CHAPTER 2
ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

2.1   INTRODUCTION

In chapter 1, I indicated that by means of employing an alternate state of consciousness, Jesus "showed"; by means of anti-language the earliest Jesus-followers "told"; and by means of the rites of baptism and the Eucharist Jesus-groups "re-enacted" this "telling" of the "showing" of an alternate state of consciousness. In this chapter, I intend to discuss the nature of alternate states of consciousness. I consider that such states of consciousness played a fundamental role in the lives of the people who lived in the first-century Mediterranean world.[1] Insight into this matter could shed light on many of the unfamiliar events we read about in the Bible.[2]

I shall examine the following themes in this chapter: Consciousness (since our understanding of alternate states of *consciousness* will depend on our understanding of consciousness), the many facets of alternate states of consciousness, alternate states of consciousness and myth, the context of alternate states of consciousness, shamanism, and the function of alternate states of consciousness. At the end of the chapter, I shall offer some concluding remarks.

A short note on terminology: there is no consensus among scholars regarding the appropriate terminology for describing the phenomenon at stake. The traditional phrase "altered states of consciousness" raises quite a few problems. I concur with Zinberg (1977:1 note 1), Austin (1998:306), and Craffert (2002:65) that the term "alternate states of consciousness" describes this phenomenon adequately.[3] Craffert (2002:65) indicates that on a homoversal[4] level, a distinction can be made between ordinary and extraordinary states of consciousness. What is "ordinary" is not homoversal – in other words, it is not the same for all human beings. On a cultural level, a distinction can be made

between *baseline* (or normal) and *alternate states of consciousness,* which differ from culture to culture. Craffert (2002:65; emphasis by Craffert) writes that it should be realized "that these distinctions are analytically necessary in order to avoid the single distinction between *consciousness* and *altered states of consciousness* (with the implication that a fixed set of altered states exists for all human beings)." Regarding the history of the term "altered", Austin (1998:306-310) shows that it was first used in the context of describing the state brought about by psychedelic drugs, which could easily *alter* a person's consciousness. Zinberg (1977:1 note 1) further exposes the term's implicit pejorative and ethnocentric[5] connotation, since these states are commonly perceived to represent a deviation from the way consciousness "should" be. Owing to these reasons, I prefer not to use the term "altered states of consciousness". On the other hand, the term "alternate" makes it clear that "different states of consciousness prevail at different times for different reasons and that no one state is considered standard" (Craffert 2002:65). Or as Austin (1998:306) comments: "As a term, *alternate* carries no pejorative connotations. It states the obvious: many optional states occur. And they differ substantially."

Another important issue addressed by Craffert (2002:53-54) is the perspective from which alternate states of consciousness can be described. He chooses a "biopsychosocial" perspective, which he describes as follows:

> On the one hand, it is grounded in neurobiology and neurosciences and maintains that the nervous system constructs the world of everyday experience. The underlying truth of this viewpoint is that consciousness and conscious experiences are largely the constructs of the human nervous system. On the other hand, it accepts the insights of transpersonal anthropology which indicate that similar transpersonal experiences are to be found among people from all cultures of the world. Taken together, these fields of research open fascinating avenues not only for looking at religious experiences but also for understanding human beings as unitary beings.

As I have already indicated in chapter 1, I concur with Craffert that a multidisciplinary methodology serves the study of alternate states of consciousness well. To start at the beginning, I shall now investigate the phenomenon of "consciousness".

2.2   CONSCIOUSNESS

A certain comprehension of the term "consciousness" is essential for an adequate appreciation of the concept "*alternate* states of consciousness".[6] But it is not an easy task to describe "consciousness".[7] There are even scholars who regard consciousness as indefinable.[8] The reason for this, according to Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili ([1990] 1992:72, 77), is that despite the fact that all kinds of divisions or sections of the brain and nervous system can be identified, the nervous system does not neatly divide into parts like a Lego toy. Each moment of consciousness is mediated by a field of neural connections that involve millions of neural cells and their support structures. The conscious organism is a certain "way of being" which represents a specific ontological level or reality. The above authors indicate that consciousness defies easy definition, because it is "a functional complex" and not an object or "thing" (cf Craffert 2002:62-63).

Intrinsically, consciousness refers to a continuum in which we are able to feel, think, and perceive (Wright 1996:128).[9] This means that what a human being experiences in waking awareness is termed ordinary or normal consciousness.[10] But because of the negative connotations[11] some people may associate with the words "ordinary" and "normal", I shall throughout refer to this state as "baseline consciousness". According to Krippner (1972:5), this baseline state of consciousness is characterized by logic, rationality, cause-and-effect thinking, goal directedness, and the feeling that one is in control of one's mental activity. In Eurocentric terminology, a conscious person is someone who engages in reflective thinking; in other words, an individual who is aware of himself or herself as an experiencing unit. Pease (1993:14) agrees, defining consciousness as: "…the totality…of sensations, perceptions, ideas, attitudes, and feelings of which

an individual or a group is aware at any given time span." Kriel (2000:113) contributes to this discussion by adding that consciousness is neither a property of the mind nor a phenomenon that exists separately from a person, but a manner of existence (of the person as a total system) in the world. It is a process (or a relation) rather than an entity, and this process is culturally constructed and determined (see Price-Williams 1975:88, 90; Pilch 1993:234; Ellis 1995:2). Winkelman (2000:10-11) writes that the term "consciousness" is fundamentally concerned with an informational relationship between an organism and its environment, the process and properties of "knowing" systems. Consciousness functions to couple the individual organism, its social group and the environment. The central nervous system integrates all the activities of the individual (cf Popper & Eccles 1977:127-129). Thus, consciousness refers to the ongoing stream of experience that is mediated by a functional neural complex, and this complex models the world (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:90). We must keep in mind that the properties of consciousness are not only the properties created by brain structures; they are also derived from the interrelations of systemic properties of the brain with the symbolic information and meanings provided by learning and culture (Winkelman 2000:24). Culture, language and education play an important role in the development of human consciousness, since they are the most extensive context in which meaning is constructed (cf Scheff 1993:188-194). As Winkelman (2000:15) observes: "Consciousness is produced by the structures that mediate interaction between knower and known." Consciousness thus implies awareness and socially shared knowledge (cf Ellis 1995:28-29, 138; see Pilch 2002d:692).

Something else that we have to keep in mind is that consciousness is not a natural "given", but a rather arbitrary "construction". The basic components of consciousness are attention or awareness energy and structures, and these components form a system. Such a system is dynamic, since the function of consciousness is to cope successfully with the external environment, which means that parts of the former are changing all the time, while maintaining the

overall patterns that comprise its nature (see Tart 1977:160-169, 180-181). Because we are born as human beings, creatures with a certain kind of body and nervous system living on the same planet, a very large number of human potentialities are in principle available to us. But we are born into a particular culture that selects and develops a small number of these potentialities, actively rejects others, and is ignorant of many of these potentialities as well. The small number of experiential potentialities selected by our culture, plus some random factors, constitute the elements from which our baseline state of consciousness is constructed. But there is a possibility of developing latent potentials outside the cultural norm, by temporarily restructuring our consciousness – and this can be done by entering an alternate state of consciousness (see Tart 1977:215; 1982: 245-248).

Craffert (2002:65-69) indicates that a distinction can be made between cultures which favor different patterns or views of consciousness. In Western cultures people with monophasic consciousness give dominance to ego-consciousness. For them the only "real world" is the world experienced during the baseline phase. But the majority of people on the planet experience polyphasic consciousness, in which many more states of consciousness (such as dreams or visions) are taken as real and are often experienced. Such cultures also provide the rituals and prescriptions for the how, when and where of these experiences. Baseline states of consciousness as well as alternate states of consciousness in a specific setting are thus not stereotyped reactions to specific stimuli or neurological conditions, but dynamic, goal-oriented processes which the individual has learned from his or her culture (see Lewis 1989:5).

In conclusion, Craffert (2002:65-69) considers that consciousness is not only a biological or neurological feature of human nature, but that it is also embedded in psychosocial parameters which co-determine it. He adds that since consciousness is a systems and functional entity, neither states of consciousness nor consciousness as such are fixed. For example, the

consciousness of a child is not the same as that of an adult. States of consciousness are unique and personal experiences.

With this basic understanding of consciousness in mind, we can now turn to the concept *alternate states* of consciousness.

2.3   ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

2.3.1   Introduction

At the beginning of the previous century, James ([1902] 1985:388) had already realized the importance of alternate states of consciousness. He writes:

> …our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question, – for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. Yet they may determine attitudes though they cannot furnish formulas, and open a region though they fail to give a map. At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts with reality.

Rowan (2001:215) similarly comments that there are multiple levels of human consciousness, and argues that if "we are genuinely trying to explain human behavior, or understand human actions, or interpret human conduct, it must be absurd to ignore these different conditions" (cf Rollins 1999). Even though scholars realize the importance of alternate states of consciousness, they struggle to define this concept. Craffert (2002:72) observes that if we take the large number of components of consciousness into account, as well as the many

induction techniques and the variety of cultural settings within which they operate, "it is almost inevitable that no single map or universal cartography of states of consciousness exists, that no unified definition of any individual aspect or of the overall group of phenomena can be given."

As I remarked earlier, a distinction can be made between *baseline* and *alternate states of consciousness,* which differ from culture to culture (Craffert 2002:65; see Tart 1972:1-2). An alternate state of consciousness is a shift in a person's level of awareness (Erickson & Rossi 1981:242, 248).

In chapter 1, I referred to a definition of alternate[12] states of consciousness given by Bourguignon[13] (1979:236). In addition to her description, I consider that Ludwig's (1966:225; 1972:11) definition of alternate states of consciousness also describes this phenomenon adequately:

> …any mental state(s), induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological manoeuvres or agents, which can be recognised subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in subjective experience or psychological functioning from certain general norms for that individual during alert, waking consciousness. This sufficient deviation may be represented by a greater preoccupation than usual with internal sensations or mental processes, changes in the formal characteristics of thought, and impairment of reality testing to various degrees.

In an alternate state of consciousness a person, thus, enters another level of reality than the one he or she usually experiences. In this reality, interaction with unseen personages, celestial and terrestrial, can take place (see Malina and Pilch 2000:4-8; Winkelman 2000:147; Pilch 2002d:692). To describe these events as contacts with the "transcendent" or the "supernatural" would be ethnocentric. For people who lived in the first century, the realms of God and God's angels, of stars and planets, of spirits, demons, and genies, were all part

of the total environment in which humans lived (cf Saler 1977:42-44). The distinction between "natural" and "supernatural"[14] is a concept deriving from Western culture and is of no help in understanding first-century Mediterranean concepts[15] (Saler 1977:43-44, 46, 51; cf Rogerson 1976:5; Pilch 1996a:134-135; Van Aarde 2001b:1165).

Alternate states of consciousness are something common to humanity. States like these have been recognized as common possibilities from the early first century until today (Crossan 2003:47; see Winkelman 2000:116). Crossan (2003:47) remarks: "How you explain them and whether you judge them objective, subjective, or interactive, is quite another question."

Alternate-states-of-consciousness research thus examines and compares ecstatic, trance, mystical, transcendental, or visionary experiences that pervade human cultures around the world. The wide range[16] of states of consciousness that researchers consider under the rubric of alternate states of consciousness makes it difficult to define the phenomenon with precision (DeMaris 2002:145-146).

2.3.2 Misperceptions regarding alternate states of consciousness

In contemporary Western culture, alternate states of consciousness are generally thought of as irrational[17] (cf Bourguignon 1973:3; Goodman 1988a:3, 36; Goodman 1990:11; Pilch 1993; Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14; Winkelman 2000:116; Turner 2003:145-151). For this reason, a large percentage of Westernized people offer strong cultural resistance to alternate state of consciousness experiences. These people tend to consider alternate states of consciousness as pathological and infantile, while considering their own mode of consciousness as "normal" and "ordinary". But as a number of cross-cultural social psychologists insist, the Western baseline state of consciousness is a socially learned and selectively patterned state of consciousness that in many ways is arbitrary (see e.g., Tart 1982:244-245). Consequently, many of the

values associated with it are quite arbitrary and specific to Eurocentric culture alone (Malina & Pilch 2000:5; see Pilch 2002a:105; Craffert 2002:84).

However, Bourguignon (1974:229-232) shows that alternate states of consciousness are widespread human phenomena, experienced in a variety of forms by almost all human beings. It seems as if it is mostly people who are part of contemporary Western culture who choose not to employ alternate states of consciousness. She compiled a sample of 488 societies in all parts of the world, at various levels of technological complexity, and found that approximately 90% of these societies evidence institutionalized forms of alternate states of consciousness.[18] Her conclusion is that societies which do not utilize these states are historical exceptions which need to be explained, rather than the vast majority of societies that do use these states[19] (see Bourguignon 1973:9-10; Bourguignon 1976:49-51; Goodman 1988a:36; Goodman 2001:6-7). Thus, it would be anachronistic and ethnocentric to take our post-Enlightenment, technologically orientated society as normative for judging anyone other than ourselves. For most of the world, even today, a report of alternate states of consciousness would be considered quite "normal"[20] (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:282-285; cf Kleinman 1988:123; see Pilch 1995c:49-50, 56-57).

Clottes and Lewis-Williams (1998:12, 81) concur: they state that in all places and at all times people have entered into alternate states of consciousness.[21] As a matter of fact, they carried out research which shows that it is likely that 1.4 million years ago people had already experienced alternate states of consciousness[22] (cf Henderson [1964] 1988:151). The potential to shift, voluntarily or involuntarily, between different states of consciousness is a function of the universal human nervous system (cf Joseph 2001:105-106; see Pilch 2002e:717-718). This makes sense if we keep in mind that, according to Malina (1993a:8), all humans are entirely the same (100%; according to nature), entirely different (100%; according to person), and somewhat the same and somewhat different (50%/50%; according to culture) at the same time. Our common biology,

thus, explains why alternate states of consciousness are a pan-human phenomenon for those people who do not block such states (see Pilch 2002d:704).

But why do some societies, especially in the contemporary West, lack alternate state of consciousness experiences? Kleinman (1988:50) explains that the advent of modern science in about the seventeenth century disrupted the bio-psycho-spiritual unity of the human consciousness, as well as the unity of the human consciousness and cosmos, that had existed until then (see Price-Williams 1975:87-88). According to Kleinman (1988:50-51) we have developed an "acquired consciousness", whereby we dissociate the self and look at the self "objectively". Western culture socializes individuals to develop a meta-self, a critical observer who monitors and comments on experience. The meta-self does not allow the total absorption in lived experience which is the very essence of highly focused alternate states of consciousness. By internalizing a critical observing mentality, the self is rendered inaccessible to possession by gods or ghosts; it cannot faint from fright or become paralyzed by humiliation; it loses the literalness of bodily metaphors of the most intimate personal distress, accepting in their place a psychological meta-language that has the appearance of immediacy but in fact distances felt experience; and the self becomes vulnerable to forms of pathology (like borderline and egotistic personality disorders) that appear to be culture bound to the West (cf Jung [1964] 1988:45; Goodman 2001:7). This also explains why primarily, in the West, the idea of ecstatic religious practices (related to alternate states of consciousness) is associated with a lack of respectability. Bourguignon (1973:342-349) points out that within the norm of proper Eurocentric behavior, such abandonment of self-control is easily regarded as indecent. Capitalism, science, and technology are linked to rationality, and as such to a suspicion of mysticism and otherworldliness (Bourguignon 1974:234-235). According to Price-Williams (1975:81-87), Westerners experience alternate states of consciousness as "primitive" or part of "primitive cultures",[23] merely because they have not socialized or cultured these

studies. "Primitives" are just as logical and coherent in their own world as the so-called "civilized people" in theirs[24] (cf Bourguignon 1974:234).

2.3.3 Characteristics of alternate states of consciousness

Bourguignon (1973:6) writes that alternate states of consciousness are characterized by a deviation in the quantity of central nervous system arousal from a baseline state. General characteristics of alternate states of consciousness are: alterations in thinking, disturbed time sense, loss of control, change in emotional expression, change in body image, perceptual distortions, change in meaning or significance, sense of the ineffable, feelings of rejuvenation and hypersuggestibility (Ludwig 1966:227-230; 1972:12-15; cf Korn 2002:41).

In line with the above mentioned features, Goodman (1988a:37; see Goodman 2001:9) describes the characteristics of *religious* alternate states of consciousness as follows:

> The religious altered state of consciousness…causes a number of changes in the body. Some are readily observable. The individuals involved may start breathing more deeply. Some perspire profusely, they may blush, tremble, or twitch. Occasionally muscles tense, especially around the neck. Were a person to speak in this state, there would be a switch to a beautifully rhythmic vocalization, pulsing like poetry, and rising in intonation until the end of the first third of the utterance unit, then steadily dropping toward the end. A careful observation of subjects experiencing a religious trance indicates that a single occurrence, an episode, has a clearly discernible start, a certain duration, and an end or dissolution.

She portrays the process of experiencing a religious alternate state of consciousness thus:

- *The start:* Religious communities where alternate states of consciousness are institutionalized use rituals to induce them, and the people who participate in the experience learn to react to these rituals[25] (cf Davies[26] 1995:30). There is almost no limit to the types of stimuli that are suitable for induction, for example: the singing of a certain hymn or chant, clapping, dancing, drumming, shaking a rattle, turning around one's own axis, reciting a certain formula or prayer, glancing at a flickering candle or moving water, or smelling a certain fragrance. The reason for this great variety lies in part in the fact that it is not so much the stimulus in and of itself that produces the switch from one state of consciousness to another, but rather the expectation that this shift is going to take place. This, together with the associated ritual situation, produces an intense concentration, which is aided by the stimulus. Concentration is an introductory strategy (cf d'Aquili & Newberg 1999:100-102).

- *Sojourn:* During this phase, the body works hard, exhibiting the features described above. Here differences occur in the ecstatic experiences of different people, because although humans are similar as far as physical manifestations are concerned and all human beings share the same nervous system, we are very diverse culturally. The physiological changes of religious alternate states of consciousness are our common gateway, but they admit us to our own, distinctive alternate reality.

- *Dissolution:* Eventually, the people who experienced the alternate state of consciousness "awaken". This happens as a response to a signal in the ritual, for example the ceasing of the drumming or the sound of a sharp bell.

- *After-effects:* After the conclusion of the alternate state of consciousness, the people who participated in the experience are rewarded with a feeling of intense euphoria (Goodman 1988a:37-38).

If we take into consideration the descriptions we possess about the way in which the earliest baptism and Eucharist were conducted (see chapters 4 and 5), we shall recognize that there are certain similarities between the rites of baptism and the Eucharist and the process of experiencing alternate states of consciousness described above.

2.3.4 Types of alternate states of consciousness

Because of the complexity of the phenomenon, we can distinguish between different types of alternate states of consciousness. Winkelman (2000:124, 187) distinguishes between modes and states of consciousness. He argues that *modes* of consciousness are biologically based, and that their functions are related to organismic needs and homeostatic balance. *States* of consciousness reflect sociological learning and psychosocial needs. States operate within modes, and the functions of states are determined by social, cultural, and psychological functions rather than by strictly biological needs.

Examples of *modes* of consciousness are waking consciousness, deep sleep, REM (rapid eye movement), sleep (dreaming), and transpersonal, mystical, or transcendental consciousness (integrative consciousness) (Winkelman 2000:118-119, 122). Examples of *states* of consciousness include nocturnal dreaming, alcohol intoxication, drug-induced states (e.g., by marijuana), strong emotional states (e.g., rage, depression, ecstasy), hypnosis, meditation-induced states,[27] sensory-isolation induced states, mediumistic and possession trance, reverie, shamanic states, guided visualization states, and channeling states (Tart 2000:258; see Winkelman 2000:125-126).

Although Krippner (1972:1-5) does not make a distinction between modes and states of consciousness, he largely agrees with Winkelman by identifying twenty states of consciousness: the dreaming state, the sleeping state, the hypnagogic state (drowsiness before sleep), the hypnopompic state (semi-consciousness preceding waking), the hyperalert state, the lethargic state, states of rapture, states of hysteria, states of fragmentation, regressive states, meditative states, trance states, reverie, the daydreaming state, internal scanning, stupor, coma, stored memory, "expanded" consciousness states, and the baseline state.

These states of consciousness shade one into the other, along a continuum, with *alert consciousness* (the condition in which people are fully aware of their surroundings and are able to react rationally to these surroundings) at one end and *deep states* (trance) at the other. Thus, alert consciousness sometimes gives way to daydreaming in which one is less alert. Next there is dreaming and lucid dreaming, a state between waking and sleeping in which people can control or learn to control the imagery in their dreams. In deep states of trance, all the senses are involved: people see, hear, smell, feel, and taste things. They experience a variety of sensations in their bodies (cf Turner [1982] 1992:81; see Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:13-14; Pilch 2002d:694-697). Because these states flow one into the other, and are thus not fixed categories, we need to keep in mind that even in the case of a single individual, such states are not exactly the same from one occurrence to the next (Craffert 2002:72).

Therefore, Craffert (2002:72-75) proposes that instead of suggesting that all these phenomena can be covered by the same descriptive map, it will be more appropriate to employ different maps which each highlight specific features of alternate states of consciousness, and consequently engage in a constant process of translation between them.

He gives the following examples of such maps (Craffert 2002:72-75):

- *Map 1:* This map distinguishes between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* states of consciousness. It has already been pointed out that baseline consciousness is not fixed or standardized. Craffert (2002:73) continues:

  What is added here is that some states are ordinary in the sense that people experience them every day. Among the ordinary states are waking, sleeping, and dreaming, with transition periods in between. Thus, all people ordinarily experience a baseline consciousness which contains certain different states. In addition, there is a great variety of potential states which are extraordinary, some of which are experienced by many people at some time during their lifetime (e g when ill with high fever or intoxicated or due to certain activities), and others which some people experience more often due to their cultural settings. These states can be normal or ordinary for people living in a polyphasic culture but are definitely extraordinary for those living in a monophasic culture.

  The value of this map is that it portrays that which the neurosciences also confirm, namely that the human and bodily potential of experiencing a great variety of states of consciousness is totally "normal".

- *Map 2:* This map provides a view of the spectrum of ritually induced states of consciousness. It has already been indicated that in a great majority of human societies there are ritually induced forms of alternate states of consciousness. In this regard Bourguignon (1972:417-418; 1973:12-17; 1974:229-240; [1976] 1991:7-10) distinguishes between alternate states of consciousness interpreted as possession and those given some other explanation.[28] She uses the term "trance" to refer to an alternate state of consciousness in which contact with self and others is modified in some particular way, ranging from total unconsciousness to a very shallow modification. Among these states, two are found very frequently: The

concept of a temporary absence of the soul, which leaves the body and goes on a trip or is abducted; or the notion that the body is taken over by one or more possessing spirits for the duration of the trance. She refers to the first kind as *trance* and to the second as *possession trance*.[29] She also mentions a concept of possession that is not applied exclusively to alternate states of consciousness, and this she refers to as *possession*[30] (cf Jung 1988:32-38; Lewis 1986:82; Davies 1995:23-26, 117; DeMaris 2002:146-151).

- *Map 3:* This map distinguishes between ecstatic and meditative states in religious settings. "These can be placed on a single circular continuum which represents two alternate ways of attaining the Self" (Craffert 2002:74). D'Aquili and Newburg (1993:5-6) observe that neurologically speaking, these experiences can be driven from the "bottom-up" (by means of the physical behaviors of ritual), or from the "top-down" (triggered by the mind). Although the two ends of the continuum represent different physiological processes, they bring about much the same result – an experience of oneness with the universe.

Craffert (2002:75) concludes from these maps that not all alternate states of consciousness are religiously experienced, that not all religiously experienced states are similar, and that the borders between them are flimsy.

2.3.5 Induction techniques

The possibility of experiencing alternate states of consciousness occurs in the interaction of the biological and symbolic systems. Winkelman (2000:24) explains this as follows:

A range of biological manipulations of the body, including drugs,[31] sensory stimulation and deprivation, and physical activities, can dramatically alter consciousness and the individual's experience of self

and world. Conversely, voluntary control of mental process and attention to symbols can yoke experience and body physiology, forcing dramatic alterations in consciousness and organic responses.

According to Price-Williams (1975:88-89), alternate states of consciousness do not come ready-made without discipline, training, and initiation. Goodman (1990:180-181) lists the following conditions that must be met before a person can experience an alternate state of consciousness:

- Such a person needs to know how to find the crack between the ordinary reality and the alternate reality.
- Since the human body is an intruder in the alternate reality, some bodily preparation is necessary for the person to tune the physical self to the alternate reality. Only in this way can he or she properly perceive it.
- The person who wants to experience the alternate state of consciousness needs to know the proper angle of vision.
- The event perceived in the experience of the alternate reality is sketched out very hazily and can only be understood by means of cultural expectations.

In addition to this, certain neurological procedures also need to take place in order to induce an alternate state of consciousness:

- The baseline state of consciousness must first be disrupted. This can be carried out by psychological, physiological or drug actions that disrupt the stabilization process either by interfering with this process or by withdrawing attention or awareness energy from it.
- Secondly, patterning forces must be applied. These are stimuli that push disrupted psychological functioning toward the new pattern of the desired alternate state of consciousness.
- Thirdly, the patterning stimuli must push the isolated psychological structures into a new construction – resulting in an alternate state of

consciousness (see Tart 1977:192-197; Tart 1982:262-266; Tart 2000:257).

This can be achieved, according to Ludwig (1966:225; 1972:12), in any setting, by a wide variety of agents or maneuvers which interfere with the normal inflow of sensory or proprioceptive stimuli, the normal outflow of motor impulses, the normal emotional tone, or the normal flow and organization of cognitive processes. It seems that an optimal range of exteroceptive stimulation is necessary for the maintenance of baseline consciousness, and levels of stimulation either above or below this range appear to contribute to the production of alternate states of consciousness. Thus, alternate states of consciousness can be induced by modifying sensory input, either directly or indirectly (Bourguignon 1979:236; cf Pilch 1996a:133).

This argument makes it clear that there is a close connection between religious experiences and the human body.[32] Goodman (2001:7) points out that the most popular technique to induce alternate states of consciousness in a religious ritual involves rhythmic stimulation. This causes the following changes in a person:

> The rate of the heartbeat increases; the blood pressure drops; in the blood serum, adrenaline, noradrenalin, and cortisol diminish; and the brain begins to release a peptide, the beta endorphin. This compound is the body's own opiate and is what produces the infinite joy associated with ecstasy. The electric activity of the brain also changes; high-amplitude and low-frequency theta waves appear in EEGs produced by altering current, while at the same time the brain begins to act like a battery and produces an enormous increase in its negative potential, as seen in direct-current EEGs. All of these changes are instituted on cue; that is, when the rhythmic activity – the drumming, clapping, singing, and so forth – starts, and the systems of the body involved in the trance return to previous conditions when the stimulation stops.

But rhythmic stimulation is not the only way in which alternate states of consciousness can be brought about. Craffert (2002:59) perceives the two main ways by means of which these states can be induced as:

- Physiological deprivation: fasting, sleep deprivation, restricted sensory stimulation and breath control. In most religious traditions these are all institutionalized and are performed in culturally prescribed ways.
- Physiological overstimulation: can be induced by ritual practices like drumming, chanting, singing and dancing.

Craffert (2002:69-70) also lists a number of different ways in which alternate states of consciousness can be brought about.[33] These can follow from certain bodily conditions or experiences (e.g., highway hypnosis) or be caused by certain illnesses (e.g., fever), be the result of recreational activities (e.g., mood-altering drugs or long distance running) or the result of religious practices (e.g., rituals). Induction can thus be deliberate (e.g., meditation) or accidental (e.g., highway trance), it can be produced by artificial means (e.g., drugs) or within a natural setting (e.g., dancing or drumming), it can be individual and spontaneous (e.g., during solitude or prayer) or while participating in a group activity (e.g., ritual dancing or chanting) (cf Bourguignon 1976:47, 53; Richeport 1984; Lewis 1989:34; Pilch 1995c:53-54; Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14; Korn 2002:41; Harvey 2003:27-56).

Like most skills, the induction process can be learned so well that transition to an alternate state of consciousness can be almost automatic and instantaneous. Such fast transitions and habitual familiarity can mean that a person may not consciously recognize that he or she is in an alternate state of consciousness (see Tart 2000:257-258). On the other hand, since consciousness is a very complex system, with multiple stabilization processes operating simultaneously in the human brain, induction may not always work. Additionally, people's personalities as well as their contexts also play a role in their openness towards alternate states

of consciousness (cf Shapiro 1977:148; Glicksohn 2001:347; see Tart 1977:192-197; Tart 1982:262-266; Tart 2000:257).

When the process of preparation for the earliest baptism (as we find it described in some of the early texts) is discussed in chapter 4, the similarities with these induction techniques will become apparent, which will show that the baptism of Jesus' earliest followers was probably alternate states of consciousness experiences. The similarities with the earliest Eucharist, which will be discussed in chapter 5, are not as obvious as is the case with baptism, but it is still possible to draw a line between preparation for the earliest Eucharist and induction techniques that result in alternate states of consciousness – especially regarding the first time Jesus-followers participated in the Eucharist, since this event took place immediately after baptism.

2.3.6 The neurology of alternate states of consciousness

Research into the human brain and nervous system may explain why and how alternate states of consciousness occur and can help us to interpret these experiences (Pilch 2002d:697). Neuroscience demonstrates that the brain mediates thought, image, feeling, and action[34] (Laughlin 1997:472). The structures mediating consciousness are, therefore, also located in the brain and produced by the nervous system, with or without stimulation by events occurring in the external world (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:43; cf Siegel 1977:139-140). This explains why both a flash of light and gentle pressure on the eyeballs will result in the experience of light in the visual receptors (see Siegel 1977:134; Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:109-110). When one is in an alternate state of consciousness, the images experienced in the sensorium are, therefore, just as "real" as those experienced when one is in a baseline state of consciousness (see Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:273). Consequently, a neurophenomenological framework linking biology and experience needs to be taken into consideration in order to understand alternate states of consciousness (see Winkelman 2000:1).

The desire to alter consciousness is an innate, human, biologically based drive with adaptive significance. Alternate states of consciousness are a manifestation of a fundamental homeostatic dynamic of the nervous system. These manifestations of consciousness involve a biologically based integrative mode of consciousness, replacing baseline conditions with a parasympathetic dominant state characterized by high-voltage, slow-wave electroencephalogram (EEG) activity originating in the circuits linking the brain stem and the hippocampal-septal area of the limbic system with the frontal cortex. Winkelman (2000:7-8) explains this as follows:

> This integrative mode of consciousness is a condition of homeostatic balance, a physiologically based mode of organismic functioning and integration. These conditions of systematic brain-mind[35] integration provide different types of information processing than that associated with waking consciousness….Induction of integrative brain processing is achieved through rituals that manipulate biological functions through both physical activities and cognitive-emotional associations to produce transformations of consciousness, linking the individual with supraindividual and infrapersonal frames of reference.

The most basic part of the nervous system is the autonomic nervous system. The latter system is responsible for maintaining "baseline" bodily function, which happens with input from the rest of the brain and central nervous system. It also allows the body to respond to external stimuli and it helps in generating fundamental emotions such as joy, fear and shame. The autonomic nervous system is thus the part of the brain that plays an important role in inducing alternate states of consciousness.

The autonomic nervous system is composed of two subsystems, namely the sympathetic system and the parasympathetic system. The sympathetic system subserves to the fight-or-flight response and comprises the physiological base of our adaptive strategies. It is in control of short-range adaptation to events in the

68

environment. The sympathetic system forms part of the arousal system, which is responsible for the functioning of vital resources, like stopping digestion, opening the airways in the lungs, increasing heart rate and blood pressure, increasing muscle efficiency, the dilation of the pupils, erection of body hair, and increasing the rate of respiration. The function of the parasympathetic system is directly opposite to that of the sympathetic system. This system is responsible for maintaining homeostasis and conserving the body's resources and energy. It regulates physiological maintenance activities and vegetative functions such as the growth of cells, digestion, relaxation, and sleep. It forms part of the quiescent system. The functions of the quiescent system include storage of vital resources, digestion and distribution of nutrients, constriction of bronchi, decreasing heart rate and blood pressure, collection of waste products, and slowing of respiration. Increase of activity in one of these two systems normally leads to decrease of activity in the other. But the specific balance between these two systems under particular environmental circumstances is open to conditioning. Ritual or meditation can generate alternate states of consciousness by activating the arousal and the quiescent systems (d'Aquili & Newberg 1999:23-27; cf Sargant 1961:52-57, 89-90).

This implies that alternate states of consciousness can be induced in the autonomic nervous system from the "bottom up" (via ceremonial ritual) or from the "top down" (via meditation), as I mentioned earlier. These terms refer to whether the initiating events in generating such experiences occur first in the autonomic nervous system (bottom up) or in the cerebral cortex (top down)[36] (d'Aquili & Newberg 1999:99-104).

An alternate state of consciousness can be described as a state in which wholeness of perception is to one degree or another greater than the sense of the discreteness of its component parts. d'Aquili and Newberg (1993:10) state that there is substantial evidence indicating that the posterior-superior parietal lobe of the brain is responsible for the imposition of wholeness on perceived or

imagined reality. This area is responsible for orienting self and objects in three-dimensional space, and even the sense of space itself arises from the functioning of this area. It is their hypothesis that the degree of unity perceived in organizing sensory input is directly proportional to the amount of information input cut off from the posterior-superior parietal lobe. This process of progressive "deafferentation" from information input results in an accumulating holistic perception of reality, until total deafferentation from information input results in a sense of contentless absolute unity.

Another factor to take into consideration is that cognized and labeled categories of experience (like "awake", "dreaming", "playing"), and their mediating neurocognitive entrainments, are called *phases* of consciousness. The points of experiential and neurophysiological transformation between phases are called *warps* of consciousness. When a society wishes to exercise control over the recurrence and quality of a phase of consciousness, it will tend to ritualize[37] the individual's activity during the warp preceding the phase. Warps are durations of neural transformation that are usually both short and efficacious. They also tend to occur unconsciously (Laughlin 1997:478). In any society a finite set of possible phases of consciousness is declared normal. Members of that society are socialized to recognize the appropriate attributes of these phases and to consider them significant for their own and other's mindstates (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:142). Thus, a warp is a liminal event – an event that stands between two cognized strips of experience (two phases), much as a doorway stands between two rooms (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:142). In order for individuals or groups to control phases of consciousness, control must be exercised over the factors inducing warps. In other words, control must be exercised over the structural aspects of experience about which the experiencer is normally least aware. The simplest and most direct means of controlling a phase of consciousness is by directing the attention of the experiencer to the warp preceding it. For example: The warp between the waking phase and the dream phase of consciousness has been termed "hypnagogic" and the warp

between the dream phase and the waking phase "hypnopompic". There is evidence that mediation of these warps is carried out by neural systems over a wide expanse of the nervous system. These warps are extremely brief and few people in the Western culture are aware of them, but learning to control them can lead to the recalling of dreams (Laughlin, McManus & d'Aquili 1992:141-144; cf Winkelman 2000:123-124).

When entering an alternate state of consciousness, there are different stages through which a person goes (not every person necessarily passes through all the stages):

- In the *first stage,* people see geometric forms, such as dots, zigzags, grids, sets of parallel lines, nested curves, and meandering lines. The forms are brightly colored and flicker, pulsate, enlarge, contract, and blend with one another. Some societies give meanings to these forms and colors,[38] others do not.

- In the *second stage,* persons try to make better sense of the geometric forms by illusioning them into objects of religious or emotional significance. The objects often depend on the emotional state of the person. For instance, if the person is thirsty, a round luminous form may be seen as a cup.

- The *third stage* is reached through something like a tunnel. People feel themselves drawn into the tunnel, at the end of which is a bright light. On the sides of the tunnel is a lattice derived from the geometric imagery of stage one. In the compartment of this lattice the person can now start to see people, animals, and so forth. When people emerge from the far end of the tunnel, they find themselves in the world of trance. The things that they see are intensely real. People can fly and change into birds or animals (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14-19; cf Siegel 1977:132-139).

Although we now know that the above mentioned stages are wired into the universal human nervous system, this does not mean that every person who experiences an alternate state of consciousness interprets it in the same way. The meanings given to the items people see and experience in alternate states of consciousness are culture-specific. At least in some measure, people experience what they expect to experience (Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998:14-19; see Pilch 1998a:56).

This concludes my discussion on the nature of alternate states of consciousness. In chapter 1, I said that Jesus "showed" by means of alternate states of consciousness and that Jesus-groups later "re-enacted" this by means of the rites of baptism and the Eucharist. Now that we know some theories of how alternate states of consciousness function, this hypothesis should make sense. In the following section, I intend to describe the relation between alternate states of consciousness and myth. By means of anti-language, the earliest Jesus-followers "told" about his alternate states of consciousness and the way in which these states affected his life. Myths are closely related to anti-language. In a sense, myths can be described as the "objectifying" of alternate states of consciousness, as verbalized in anti-language.

2.4   ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND MYTH

2.4.1 What is myth?

Before we investigate the role which alternate states of consciousness play in culture, it is important to understand what myth is, since in a sense alternate states of consciousness and myth construct the bridge to alternate states of consciousness and culture.

Van Aarde (2001a:49; cf Barthes 1957:142-143) describes the relation between alternate states of consciousness and myth as follows:

> In a mythological context, everyday experiences are projected into an imaginary world; in other words, reality is emptied. The imaginary world consists of imageries analogous to everyday experiences; the "emptied history" is filled with "nature." Crises in life are often made bearable by living in such an altered state of consciousness.

Another reason why an understanding of myth is important for this study is that myth forms an integral part of religion[39] and plays an important role in biblical interpretation (see Walsh 2001:1-12). Theories of myth differ. Segal (1998:3; 1999:67) notes that at least three major questions can be asked of myth, namely: what is its subject matter, what is its origin, and what is its function?[40] The subject matter can include anything, either something literal (gods and goddesses) or something symbolic (divinities as symbols of human traits). According to most theories, myths originate and function to satisfy a need (for anything – e.g., rain, information, or the meaning of life). Eliade[41] ([1963] 1975:5-6) avers that myth is an extremely complex cultural reality, which can be approached and interpreted from various and complementary viewpoints. Although myth is not easily definable, Segal (1986:5-6) shows that theorists largely agree on the following matters:

- That in the *first place* myth is a story. As a story, myth is more than an argument of proof. Not logic, but imagination, drives the plot. In myth, anything can happen.

- *Secondly,* myth considers the causes of events in terms of personalities. Events happen not because of the mechanical operation of impersonal forces but owing to the decisions of willful agents. Some think of these personalities as gods; for others they are legendary humans or animals; while still others interpret these personalities symbolically – gods as

73

symbols of humans or as symbols of the forces of nature – as long as the literal causes of events are personalities of some kind.

- In the *third place,* the prime kind of myth, for most scholars, is a creation story – a story of the creation of the world itself or of individual phenomena within it[42] (cf Van der Leeuw 1964:413-417; Eliot 1976:59).

According to Van Aarde (2003:245-245; 2005a:469; cf Sumner 1959:31-32; Honko 1984:49), some people may be under the impression that "myth" refers to a primitive, unsophisticated story – an untrue fable[43] which originated in oral culture and was handed down by unknown narrators[44] (cf Rogerson 1976:9). In contrast to this, he sees myth as folklorist "art" (cf Rogerson 1978:66-85), which is "true history" because it is "sacred history"[45] (cf Eliade 1975:1; Eliade, in Eliot 1976:13-14). Myth cannot be judged in the same way as "literature", since its "truth" has no origin in logic and it is not historical. Dibelius (1971:1-2) classifies the literary products of individual writers as *großen Literatur.* In contrast to this, myths can be classified as *Kleinliteratur,* possessing collective origins. Kundera's ([1982] 1983:122) description of "folk song" explains this argument. He comments that songs "came about much like stalactites, developing new motifs and new variations drop by drop. They were passed down from generation to generation, and each singer added something to them. Every song had many creators, and all of them modestly disappeared behind their creation" (cf Rogerson 1976:8; see Van Aarde 2005a:469).

In the same vein, Jung (1988:79) remarks that it is sometimes assumed that at a given occasion in prehistoric times, the basic mythological ideas were "invented" by a clever old prophet or philosopher, and then were "believed" by uncritical people for ever thereafter. But, according to him, the word "invent" is derived from the Latin *invenire,* which means "to find" something by "seeking" it. The word itself then hints at some foreknowledge of what was going to be found. Jung (1988:89-90) indicates that myths consist of symbols that have not been

invented consciously. They have happened. He considers that myths go back to the primitive storytellers and their dreams, to people moved by the stirring of their fantasies. They did not concern themselves with the origin of their fantasies: it was only much later that people started to wonder where the stories had originated.

But what is the origin of myths? According to Jung (1988:79), myths are created by archetypes.[46] He believes that myths of a religious nature can be interpreted as a sort of mental therapy for the anxieties and sufferings of humankind in general, namely hunger, old age, disease, death, and war:

> The universal hero myth, for example, always refers to a powerful man or god-man who vanquishes evil in the form of dragons, serpents, monsters, demons, and so on, and who liberates his people from destruction and death. The narration or ritual repetition of sacred texts and ceremonies, and the worship of such a figure with dances, music, hymns, prayers, and sacrifices, grip the audience with numinous emotions (as if with magic spells) and exalt the individual to an identification with the hero.

Walsh (2001:1-12; 55) describes myth as a sacred story,[47] which, according to him, includes texts, film, other media, and traditional oral tales. To him myth can constitute a vehicle for interpretation, a hermeneutical perspective, or a world view[48] (cf Segal 1986:97-100; Donald 1991:267-268; Arden 1998:44-45). To say myth is sacred story is to imply that it is both powerful story and structuring device. It uses the sacred (some mysterious, powerful "other") to empower and to structure the natural and social maps in and by which human beings live. He adds that humans must "myth" to live, and while they do this they draw boundaries to include and exclude, they "achieve perspectives" to interpret otherwise meaningless data, they recognize and deal with tensions in a metaphysical, epistemological and ethical way, and they desire the "other". In contrast to this myths can also oppress, dominate and deceive. Therefore, human beings also sometimes need liberation from myths.

Honko (1984:49-51; see Van Aarde 2003:250-252; 2005a:473-474) defines myth in terms of four criteria, namely form, content, function, and context:[49]

- The *form* of myth is a narrative, a verbal report of what is known about the origins of that which is sacred. Myth can be expressed in one of two forms – either as *enacted myth* or as *narrated myth*. Enacted myth can be described as a "ritual drama", such as holy meals or initiation rites. Narrated myth comprises a "liturgical performance" where verbal and non-verbal forms, like hymns, sermons, prayers and dances, play a role (cf Walsh 2001:56).

- Regarding *content,* cosmogony plays an important role in most myths. Cosmogony has to do with reports on the creation of the world, the origin of the cosmos and the subjugation of chaos.[50]

- The *function* of myth in general is to serve as a model for behavior (cf Segal 1998:21; Walsh 2001:83).

- The *context* of myth is normally the rite, where the secular presence is filled by the sacred past. What was once possible in primordial times again becomes possible in the present and can once again exercise influence (see Walsh 2001:66).

If we take these four criteria into account, the importance of myth for this study becomes apparent:

- *Form:* I detect anti-language in the narrative reports of the earliest baptism and Eucharist, which in turn were enacted in these rites by the earliest Jesus-followers.

- *Content:* The content of these myths is the origin of the apocalyptic "new world" in Jesus, in contrast to the persecution the earliest Jesus-followers experienced.

- *Function:* Jesus' "showing" as well as the earliest Jesus-followers' "telling" served as a model for behavior. Each time this model was "re-enacted" it had the function of reminding the participants what their behavior needed to be.

- *Context:* This myth was re-enacted in the rites of baptism and the Eucharist. By means of baptism someone became part of a new group of people (initiation), and then by means of participation in the Eucharist, the meaning of Jesus' death became present again.

These responses were only possible because of the first Jesus-followers' apocalyptic worldview and their experience of alternate states of consciousness.

2.4.2 Time in myth

Myths can either be explanatory or aetiological, which makes it important to reflect on the relationship between myth and history,[51] which in turn draws one's attention to the role *time* plays in the interpretation of myth (Van Aarde 2003:247). Van der Leeuw (1964:384-385) points out that in the Western world we read time from the clock, but this is not the only way in which time can be understood. In mythical consciousness, for example, time can "stand still"; even though in actual fact the clock never stops ticking. He terms this "sacred time" (cf chapter 1). According to Otzen ([1972] 1973:14-18), scientists of religion and biblical scientists usually distinguish between "mythical time" and "historical time", but they do not agree on the difference between these two types of time. Van Aarde (2003:247; 2005a:471-473; cf Sløk 1960:1263-1268; Van der Leeuw 1964:414) shows that the dimensions of "time" deals with the *Urzeit*

(narration about creation and paradise, thus *before)* or *Eindzeit* (narrations about the new heaven and earth; re-creation, thus *after).* Other scholars, like Bultmann ([1958] 1964:17, 21-36), perceived "mythical time" as time which transcends "historical time" (as the actual time in which historical events take place and which as such can be the object of historical criticism). "In other words, although articulated in an objectified form, 'mythical time' is not the subject of historical critical investigation, but is existentially capable of interpretation as *explanatory* or *aetiological* mythical sayings which should be demythologized in a hermeneutical way" (Van Aarde 2003:247, emphasis by Van Aarde). Eliade (1975:168-169; cf Allen 2002) views mythical time and historical time as overlapping in a synthetic manner. Van Aarde (2003:248) describes this as follows:

> People live in "profane time" (which can be depicted linearly because it encompasses time from birth to death – i e normal, "historical" time). At the same time people also live in "sacral time" which manifests itself during religious happenings in their lives. "Sacral time" is cyclical insofar as it is recurring and traverses "profane time". Its point of departure is always in "primeval time" (*Urzeit*). It then traverses someone's life cycle many times and because of his or her desire to become "contemporary with the gods" (cf Eliade 1975:[169]), such "eschatological" desire (*Endzeit*) to return to a "primordial situation" where the gods and mythical ancestors are present, manifests itself at times. Thus myths about creation and paradise are often repeated in myths about a new heaven and earth....

Since "historical time" becomes arbitrary in alternate states of consciousness as well, the relation between alternate states of consciousness and myth can be seen in the above description of the perception of time in myth.

2.4.3 Myth and rites

Since this study concerns the rites of the earliest Jesus-followers, and myth and rites are interconnected with each other, a discussion of the relation between

78

myth and rites should illuminate the issues at stake. According to Segal (1999:37-41), a certain theory of myth and ritual claims that myth and ritual cannot exist without one another. He shows that Smith (1889) pioneered the myth-ritualist theory. Smith (1889:17-18) warns against the anachronistic habit of looking at religion from the side of belief rather than of practice. He argues that instead of first looking for the creed so that it can provide the key to ritual and practice, the reverse needs to be done. First find the ritual; then you will be able to unlock the creed. He cautions against even expecting to find a creed, for early religions did not necessarily possess a creed. He also asserts that the explanations given for a ritual were not very important and could even differ from time to time. These explanations were not formal declarations of belief (or creeds): they were stories, or myths, which simply described "the circumstances under which the rite first came to be established, by the command or by the direct example of the god" (Smith 1889:18). The rite was thus connected with a myth, and not with dogma. He even contends that in early religions mythology takes the place of dogma. But ritual was more important than myth (Smith 1889:19). According to Smith (1889:19), myth was derived from ritual, and not the other way around. To him, myth only arose once the reason for the ritual had somehow been forgotten.

Frazer ([1922] 1943:608-609) does not agree. In his myth-ritualist scenario, myth arises prior to ritual. A myth is applied to a ritual in which it is enacted. He considers that myth gives ritual its meaning. Frazer (1943:608-609), as well as others, argues that modern science replaced not only myth-ritualism, but myth and ritual per se (see Segal 1999:41-42).

On the other hand, Harrison ([1912] 1962:328) and Hooke (1933:3) assert that myth and ritual arise simultaneously. To Hooke, the spoken part of a ritual consists of a description of what is being done – thus myth. For Harrison, the primary meaning of myth is the spoken correlative of the acted rite (cf Van der Leeuw 1964:413-415; Segal 1999:42-43).

Later Malinowski ([1926] 1971:13-15, 18-19) and Eliade (1975:19) added that myth sanctions phenomena of all kind, not merely rituals (see Segal 1999:44). But Eliade stresses the importance of the ritualistic enactment of myth in the fulfillment of the ultimate function of myth: namely, that when myth is enacted, it serves as a time machine, carrying one back to the time of the myth and thereby bringing one closer to the divine.

Segal (1999:46) concludes by acknowledging that as influential as the myth-ritualist theory has been, there are theorists of myth and theorists of ritual who maintain that myths and rituals exist largely independently of one another (see Segal 1999:159-160). Although there is uncertainty about these matters, I argue that there is a probable relation between myth and ritual, and that this relation can be seen in the earliest baptism and Eucharist. Eliade's (1975:19) point, that in one way or another people "live" the myth, strengthens my case. To him, this happens in the sense that one is seized by the sacred, exalting power of the events recollected or re-enacted. He writes that "living" a myth implies a genuinely "religious" (in my terminology – an "alternate state of consciousness") experience, since it differs from the ordinary experience of everyday life. Eliade (1975:19, emphasis by Eliade) explains:

> The "religiousness" of this experience is due to the fact that one re-enacts fabulous, exalting, significant events, one again witnesses the creative deeds of the Supernaturals; one ceases to exist in the everyday world and enters a transfigured, auroral world impregnated with the Supernaturals' presence. What is involved is not a commemoration of mythical events but a reiteration of them. The protagonists of the myth are made present, one becomes their contemporary. This also implies that one is no longer living in chronological time, but in the primordial Time, the Time when the event *first took place.* This is why we can use the term the "strong time" of myth; it is the prodigious, "sacred" time when something *new, strong,* and *significant* was manifested. To re-experience that time, to re-enact it as often as possible, to witness again the spectacle of the divine works, to meet with the Supernaturals and relearn

their creative lesson is the desire that runs like a pattern through all the ritual reiterations of myths.

In other words, the rite is the context of the myth (Honko 1984:49-51). Myth gives content to a rite and repeats the sacred origin of the myth in the present. A myth, thus, expresses and confirms a society's religious values and norms; it provides patterns of behavior to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of ritual with its practical ends and establishes the sanctity of the cult.

2.4.4 The function of myth

Many different theories exist according to which the function of myth is interpreted. Honko (1984:46-48) lists twelve:

- myth as source of cognitive categories;
- myth as form of symbolic expression;
- myth as projection of the subconscious;
- myth as an integrating factor in people's adaptation to life: myth as worldview;
- myth as charter of behavior;
- myth as legitimation of social institutions;
- myth as marker of social relevance;
- myth as mirror of culture and social structure;
- myth as result of a historical situation;
- myth as religious communication;
- myth as religious genre;
- and myth as medium for structure.

For the purpose of this study, I wish to emphasize two of these theories, in which myth is interpreted existentially:

- According to the Jungian school, myth is a *projection of the unconscious* (see Jung [1949]1984:248; Segal 1998:3-6, 17-19). For Jung himself this

81

happens by means of independent invention as hereditary, while neo-Jungians understand this as happening via independent invention through experience (see Segal 1998:13-17). From the shared substratum of humanness comes a condensed message which in actuality is a projection of the unconscious, which is controlled partly by tradition and partly by the elementary facts of life (see Van Aarde 2005a:475).

- Myth can also be perceived as a *worldview,* which can be described as a paradigm in the Kuhnian sense of the word (cf Kuhn 1966:43-51; see Küng 1988:172). In this sense myths offer an explanation for a specific individual paradigm, which at the same time possesses collective and traditional characteristics. People who are confronted with fundamental problems in connection with society, culture, and nature, in times of crises are given the opportunity to select those elements from their mythical heritage and paradigm that will satisfy other individuals and the society. Myths legitimize social institutions, since myths, with their ritual and ceremonial substructure, express the religious values by which social institutions are maintained (Van Aarde 2005a:475).

These theories all boil down to the notion that myth serves as a model for human action, since a mythical worldview does not presuppose change or development and is experienced as static. An almost uniform explanation of the world, which is based on the creative and formative actions of the gods, can be derived from myths. The religious personality shares in these deeds in so far as they are established as models in thoughts and are imitated and followed in action (Van Aarde 2005a:474). This process can once again be perceived clearly in the earliest Jesus-followers' participation in baptism and the Eucharist.

According to Van Aarde (2003:257-258), in studies of myth, "myth as worldview" and "myth as narrative" are sometimes regarded as mutually exclusive epistemological perspectives. But Bultmann's (1964:14-16) dialectical distinction

between mythology (worldview) and myth (an objectifying speech act as expression of such a world view) avoids this. Van Aarde (2003:259) comes to the conclusion that scholars must be careful not to interpret myth as non-mythical. He posits that "to approach myth from a post-modern perspective in the same way in which non-positivistic hermeneutics interprets metaphors in these days, opens a door for innovative theorizing about myth. Such an approach is a beginning of an exciting time for reopening a new stage in the interpretation of mythical elements in early Christian writings."

Van Aarde's (2005a:478-479) answer to the dilemma of misinterpreting myths lies in a tautegorical interpretation (as opposed to allegorical interpretation). An allegorical interpretation of myth approaches the mythical text from the angle of what could be "true" or "meaningful" for the interpreter. These assumptions stem from the worldview of the interpreter and not from the myth itself. On the other hand, a tautegorical interpretation views meaning and judges the truth of the myth by means of criteria which perceive the worldview of the myth as "other", but do not understand the meaning of the myth as so "strange" that it has to be altered by way of allegory. This interpretation does not mean that the myth needs to be communicated "literally" as it is, but that the "same" message is communicated.[52]

The meaning of myths needs to be examined in connection with the specific time and society from which they originate, since meaning is relative (Van Aarde 2005a:475-476). Segal (1998:11, emphasis by Segal) observes:

> To reach their intended audience, myths must be translated into a language the audience knows. Just as archetypes must be translated, however insufficiently, into myths, so myths must be translated, however insufficiently, into the language of those whose myths they are. Just as archetypes are dependent on myths to convey their meaning, so myths are dependent on interpretations to convey *their* meaning.

One should keep in mind that there is a difference between premodern and modern spiritualities. Premodern people exhibited a way of thinking that can be described as spontaneous and fantasy-like (*mythos*), while the modern mode of thought can be described as rationalistic and logical (*logos*) (Segal 1999:81-84). The "mythological" worldview underwent change in modern times and was replaced with a dualistic worldview. In this dualistic, scientific worldview, *mythos* (the "supernatural") and *logos* (the "natural") were increasingly seen as separate entities, which led to a type of historical consciousness according to which God's "supernatural" work in history can only be understood when seen as part of natural processes[53] (Van Aarde 2005a:477; cf Rogerson 1976:1-9).

People construct myths to explain their world. d'Aquili and Newberg (1999:86-91) point out that as long as there are unanswerable questions in the universe, the cognitive operators will try to find temporary solutions – in the form of myth. But why is it important to take note of myth for the purpose of this study? In my opinion Laughlin, McManus and d'Aquili (1992:276-281) answer this question adequately. They argue that symbols provide an ideographic mode of access (portals from which a person can enter an alternate state of consciousness), as well as giving form to the experiences encountered in this state. Rites constitute the driving force behind the alternate state of consciousness, and are characterized by patterned, repetitive, and structured behavior, which produces generally inter-organismic or intra-organismic coordination. Supported by the driving techniques encountered in rites, intense concentration upon a particular symbol can place the mind into a visual pattern in a hyperintentional way that eventually fills the whole of consciousness. The mode of conceptual integration employed by a person entering an alternate state of consciousness is myth. Myth forms the bridge between the iconic and the verbal (rational) and includes elements of both. Within the mythic world, imagery and feeling are cast into a narrative. For the purpose of my investigation, this narrative is told by way of anti-language. Story line and causality become more linear and thus more satisfying to the analytic mind. Myth mediates between the transpersonal and the personal,

between the "sacred" and the "profane". Although myth explains and applies to the realm of the practical, it stems from the realm of the sacred. Existing in manifest form within the world of the "real," myth acts as the container for, and integration of, the land of the "unreal" (cf Bourguignon 1972:427; Laughlin 1997:480-481).

It can thus be posited that myth exhibits two functions. In the first place, it presents a problem of ultimate concern to a society, which is normally offered in the form of opposites, such as life-death, heaven-hell, or good-evil. Secondly, once the existential problem is presented in myth, it is solved by some resolution or unification of the seemingly irreconcilable opposites that constitute the problem. This resolution usually occurs when the myth is enacted in a rite, because properly performed rites can produce powerful alternate states of consciousness. When the myth is incarnated by the rite, this sense of union or oneness is applied by the mind to the major antinomies of the myth. When this enactment is successful, the sense of a resolution of the problem is vividly experienced by the participants in the rite, and the resolution of otherwise irreconcilable opposites becomes a fact which is experienced (d'Aquili & Newberg 1999:85-86).

In conclusion it can be reaffirmed that myths were one of the ways in which alternate states of consciousness could be verbalized. These myths were told in anti-language, because the content of these myths was related to alternate states of consciousness – which cannot be adequately expressed in "ordinary" language, since the last-mentioned is in opposition to such states. Jesus' baptism and all-inclusive meals became a myth for the newly established groups of Jesus-followers, the anti-society "family of God". They re-enacted this myth in order to accord meaning to their lives.

2.5   THE CONTEXT OF ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

2.5.1   Introduction

As I explained earlier, alternate states of consciousness function within a specific cultural setting. Without taking the context of alternate states of consciousness into consideration, the meaning these states could have may be jeopardized. Although I remarked in chapter 1 that first-century Mediterranean people did not understand religion as a separate category in their lives, in the study of alternate states of consciousness religion does play a role. Therefore, I intend to investigate the cultural as well as religious context of alternate states of consciousness in this section.

2.5.2   Alternate states of consciousness and culture

Every culture possesses a consensus reality. Cultural selectivity and plausibility structures shape the wide range of human potentials into a fixed and stable state of baseline consciousness. This is a characteristic of mental functioning that adapts people more or less successfully to survive in their culture's consensus reality. Our baseline state of consciousness constitutes a tool for coping with the environment, the consensus reality we live in[54] (Tart 1982:260-261). If we desire to understand the appearance and effect of alternate states of consciousness in the first-century Mediterranean world, for example, I argue that we must pay attention to the Mediterranean culture's consensus reality[55] (see chapter 1; Malina & Pilch 2000:5; Pilch 2002a:105).

If we keep in mind that almost every aspect of life is culturally conditioned, it is only natural to conclude that alternate states of consciousness are also culturally formed and influenced by learning, cultural patterning, social practice, tradition and community opinion[56] (Bourguignon 1979:239; cf Tart 1977:211-212). Thus, alternate states of consciousness are open to different cultural controls and to various cultural interpretations (cf Lewis 1989:39; Goodman 2001:7-8). The content of alternate states of consciousness is usually determined by a local

cultural pattern, which determines how the person who experienced the alternate state of consciousness will identify what he or she had "seen" in the alternate state (see Pilch 1995c:55). New members of any society are socialized into its culture and they develop particular personalities that include particular beliefs. Thus, the behavior manifested in a given alternate state of consciousness may reflect a certain personality, or that person's values and beliefs, stresses, and needs, or reflect the same about the culture of which the person is a member (Pilch 1993:237).

This suggests that people who were initiated into early Jesus-groups by means of baptism, and were later integrated into the community by means of repetitive participation in the Eucharist, would all understand the alternate states experienced during these rites in the same manner. The Eucharist was a celebration of Jesus' redemptive death and a reminder that his followers needed to arrange their lives according to the example Jesus had given them.

Although alternate states of consciousness are widespread psychobiological phenomena experienced in at least one form by almost all human beings, some of these states are more generally and extensively culturally patterned than others (Bourguignon 1974:234-235). Since people have to cope with these different states of consciousness in one way or another, culture offers a way of doing so by prescribing the appropriate behavior (Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1998:12; Pilch 2002d:701). This leads to the institutionalizing of some alternate states of consciousness (Pilch 1993:236-237) – as in the earliest baptism and Eucharist. Thus, alternate states of consciousness are best understood in terms of a specific culture's expectations[57] (cf d'Aquili & Newberg 1999:158; see Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:282-285). In fact, alternate states of consciousness play an important role in culture. The institution of alternate states of consciousness can mean something for the participating individual on the one hand and fulfill a function for the society on the other (Bourguignon 1976:51; cf Tart 1972:3). Expectations with respect to alternate states of consciousness and experiences

during these states contribute to the construction of a cultural universe or behavioral environment and provide channels for the verification of beliefs[58] (Bourguignon 1972:429). Therefore, it is important to examine the role religion plays in alternate states of consciousness as well.

2.5.3 Alternate states of consciousness and religion

For the purpose of the following discussion, we must keep in mind that religion is also embedded in culture. According to Goodman (1988a:6-7), some of the universal traits of religion are: ritual; alternate states of consciousness; an alternate reality; good fortune, misfortune, and the rituals of divination; ethics; and the semantics of the term "religion". Regarding alternate states of consciousness, she writes that a religion as such can be described using ordinary language, but religious experience can take place only if there are radical changes in the way the body functions, initiating an alteration in consciousness. She describes the alternate reality as constituting another dimension of reality as a whole. Entrance into the alternate reality is gained through an alternate state of consciousness and this reality is patterned by the specific culture to which the religious practitioner belongs.

Bourguignon (1973:3; see Bourguignon 1976:48) asserts that often alternate states of consciousness are

> …institutionalized and culturally patterned and utilized in specific ways….The cultural meaning supplied for these states and the institutional framework within which they operate vary from society to society, and thus the specific functions they fulfill vary also. Yet, there are some common trends. In traditional societies – and to a considerable extent in modern societies as well – the context in which such patterned states are viewed most often by people is one that we may broadly call "religious".

One of the major functions of religion is to deal with the areas of life that are beyond the empirical skills of a society's specialists, things that they cannot control, like illness, weather conditions, the fertility or availability of game, social conflicts, the mysterious and unanswerable questions about the universe and the beings and forces in it (Bourguignon 1973:4):

> Among such problems beyond the control of individuals are the frequently cataclysmic consequences of change – social, cultural, economic, and political. And when we consider the relationship of religion to change, its double role as a bulwark against change on the one hand and as a mediator or even initiator of change on the other, we often find that key individuals in this process experience altered states of consciousness. It is on this point of juncture – between religious institutions (beliefs, practices, and personnel) and the process of sociocultural change, where altered states of consciousness may play a critical role.

Concerning social change, Bourguignon (1973:29-33) distinguishes between "microchange" and "macrochange". Microchange[59] refers to modifications in the social situation of an individual without implying a modification in the social structure, whereas macrochange[60] refers to modifications in the social structure. To the extent that alternate states of consciousness offer opportunities for a larger number of personal options to the individual within the existing social framework, these states help to maintain that framework and thus act as a conservative force. On the other hand, by providing a sanctioned and prestigious form of decision-making, these states may, in situations of social crisis, provide a way for the expression of dissatisfaction with existing patterns and for the introduction of innovations. This is in my view what took place during the lives of Jesus and his earliest followers.

Berger (1967:41-43) points out that religion serves to maintain the reality of the socially constructed world within which people exist, since religion is rooted in the practical concerns of everyday life. But the legitimating power of religion has

another important dimension – the integration into a comprehensive understanding of the marginal situations in which the reality of everyday life is put in question. Situations like these occur frequently, since all individuals pass through such a situation approximately every twenty hours, in the experience of sleep and in the transition stages between being asleep and being awake. In the world of dreams the reality of everyday life is left behind (cf Jung 1988:45, 95). In the transition stages of falling asleep and waking up again the contours of everyday reality are less firm than in the state of fully awake consciousness. The reality of everyday life, therefore, is continuously surrounded by a collection of different realities. Where these other realities (experienced in alternate states of consciousness) are taken seriously *as* realities, to be precise as realities of a different kind,[61] religion serves to integrate these realities into the reality of everyday life. But within a modern or scientific frame of reference religion is less capable of performing this integration, since these realities are, most of the time, not taken seriously *as* realities in the Western world. All the same, where religion continues to be meaningful as an interpretation of existence, its definitions of reality must somehow be able to account for the fact that there are different spheres of reality.

One may ask what Berger (1967:43-45) means by "marginal" situations. He describes such situations[62] as characterized by the experience of ecstasy – in the literal sense of *"ek-stasis"* (standing, or stepping *outside* reality as commonly defined). The world of dreams is ecstatic regarding everyday life, and the latter can only retain its primary status in consciousness if some way is found to legitimate these ecstasies within a frame of reference that includes both reality spheres. Other bodily states also produce ecstasies of a similar kind, particularly those arising from disease and acute emotional disturbance. The confrontation with death (whether through actually witnessing the death of others or anticipating one's own death in the imagination) constitutes what is probably the most important marginal situation. When someone has to do with death, everything in the daytime world of one's existence in society is threatened with

90

irreality. This could lead us to conclude that Jesus as well as his earliest followers (after his death) were placed in marginal situations. Berger (1967:43-44; emphasis by Berger) writes that insofar as "the knowledge of death cannot be avoided in any society, legitimations of the reality of the social world *in the face of death* are decisive requirements in any society. The importance of religion in such legitimations is obvious". Religion maintains the socially defined reality by legitimating marginal situations in terms of an all-encompassing sacred reality. This permits the individual or group who experiences these situations to continue to exist in the world of their society – not "as if nothing had happened," which is psychologically difficult in the more extreme marginal situations, but in the "knowledge" that even these events or experiences have a place within a universe that makes sense (Berger 1967:44). Thus, "[t]he key to a stable religion and a stable situation is the ability to utilize altered states under controlled, ritualized conditions….[A]ltered states increase suggestibility, they heighten the common faith of those who experience them jointly" (Bourguignon 1973:338).

d'Aquili & Newberg (1999:159-161) also consider that one of the functions of religion is an attempt to control the external environment. They add another function, namely, that religion leads to self-transcendence. An alternate state of consciousness has to do with this second function. It involves self-transcendence and increases a person's sense of unity with some higher order of reality. Why would a person want to experience self-transcendence? To gain a sense of insight into the world of the mysterious, union with God (or the Absolute), a sense of bliss or tranquility and a lack of fear regarding death. And this reinforces the first function of religion, because it verifies the existence of the power sources that are believed to be able to change the environment.

Examining what happens neurologically during religious behavior, d'Aquili and Newberg (1999:149) explain that religious behavior arises from the operation and interrelationship of two distinct neuroanatomical and neurophysiological mechanisms in the brain. The first comprises the perception of causal sequences

91

in the organization of reality, which results in an attempt to impose control over the world through the manipulation of causal constructs such as gods, demons and spirits. The second results from neurophysiological evolution, culminating in the potential to develop alternate states of consciousness. Experiences like these are often interpreted as glimpses into the world of the "supernatural" and tend to confirm the existence of the personalized power forces generated by the first mechanism. Such experiences can facilitate a reorganization of the personality structure and a realignment of the person toward the cosmos.[63] The amygdala, hippocampus and inferior (right) temporal lobe of the brain appear to provide the foundations for mystical, spiritual, and religious experience, the perception of ghosts, spirits and demons, and belief in demonic and angelic possession (Joseph 2001:106, 129; see d'Aquili & Newberg 1993:2-34).

In the religious life of a community, the classic mediator of alternate states of consciousness is the shaman. Shamans experience alternate states of consciousness, because they feel themselves endowed with powers to see and hear events in a realm not perceptible by all humans, and they usually do this for the benefit of others (see Winkelman 2000:116). In chapter 1, I indicated that Jesus can also be viewed as a shaman-like figure. Furthermore, studies regarding alternate states of consciousness were traditionally associated with the shaman (Pilch 2002a:104, 108), and therefore I shall provide a cursory overview of the phenomenon *shamanism* in the next section.

2.6   SHAMANISM

2.6.1 Introduction

A discussion of alternate states of consciousness without any reference to shamanism would be incomplete. The reason for this is that certain people who experience alternate states of consciousness take on special statuses and ritualize these experiences so as to help make better sense of their way of life.

Anthropologists call these ritual specialists shamans (see Lenski, Lenski & Nolan 1991:110-112).

Although the term "shaman" can be translated "the ecstatic one",[64] according to Stutley (2003:3), it is difficult to develop a workable definition of "shaman"[65] (see Lewis 1986:88; Kehoe 2000:8, 57; Winkelman 2000:6-7, 58; Price 2001:5; Grim 2003:92; Hamayon 2003:63-64; Harvey 2003:1). Furthermore, not only the meaning, but also the origin, of the word "shamanism" is a point of dispute between scholars[66] (see Stutley 2003:3). There are scholars who trace the word "shaman" back to the Tungus language of Central Siberia, and consequently state that it can only be used to refer to Siberian shamans, since there are vital differences between other ritualists and Siberian shamans (see Kehoe 2000:8, 65; cf Eliade [1964] 1989:3-5). Other scholars argue that since the methods by which shamans are chosen and trained and the ways in which they fulfill their roles are of considerable interest to academics in many disciplines, and because they attract popular interest too, the word shaman has become part of languages outside Siberia (see Lewis-Williams 2001:21; Harvey 2003:1-2, 5-6; MacLellan 2003:366). In this regard, Lewis (1986:78) asserts that the "term *shaman* belongs to that special category of ethnographically specific concepts used cross-culturally outside their own native contexts." Price (2001:6) does not concur with historians of religion who resist using the term "shamanism" beyond certain regions of central Siberia, since, according to him, the concept of shaman*ism* has always been an externally imposed construction, and does not exist anywhere at all other than in the minds of scholars investigating this phenomenon. Craffert (1999b:324) indicates that even the origin of the term *šaman* in the Tungus language, which is spoken by about 6% of the inhabitants of Siberia, is uncertain. It is also not certain whether the modern word *shaman* is derived from the Tungus world at all. But whatever the origin of the term, it has been widely adopted by anthropologists and scholars of comparative religion to refer to specific groups of religious practitioners in diverse cultures, including medicine men, witchdoctors, sorcerers, magicians, healers and seers. The word "shaman"

has thus become part of a new vocabulary where it carries additional associations and implications[67] (Harvey 2003:2).

Despite the variety of definitions regarding shamanism, Craffert (1999b:324-325) indicates that some commonalities do occur.[68] He describes the shamanic complex as a family of traditions which regularly occurs in many cultural systems,[69] and consists of a configuration of certain *features* (controlled alternate states of consciousness on behalf of the community) and certain *social functions* (such as healing, mediating, prophecy, exorcism and spirit possession), which flow from these experiences. He points out that it is not so much the individual elements but the combination of a number of aspects which constitutes the shamanic complex as an identifiable phenomenon in many cultural settings (cf Pilch 2002a:106). Shamanism is thus constituted by a combination of elements which exist independently elsewhere but are integrated into this complex with a particular worldview and which validate specific techniques.[70] Craffert (1999b:325) comments the following:

> From this point of view a shaman is a person within a particular cultural system who successfully operates within the parameters of the shamanic complex; someone who combines controlled altered states of consciousness or non-ordinary psychic states with a variety of social functions on behalf of the group or community.[71]

Price (2001:6) concurs: "As both a term and a notion, shamanism is entirely an academic creation, and as such it is certainly a useful tool serving to describe a pattern of ritual behavior and belief found in strikingly similar form across much of the arctic and sub-arctic regions of the world."

Craffert (1999b:326; cf Eliade 1989:3-5) has compiled the following list of features and functions of shamanism:

- Features include *experiences,* like journeys, visions, possession, mediumistic and transformation experiences; as well as *techniques,* like ecstasy, drama, dreams and meditation.

- The functions ascribed to the shaman are those of healer, mediator, diviner, interpreter of dreams, sacrificer, protector from spirits, psychopomps, retriever of souls and exorcist.

Without suggesting that all elements of each category appear in every instance of shamanism, it seems clear that the combination of features and functions within recognizable world-views constitutes the shamanic complex (see Malina & Pilch 2000c:6-7; Pilch 2002a:106). Consequently, Harvey (2003:6) warns that it is difficult to achieve an appropriate balance between lumping all indigenous peoples together as if they were essentially the same and atomizing them into entirely dissimilar "tribal" groups. Thus, it might be that the concept of the "shaman" usefully points to widespread communalities among indigenous peoples, but that we need to speak about particular shamans (e.g., those who are Tungus) rather than implying that all shamans are alike.

The essence of shamanism, thus, is generally considered to be a healing ritual, practiced by a communal leader chosen and trained to work for the community; incorporating observable drumming, dancing, and chanting; climaxing in the adept falling down in a trance; plus the stated belief that the shaman's soul leaves the body to travel in company with spirits during the trance[72] (Kehoe 2000:57; Harvey 2003:1; cf Henderson 1988:151; Lewis 1986:88). The shaman is the bridge between the spiritual and physical world (MacLellan, 2003:366). The way in which a shaman accomplishes acting as this bridge is to make use of alternate states of consciousness[73] (see Balzer 2003:310). According to

Winkelman (2000:7-8), shamans represent the first people who learned to operate within and to utilize alternate states of consciousness, providing psychodynamic integration and transformation. He argues that symbols, ritual, and myth, such as those referred to in the descent and ascent found in shamanic flight, represent these developmental transformations. These are exemplified in the death and rebirth experiences that represent the termination of one ego or identity and the birth of a new identity and sense of self.

2.6.2 Holy men or women

In the biblical context, people who displayed the same characteristics and performed the same duty as shamans are known as "holy men" or "holy women" (*Hasid*) (Myburgh 1995:139; Pilch 1998a:53; Pilch 2002a:104; cf Brown 1971:89-92, 96). The term "Hasid" (חָסִיד) can be translated literally as "he who practices 'hesed' (חֶסֶד)"; "the loyal, the pious one" (Koehler & Baumgartner 1985:319). Myburgh (1995:138) understands this term as referring to someone who experiences an exceptional relationship with God. A holy person was a living model worthy to be imitated (Pilch 1998a:54). We learn from rabbinic literature (see Pilch 1998a:54) that a holy person was considered as Torah incarnated – everything such a person did was a living example of the Torah's content and form.

If we take a look at the way Jesus of Nazareth is described in the Gospels, we see that this description fits him well (cf Van den Heever 1993:433-434). Jesus was authentically Jewish – and therefore he must be understood within his contemporary Judaism[74] (see Sanders 1985; Crossan 1992:417; Theißen & Merz 1996:143; Den Heyer 1997:73-74, 80-82). Vermes (1993:206-207) describes Jesus as "[a] powerful healer of the physically and mentally sick, a friend of sinners, he was a magnetic preacher of what lies at the heart of the law, unconditionally given over to rescue, not of communities, but of persons in need." By means of his way of life, Jesus "showed" his contemporaries what it meant to be part of the kingdom of God. He did this in such a manner that his followers felt

inclined to "tell" other people about this and to live like Jesus themselves, by "re-enacting" Jesus' "showing" in the rites of baptism and Eucharist.

Although there are no known instances available in the literature where Jesus is called a *Hasid* (Myburg 1995:149-150), Vermes (1983:83, 209) argues that the picture the Gospel writers paint of Jesus corresponds to that of a miracle-working *Hasid.* Another feature that suggests a connection between Jesus and a "holy man"[75] is the way in which he called God his father (e.g., Mk 14:36). The *Hasidim* displayed the same intimacy with God (see Pope 1989:528-529).

As with shamans, holy people were believed to have ready access to the deity and alternate reality. This access takes place in alternate states of consciousness, during which the holy person can discover solutions to problems, find new direction in life, heal the sick, change the weather, foretell the future, control the movement of animals, and converse with spirits[76] (Pilch 2001:242-243).

Thus, in social-scientific terms, it can be said that the Gospels portray Jesus as a holy man (see Mk 10:17; Lk 20:21; Craffert 1999b:329-340), who was gifted with alternate state of consciousness experiences, with the power to heal, and with power over spirits (see chapter 1). Furthermore, this meant that his reward (of continued life in alternate reality) was not completely unexpected, since holy people were believed to keep on living in alternate reality after they died[77] (Pilch 1998a:53; 2003b:257). This brings Pilch (2002a:104) to the following conclusion: "By reflecting on the social-scientific understanding of shamans and ASCs [alternate states of consciousness], the interpreter of the Gospels will be able to make fresh, culturally plausible interpretations of the events such as the visions reported about Jesus and his disciples".

If we consider the process by which a person becomes a shaman, we shall observe striking similarities with the way in which Jesus started his public

97

ministry. Townsend (1997:444) comments that an individual cannot decide that he or she wants to become a shaman: this is the prerogative of the spirits (cf Eliade 1989:13; Dowson 1992:15). The usual sequence of events in the process of becoming a shaman is as follows (Pilch 2002a:106-107; adapted from Townsend 1997:445; cf Eliade [1958] 1965:87-89; Hitchcock 1976:169; Malina & Pilch 2000:6-7):

- contact with the spirit (by possession or adoption);
- identification of the possessing or adopting spirit;
- acquisition of necessary ritual skills;
- tutelage by both a spirit and a real-life teacher;
- growing familiarity with the possessing or adopting spirit;
- and ongoing alternate state of consciousness experiences.

It is also possible that a death-rebirth or major-change symbolism transfers the novice from his or her old status to a liminal transitional position and finally to rebirth as a changed being (Townsend 1997:446; Pilch 2002a:108; see chapter 3).

Pilch (2002a:108) interprets Jesus' baptism (Mk 1:9-11//Mt 3:13-17//Lk 3:21-22) as his call to become a holy man. Pilch explains this event as follows: Jesus meets John the Baptist, his teacher and guide, and becomes his apprentice. In an alternate state of consciousness Jesus sees the Holy Spirit descending upon him, which means that he was contacted by the spirit world. He then hears a voice from heaven whereby the spirit revealed his identity and announced a new identity for Jesus – a beloved son who pleases the Father. Thus, Jesus is called to become a holy man, a broker on behalf of the patron (God)[78] (cf Van den Heever 1993:426). Davies (1995:52-54) points out that in accord with Mediterranean cultural values, the honors attributed to Jesus at his baptism needed to be tested. Jesus had to prove that he really was a faithful, adopted son of God. This he did in an alternate state of consciousness. He engaged in a challenge-riposte contest with the tester, and he won. The devil tested Jesus'

98

spiritual strength, loyalty and obedience (Mk 1:12-13//Mt 4:1-11//Lk 4:1-13). The experience and successful passing of the test also constitutes one of the steps toward becoming a shaman: Jesus demonstrated that he had acquired the necessary skills to deal with and control the spirit world (Pilch 2002a:108-109; cf Pilch 1999c:80). All of this can be summarized as "Jesus showing", which in turn leads to "telling" and "re-enacting", as argued earlier.

Now that we know that it was expected of Jesus, as a holy man, to experience alternate states of consciousness in the first-century Mediterranean world, it is necessary to investigate the function of these states.

2.7   THE FUNCTION OF ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Ludwig (1966:230-233; 1972:20) the very presence of alternate states of consciousness in people attests to their importance in everyday functioning. As a matter of fact, alternate states of consciousness exhibit functions on more than one level. He lists adaptive as well as maladaptive expressions of alternate states of consciousness. The adaptive expressions can for example be used in healing (e.g., by shamans or pharmacologically), in avenues of new knowledge and experience (e.g., creative insights and problem solving) and in social function (e.g., possession by a deity [or the Holy Spirit] allows an individual to fulfill his or her cult role; from society's standpoint the needs of the group are met through its identification with the entranced person who acts out ritualized group conflicts and aspirations, such as the themes of death and resurrection and cultural taboos) (cf Neufeld 2005:7). The description of Jesus in the Gospels indicates that he utilized his ability to deploy alternate states of consciousness for all of these "adaptive" expressions. Maladaptive expressions comprise the following: attempts at resolution of emotional conflict (e.g., amnesias), defensive functions in certain threatening situations conducive to the normal arousal of anxiety (e.g., lapsing into hypnoidal states during psychotherapy), a breakthrough of forbidden impulses (e.g., panic reactions), escape from responsibilities and inner tensions (e.g., alcohol), the symbolic

acting out of unconscious conflicts (e.g., demoniacal possession), the manifestation of organic lesions of neurophysiological disturbances (e.g., toxic conditions) and an inadvertent and potentially dangerous response to certain stimuli (e.g., highway hypnosis).

For the purpose of this study, an important function can be observed in the alternate state of consciousness which Bourguignon (1973:31-33) termed possession trance. In her view, possession trance is often a search for compensation and self respect among people who are humiliated in their daily lives. The kind of society most prone to give rise to the practice of possession trance is sedentary and dependent on agriculture and/or animal husbandry (cf Lewis 1986:84). This leads her to conclude that those people who suffer the greatest inability to modify their own lives in a given society under existing circumstances will be most likely to make use of alternate states of consciousness[79] (Bourguignon 1973:350; cf Lewis 1986:82-83). Davies (1995:40) concurs. According to him, societies where alternate states of consciousness occur frequently contain local groups larger than 1 000 and have an overall population greater than 100 000, exhibiting a jurisdictional hierarchy extending beyond the local level, and a rigid hierarchical system often including a form of slavery. Alternate states of consciousness often represent the way in which certain individuals circumvent restrictions imposed by their economic, sexual, or social status, and so will most often be found in societies where these restrictions are rather clearly defined. The society of first-century Palestine (the world of Jesus and his followers) meets these criteria (Davies 1995:40; see Malina 1993a, 1993b).

Lewis (1989:27-29, 119, 157-158) further distinguishes between "peripheral possession" and "central possession". Neufeld (2005:7-9) describes this issue as follows: Peripheral possession refers to what happens on the margins of a community, where the weak and powerless are found. On the other hand, central possession can be found in the center of a community, where powerful people

compete for authority. The function of peripheral possession is employed by the marginalized to protest their position and situation in society, while central possession is utilized by the powerful to protect a social and religious morality under attack. With reference to the present study, because of their marginalization, the Jesus followers formed an anti-society in opposition to the established society where the powerful resided. Alternate states of consciousness played an important part in this process.

Davies (1995:39-40) agrees with Lewis, but he places more emphasis on "peripheral possession". He shows that because people who experience possession trance enjoy an upward alteration in social status during the period when they are possessed, more often people of relatively low social statuses, marginal people, or people in a condition of social oppression, choose to join groups where alternate states of consciousness occur regularly. People whose opinions are normally received with respect, and whose resentments can normally be expressed effectively, will be less likely to experience possession trance.[80] Once again the situation of Jesus and his contemporaries, as well as the situation of Jesus' earliest followers after his death, fit this description. As I described in chapter 1, they lived in a situation where they were marginalized by the Roman Empire as well as by the hierarchical Israelite temple tradition. This makes it easier to understand why Jesus experienced alternate states of consciousness ("showing"), and why his followers started "telling" and "re-enacting" these states.

How does this process work in practice? As discussed earlier, structures of consciousness can be transformed by rites, since rites connect previously developed (socialized) intentionalities by means of symbols, eliciting conditioned responses (that can change the structures of consciousness). States of consciousness that are induced through the performance of rites, contrast with normally static and stable social life by providing a period of fluidity for the purpose of transformation of social status and the transformation of self-

experience through liminal or transitional stages. The rite then resolves ambiguity of status by marking the social transition and by producing feelings of unity or community with the social group (Winkelman 2000:97). If we apply this process to the situation of Jesus' earliest followers, we can perceive that they were initiated into a new group by means of the ritual of baptism. During this ritual they experienced alternate states of consciousness. Their status was transformed, since in their "new community" they possessed new rights and responsibilities. By means of participating in the ceremony of integration (the Eucharist), community and social bonding with the rest of the group was established. During this ceremony they also experienced alternate states of consciousness, because they experienced the presence of the exalted Christ in their midst, which reminded them that they were required to live according to a new ethic. This entire process will be described in the following chapter.

I conclude this section with the words of Pilch (1995c:64): "For people who have no control over their lives and who believe that God alone is in charge of life, ASCs [alternate states of consciousness]…are as essential to well being as aspirin…are to modern Westerners."

2.8   CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter, I have indicated the nature of alternate states of consciousness. I have also suggested that, like all first-century Mediterranean people, Jesus as well as his followers experienced alternate states of consciousness on a regular basis. If we keep the relation between the historical Jesus and the *kerugmatic* Christ in mind, we shall remember (as indicated in chapter 1), that the historical Jesus could be described as a healer. Because of the influence he exerted on the lives of the people surrounding him, we can describe Jesus' earliest followers as "healed healers". Jesus changed their lives, and they set out to change the lives of others. This they also did by means of bringing about alternate states of consciousness. Once again this indicates the relation between Jesus' "showing", his earliest followers' "telling" and the "re-enactment" of this by early Jesus-

groups. The healed healers verbalized Jesus' alternate states of consciousness experiences in anti-language and then ritually re-enacted them by means of the earliest baptism and Eucharist.

Throughout this chapter, I have emphasized the important role that alternate states of consciousness play in rites. In the next chapter I shall describe the nature of rites, placing a specific focus on the rites of the earliest Jesus-followers – baptism and the Eucharist. I am also going to indicate the relatedness between rites and the formation of new groups, since the rites of Jesus' followers played an important part in the formation of their anti-society – the "family of God".

ENDNOTES: CHAPTER 2

[1] Since this study has to do with the people the Bible was written about, I would like to point out that in the Bible there are numerous examples of alternate state of consciousness experiences. Pilch (1998c:121-122; 2002d:691) indicates that we already encounter this phenomenon in Genesis when God puts Adam into a deep sleep to create Eve (Gn 2:21) and we still read about it in Revelation, where John declares that what he reports is the result of experiences in trance (Rv 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

[2] John Allegro (1970) describes Christianity as a secret Near Eastern fertility drug cult, which used the "sacred mushroom" (known today as the *Amanita muscaria*) for its hallucinatory powers. He indicated the importance of alternate states of consciousness for the understanding of the earliest Jesus-followers and showed that "early Christianity" was influenced as much by the Israelite tradition as by the Greco-Roman mystery religions, but other than that I do not agree with his findings.

[3] Because of this, in some of the publications I refer to, other terminology is used instead of or next to the term "alternate state of consciousness", for example "altered state of consciousness", "distinct states of consciousness", "trance", "spirit possession", "hallucinations", "visions", "ecstasy", etc., but to a large extent the authors mean the same thing (see, e.g., Price-Williams 1975:84; Tart 1977:173-174; 1982:255-256; Rossi 1986:111; Lewis 1989:38-39; Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1998:14-19; Craffert 2002:72, 77; Pilch 2002d:691-692).

[4] The term "homoversal" was coined by Henry Rosemont (jr) (1988:52), to signify "for all human beings, physiologically and mentally constituted as they are".

[5] In this regard Craffert (2002:77, emphasis by Craffert) remarks: "It is much less ethnocentric to think...in terms of states of consciousness which can be grouped together in multiple ways (alternate), than to operate with altered (as opposed to *normal*) consciousness....Mystics, shamans and the like do not visit alternate reality – they visit reality as seen within their cultural system or cycle of meaning."

[6] Bosman (2003:177-190) points out that in the time before Philo, reflection on psychological processes is virtually absent. It was only in Hellenistic times that the composition and workings of the soul became important. This was due to sociopolitical changes – the decline of the classic cities and the new world of Hellenistic kingdoms. During this time the requirements for honor had changed. The ambitious had to be actively involved in the political activities of the state and were obliged to contribute to its welfare, either by means of personal wealth or by influencing state affairs or policy. This was very difficult. But the philosophies of the time offered possibilities of regaining sense in life, by focusing on the "phenomena of consciousness". Little else remained but to withdraw into the self and to make happiness dependent on the state of the soul alone. Another explanation for this occurrence is seen as a continuity between classical and Hellenistic philosophy and is ascribed to Socrates and his example of "self-mastery". The ideal human being was seen as someone who proclaims complete authority over himself or herself. Analyzing the mechanics of the soul became a sophisticated enterprise in the philosophical schools of that time, labeling the "components of the soul" in traditional Greek fashion by means of abstract concepts. See Bosman (2003) on the meaning and use of the su&noida ("conscious") word group in Philo and Paul.

[7] I do not intend to provide an extensive description of the concept "consciousness". This section only serves as a background to the understanding of the phenomenon "alternate states of consciousness".

[8] One such scholar is Newton (2001:47-51), who perceives consciousness as *sui generis*, which means that nothing else is like consciousness *in any way at all.* Although Newton (2001:47-51)

sees consciousness, like many emerging properties, as arising from the forced blending of intrinsically incompatible components into a unified framework, she also describes consciousness as a unique type of emergent property that is analytically and comparatively indefinable. This means that even though consciousness is unique as a psychological state, its uniqueness is comprehensible in terms of a more general kind of emergence. Consciousness essentially involves synchronous activations of representations, with distinct temporal tags, of more or less "identical" intentional content. She explains this as follows: "The greater the identity, or matching of expectations with actuality, the less the surprise or confusion. Understanding this brain process allows the prediction of certain experiential properties of phenomenal consciousness that identify it as a case of the emergence of novelty from incompatibility....[I]t follows from the general nature of such emergence that the properties of consciousness would be indefinable and hence seem mysterious, and even incoherent, which in fact they are" (Newton 2001:51). Wright (1996:128) agrees by saying that consciousness "is paradoxical because we have direct and immediate personal knowledge of it, but, at the same time, it seems to evade the explanatory frameworks of the social and natural sciences."

[9] The Latin word *conscious* consists of *com*-, meaning "together" and *scire*, meaning "to know"; thus, "knowing with others" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 1985). The definition of "consciousness" in the *American Heritage Dictionary* (1985) is: "the state or condition of being conscious". The definition of "conscious" reads: "having an awareness of one's own existence, sensations, and thoughts and of one's environment; capable of thought, will, or perception; subjectively known or felt; intentionally conceived or done; deliberate; having or showing self-consciousness; aware; the component of waking awareness perceptible by an individual at any given instant...."

[10] We cannot apply the term "ordinary/normal consciousness" homogeneously to all people. A giant leap for a person in one kind of society or time may resemble only a minimal increment for a person from another society or time (cf Price-Williams 1975:91). Normal or ordinary consciousness has adaptive value for a human being within a particular culture and environment.

[11] In the sense that these words can apply to an attitude of superiority, where the opposite of these words is seen as extraordinary and abnormal. This is not the meaning of baseline consciousness.

[12] In regard to the term "*alter*nate" states of consciousness, one needs to remember that the word "alter" is a Latin word that can only be fully comprehended in conjunction with the word "ego". According to the *Collins Latin Dictionary plus grammar* (1997:12, 74), the Latin adjective "alter" means "the one, the other *(of two);* "alter ego" means "a second self"; and the pronoun "ego" can be translated "I". Furthermore, the term "state" is used to describe temporal clusterings of the content and organization of consciousness (Tart 1982: 251).

[13] She explains alternate states of consciousness as "conditions in which sensations, perceptions, cognition and emotions are altered. They are characterized by changes in sensing, perceiving, thinking and feeling. They modify the relation of the individual to self, body, sense of identity, and the environment of time, space or other people" (Bourguignon 1979:236; cf Krippner 1972:1; Erickson & Rossi 1981:242, 248).

[14] Foucault's explanation of "reason" and "unreason" can help to illustrate this point. He has shown that without a concept of reason there could be no concept of "unreason" (Strathern 2000:20). Foucault ([1965] 1967:30-220) pointed out that in the classical age (Age of Reason; 1650-1800) madness became separated from reason and the concept of "unreason" was born. It was then that madness was confined to the asylum (cf Strathern 2000:43; Horrocks & Jevtic [1997] 2001:39-46).

[15] It was the translation of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius into Latin in the ninth century that introduced the word "supernatural" into the theology of the Western Christendom (Saler 1977:38, 46; see Pilch 1996a:134).

[16] DeMaris (2002:145-146) avers that the "rise of drug use and the introduction of meditative techniques from South to East Asia in the 1960[s] and '70[s] fostered an interest in such inquiry at the popular level in Europe and North America. More important, however, was the impetus from anthropologists and other scholars who sought to counteract dismissive assessments of departures from an alert waking state as aberrant, pathological, or dysfunctional."

[17] Jung (1988:45) makes some interesting remarks in this regard. He writes: "I have more than once been consulted by well-educated and intelligent people who have had peculiar dreams, fantasies, or even visions, which have shocked them deeply. They have assumed that no one who is in a sound state of mind could suffer from such things, and that anyone who actually sees a vision must be pathologically disturbed. A theologian once told me that Ezekiel's visions were nothing more than morbid symptoms, and that, when Moses and other prophets heard 'voices' speaking to them, they were suffering from hallucinations. You can imagine the panic he felt when something of this kind 'spontaneously' happened to him. We are so accustomed to the apparently rational nature of our world that we can scarcely imagine anything happening that cannot be explained by common sense. The primitive man confronted by a shock of this kind would not doubt his sanity; he would think of fetishes, spirits, or gods." Jung (1988:82) comments that Western people today are blind to the fact that, with all their rationality and efficiency, they are possessed by "powers" that are beyond their control. Their gods and demons have not disappeared at all: they have only received new names. They keep people "on the run with restlessness, vague apprehensions, psychological complications, an insatiable need for pills, alcohol, tobacco, food – and, above all, a large array of neuroses." He further says that what we call civilized consciousness has steadily separated itself from our basic instincts. But the instincts did not disappear. They have only lost their contact with our consciousness and are, thus, forced to assert themselves in an indirect fashion (Jung 1988:83).

[18] Since the first-century Mediterranean world is of particular importance for this study, I have singled it out from the rest of the cultures Bourguignon studied. According to her findings, alternate states of consciousness were most probably experienced by about 80 percent of the cultures in the first century Mediterranean word, which is still by far the majority of people (see Bourguignon 1974:232; Bourguignon 1979:236; Pilch 1995c:50; Pilch 1996a:133; Pilch 1998c:121; Pilch 2002d:693).

[19] For clarity, Felicitas D Goodman (1988a:36) adds that *institutionalized* religious alternate states of consciousness are "normal". That is, when and if the altered state of consciousness represents controlled behavior, when it is a ritualized action, capable of being called forth and terminated on a given signal, then it is a perfectly "ordinary" phenomenon. She says that some brain diseases or biomedical disturbances of the body occasionally manifest themselves in a loss or change of consciousness, hallucinations, convulsions, and the like. An alteration in consciousness of this kind is an illness, but religious alternate states of consciousness are not (see Goodman 2001:7).

[20] Crossan (1998:xviii) explains this as follows: "Trance and ecstasy, vision and apparition are perfectly normal and natural phenomena. Altered states of consciousness, such as dreams and visions, are something common to our humanity, something hard-wired into our brains, something as normal as language itself. They are recognized as common possibilities in the early first century, and they are still recognized as such in the late twentieth century. And only when their human normalcy is accepted can a proper response be offered. That response should not be, We deny the *fact* of your vision. It should be, Tell us the *content* of your vision. And then we will have to judge, not whether you had it or not, but whether we should follow it or not."

---

[21] E.g.: Interactions with the risen Jesus described in various early Jesus-groups can best be explained in terms of alternate states of consciousness experiences. But since experiences like these are generally unavailable to human perception in the Western culture, Westerners usually do not realize this (see Goodman 1988a:3, 36; Goodman 1990:11; Pilch 1998a:59).

[22] Examples of this can be seen in rock engravings and cave paintings (see Dowson 1992; Clottes & Lewis-Williams 1998).

[23] I consider that one of the advantages of the postmodern paradigm is that Western people are becoming more open-minded and accommodating towards people with different worldviews.

[24] In this regard, see the "labyrinth complex". Henderson (1988:125) explains this heritage from Greek mythology as follows: In all cultures, the labyrinth has the meaning of an entangling and confusing representation of the world of matriarchal consciousness; it can be traversed only by those who are ready for a special initiation into the mysterious world of the collective unconscious. See also Jung's (1971:193-194) views on mythical and profane thinking (cf Tylor 1924:273-315; Frazer 1943:319, 392; Segal 1998:3-6).

[25] In a documentary film, Richeport (1984) records footage of alternate states of consciousness as experienced by diverse groups of a specific society – from the privileged rich to the illiterate poor. In this film it is evident that a whole congregation can experience alternate states of consciousness at the same time.

[26] DeMaris (2002:145) praises Davies for using the cross-cultural phenomenon of spirit possession in the analysis of the historical Jesus. But according to him, Davies makes a mistake by introducing psychological analysis to account for Jesus' possession as response to John the Baptist. The psychoanalytical claims he make are anachronistic vis-à-vis first-century Mediterranean personalities, and they cannot be verified from the information the Gospels provide. He refers in particular to pages 56, 58 and 118 of Davies' book (see also Pilch 1997b:112-114). In the same vein, Pilch (1996b:182) criticizes Davies by noting that he uses cross-cultural anthropology to validate analogies and similarities between contemporary and ancient cultures, while by definition it focuses on differences between cultures. Davies employs modern psychology (e.g., Erickson 1980) to interpret happenings in the time of Jesus, but this is a Western science and useless for interpreting other cultures. Pilch asserts that Davies seems unaware of Mediterranean anthropology – a discipline that helps prevent ethnocentric misinterpretations of New Testament evidence, yet provides a basis for creating and testing culturally plausible reading scenarios for biblical texts.

[27] Highly practiced psychological practices (like meditation) can shape conscious experience in the same way that drugs do (Shapiro 1977:148).

[28] Craffert (2002:73-64) comments that although there are shortcomings in this map of Bourguignon (e.g., by suggesting that these categories correlate with specific cultures or societies; see Lewis 1986:82-85), it is useful in bringing to the surface some of the distinctions which are used in such cultures.

[29] There is a connection between trance and simpler societies and possession trance and more complex ones. Trance, which often involves hallucinations (or visions, in a sacred context) is an intrapersonal event. It is a private experience of the individual that others can know about only from the individual's report, as he or she remembers the experience. It is prominent in middle and eastern Asia and in the native cultures of the Americas. Possession trance involves the impersonation of another being on an occasion when there are witnesses. As such it is an interpersonal event, for the audience has a crucial role to play in the event. It appears frequently in sub-Saharan African, Latin-American, Afro-American, and Mediterranean cultures (DeMaris 2002:147). Possession trance is often conceived of as pathological, especially in Western

society. Unless the person who experienced the trance can convince others that he or she has indeed had a supernatural experience, such a person will be regarded as deviant and even considered to be dangerous (Bourguignon 1972:428).

[30] Most commonly, possession belief is used to account for diseases (see Davies 1995:39-40). The film, *The Exorcist* (Friedkin [1973] 1998), provides a good illustration of possession (see Goodman 1981, 1988b:xv).

[31] Investigators into the drugs used for inducing alternate states of consciousness cannot agree on a generic name for these substances. In contrast to terms like "hallucinogens", "psychotomimetic" and "psychoactive", the term "psychedelic" (coined by Humphrey Osmond) seems to be the most neutral. It literally means "mind-manifesting". These drugs occur naturally in plants or can be synthesized in laboratories (Tart 1972:327; Wulff 1997:89-95; cf Siegel 1977:132).

[32] Wulff (1997:49, 70-89) indicates that certain religious practices often include exercises that are directly related to the body. This includes psychological or other modes of deprivation, like assuming certain postures, depriving oneself of food or sleep, submitting the body to certain discomforts (like stimulus deprivation during solitude) or controlling the rate of breathing. It also includes overstimulation, like ecstatic dance and other forms of excessive sensory stimulation or profound emotional arousal (like brandishing weapons, handling or walking on fire, flagellating oneself or others, sacrificing animals, religious revival, handling of snakes, and glossolalia). All of these techniques can contribute to changes in the central nervous system that facilitate the induction of alternate states of consciousness (cf Craffert 2002:59). This will happen especially when some of these exercises are combined, since this will lead to the production of endorphins (a mechanism that dramatically reduces maladaptive pain or fear, which can be described as natural opiates in the human brain) by the brain and, thus, to alternate states of consciousness (Wulff 1997:85-89; cf Lewis 1989:34).

[33] For a detailed discussion, see Ludwig (1966:226-227; 1972:12-15). He provides a long list of methods for the induction of alternate states of consciousness:
- Reduction of exteroceptive stimulation and/or motor activity:
E.g.: Solitary confinement; prolonged social and stimulus deprivation while at sea, in the Arctic or the desert; highway hypnosis; extreme boredom; sleep; dreaming.
- Increase of exteroceptive stimulation and/or motor activity and/or emotion:
E.g.: Brainwashing; religious conversion; healing trance experiences during revivalist meetings; mental aberrations associated with certain *rites de passage*; spirit possession states; shamanistic and prophetic trance states during tribal ceremonies.
- Increased alertness or mental involvement:
E.g.: Prolonged observation of a radar screen; fervent praying; intense mental absorption in a task, such as reading, writing, or problem solving; total mental involvement in listening to a charismatic speaker.
- Decreased alertness or relaxation of critical faculties:
E.g.: Mystical, transcendental, or revelatory states attained through passive meditation or occurring spontaneously during the relaxation of one's critical faculties; daydreaming; drowsiness; nostalgia; music-trance resulting from absorption in soothing lullabies.
- Presence of somatopsychological factors:
E.g.: Fasting; dehydration; sleep deprivation; hyperventilation.

[34] This supports Craffert's (2002:79) statement: that everything that is meaningful to religious experiences happens in the mind. He argues that we trust our perceptions of the physical world, which are also only flashes inside our skulls, so there is no rational reason to declare that religious experiences are fiction or only in our minds.

[35] What is the difference between "mind" and "brain"? According to d'Aquili and Newberg (1999:75) it is essentially two different ways of looking at the same thing – the brain represents the structural aspects of the mind, and the mind represents the functional aspects of the brain. Feinberg (2001:143) comments that by its very nature, the brain functions in a way that produces irreducibly mental states (mind). See Feinberg (2001:123-145) for a further discussion of this issue.

[36] For a detailed description of the functioning of the neurological system during alternate state of consciousness experiences, see Goodman (1988a:39) and d'Aquili & Newberg (1993:5-28; 1999:99-104).

[37] Rituals are symbolically rich events. Rituals incorporate a variety of drivers that may account in some measure for the ritual's efficacy. Drivers are ritual elements that evoke specific neurophysiological effects. These ritual elements can be striking in form, such as drumming, dancing, ingestion of psychotropic drugs, sweat baths, ordeals, flickering lights, chanting, fasting, and special diets; or they can be relatively subtle in form, such as extraordinary concentration on breathing, on eidetic imagery, or on a question (Laughlin 1997:478-479).

[38] I consider that alternate states of consciousness are closely linked to an apocalyptic frame of reference (as indicated in chapter 1). Therefore, it might be possible that that there is a relation between the symbolic meanings of color in apocalyptic literature and the first stage of entering an alternate state of consciousness (cf Pilch 2003b:256).

[39] For Jung, myth and religion have traditionally worked in tandem. Religion has preserved myth, and myth has sustained religion. Segal (1998:35) writes: "The heart of religion for Jung is neither belief nor practice but experience, and myth provides the best entrée to the experience of God, which means to the unconscious. Jung thus praises early Christianity for adopting and adapting various pre-Christian myths". Jung argues that the "spiritual vitality" of a religion depends on the continuity of myth, and this can be preserved only if every era translates the myth into its own language and makes it an important part of its worldview. In contrast to "early Christianity", according to Jung, modern Christianity has failed to update its myths.

[40] According to Segal (1998:3), Jung (1984:248) is one of the few scholars who has developed a theory that answers all three questions. Jung says that myths are "original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of physical processes". He, thus, considers that the subject matter of myth is not literal but symbolic – not the external world but the human mind. Myth originates and functions to satisfy the psychological need for contact with the unconscious.

[41] See Allen (2002) for a comprehensive critical discussion of the place of myth in Eliade's broader theory of religion.

[42] Here is Eliade's (1975:5-6) definition of myth as an example: "Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event that took place in primordial Time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings.' In other words, myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural Beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species or plant, a particular kind of human behavior, an institution. Myth, then, is always an account of a 'creation'; it relates how something was produced, began to *be.* Myth tells only of that which *really* happened, which manifested itself completely. The actors in myth are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the transcendent times of the 'beginnings.' Hence myths disclose their creative activity and reveal the sacredness...of their works. In short, myths describe the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred...into the World."

[43] See, e.g., the lexicographical contributions in the *Collins Essential English Dictionary* (2003:506).

---

[44] Van Aarde (2003:246-247) points out that Strauss' ([1836] 1984:273) over-emphasis on myth, "to the extent of the entire New Testament being regarded as mythological, resulted in exegetes and theologians becoming increasingly uncomfortable with and even rejecting the notion." On the other hand, Bultmann's (1964:14-16) dialectical distinction between the concepts "mythology" (referring to the pre-modern thought structure) and "myth" (referring to the objectified textual evidence of an encounter of humans with external divine or demonic powers) appealed to the exponents of the hermeneutical approach. According to this approach, in order to be relevant, myth requires interpretation.

[45] Eliade (1975:1-2) shows that from the time of Xenophanes (c 565-470 BCE) – who was the first to criticize and reject the "mythological" expressions of the divinity employed by Homer and Hesiod – the Greeks steadily continued to empty *mythos* of all religious and metaphysical value. Contrasted both with *logos* and later with *historia, mythos* came in the end to denote "what cannot really exist." But there were, and still are, societies in which myth is "living", in the sense that it supplies models for human behavior and, by that very fact, gives meaning and value to life.

[46] Jung (1988:69) defines archetypes as follows: "What we properly call instincts are physiological urges, and are perceived by the senses. But at the same time, they also manifest themselves in fantasies and often reveal their presence only by symbolic images. These manifestations are what I call the archetypes" (see Segal 1998:39-40). Myths are more than archetypes – they are stories that, read symbolically, contain archetypes. Archetypes are mythological components which can be called "motifs", "primordial images" or "types". But an archetype is not only a motif within a myth; it is a motif within many myths. A motif found in only one myth would not be an archetype. Segal (1998:43) explains this as follows: "Any myth ordinarily contains multiple archetypes, though one archetype is often dominant. The plot of myth is not only the manifestation of one or more archetypes but also the development of them and their interaction." Archetypes are not mere names or philosophical concepts; they are pieces of life itself – images that are integrally connected to a person by the bridge of the emotions. Because of this, Jung (1988:96) considers that it is impossible to give an arbitrary (or universal) interpretation of any archetype. It must be explained in the manner indicated by the whole life-situation of the particular individual to whom it relates. For example, in the case of a devout Christian, the symbol of the cross can be interpreted only in its Christian context. But this does not mean that in all circumstances the symbol of the cross has the same meaning. If that were so, it would be stripped of its numinosity, lose its vitality, and become a mere word. Archetypes come to life only when one patiently tries to discover why and in what fashion they are meaningful to an individual.

[47] Another perspective is that of Goodman (1990:17). She describes myth as "traditional story", a report about events that took place in the other reality and that involved people or beings who straddled the two dimensions. She takes Joan of Arc as an example. Joan of Arc was not guided by a military command but by spirits. She disguised these spirits as saints when she came into conflict with the Inquisition (see Pilch 1993:239-240).

[48] Walsh (2001:30) indicates that there are three basic understandings of myth, namely:
- The *popular* understanding of myth: this is the most common understanding and usage of myth in the West. Here myth is seen as a powerful ordering device, materially and ideologically.
- The *romantic* understanding of myth: this understanding deliberately rejects the popular understanding of myth. The Romantic motif suggests that myth is playful and creative.
- The *sociological* understanding of myth: this understanding underlines the pluralistic notion of myth in the ambiguous world that we live in today. The sociological definition of myth indicates orders that are manifold and diverse.

[49] In the same vein Theißen (1999:325) distinguishes three dimensions in myth, namely, that myth is a text, a power that shapes life and a thought-structure:

- *Myth as text:* Myth is a narrative according to which numinous subjects, like gods, demons, and angels, can transform a weak state of reality into a stable state.
- *The function of myth:* The mythical narrative can serve as the basis for a form of social life (or it can put such a form in question), since it has legitimizing power.
- *Myth as mentality or thought structure:* Myths are narratives based on another way of ordering the world in forms of perception and interpreting it in categories.

[50] Since *rites de passage* serve as markers of identity, giving people a place in a specific cultural grouping, rites like these play an important role in cosmogonic myths (cf McVann 1991b:333).

[51] For Theißen (1999:23-26) myths are narratives from a time which was significant for the world, with supernatural agents who can turn an unstable state into a stable state. Myths act in their own kind of world with thought-structures that differ from those in the everyday world. For example, in myth, two things or persons which are different in people's perception, can be identical at a deep level – for instance, a dead person can return in a new form; a rite can make something else really present. If myth is understood in this manner, the preaching of Jesus also contains a myth – a myth of the end time as a time which is decisive for the world, in which God will establish himself against the supernatural powers (Satan and his demons) to change the present unstable state of disaster into a state of salvation. This mythical future is present in the activity of Jesus through the overcoming of evil. Jesus interprets his exorcisms as the establishment of the rule of God over Satan and his powers (Mt 12:28), in fact, Satan has already been cast down from heaven (Lk 10:18). Although these are mythical statements, they are associated with concrete historical experiences – the exorcisms. This mythical future is present as a hidden nucleus in the present (Lk 17-20-21). While this statement appears to be a contradiction in everyday language, there is nothing strange about the future being present *in* the present in a mythical framework of thought. Jesus' action in the present can be identical to the future rule of God at a deep level, although in actuality it is clearly different. We see the same thing in aesthetic experience, namely, that something can be present that is really absent. The work of art makes it appear, even if it is only a "foretaste" of the beautiful. It is, thus, not by chance that Jesus used aesthetic forms, like parables (short fictional stories of great poetical quality), to communicate his message. Traditionally the apocalyptic expectation of the rule of God is always bound up with a victory over the Gentiles, but for Jesus the rule of God is already present in hidden form without the Gentiles being conquered. The rule of God and Roman rule can co-exist for a time in the present. The revolution which begins with the kingly rule of God is a revolution at a metaphysical level, an end to demonic rule, a revolution within the people: the kingdom of God belongs to the poor (Mt 5:3) and the children (Mk 10:14); the toll collectors and sinners will enter it before the pious (Mt 21:32). A change in the expectation of the kingdom of God should, thus, be called a "demilitarizing", because it is detached from the great military victory over the peoples.

[52] The term "tautegory" is deduced from the Greek words to _ tau)to& ("the same") and a0gopeu/w ("to speak/proclaim), while "allegory" is deduced from a1lloj ("different") and a)goreu&w ("to speak/proclaim") (see Liddel & Scott 1961; Van Aarde 2005a:478-479).

[53] The words "natural" and "supernatural" are used here in terms of a modern Western perspective, since, as I indicated earlier, first-century Mediterranean people as well as other premodern cultures did not employ these notions in such a manner.

[54] For example, in Mediterranean cultures of the first century, belief in spirit entities and their relations to human beings was part of baseline consciousness. For such cultures, alternate states of consciousness fell into readily recognizable patterns. On the other hand, from a rational, modernistic perspective, alternate states of consciousness are frequently regarded as "supernatural" (Pilch 1993:234-237; see Saler 1977:31-38).

[55] The phenomenon that different societies exhibit different consensus realities can be demonstrated as follows: Any state of consciousness a culture can construct will be effective in insuring biological survival, if it, for example, prevents its members from walking off cliffs. Tart (1977:213) explains: "We could construct a rationale based on a potent and invisible force called 'gravity', which will throw one to the bottom of the cliff, causing physical pain. Or we could construct a rationale based on the idea that demons lurk at the bottom of every cliff and smash up people who fall over the edge. Or we could form a rationale around the belief that the rapid acceleration in falling makes the soul leave the body, thereby rendering the body vulnerable to physical hurt….The sheer size and complexity of the world allows us to conceptualize it in a vast variety of ways; thus the diversity of cultures".

[56] In the context of the New Testament it is easy to recognize the cultural patterning of alternate states of consciousness, because these states are usually described by the following elements that frequently occur together:
- those experiencing the vision are initially frightened;
- they do not recognize the figure;
- the figure offers calming assurance;
- the figure identifies himself or herself;
- then the figure offers the desired information: the clarification of identity or the granting of a favor.
The purpose of the experience is to illuminate a puzzle in life (by answering a question like: "Who is this person?") or to suggest or approve a line of conduct (with an answer like: "My beloved son, listen to him") (see Pilch 1998a:57-58; Pilch 1998c:121).

[57] For example, Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:282-285) note that appearances of the risen Jesus were widely known in ancient Mediterranean culture (e.g., Jn 20:1-29; Mk 9:2-8; Mt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-36; Gl 1:12; 2 Cor 12:2-4). What this means is that if the disciples witnessed to having repeatedly experienced the risen Jesus, this is undoubtedly because they were culturally prepared to have such experiences.

[58] The idea of alternate states of consciousness as "channels for the verification of beliefs" legitimates Theißen's (1999:121-122) theories of the meaning and ethics of sacramental rites. Theißen (1999:122) describes these rites as depicting the basic rules of social life which are unconditionally binding on all and make the co-ordination of action, feeling, and thought possible. He also understands rites to ward off chaos. Rites "serve to ward off anxiety that hurls people into social chaos. However, this warding off of chaos or of the dissolution of the existing order does not take place by suppressing chaos but by admitting it in ritualized form" (Theißen 1999:122).

[59] Microchange can be seen in the way "charismatic" churches deal with two major problems: illness, by offering faith healing; and self-respect, by offering salvation. This helps society to keep on functioning as always without major changes (Bourguignon 1973:350).

[60] Macrochange concerns innovators who aim towards the restructuring of the entire society (cf Giddens [1984] 1993), at developing alternate ways of living and of experiencing life. They begin this process while experiencing a personal crisis. This results in a restructuring of their world and their functioning within it. Then they gain followers. When they develop the movement toward the reorganization of society, they have, in part, already removed themselves from that society and have created a small new society for themselves (cf Weber 1968:252-267). Thus, change is brought about and legitimized by supernatural sanction (usually gained in possession trance). In addition to the benefits that alternate states of consciousness bestow on members of such a group, membership itself is a transforming experience (on the level of personal behavior and experience as well as on the level of social action) (Bourguignon 1973:32-33). In Yucatán Maya (Mexico), for example, individuals experienced "baptism in the Holy Spirit" (which comprised glossolalia) and felt themselves to be saved. They also altered their style of life by giving up the

"things of the world", and they developed new ties to the quasi family represented by the congregation. Life in such a congregation is meaningful, even if the larger society is not changed (Goodman 1973:178-218; see Goodman 2001).

[61] These "realities of a different kind" can be compared with what a person experiences during sacramental rites. Theißen (1999:121-122) describes sacramental rites as independent of space and time, which causes the person who participates in these rites to be able to "drop out" of the flow of transitoriness, and experience them as an incursion of the "eternal" into time. Theißen (1999:121-122) also describes rites as free from everyday purposiveness: "An action which is an end in itself can become the symbolic depiction of the ultimate reality which in itself is purpose, meaning and value – and on which everything that has meaning and value depends. What is intrinsically regular is hallowed in the rite."

[62] While the ecstasy of marginal situations is a phenomenon of individual experience, entire societies or social groups may, in times of crises, undergo such a situation collectively. Thus, there are events that affect entire societies or social groups which provide massive threats to the reality previously taken for granted. At such times religious legitimations almost invariably come to the front. Killing under the auspices of the legitimate authorities has from ancient times to today been accompanied by religious paraphernalia and ritualism. People are put to death amid prayers, blessings and incantations. The ecstasies of fear and violence are, by these means, kept within the bounds of "sanity", of the reality of the social world (Berger 1967:44-45).

[63] This is most probably what happened to the first Jesus-followers after they were baptized and became part of a new family who regularly participated in the Eucharist. According to Matthew, Jesus-followers (i.e. disciples) formed a "fictive family" and this happened because they were baptized into such a new situation (see Mt 28:16-20).

[64] Kehoe (2000:8) understands the meaning of the word "shaman" a little differently. She writes that: "*Saman* in Tungus incorporates the word *sa,* "to know", hence an especially knowledgeable person."

[65] When reflecting on a phenomenon like shamanism, Kehoe (2000:78) warns Westerners against labeling small non-Western societies as "primitives" or "preliterates" (cf Price-Williams 1975:81-82). She says: "From the perspective of genuine, distinctively human empowerment, the term 'primitive' cannot, in any sense, be applied to...small indigenous nations....Their technology is not 'low', but constructed from renewable raw materials. This perspective applies to medical ('healing') practices, which generally demand prayer and invocation but incorporate plants and techniques with very demonstrable physical qualities useful for treating illnesses" (Kehoe 2000:92).

[66] Regarding the dispute about the origin of the term "shaman", Stutley (2003:3) indicates that some scholars content that it is derived from the Tungus word *śaman,* while others believe that it is derived either from the Pali term *samaṇa,* the Chinese term *sha-men* or the Vedic term *śram.* She concludes by pointing out that it needs to be kept in mind that different tribes also have different terms for "shaman", and Harvey (2003:2) adds that speakers of some languages previously lacked a term like "shaman" – either because they had never encountered people who acted in these ways or because they had not noticed such people. Since shamanism was first recorded by Europeans among the Tungus, this is most probably the reason why their term is used.

[67] Indigeneity became a key element of academic definitions of shamanism. Harvey (2003:5) mentions that recently the label "neo-shamanism" has been used to describe those who claim to be shamans, without being indigenous. He says: "Of course, this misses the point that Western and academic rather than indigenous people invented shamanism – albeit from indigenous resources" (cf Price 2001:6-10). Regarding this topic, Vitebsky (2003:276-277) remarks that in the

jungles and the tundra shamanism is dying. An intensely local kind of knowledge is being abandoned in favor of various kinds of knowledge which are cosmopolitan and distant-led. Meanwhile, something called shamanism thrives in Eurocentric magazines, sweat lodges and weekend workshops. The New Age movement, which includes this strand of neo-shamanism, is in part a rebellion against the principle of distant-led knowledge. In the wild, shamanism is dying because local people are becoming more global in orientation, while in the West it is flourishing – apparently for the same sort of reason. Regarding neo-shamanism, Johnson (2003:334-335) claims that a ritual that changes faces is not the same ritual at all. He says that the practice of neo-shamanism is, contrary to its claims, deeply imbedded in its *own* cultural matrix (what he calls "radical modernity").

[68] Stutley (2003:2) agrees that shamanism should not be thought of as a single centrally organized religion, as there are many variations. Despite these cultural differences, three features are shared by all forms of shamanism:

- Belief in the existence of a world of spirits, mostly in animal form, that are capable of acting on human beings. The shaman is required to control or cooperate with these good and bad spirits for the benefit of his or her community.
- The inducing of trance by ecstatic singing, dancing and drumming, when the shaman's spirit leaves his or her body and enters the supernatural world.
- The shaman treats some diseases, usually those of a psychosomatic nature, as well as helping the clan members to overcome their various difficulties and problems.

Eliade (1989:3-8) avers that it is necessary to distinguish between shamans, magicians, healers, and the like. Although shamans also perform miracles and heal people, not all healers and magicians are shamans. The shaman is the great master of ecstasy. Shamans stand out in society, because of the intensity of their own religious experience.

[69] Winkelman (2000:58) concurs that shamanism is a worldwide phenomenon, but points out that it is encountered mainly in nomadic hunting-gathering societies. In societies like these the shaman is the principal political and religious functionary, the leader of hunting and group movement, and the bearer of cultural mythology (Winkelman 2000:6-7).

[70] As a general model Craffert's description of shamanism contains fewer specifics of particular cases but has the advantage of covering more cases which belong to the same pattern.

[71] Pilch (2002a:106-107) also considers that the purpose of a shaman is to interact with the spirit world for the benefit of those in the material world. He explains this ideology by emphasizing that ordinarily in a worldview where shamans operate, spirits are considered to cause problems in the world of human beings that can be corrected by other spirits, with the shaman acting as intermediary.

[72] According to Lewis-Williams (2001:22-23), San rock art represents one of the places where evidence exists regarding the rituals and experiences of shamans (cf Dowson 1992:15-21; 67-75). Some of these paintings picture shamanistic visions. San shamanism was not an optional extra for a few people: it was (and still is) the very framework of San thought and society. The pervasive and persuasive power of San shamanism is founded largely in alternate states of consciousness (that everyone has the potential to access, even if only in dreams) (Lewis-Williams 2001:26). Bourguignon (1974:234) points out that visions acquired in alternate states of consciousness are "raw materials for potential cultural utilization".

[73] Like any other form of alternate state of consciousness, shamanistic soul journeys appear after people fasted, were tired, took some kind of drugs, or were exposed to pounding drums, dancing and singing (see Harvey 2003:27-56). Harvey writes that "shamans and their communities perform religion when they attempt to meet needs for health, food, security and knowledge. Their

understandings of the world are expressed in particular actions, at which point it is the expertise of shamans that makes them recognisable as shamans."

[74] Vermes (1993:184) shows that Jesus' own kind of Judaism displayed specific features partly attributable to the eschatological-apocalyptic spirit which permeated the age in which he lived, and partly, on the subjective level, to his own turn of mind (see Vermes 1993:184-207). The observance of God's law and the pious practices based on the law comprised the most important action a pious Jew could do (Jos, *Ap* i. 60; Philo, *LegGaj* xxxi. 210) (Vermes 1993:186; cf Sim 1998:13). Jesus made no attempt to restrict, or interfere with, the Torah, but interpreted the law in a specific, eschatological way (Vermes 1993:188-196; cf Sanders 1985:336). Unlike a religious vision which takes the future for granted and envisages life in a solidly established group context (like that of Second Temple Judaism), an eschatological vision (like that of Jesus), demands a complete break with the past, exclusively concentrates on the present moment, and does this from a personal perspective. Vermes (1993:191-194) remarks that eschatological religion has the following characteristics:
- It starts with an individual act: repentance, which implied a complete turning away from sin and a conversion to the "kingdom of heaven". This can be seen in Jesus' baptism in the Jordan.
- Time becomes focused on the present.
- It is absolutely single-minded, giving and decisive. There is no place for self-interest, generosity is important and believers must be ready to lose their lives in order to reach their ultimate goal.

[75] But this does not mean that Jesus did not also exhibit characteristics associated with apocalyptic prophets (cf Horsley 1985:461-463; 1986:20-24; Myburgh 1995:150; see chapter 1).

[76] In many cultures this person acquires an animal-guide which reveals its wisdom and bestows its distinctive power on the visionary (Pilch 2001:242-243).

[77] Pilch (1998a:56) points out that alternate state of consciousness experiences have been documented for the Circum-Mediterranean world at least since the fifth century BCE. We perceive examples of indirect as well as direct encounters with holy persons. We also read about these in the Gospels with regard to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. When Jesus himself does not appear, other spokespersons appear from the realm in which Jesus now lives (that of alternate reality). We see this indirect encounter with the risen Jesus in Ac 9:17 and 22:12-14 where Ananias reminds Paul of the pertinent data from the culturally accepted lexicon. In direct encounters with the holy person in alternate reality, the subject often did not know who was being encountered. Sometimes a short dialogue took place in which the holy person revealed his or her identity. The same is true of the resurrection appearances of Jesus. The risen Jesus was thought to be a gardener (Jn 20:15), a stranger on the beach (Jn 21:4), a stranger who became a traveling companion (Lk 24:15-16), or a ghost (Lk 24:37). The authentic identity of the holy person cannot be doubted since the holy person makes the identification and not the person experiencing the alternate state of consciousness. The entire experience is culturally defined and the culture contains a latent discourse which is available to everyone in the culture as a guide for interpreting the content of the alternate state of consciousness (Pilch 1998a:56). Since a person's culture accords content to his or her alternate state of consciousness experience, we can understand why the people who believed in Jesus experienced him in this way after his death, because we read about similar situations in the Old Testament (e.g., 1 Sm 28). The angelic figures which people sometimes see before they encounter the risen Jesus possess a function apart from any alleged "eschatological" significance – they help people to interpret these experiences, because the meanings are not necessarily immediately self-evident (Pilch 1998a:58).

[78] Although Jesus' baptism and everything that is associated with it may at first not make sense to a Westerner, in the light of our discussion on alternate states of consciousness we now know that this event did not surprise or shock Jesus or the first readers of the Gospels, since spirit activity was an essential part of their belief system. A holy man must be able to "see" spirits and other things in alternate reality to be able to deal with such reality, and the cultural world of Jesus was permeated by spirits who regularly intervened in ordinary human life.

[79] The place of possession trance as coping mechanism in apocalypticism can be seen in the same light (cf Bourguignon 1973:29-33; see Pilch 1993:236-237). Pilch (1993:231-232), for example, describes the visions in Revelation as the result of alternate states of consciousness.

[80] But this does not mean that they cannot experience alternate states of consciousness, since no one enjoys as high a status as a god and the experience of alternate states of consciousness is not purely social in nature: it also offers inherent euphoric rewards and may even be considered as conveying soteriological benefits (Davies 1995:39-40).