on the mountain would be reduced to the barest minimum. However, this is not the case. The Atwea

¹²³ Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, and Edward Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality* (Great Britain: University Press, Cambridge, 1986), 241.

Mountains has become a joint place for food sellers from the various communities around the Mountain. Not only that, this action of the sale of food has also, infiltrated and influences on the pilgrims who go to the mountains purposely to fast. On several visits to the mountains on a number of occasions, the present writer has personally observed that the fruitful hours that people who have gone to the mountains to wait on the Lord could be used to pray are rather, spent on cooking one food or the other. This situation, however, obfuscate the actual purposes that people use to go and pray at the mountains. This is not to say that people shouldn't eat while they break their fast but, however, there is the need to exercise certain constraint on the way people cook and sell certain foods on top of the mountain. In an interview with some of the pilgrims that were on the mountains at the time of this data collection, some of them indicated that such an activity mostly affects the kind of spiritual exercise they went on the mountain to embark on. In narrating his experience, one of the interviewee said that, in one evening after he had break his fast, a woman who had come to the mountain with her children to wait on the Lord was cooking jollof rice behind the room he was sleeping. According to the interviewee, the aroma of the rice created a kind of displeasure for him and nearly lost his concentration of fasting and prayer.¹²⁴ Another Pastor interviewed added that, certain foods should be restricted or banned from the Mountain because, they don't enhance fasting programs.¹²⁵ In the opinion of the present writer, this activity and its subsequent nuances do not help the spiritual activities that are supposed to take place at a sacred place such as the Atwea Mountains. It is sometimes quite obvious that in most cases, people turn to use sacred places for different purposes other than what was intended. When holy sites which are meant to be a place of solemnity for the purposes of communicating with God and thereby getting blessings and seeking solution to one's

¹²⁴ Interview with Prophet Osei Elijah, a pilgrim at the Atwea Mountains on 17th March, 2017.

¹²⁵ Interview with Rev. Isaac Owusu Ansah, a pilgrim at the Atwea Mountains on 17th March, 2017

problems and difficulty in life, is used for cooking and selling purposes, their sacred character is defiled. When such acts continue, the identity of the mountain as a sacred place of prayer and pilgrimage loses its reverence and significance. As people of faith, we need to know that when we engage in activities at holy places other than what God has commanded, we can be punished or face the consequences for it. As read in the Bible, the priest-brothers who engaged in activities suitable for priests were punished. The offering of incense was restricted to the Levitical priesthood, namely Aaron and his sons (Numbers 16). They were the right people, doing the right thing. However, something about their offering was amiss. Some writers say they offered “unauthorized fire”. Some translations call it “strange fire”. The text reveals that the fire was not what God had commanded. Bible teachers and preachers have sometimes stated that the fire they put in their censers was not from the altar, and therefore “strange” (Leviticus 6:9 NIV). Yet it could be that it was the incense that they set on fire that was amiss and unauthorized. In Exodus 30:9, the Lord had been very specific regarding the recipe for acceptable incense: The LORD said to Moses, “Take sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum, sweet spices with pure frankincense (of each shall there be an equal part), and make an incense blended as by the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy. You shall beat some of it very small, and put part of it before the testimony in the tent of meeting where I shall meet with you. It shall be most holy for you. And the incense that you shall make according to its composition, you shall not make for yourselves. It shall be for you holy to the LORD. Whoever makes any like it to use as perfume shall be cut off from his people” (Exodus 30:34-38 NIV). Just as it would be wrong for the people to make incense for themselves according to the formula for this holy fragrance, it would be wrong to take a common perfume and offer it as incense before the Lord. The fact of the matter remains. These priests had attempted to offer to God that which was unauthorized, unholy. Nadab and Abihu were guilty of failure to sanctify God by rendering to Him what was holy.

They had glorified themselves by approaching God by their own design rather than by the Lord's ordinance. Therefore, the Lord punished them as an example to all. There is the need for pilgrims who goes to the prayer camps at the Atwea Mountains to recognize the do's and don'ts at such places to have time to commune with God and to avoid acts that are unwanted, in order to maintain the Prayer Mountain as a Holy Place.

4.2.2 Extortion of Money

In recent times, a number one development that have penetrated the activities of most religious groups or men of God popularly on radio and television is the commercialization of Christianity. With the commercialization of Christianity, Christian activities or religious services provided by some men of God are treated as any other commodity in the market place and sold to individuals who are in constant need of their services. With the idea that most issues that confront people in life are mostly influenced or instigated by the devil, most men of God, aware of this worldview of many Christians counter on it and dupe them. These activities, the researcher can say, is not only taking place on our radio and television stations but also, certain Prophets engages in similar activities in the various prayer camps at the Atwea Mountains. As part of the interview the researcher had with some of the leaders at the camp, there was a clear indication that these activities are creating much problems for the kind of work they are trying to do at the various prayer camps. This is because, most of the pastors who engages in such acts do not necessarily seeks to edify the people they preach or prophesy to but sought to defraud their victims who are vulnerable in their quest to seek solution to the problems they are encountering in life. According to the camp leaders, the people who engages in this acts mainly sends their victims to the bushes on the mountain and strategically (forcefully) or cunningly use some prophetic words to lure them to give them money with the aim of helping them solve the kind of

problems they brought to the prayer camp.¹²⁶ In the researcher's opinion, it is important to emphasize this act of commercialization or cunningly taking money from pilgrims by some self-acclaimed Prophets at the Atwea Mountains has far consequences on people's beliefs and practices. This is because, when such acts begin to creep into the church, many believers seem to treat religious service as normal products they can purchase to satisfy their desire. He argues that given the wide variety of church "products one may go shopping for a church where one's felt needs will be met and where one can "Pick & Pray as one would like to. In these circumstances, church goes thus move around from one church to the next as the grapevine prompts them. In quoting Miller, he argues that "believers will choose and avow religious beliefs in manner analogous to conspicuous consumption as an act of social display to establish and communicate their identity."¹²⁷ Secondly, churches are more or less forced to respond to such selectivity of their members. Where religious affiliation is a matter of choice churches become vendors of religious services and goods. Religious service providers have current and potential customers and compete with other firms seeking to serve the market. Accordingly, the clergy are the sales representatives of the church, the gospel church doctrine and various ministries are its products and proclamation its marketing techniques. Moreover, the "invisible hand of the market" is as unforgiving of ineffective religious firms as it is to their commercial counterparts.¹²⁸ Meeting people's spiritual needs is thus just another form of therapy another way of "satisfying the consumer. According to him, idea that the church exists to meet needs has become "deceptively seductive."¹²⁹ What could possibly be wrong about the church helping busy on the - go people cope with the stress and confusion of modern life fashion more stable

¹²⁶ Interview with Evangelist Richard Afriyie, the general overseer of camp three on 17th March, 2017. This incidence was also confirmed in an interview with Joseph Boateng, the secretary for camp, on 17th March, 2017.

¹²⁷ Ernst Conradie, *Christianity and a Critique of Consumerism* (Wellington: Bible Media, 2010), 92.

¹²⁸ Conradie, *Christianity and a Critique of Consumerism*, 92.

¹²⁹ Conradie, *Christianity and a Critique of Consumerism*, 93.

families overcome every kind of abuse enhance self-esteem live more satisfying lives and perhaps along the way make a positive difference in their local communities? They call for a mission understanding of the church that would direct people away from a preoccupation with their own needs in the service of God's purposes. He argues that:

When Christians accept a consumerist culture's definition at face value, they look to the church primarily to provide them with the means to improve their private lives, enhance their self-esteem give them a sense of purpose. Worship becomes a form of therapy whose sole aim is to improve the emotional state of individuals and to energize them for the week ahead. It is designed principally to make these individuals feel comfortable and to justify the style of life they find most satisfying. Quite frankly such worship is little more than projection and wish fulfillment and all the unkind things psychologists have always tended to accuse religion of.¹³⁰

A Pastor at the Zion Princes Church in Accra has condemned this act of extorting money from people or the congregation. He has bemoaned the practice which sees some men of God use weird means to extort money from their congregation, describing the situation as “unfortunate and an act of wickedness.” According to him, II Corinthians 9:7 requires that, a person should give freely what he/she has decided in his or her but not unwillingly. He continues by saying that, some Pastors, he alleged, sell oil, water, handkerchiefs, etc. during church service only just to make money from their poor congregation.¹³¹ It is therefore important for the leaders of the camp to stop such activities in order to create sanity on the Atwea Mountains.

4.2.3 Disobedience

One of the key things that God expects from his people is obedience. In the context of 1 Samuel 15:22 NIV, the Lord God through the prophet Samuel questions the disobedience of King Saul. This text indicates clearly to us that God takes delight in his children who obey and abide by his word. During

¹³⁰ Conradie, *Christianity and a Critique of Consumerism*, 93.

¹³¹ Rev. Emmanuel Ray: Zion Princes Church: www.todaygh.com/pastor-condemns-extortion-of-money-from-their-congregants (Accessed on 24th March, 2017)

the field work at the Atwea Mountains, one of the complaints made by the camp leaders as a factor contributing to the challenges in maintaining the place is disobedience.¹³² This disobedience comes as a result of the fact that on the top of the mountains, there are rules and regulations regarding the maintenance of the place as a sacred place. First, the challenge of disobedience arises out of the fact that, despite many information boards (with notices in both Twi and English languages) on the various prayer camps which, among other things, seek to inform pilgrims about the need for them to ensure environmental cleanliness, sanitation problems which include indiscriminate littering, irresponsible refuse dumping and unpleasant smell exuded from the lavatories, etc. many of the pilgrims still go contrary to this rule and end up littering and dirtying the place. In view of the researcher, this attitude goes contrary to biblical principles of keeping holy places holy as stated in the book of Deuteronomy in the previous chapter. Interesting, this view seems to contrast earlier views shared by some respondent interview by Okyere in his earlier work on the Atwea Mountains. According to Okyere, contrary to his own view, information he gathered from some of the camp workers at camp three seems to suggest that individuals take delight in cleaning the littered or dirty places at the camp and receive blessings from God. According to him, one Nana Kwame, one of the worshippers at camp three, disclosed to him that the more the prayer camp become dirty and camp workers sanitize the place (by sweeping, scrubbing, weeding, etc.), the more blessings they claim to receive from God. As a result, Nana Kwame claimed that the Camp workers are sometimes delighted by the insanitary conditions at the camp because it provides them the opportunity to tidy up the place and receive more blessings. The story of a woman believed to be poor who allegedly came to work at camp three was worth noting. It was disclosed to the researcher that a single woman believed to be poor who also had more than five children allegedly came to camp three purposely to help tidy up the place. It was said

¹³² Interview with Evangelist Afriyie.

that her belief was that through her sanitation work on the mountain, the Lord would be merciful and gracious to her. In the course of working, it is said that some unknown philanthropists came and picked five of the woman's children abroad¹³³ (Europe and America) on humanitarian grounds.¹³⁴ The case of this woman, in the opinion of the researcher, is believed to be exceptional. Like all other faith-related issues, it is also perceived to transcend empirical verification. In the view of the researcher, this and other many experiences should be an opportunity or a yardstick to make the holy place of God unholy and dirty for people to stay in. people must be aware that apart from the fact that God himself spoke against such in the Old Testament concerning holy places, the act of making the place dirty can generate or cause illness which can be dangerous to human life and existence. As Christians, we have a divine mandate to protect and be stewards of God's creation. We should always remember that we will give an account of everything God has entrusted to our care and the mountain is one of them. Taking good care of the mountain by not littering around it will go a long way to please not only man but also God.

4.2.4 Theft Cases

According to the camp leaders interviewed, one of the challenges confronting the management of the Atwea Mountains is theft. According to one of the leaders interviewed, there are reported cases involving the stealing of money and mobile phones. Some of the people who climb the mountain do so with the mentality to steal. ¹³⁵According to some respondents interviewed, not everyone who is found on the mountain is purposely there to pray or to wait on God. Some of the people who come there have different purposes and hence, engages in some acts which may be contrary to what one

¹³³ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 121.

¹³⁴ Okyere, *Reconstructing Sacred Space*, 122.

¹³⁵ Interview with Joseph Boateng.

will expect on the mountain such as stealing.¹³⁶ According to them, some individuals come to the mountain for different purposes and at times, engage in acts that are ungodly. Some of the respondents also attributed some of the theft cases to strangers or individuals who are found on the mountain purposely to sell.

4.2.5 Occult Practices and Syncretism

According to the leaders on the top of the mountains, one of the challenges that have risen as part of the religious activities on the mountain is the issue of occult practices and syncretism.¹³⁷ According to some of the leaders interviewed, the practice of anointing with oil which comes in different colors and shapes has also been an issue at some prayer camps. According to them, some individuals who come to the mountain are seen engaging in some practices of which are similar to occultism and syncretism.¹³⁸ Syncretism means the fusion of two or more thought systems, and can be applied to philosophy, politics, and religion. Religious syncretism usually involves the addition of a few essential parts of one religion to a dominant religion, resulting in a new religious system. It is important to distinguish syncretism from contextualization. Changing the way, a religion is described or the way a particular rite is practiced to make it understandable to a culture is not syncretistic, since it does not add a foreign religious belief to the system, nor does it actually change the original belief. Syncretism has been a serious issue throughout Christian history. Missionaries and indigenous Christians have struggled against both the addition of local traditions or religious tendencies to biblical doctrine, and against the simple addition of certain pieces of Christianity to an indigenous population's religion. The former happened extensively in South America, particularly during

¹³⁶ Interview with Isaac Owusu Ansah.

¹³⁷ Interview with Rev. Enock Kwabu, the leader of camp 7 on March 17th, 2017.

¹³⁸ Interview with Prophet Anthony Joel, the Founder and General Overseer of camp 5 on March 17th, 2017. This incidence was also confirmed in an interview with the both the Secretary and General Overseer of camp 3.

Spanish colonization, when some of the animistic and superstitious practices inherent to the tribal cultures were added to the colonists' imported religion.¹³⁹ On the other hand, those who work to spread the Gospel to Hindus and similar religions often have a difficult time explaining why Jesus Christ is more than another deity to be added to their polytheistic belief system. In what happens at the Atwea Mountains, people tend to blend other traditional practices with the Christian faith. For example, some of the leaders argued that there are instances in which people engage in enchantment and other ritual practices contrary to the Christian faith. In the interview, almost all the camp leaders expressed the view that these activities and many others have affected the attendance or the patronage of the Atwea Mountains in recent times. According to them, most pilgrims who come into contact with such practices upon their visit to the mountains claim that these acts have rendered the place unholy. Yaw Ofori, a luggage carrier interviewed, added that, this act has reduced the presence of God that used to be there on the mountain and has caused fear in most people to patronize the place for their spirituality. To him, the kind of testimonies that people experienced and shared is not as it is today because of such practices.¹⁴⁰ Arguably, sacred places have a sacred purpose to make a community, to gather people together, to enable them to pray, worship and meditate together. 'Sacredness', it is said, 'comes from the people'. It is what is said and done in particular places which makes them sacred or imbues them with certain holiness. There is, in other words, a very human as well as a divine story to be told about such places. Some places such as the Atwea Mountains may take the form of 'community centers' where different activities are coordinated. There is the need for the leaders on the mountains to put stringent measures in place to curtail any acts that will go a long way to destroy the Atwea Mountains as a holy ground for God's people.

¹³⁹ What is syncretism? How do some people try to blend religious or other thought systems? <https://www.compellingtruth.org/syncretism.html> (Accessed on 13th March, 2017).

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Yaw Ofori, an indigene of Abasua, and a luggage of the Atwia carrier on 17th March, 2017.

4.3 Strategies Needed to Avert the Challenges

During the interview, a number of things were suggested by the various leaders of the camps to be employed as strategies to avert the challenges. First, is the tightening of security on top of the mountains. Most of the leaders interviewed were of the view that there is the need to beef up security on the top of the mountains to prevent people who are suspected to be engaging in foul play to deceive people from such unscrupulous acts. According to the respondents, having a good security system in place to check thievery and also acts that are seen as contrary to the expected rules and regulations will go a long way to help people feel secured and also, put the place in order. This is because, according to them, many people who have suffered from thievery activities do not find the interest in coming to the prayer camp again. This has gone a long way to affect the number of people that use to come to the prayer camp. Secondly, some of the leaders indicated that continuous announcement should be made purposely to conscientize people on the need to follow and abide by the various rules and regulations regarding the use of the mountain. This concern was raised by the leaders because, each and every day, new people visit the prayer camp to pray and might not be familiar with the rules and regulation at the prayer camp. However, they are of the view that a continuous announcement will help bring people's mind on the need to keep the prayer or the holy ground tide and also, keep away from all unwanted behavior at the prayer camp. According to some of them, the announcement should be coupled with education on the rules and regulation at the various prayer camps. Thirdly, Preventing the opposite sex to sleep in the same room. According to some of the leaders interviewed the sleeping of opposite sex together in the same room need to be avoided. On a number of occasions, there have been rumors of people having sex at the prayer camps. In an attempt to authenticate this claim, the researcher sought to find out from the leader of camp three whether or not they have caught people or have reported cases of such. In his response, he indicated, issues regarding sex at the prayer

have only been rumors, however, he disclosed that he cannot doubt the authenticity of the claim or doubt what others are saying. According to him and other leaders interviewed, opposite sex should not be allowed to sleep in the same room to prevent such acts. Again, some of the respondents were of the view sleeping together in the same room by the opposite sex does not auger well for effective spiritual exercises. This is because, according to them, there are circumstances where the women would have changed themselves and hence, might create an unwanted scene for the men.

Fourth, some of the camp leaders expressed the view that excessive teaching of the word of God can also prevent people or campers from engaging in unwanted behavior at the prayer camp. In an interview, the leader of camp three indicated that some of the challenges faced at the various prayer camp has even helped them or inform them on the kind of messages they preach at the prayer camp. According to him, some of the incidence that happens or takes place at the prayer camp portrays that most of the people that come to the prayer camp to pray are not in themselves ‘born again’ Christians, and hence, sometimes, message preached are centered on salvation and the need for one to receive Christ as his or personal savior. In their view, conversion basically means repentance, diversion, and transformation. They are of the view that biblical conversion is a work of repentance and faith when a born again Christian turns his or her heart to God. Therefore, Christians repent of their sins before God by reflecting on their past life and living a life of faith as a result of repentance. When people bear fruits of repentance, the church will grow healthy and experience transformation. This transformation which is wrought out by the power of the Holy Spirit helps people to lead a life of regeneration and transformation that has a lasting effect on the way they treat others and the environment. Fifth, as part of the interview, some of the leaders at the various prayer camps also indicated that there is the need for the camp leaders to instill discipline and bring offenders to book. According to them, confronting perpetrators of acts that are unwanted at the prayer camps will be one

of the best ways to deter other people from repeating such acts again. On their view, if the various acts such as stealing, and disobedience go unpunished, the room is given to other people to repeat same. Finally, one of the strategies the leaders suggested as a means to curb the challenges they encounter at the various prayer camps is to ensure that people are not allowed to stay inside their rooms during church services. According to them, the act of people staying in the various rooms when church services are going on need to be discouraged because such act can breed in theft cases.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the study has mainly enumerated and discussed various challenges that confront the leaders in their attempt to manage the Atwea Mountains. Largely, the researcher draws most of the challenges highlighted through interviews and personal observation as a pilgrim to the Atwea Mountain on a number of occasions. It is the view of the researcher that these issues discussed, will go a long way to help confront and manage the issues that come about in the management of the Atwea Mountains.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Summary

This study has focused on the Atwea Mountains as a sacred place for prayer activities and the various challenges that are encountered in managing it. The study was motivated by the researcher's interest on how the place has been managed in recent times and resultant effect it is having on the pilgrims who embark on spiritual journey to wait on the Lord on top of the mountain. This study employed a phenomenological approach. The method was particularly used to analyze the phenomenon of sacred place experiences and to also examine how such experiences produces other life changing or threatening issues towards the management and the sustenance of the place. The first part of this study looked at the background issues and also stated the problems, aims and objectives of the study.

The study also discussed how the Atwea Mountains became a holy and/ or a sacred place. The study emphasized that in many religious traditions, there are designated places that are used as sacred or Holy places for ritual and prayer purposes. Such places serve as a site for people to visit and have direct communion with the divine. The study dealt with the Atwea Mountains as a sacred place of prayer, and also dwelt with the topic on prayer as an important aspect of the pilgrim journey. Most importantly, the work also looked at the various activities that go on at the Atwea Mountains and discussed some of the challenges that are encountered in maintaining the place. Drawing extensively from interviews with leaders at some prayer camps, the study has also offered various strategies that can be put in place to ensure the effective management of the place as a holy ground.

5.2 Conclusion

It is quite obvious throughout this study that the Atwea Mountains as a sacred site or holy place is gradually losing its relevance and reverence as it had from the beginning. This situation cannot be

attributed to no other reason than to the pilgrims who visit the place from time to time for their spiritual activities. The inability for the pilgrims to adhere to certain rules and regulations or the maintenance of certain level of discipline has largely contributed to the current state of the mountain. This is, however, not to say that the mountain can no longer be regarded as a holy site or a sacred place, however, the continuous falling of moral standards and other inhuman acts which are not supposed to be exhibited at such a place has hitherto, led to the decline of reverence the place had in its initial beginnings. In providing some vital pieces of information about the Atwea Mountains and the various activities that go on at the various prayer camps, the researcher makes the following observations or findings. First, it was found out, not all the individuals that are found on top of the mountain or at the various camps are purposely there to pray. There are, however, individuals who are also there for their own special purposes or selfish interest which is always in contradiction to the major activities that takes place at the Atwea Mountains. Secondly, I also found out that stringent measures have not been put in place by the various leaders at the various prayer camps at the Atwea to deal with the challenges that confronts them. The inability on behalf of various leaders to come to consensus and instill such strict disciplinary rules, from the researchers own opinion might lead to escalating of events which in the near future can have consequence on the use of the place as a holy site or sacred place. It is my opinion that various leaders and some of the founding churches of the prayer camps on top of the mountain such as the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches will take a lead role in this process.

5.3 Recommendations

In looking at the various observations made, I wish to make the following recommendations;

- Various leaders on top of the mountain should come together and provide personnel who will be in charge of security on top of the mountain who from time to time can profile suspected individuals and bring culprit into book.
- Various prayer camps that operate on the Atwea Mountains should put in place stringent disciplinary measures by sacking individuals who prove stubborn while on top of the mountain to pray.
- As already indicated, there should be continuous education on the rules and regulation regarding the use of the mountains. From time to time, announcement should also be made at the various prayer camps to alert pilgrims on the need to ensure cleanliness and safety of the place.
- As said in the chapter four of this work, the cooking and selling of certain foods must be banned to enhance fasting programs since this is the reason majority of pilgrims climb the Prayer Mountain. If this cannot be done perhaps for tourists' attraction, and the breaking of fasting purposes, then the camp leaders must agree to establish an official catering restaurant at a place different from where pilgrims sleep and prays. This will especially help pilgrims who have come for their fasting programs get the concentration they need.
- There should be regular seminars where both local and international speakers will be invited to teach and educate people on Christian spirituality and to empower them.
- Again, as a place of Christian spirituality, there should be an establishment of Christian book shops at the camps where pilgrims will get all kinds of Christian books or Literatures needed to enhance their spirituality.

- Though, the issues of sickness and diseases, or health matters were not directly raised and discussed, yet there's the need to establish a clinic with qualified doctors and nurses. If this is not done, in the day of an emergency of a sick person etc., the worse may happen.

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PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED

Evangelist Richard Afriyie, the General Overseer of camp 3 on 17th March, 2017.

Mr. Joseph Boateng, the secretary for camp 3, on 17th March, 2017.

Rev. Isaac Owusu Ansah, a pilgrim at the Atwea Mountains on 17th March, 2017.

Mr. Yaw Ofori, an indigene of Abasua and a luggage carrier of the camps on March 17th, 2017

Rev. Enoch Kwabu, the leader of Camp 7 on March 17, 2017.

Prophet Anthony Joel, the Founder and General Overseer of camp 5 on March 17th 2017.

Prophet Elijah Osei at camp 3 on 17th March, 2017.