

**INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS AFRICAN WORSHIP
AND CUSTOMS WITH CHRISTIAN WORSHIP AND PRACTICE:
AN ILLUSTRATION WITH THE OUTDOORING AND NAMING
CEREMONY OF A BABY AMONG THE ADA OF GHANA**

Paper presented

By

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**Introduction: The Missionary Enterprise and Integration
of Christianity into African Ways of Life**

Contrary to the conviction of some critics that missionary Christianity has only destroyed all that is of value in African culture and thus halted Africa's development, a more objective assessment would show that it has contributed a lot to the present state of development on the continent. This is clear, for example, in the areas of education, medical services, agriculture, architecture, commerce and industry, communications, religious faith and life style - even though one can, indeed, point to instances of negative impact even in these areas.

However, the criticism of missionary Christianity in Africa is not entirely without justification. Some aspects of the missionary Church's policy and practice show a fundamental misunderstanding of African culture. Thus, it outlawed or, at least, ignored and played down significant customs and practices that give meaning to life in the context of African cosmology. The Church's failure to encounter and transform these customs and practices and to integrate them with its worship and practice has created problems and dilemmas for many an African Christian. It is responsible for the phenomenon in which African Christians find themselves living in multiple worlds and cultures (African, Euro-American, secular, Judaeo-Christian etc.) without being at home in any of them. Numerous concerns have been expressed in this regard. We cite three examples which, although specifically Ghanaian, reflect the situation on the African continent.

Williamson, a theologian and missionary observed (1965: 175-176) that:

The Christian faith as historically implanted by western missionary enterprise among the Akan has proved unable to sympathize with or relate its message spiritually to Akan spiritual outlook. Its impact is thereby dulled. It has launched a frontal attack on Akan traditional beliefs and practices, and sought to emancipate the Akan from his traditional outlook. But the method and means adopted to secure this end, relying as they did on western enlightenment as set forth through a westernized form of Christianity, had the effect of calling the Akan out of his traditional environment, not of redeeming him within it. ... The conviction that the Christian faith and Akan religion, encountering each other out of vastly different backgrounds and experience, view each other from a distance without common ground of fellowship, so that the impact never amounts to a real encounter, cannot be set aside.

Busia, the renowned professor of sociology and staunch Methodist layman (and who became Prime Minister of Ghana, 1969-72) observed with concern in 1948 and reiterated in 1961 and again in 1971 as follows (1950: 79; 1961: 86-89; 1971: 18):

As one watches the daily lives and activities of the people, and takes account of the rites (i.e. ceremonies) connected with marriage, birth, death, widowhood, harvest or installations to traditional offices, one learns that a great deal of the normal communal activities of the converts lie outside their Christian activities, and that for all their influence, the Christian Churches are alien institutions, intruding upon, but not integrated with social institutions.

In the mid-1970s, the Catholic Church conducted a survey on various aspects of the Church and the life of Catholics in Ghana. One aspect of the survey sought to find out how faithful Catholics were in living out the Christian faith vis-a-vis traditional beliefs and practices.

The survey revealed a lot and confirmed earlier findings to the effect that Christianity was (and is) still alien in Ghana and that Christian living is only skin-deep. Respondents were asked as to whether conversion to Christianity should mean total rejection of traditional culture and ways. Answers given indicated (Survey: 36, 38) that:

Many Catholics live in a dual world and try to combine them as best they can. They still adhere to traditional views and practices. ... In the beginning they reject everything but later they return to some practices, especially when they are disappointed. ... They thought that on becoming a Catholic 'things' would be easier. If this is not the case they fall back. Although conversion may be sincere, the pull of the old religion may be too strong for many.

Some 85.50% of the respondents admitted that Catholics still followed practices of traditional religion, particularly on special occasions and during activities connected with festivals, ancestral rites, puberty, outdooring, funeral celebration, inheritance of wives of deceased brothers, twin rites and rites on the death of one's child. The Report explains (ibid.) why they do this:

The traditional customs are difficult for a Christian to observe, but equally difficult to omit. Christianity is not deep; when people are in difficulty they turn to fetish priests or go back to old pagan cults. ... (some) drift away (to spiritual churches or the old cults).

The reasons for this sad state of affairs were indicated as follows:

Christianity and native religious customs are still at loggerheads and there is confusion about libation. Priests do not make enough use of the sacramentals and therefore people drift away (to spiritual churches or the old cults).

The church has imported everything from Europe. She has not studied the indigenous religious concepts; everything pagan was wrong. She has not brought her doctrine in terms relevant to Ghanaian religion.

In her liturgy too she has taken very little from what is available in traditional religion. Drumming and libation are still frowned upon. So Catholics do both: liturgy in the church and traditional customs at home and in social gathering. It is felt that the catholic religion does not really help. The priest is often not interested and does not believe in a special blessing and so people turn in large numbers to the old ways, or to the spiritual churches which go in for this kind of thing.

The Report noted with concern the fact that the liturgy in use then, gave so little a place to concerns and practices which are accorded a great deal of importance in Ghanaian society: namely, libation, reverence for ancestors, funerals, concern for women who are barren, etc., and in general, the desire for well-being. The Report further observes that:

The Church should see the need of the people and adapt herself. She has neglected to integrate the old religious practices into the catholic way of life.

From all available evidence, the story would not be different in the other mainline churches. Indeed, similar surveys might have revealed a more gloomy picture.

These above examples amply demonstrate the need for contextualisation /inculturation. It is this kind of situation that makes what has come to be known as African Theology relevant, and the quest for it urgent. In this presentation, we indicate some of the broad areas in which creative integration work could be done as well as some of the achievements already made. Against the background of these broad areas, the presentation will illustrate in some detail, one particular effort to integrate the outdoor and naming ceremony of the Ada of Ghana with Christian worship and practice.

Difficulties in indigenization

There are factors that make the call difficult to fulfill and which perpetuate the *status quo*. Among them are the following.

1. Inertia and fear of syncretism. (Unwillingness to change and to accept indigenous practices and values, in order not to adulterate or contradict the Christian faith, once convinced that some particular practice or thing is not Christian; for example, libation, the use of drums, the use of *abolo* (1) and palm-wine (2) for Communion).
2. Ambivalent attitude to integration. (For the example, the Methodist Church - Ghana on the one hand is favourably disposed to integration but has not as yet evolved any radical integration, and it still has in the Standing Orders a provision forbidding drumming at a member's funeral or carrying a coffin on the head or shoulders.)
3. Uncertainty about the form that a particular adaptation should take. (Libation, for example poses problems: what aspect of it should be integrated: the invocation of ancestral spirits, the pouring of rum and water, the linguistic style? It raises theological, aesthetic and other practical problems.)
4. Difficulty in sifting the essence from the incidental. (For example, what is the essence of libation: is it essentially a religious act or a social act? Is it worship or veneration of ancestors, or a social summoning of the ancestors as members of the community to be present for the occasion as they used to do while in the physical body on earth? Or is it just a projection of the African personality and expression

of cultural identity? Again is *Dipo* (3): is the custom essentially an institution for preparing girls for adult life as women, wives and mothers? Or is it initiation into a covenant-relationship with a god or goddess?)

5. Dearth of people who are competent in both the indigenous traditions and Christian theology to do the sifting, reinterpretation, and creating the new forms. (Some of the potential candidates may have been too westernized and living in multiple worlds to be able to appreciate the traditional norms.)

Prospects for integration

The difficulties notwithstanding, there are prospects for integration. Following are examples of areas in which creative integration could be done. Indeed, much progress has been made in this direction, especially in the African Indsituted/Independent Churches, and now also in the mainline churches, albeit to a lesser extent. Some Churches have designed rites and written liturgies for burial and funeral celebrations, widowhood, the Eucharist, and so on. On the whole, however, much more could be done to integrate African practices and spirituality with Christian worship and practice.

- (1) **Worship** could be designed to be more meaningful by evolving liturgies, rites and practices that are in keeping with African psychology and concepts, and which meet the aspirations and touch the soul of the African. For example:

sprinkling of consecrated water on worshippers as symbolic expression of ablution or absolution and God's blessing;
anointing the sick;
special services for healing, deliverance/exorcism, etc.

- (2) For **Church music**, the use of:
African instruments (drums, xylophones, horns, maracass, etc. without despising them. In Europe organs and pianos were being used in public places and concert halls for secular music and entertainment before they were taken into church and consecrated for sacred music);

Rhythms & melodies, lyrics and choruses (In Ghana, the Musama Disco Christo Church uses different drums and melodies creatively to very good effect for different parts and movements of the worship service

- : praise
- : confession
- : hearing of Scriptures
- : hearing Sermon
- : silence/meditation.

Caution should, however, be exercised; for, experience has shown that certain rhythms do invoke all kinds of spirits.

Prayers should be said mainly *ex tempore* in expressive ways, using local concepts and idioms, and not the cold translations of European phrases, concepts and aspirations, etc. Special prayers/blessings: birthdays, marriages, examination candidates, gender/age groups, etc.

Special and symbolic services and liturgies must be evolved and used for rites of passage and on other important and significant occasions such as birth, outdooring and naming of babies, puberty, marriage (with a place in the Marriage Service for the four families joined by the marriage and not just the two individuals), death, burial, funeral, widowhood, festivals, dedication of new homes, new enterprises, etc.

Some principles and practical guidelines for integration

I found the following principles and practical guidelines useful in the attempt to integrate the the traditional outdooring and naming ceremony of the Ada into Christian worship and practice.

1. The apostles established the principle that people need not reject every aspect of their culture in order to become Christian. (See the proceedings of the "Jerusalem Council" in Acts 15: 23-29.). It is worth remembering that culture is all-embracing and that no aspect of life is outside culture. Hence no one can live without a culture. (4)
2. Christians are not to be restricted unnecessarily with *do's* and *don'ts*. However, freedom

is to be exercised responsibly (Rom. 14:13-23; 1 Cor. 10: 23-30; Col. 2: 16-23).

3. Whatever is done should glorify God and be helpful to others (1 Cor. 10: 31-33; Col. 3: 17).
4. It is important to be alert and not compromise on certain crucial issues of the Christian faith: one cannot worship both Christ and demons (cf., Exod. 20: 1-7; 1 Cor. 10: 1-22; 2 Cor. 6: 14-18; Col. 2: 11 to 3:4).
5. Identify and sift the essence from the incidental in the traditional custom or practice. Test them:
 - (1) By the standard of the primitive creed: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour and Lord. If any practice compromises the saviourhood and lordship of Christ, then it is not acceptable. If it does not contradict these doctrines, then it is acceptable.
 - (2) As to whether a practice is compatible with biblical revelation and teaching: if it goes counter to explicit biblical teaching/injunction, then it is not acceptable. If it does not, it may be integrated.
6. Ensure that any imported practice is meaningful and not repugnant in the receptor culture. As far as possible remove, or, at least, reduce to the barest minimum, any incompatibilities.
7. Retain what does not conflict with biblical teaching. Replace, adapt or transform what conflicts with biblical teaching.
8. A practice may be modernized and innovations made, provided these do not undermine the traditional essences or Christian belief and practice.

Guided by these principles, I have worked out an integrated version of the outdoor and naming ceremony of the Ada (5) of Ghana for use by Christians of the Ada community. The version has been used not only by Adas but by families from other ethnic groups as well - with appropriate modifications.

Phenomenological description of the outdoorings and namSing ceremony of the Ada

In the Ada ethnic society, when a baby is born, it is outdoored and named on the eighth day, that is, when it is one week old. At dawn, just before sunrise, the families of the parents as well as neighbours and friends gather in the compound of the father, i.e., where the parents live. Sometimes the ceremony is performed in the family house, i.e., the ancestral home of the father. The child is brought out of the room. Water is poured or thrown on to the eaves. As drops of the water fall on the ground, the naked baby is placed on the ground, on its back, and a few drops fall on it. When the child screams, one of the women 'redeems' it, and takes it inside the room, cuddling it. She gives it to its mother or one of the other elderly women, who quickly bathes, dresses and wraps it up, usually in white or other light colour. (6)

The second part of the ceremony begins with libation made by the head of family. He invokes the Supreme Being, clan or family deities and the spirits of the ancestors; tells what day it is and narrates the purpose of the gathering and the reasons for invoking them. He then thanks them for blessing the couple and family with a baby to continue the lineage. He asks them to protect the child and its parents from the evil eye. He also implores the spirits for good health, more children, and abundance for the parents and all the families.

The baby is then given to the officiant who is the same sex as the baby. He or she must be an elderly member of the family, usually the father's family. He/she must be acknowledged to be accomplished and of good character and name, and well respected in the community. The spokesman for the occasion (called *otsiame*) hands a bottle of rum (described as *bie womi da*, that is, naming rum) provided by the father to the officiant and tells him/her the name given the baby by the father. The officiant announces the name. If the child is named after someone in the family, this is explained. The drink is opened and a tort is put in a serving cup (traditionally made of a small coconut shell). The officiant sips and passes it on to all those present. Each person pronounces the name of the baby, sips the drink and passes it on. Those who do not take alcohol may ask that the cup be passed over or they may touch the cup or even touch their lips with it.

When everyone has been served, the officiant then addresses the child. He/she dips his/her finger in a calabash of mixture of roasted-corn flour, salt and water (called *mamu nyu*) and puts

a drop into the baby's mouth three times. As he/she does this, he/she counsels the child in words that go like this:

Kabutey (or whatever the name of the child), you are a Dangme born (or mention the name of the tribe/clan). I have give you a mixture of roasted-corn flour. See, that is what we eat. You will have to work and eat from your labour. We do not steal to eat; we work. As a born, you have to be hardworking, honest, reliable, humble, modest, wise. You are to open your eyes and see much; but you must speak little. You are to open your ears and hear much; but you must speak little. You must grow up and look after your parents. Live to a ripe old age and bear children. You have come with one hand; we receive you with two hands.

The officiant then sips the mixture and passes it on to the spokesman, who also sips and passes it on. Everyone present sips and passes it on until everybody has sipped.

After this, articles that the father has provided for the baby (such as dresses, bath bowl, toileteries, etc.) are presented by the father's aunts and sisters to the mother's aunts and sisters. After this, other people, usually beginning with the father's father (i.e., the baby's grandfather, if he is alive), father's uncle or elder brother. Then other people also bring their gifts. Those unable to attend send their gifts. Most people give money, but other items are also presented, such as dresses, beads, napkins, toileteries, cloth for padding or wrapping the baby, or food items. All the gifts are announced by the spokesman, who must tell the relationship of the donor to the mother or father and also of the baby. Donors also usually say with great humour the specific reason or purpose for the gift. The spokesman, who usually has a good sense of humour, would narrate these with a lot of colour and humour. While this is going on cornwine, a non-alcoholic drink, is served.

When this has gone on for some time, the formal part of the ceremony is brought to an end with libation. The spokesman announces the end of the ceremony, thanks everyone, and shows them where the different visible doors lead, ending with the gate which will take them out of the compound and on to their homes. Those who have other business to attend leave. Those who have more time to spare, stay on. It would now be about 8 or 9 o'clock. Breakfast is served, usually

provided by the women of the extended families. After this, most people leave. Few close relatives may stay on and keep the company of the couple for a few more hours before departing.

The essences: significant symbolisms, acts and object lessons

The ceremony is full of significant symbolisms, acts, object lessons and values which are full of meaning in Dangme society. As is often the case in traditional societies, the presuppositions, beliefs and meanings of most of the ritual acts are usually not recorded or passed on in detail. Some are even lost. I have tried to draw some of these out.

- (1) The libations and libation prayers are evidence of the realization by the Dangme of the human need and dependence on the supernatural for protection and sustenance. They are also an expression of thanksgiving to the supernatural for the gift and life of the child.
- (2) Taking the baby outside, placing it on the ground looking up, and letting some water fall on it are all different ways of bringing the child into contact with and initiating it to the wider world in which it will live.
- (3) The gestures of 'redeeming' the child from the elements, and pronouncing its name are ways of accepting and integrating the newly born into the immediate society - the extended family and community. Also, pronouncing the name serves as a kind of mnemonic to help one remember it.
- (4) Naming the child gives it its identity as an individual person within the larger community of persons. Dangme names tell the clan, sex and ordinal position of the child among siblings. The naming initiates the baby into and declares it a member of a particular family, clan and tribe - with all the privileges and responsibilities that go with such membership.
- (5) The mixture of roasted-corn flour, water and salt are ways of introducing the child to the major food items that the Ada depend upon. For all major traditional ceremonies, the same ingredients are prepared in a more solid form, called *kungmi*, and eaten communally, usually with crabs. Salt mining is a major traditional industry of the Ada. Thus, their significance in this

integration ceremony is paramount. The introduction to the traditional staple food and major industry is combined with exhortation to the baby not only to be industrious but also to be a *Dangme*, an *Ade ngmiingmi* - a true, unadulterated, humane person (7). (Puplampu 1953: 13, 18). It is believed that the child will imbibe the words of counsel which contain some of the cardinal virtues of the *Dangme*, and also that he or she will take after the good life and example of the person who outdoored him or her. This explains why it is not just anybody at all who is allowed to perform the rite of outdooing and naming.) The counselling also rehearses and reinforces the teaching of the traditional moral and social values from which the adults around can learn. Thus, the ceremony provides a forum for both formal and informal moral education.

(6) Sipping the rum and mixture from the same cup and calabash is a symbolic way of expressing a *we-feeling*, a solidarity, a oneness. It is both a reminder and a pledge of togetherness and communality. The sipping and the pronouncing of the name express some kind of covenant relationship both with the newly born child and the extended family and community.

(7) The gifts, quite apart from providing immediate help to the parents in caring for the child, also represent a pledge and willingness to participate in the material, moral and spiritual upbringing as well as emotional support of the new member of the family.

(8) The occasion is used to honour the parents and the baby: the parents for their marital fidelity and sense of responsibility; the baby because it has a responsible father who has provided its needs and given it a name, thus ensuring its proper integration into the clan. (Among the *Ada*, if a child is not outdoored and named by its father, and, therefore, it has no clan name, it is virtually considered a bastard. Hence sometimes a grown-up person even in the teens may be outdoored and named, if the father originally denied responsibility for the birth but later accepted it only after those many years.)

(9) It is an important occasion that brings together once more members of the extended family and community. The benefits that come from the communal eating and drinking, as well as conversation and jokes that are shared, cannot be overstated. Not infrequently, the occasion provides opportunity for discussing various family matters, and, sometimes, for arbitration and settling of petty disputes.

Undoubtedly, the Ada outdooring and naming ceremony is rich in meaning and for socialization. It is also of great religious, moral and social significance.

The integrated version

In the integrated version that I have worked out, I have retained what I believe to be the essential elements. I have taken out or modified some of the rituals and elements on theological, psychological or hygienic grounds. But even in such cases, I have retained what I consider to be the essences. On the other hand, I have added some rituals and elements to reflect the Church as a new family and the place that the Methodist Church gives to the Class Meeting as the nucleus of the Methodist family, as well as a place for the Class Leader as a member of the Church's pastoral team. (In cases where neither of the parents is a Methodist, the roles of the Class and Leader are omitted or performed by the Minister.)

I have also added a theological interpretation to the one given in the Ada tradition to the mixture of roasted-corn flour, salt and water. The child is to come to see these not only as the staple food of its people which she/he must work hard to produce for sustenance. She or he is to see them as gifts from God, for which she or he must be thankful. Moreover, it must realize, appreciate and emulate human labour that has gone in to turn the divine gift from one state into another in which it is most useful to humans. Again, like water which gives life and refreshes a person, the child must grow and let its future life be a source of hope and comfort to the community and environment. Similarly, as salt gives taste and hardens the bones, so must she or he make her or his life influence others for good; that life should also be a source of strength to others.

Rituals excluded from the integrated version

Four of the traditional rituals have been excluded from the integrated version for various reasons.

- (1) **The libation** I have taken out the libation, one of whose essential elements is to serve as a means of contact with the gods and ancestral spirits, in order to acknowledge them,

thank them for various favours including the gift of the child and safe birth, and to implore them to protect the child and supply the needs of the child, parents and the entire family. This has been taken out because it contradicts biblical teaching that forbids a Christian to indulge in the worship of other gods, invocation of spirits of the dead, and giving God's glory to other gods. Libation and dependence on ancestral spirits also go against the injunction to worship the Lord God alone, and to find him sufficient for all needs. (See, for example, Exodus 20: 3-6; Deuteronomy 18: 9-13; Isaiah 42: 8; John 14: 11-14.)

However, one of the underlying purposes for invoking the ancestors is retained; namely, to acknowledge their role in the perpetuation of the lineage. This is catered for in saying a Christian prayer in which the role of the ancestors and forebears in sustaining the lineage and handing it down as well as serving as exemplars is acknowledged and prayers of thanksgiving are offered for them to the Almighty God.

(2) **The eaves water drops and 'redemption'** This practice has been expunged for three reasons: hygienic, psychological and theological. Placing a naked eight-day old baby on the bare ground is unhygienic. At that age the child is very vulnerable to infection. It is, therefore, not in its best interests to expose it to the cold at that time of the morning and to place it on the bare ground. Furthermore, the trauma and ordeal of experiencing cold water falling on it from the eaves which is evidenced in the loud screams of the frail and fragile baby can cause psychological damage, and lead to adverse psychological effects on the child. This can hardly be justified. Again, the assumption of abandonment which is implied in the call for somebody to 'redeem' the child is unfounded. Being born into the world is not an abandonment; it is a giving of a gift by God the primary creator; it is an arrival. What is called for is welcoming and thanksgiving, not redemption.

It must be added that in some cases, a modified form is performed at the request of the parents. In this, the child - already bathed and clothed - is taken outdoors and shown the heavens, and gently lowered to touch the ground. In either case, the essential ritual of *outdoor*ing the baby is fulfilled by bringing it out of the bedroom in which it has been confined since its birth.

(3) **Dropping the mixture on baby's tongue** Instead of dipping one's finger in the mixture and putting it on the baby's tongue, a small spoon is used. (8) This is purely for hygienic reasons.

The essence of the ritual is to symbolically impress upon the fresh and new arrival to be a true Dangme and to be hard working. To put in theological language, it is meant to present to the child God's gifts in nature and to impress upon him or her the need for human stewardship and labour to process God's good gifts for the benefit of humans and other creatures. The force of these lessons is not in any way vitiated by the use of a spoon.

(4) **Rum and water** In some Ghanaian ethnic groups, for example, the Akans and northern Ewes, rum and water (not mixture of roasted-corn flour) is put on the baby's tongue. It is used symbolically to demonstrate that just as there is difference between rum and water, so there is a difference between truth and falsehood. The rum and water are used as an entry point to counsel the baby to be truthful and reliable. Thus, the officiant says to him/her words that mean: "This is rum and that is water. If you say 'it is rum,' it must be rum; and if you say 'it is water,' it must be water." In the integrated form, rum is replaced with some soft drink, say, Fanta or other local soft drink, because is considered to be too strong for the baby.

New elements introduced

Apart from the modifications just stated, the following other elements have been added.

(1) **The Officiant** In the traditional practice, the ceremony is presided over and officiated by an elder of the family or clan, who has a good name in the society and who is of the same sex as the baby to be outdoored and named. He or she must have been agreed upon by the couple, in consultation with the family. In the integrated form, that role can still be played by a family elder, although increasingly, it is being shared with a Church elder; in many cases, however, at the decision of the couple, the Minister is the officiant.

(2) **Bible exhortation and counselling** The traditional words of counsel and exhortation are used in conjunction with a couple of biblical injunctions and exhortations addressed to the child as God's direct words to him or her. Examples of passages used are: Proverbs 1: 7-8; 2: 1-8; 13: 1-6 and Philippians 4: 4-9.

(3) **The Church, Class Meeting and Class Leader** To demonstrate that the Church is a family, church members attend. Where either or both of the parents are members of the Methodist Church, members of their Class Meeting(s) make a special effort to attend the ceremony. The Class Leader is assigned some roles, such as saying some of the prayers, giving a word of counsel to the parents as regards their Christian responsibility in the upbringing of the child, or receiving the baby from the mother or family elder and handing it to the Minister (as it were, from the family to the Church) for the ceremony, and handing it back to the parents before the word of counsel is given them.

(4) **Counselling of parents** In the traditional format, only the child is counselled. Taking a cue from the Church's liturgy of baptism of children, I have incorporated an item of brief counselling of the parents. As already indicated the Class Leader is sometimes called upon to do the counselling.

(5) **Praise and worship** Provision is made for a time of praise and worship during which hymns and local songs and choruses are sung.

Specimen of the integrated formula

The integrated formula that I have worked out is essentially oral. It follows closely the traditional order. Although the order is fairly fixed, it is not rigid; and there are no set prayers. Both the prayers and words that accompany the ritual acts are *ex tempore*, though the pattern is fairly fixed. Biblical passages used are also varied on occasion. The following Order and rubrics give a vivid picture of the integrated ceremony.

AN ABRIDGED ORDER FOR THE OUTDOORING
AND NAMING OF A BABY

At the home of the couple or family house of the father. Family members and congregation are seated, the parents come out of their room, and baby is brought by a female member of the family or close friend or church elder.

1. HYMN/SONG and/or PSALM OF PRAISE Gen. 1: 26-31; Psalm 100

2. PRAYER *Thanksgiving for life, ancestors, the family, marriage, safe delivery and the baby.*

3. NAMING *Officiant (Family elder or Minister) declares purpose of the gathering and announces the name of the baby - explaining any particular reasons for the choice of the name, or virtues of the one (if any) after whom the child is named.*

4. COUNSELLING

Baby is given symbolic drink to impress upon it God's providence and human industry.

Baby is counselled on virtues and vices: Godliness, truthfulness, righteousness, purity, hard work, discretion, humility, love, etc.; avoidance of falsehood, laziness, tale telling, etc.

Proverbs 1: 7-8;
2: 1-8; 13: 1-6;
Philippians 4: 4-9

5. COUNSELLING OF PARENTS

Baby is handed to parents. Parents are counselled to bring up baby in the fear of God, to be a responsible member of family and society, and bring up baby to grow into a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

6. SCRIPTURE & PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND

PROTECTION

Psalm 121

7. FELLOWSHIP DRINK

*All sip drink as symbol of acceptance of
baby, togetherness, solidarity and support.*

8. TIME OF WORSHIP

*Hymns, songs, choruses - Interspersed with
gifts and refreshments.*

9. GIFTS }

} *Interspersing songs & choruses*

10. REFRESHMENTS }

11. BENEDICTION

Reactions to integrated formula

The integrated version described above has been used for over ten years in a variety of contexts - among Dangme and non-Dangme families, Methodist and non-Methodist families, and the conservative and not-so-conservative Dangmes and Christians.

Comments were solicited from parents at the outdoorings of whose children the formula had been used as well as from other parents; from members of the Dangme community; church members and elders; fellow Methodist Ministers; and from a Chairman and General Superintendent of a District of the Methodist Church - Ghana.

So far, none have said that any essential traditional practice or value, or Christian teaching and practice has been severely compromised. On the contrary, in virtually all cases, the formula has been enthusiastically commended. However, a few Christians expressed some reservation about an earlier format in which - at the request of one family, and in keeping with the original indigenous practice - the baby was taken outside, shown to the heavens and placed on the ground. That has since been taken out. That elimination explains the description of the order as "an abridged order." The other issue that occasioned divergent opinions relates to the issue as to who should officiate. Some would prefer a family elder to do the naming and the giving of the symbolic drink together with the traditional short counselling, while the Minister adds the theological interpretation of the drink and an extended counselling based on biblical passages. The majority of the commentators, however, preferred that the Minister does everything. Practically all who have offered some comments, commended the modernizations and innovations. The various views were taken into account in settling on the present format.

Conclusion

The traditional Ada outdoorings and naming ceremony is full of symbolism and demonstrates a deep understanding of reality, nature and human life. It has a great deal of religious, social, psychological and moral significance. As in many other cases, the Church has not integrated it into its worship and practice. The Methodist Church as a body as well as individual

Christians have been indifferent and even hostile to it. Many Dangmes - and, indeed, other ethnic groups in Ghana - are torn between their desire to conform to the customary practice and their commitment to conform to the Church's predilections.

As there is no clear direction from the Church, people are confused. Some simply embrace the traditional practice in its entirety. Others reject it outright and do no outdoorings or naming in any formal way. Most of the people, however, want to keep the tradition in a Christian fashion. To meet this need, individual Ministers have designed their own formulas with varying degrees of integration.

In response to requests from members of my congregation, from members of other churches with no Christian rites for the outdoorings ceremony as well as from friends and neighbours, I began to devise something, after some reflection on the traditional formula. With the help of comments that I solicited and after a series of revisions, the formula described in this presentation evolved. Thus, the present integrated version is the result of my observations and interpretations of the traditional practices of the Ada - and of some aspects of those of the Ga, Akan and northern Ewe - on the one hand, and Christian usages on the other. It has been used for several years now. Notice has been given of intention to submit it for consideration and possible adoption by the Liturgy Committee of the Methodist Church - Ghana which has called for various formulae that individuals are using, as part of an exercise to draw up and authorize liturgies and orders for various rites, services and occasions.

This integrated formula is also a modest practical response to the call by the *African Theology* enterprise for a contextual theology in Africa. The basic aim of African Theology, was stated at the very inception of the concept by Bolaji Idowu (Dickson & Ellingworth 1969: 16), one of its early proponents and one of Africa's great theologians and churchmen, who became the President of the Methodist Conference in Nigeria. Among other things, Idowu stated the aim thus:

to discover in what way the Christian faith could best be presented, interpreted, and inculcated in Africa so that Africans will hear God in Jesus Christ addressing himself immediately to them in their native situation and particular circumstances.

Similarly, Dickson (1984: 120, 122), another foremost African theologian and churchman, and the current President of the Conference of the Methodist Church - Ghana, said that African Theology was meant:

to involve a sustained articulation of faith which would bear the marks of an original African experience ... to arrive at a distinctive meditation upon faith in Christ that does justice to the life-circumstances of the African.

Engagement with African Theology includes, among others, tasks such as the integration of indigenous African worship and customs with Christian worship and practice. The integrated order for the outdooing and naming ceremony based primarily on the Ada traditional formula is a contribution in that direction. We hope that it will be accepted as a positive contribution, and that it will serve not only to preserve an important Ghanaian traditional rite of passage in a modern and Christian context but bring Christ into the native situations and life-circumstances of Africans.

End Notes

1. *Aboloo* is a loaf made from maize and is baked or steamed.
2. Palm-wine is tapped from the oil-palm tree, usually drunk within days of being tapped but nowadays bottled and preserved.
3. *Dipo* is a rite of puberty and training for adolescent girls among the Krobo. On reaching adolescence, girls are boarded away from home; in the past, for periods between nine and twelve months (nowadays for only a few weeks) during which they are taught by priestesses and other elderly women acknowledged to be knowledgeable, wise and of good character. The girls are prepared for their role in society as adults, wives and mothers. They have lessons in sex education, housewifery, pottery and other cottage industries, etc. They also learn songs and dances in the ancient *Klama* tongue. Various rites and rituals are performed, associated with *Kloweki*, the goddess of Kroboland. At the end of the period, they are gorgeously dressed, and given presents as they go from house to house to greet people, dancing and singing *Klama* songs. The girls can marry after the rites. A Krobo girl who is found pregnant before she undergoes the rites is banished from the society after elaborate rites to expiate the offence. *Dipo* helped to check sexual immorality and to ensure that mothers were mature and able to support the family and train the children.
4. Culture is an integrated system of: (1) **the beliefs** of a people, e.g., about God or the nature of humans; (2) **their values**, e.g., what they regard as good or bad, right or wrong and,

therefore, ought or ought not be done; or what they consider to be true, or beautiful; (3) **their customs**, e.g., how they behave, relate to others, talk, greet, dress, eat or build houses; and (4) **the institutions** that help them express the above, such as the social structure, the institution of chieftaincy, the family, system of government, courts, markets, clubs and associations, etc. It is this system of beliefs, values, customs and institutions that binds a people together and gives them a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity.

5. The Ada live in the south-eastern corner of Ghana, 70 miles east of Accra the capital city. They are a sub-group of the Dangme who together with the Ga were for a long time regarded as a twin-ethnic group called Ga-Adangme, and treated as such. Together, they form about 13% of the population of Ghana. At present for practically all purposes, they are two separate ethnic groups. The Dangme are made up of eight traditional areas: Ada, Ningo (Nugo), Prampram (Gbugbla), Kpone, Shai (*Se*), Yilo Krobo, Manya Krobo (Yilô and Manya Krôbô), and Osudoku. Each of the eight Dangme sub-groups speak dialects of Dangme which are linguistically similar and mutually intelligible, with only slight differences of usage and pronunciation; but there are more significant differences in names of things. The Ga traditional area comprises Ga Mashie, Osu, La, Nungua, Teshie and Tema, all of whom speak Ga with little dialectical differences.

The Ga and Dangme have a great deal in common in their culture. For example, they both have a patrilineal system of inheritance. Again, originally, their societies were ruled by traditional priests, but later, under the influence of their Akan neighbours, they came to be ruled by secular chiefs. In many respects their cultural outlook is similar to that of other Ghanaian and, for that matter, African ethnic groups. Their traditional occupations are fishing and farming, but they can now be found in every kind of occupation. Although they are quite enterprising, the Ga and Dangme are characteristically modest and abhor inordinate ambition, especially for material gain.

Christianity was introduced into Ga and Dangme land over one hundred years ago first by the Presbyterians followed by the Methodists. Now there are many denominations: mainline, African instituted, Pentecostal, charismatic and all. It is estimated that some 55 % of Ga and Dangme people are Christians.

6. The colour white signifies purity, joy and thankfulness for safe delivery and victory.

7. It is said that in the olden days when a male child was born in a Dangme home, their midwives would sing a song in which they enquired whether what had been born was *Ade eko* (i.e., just any sort of man); whether it was *Ade mluku* (i.e., a man without any useful parts, just a lump of human flesh - in other words, a stupid person); or whether it was, indeed, *Ade ngmiingmi*, that is, a human being - in the sense of being a strong, courageous, heroic, level-headed type of person, without any adulterating element.

8. This modification was urged by my wife on hygienic grounds.

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