

between parallel cousins and cross-cousins are the same. Marriage is forbidden between cross-cousins and parallel cousins since the degree of consanguinity is 4. Yet in Asante, whereas it is an abomination for parallel cousins to marry, the marriage between cross-cousins is not only allowed, it is preferred.

The Church has certain laws concerning marriage which we call impediments. Some of them are diriment impediments. A diriment impediment renders two people incapable of marriage. For example, a man and a woman can marry only when they have attained the ages of 16 and 14 respectively. If, therefore, a girl of 13 mistakenly or knowingly marries in Church, that marriage is null and void.

That is why priests should take their time to examine the would-be couple before marriage.

There are three essential things that the priest has to make sure of. He has to ascertain that there is no diriment impediment between a man and a woman who want to marry. He has to be certain that they are giving their consent to the marriage freely. Thirdly, he has to pass the couple through the canonical form of marriage. Canon 1108 stipulates that marriage must take place before the Ordinary, the parish priest, a deacon or a priest or deacon delegated by either the Ordinary or the parish priest.

Here we are dealing with marriage at three levels. The first level is the level of doctrine - what the Church teaches about marriage. One of the two key doctrinal truths about marriage is that the marriage between two baptised persons is indissoluble. The second is that a man or a woman must have only one wife or husband at the same time.

The second level is that of the law which stipulates certain conditions for the validity or the legality of a marriage.

The third level is the pastoral care that the priest should give to the couple

VII

CHURCH'S LAW

There are certain situations which the Church may allow something but which culture would not permit and there are certain instances where culture would allow something but not the law of the Church. Two examples have already been given. The Church's law has nothing to do directly with lineality but, indirectly, it favours matrilineality.

Canons 101 and 102, talking about the origin of people, state as follows:

Can. 101 §1 - The place of origin of a child, and even of a neophyte, is that in which the parents had a domicile or, lacking that, a quasi-domicile when the child was born; if the parents did not have the same domicile or quasi-domicile, it is that of the mother.

*§2 - In the case of a child of **vagi**, the place of origin is the actual place of birth; in the case of a foundling, it is the place where it was found.*

Can. 102 §1 - Domicile is acquired by residence in the territory of a parish, or at least of a diocese, which is either linked to the intention of remaining there permanently if nothing should occasion its withdrawal, or in fact protracted for a full five years.

§2 - Quasi-domicile is acquired by residence in the territory of a parish, or at least of a diocese, which is either linked to the intention of remaining there for three months if nothing should occasion its withdrawal, or in fact protracted for three months.

As has been explained already, in anthropology, the children of a man and his sister are cross-cousins. The children of two brothers or two sisters are parallel cousins. From the point of view of the Church, the relationship

before and after the marriage. It also deals with what the priest should do in case of problems arising out of the marriage. Therefore the priest must be conversant with the faith and not teach what he wants. He must be conversant with the law to be able to handle situations canonically and he must have the pastoral sensitivity to handle issues arising out of the marriage.

Avoidance of Isolation and Alienation

There are some people who believe that inculturation means doing what is allowed in the culture. From what I have said, it should be clear that this is not the case. Inculturation cannot go against the teachings of the Church. Inculturation must rather purify the culture and animate it and unite it, without making the faithful strangers to their own culture. The two things that must be avoided in inculturation are **isolationism** (acting as if everything in a culture is good) and **alienation** (becoming a stranger to your own culture).

Many have said that Canon Law is the work of Europeans who ignored the African ethos because they did not know it. A Code of Canon Law was written in 1917 during the pontificate of Pope Benedict XV. Pope John XXIII decided to update the 1917 Code but he died before the Code came out. The Code came out only in 1983.

In doing this, the Pope consulted each and every Bishop in the world. Obviously, not all Bishops answered the questions or made their inputs but that is not the fault of the Pope. So, African Bishops were consulted. But if you have 4,000 Bishops being consulted on something, it is very difficult to get your personal views clearly articulated. At that time, African Bishops numbered about 250. Our voice was listened to. Whether it was carried through in the final text is another thing. Obviously if what the Africans said was against the letter or the spirit of the Church's law, then it could not be taken into account. Let us take an example that has been mentioned already.

It is true African men and women want to have children. But there are virgins in Africa who remain virgins until they die. Virginity is not something strange to Africa. If you have a reason for not having a child, for example, because you are in charge of the king's wives, and therefore cannot marry, your childlessness is not counted as a disgrace. In this particular instance it raises your status. During the African Synod, I was the moderator of English Group C. I asked my colleagues from other parts of Africa whether they had institutions of virginity in their societies and everybody said yes. In Asante, there are indeed "eunuchs", made so by men. The lower cultural imperative always gives way to a higher good.

The greatest figure in Asante history is called Osei Tutu. He founded the Asante kingdom. Among the Asante people, for somebody to die tragically is an abomination. Osei Tutu was killed "tragically". But he is the greatest figure in Asante history because he died in war, fighting for his people. Because there could have been no better cause than the defence of the Asante nation, his death in the war, though tragic, was considered a triumph.

Inculturation makes us look for such examples to understand better some practices which otherwise would be difficult to accept. There is no doubt that there are such examples of lower values giving way to higher ones in every African society. Inculturation means making use of such elements in our society for a better understanding of the Christian message and life. Jesus died vicariously, that is to say, he died for the sake of others, not for his own sake.

The Asante have historical examples of such heroic vicarious deaths. In the 17th century, when they were going to war against the might of the Denkyira people, they needed a sacrifice of four people to make "medicine", as they put it. The chiefs of Ejisu, Mampong, Adwumakaase and Kumawu offered themselves and were indeed sacrificed. Here there is a kind of similarity with the death of Jesus but the vicariousness of the death of Jesus was essentially different in two very important aspects. The four chiefs who offered themselves did so conditionally. The chief of Kumawu

requested that his name be drummed on the talking drum forever and so it is up to now. The chief of Adwumakaase demanded that none of his subjects should ever undergo the capital punishment, no matter the type of crime they would commit. The chief of Mampong requested that his successors be second in rank and importance only to the king of Asante. The status of the stool of Ejisu was raised to that of paramountcy. Jesus died vicariously without asking for any condition, totally selflessly. Moreover, Jesus died for sinners who had, by their sinful actions, become his enemies. The four chiefs died for their friends. All the same, the example of these four people helps to explain the sacrifice of Christ for us.

As has been remarked, even though inculturation is not going back into antiquarianism, certain practices are still not outmoded. The way the king of Asante is chosen, for example, is governed by cultural principles and it works. If the Church could adopt this for the choice of a Bishop or even a priest, it would stand us in good stead.

Marriage, for example, presents an actual situation which we have to deal with. There should be a way of synchronising cultural marriages with Church marriages.

The Synod of Africa puts the issue clearly:

Jesus Christ the Son of God made man, crucified and risen in glory, is the center and model of every aspect of the Christian life. The incarnation of the Son of God is the principle and model of inculturation. In the light of the mystery of the incarnation, inculturation, as a project of communion in diversity, is thus rooted in the mystery of the Trinity. Christ is "at home" in our cultures. Furthermore, the Gospel itself becomes the principle that purifies, guides, animates and elevates the culture, transforming it in such a way that there is a new creation. There is need for every culture to be transformed by Gospel values in the light of the paschal mystery. (The African Synod, Proposition 28).

Theologically, the basis of inculturation is the Incarnation. The Incarnation of the

Lord Jesus; its effects are on-going. In the same way, inculturation is not a one-day dream. It is an on-going process which must take into account two major truths.

1. Compatibility with the Christian Message.
 2. Communion with the Universal Church. The Church of Asante cannot isolate itself from the Universal Church because of Inculturation.
- Again, the African Synod clarifies the point:

Inculturation is a movement toward full evangelization. It seeks to dispose people to receive Jesus Christ in an integral manner. It touches them on the personal, cultural, economic, and political levels so that they can live a holy life in total union with God the Father, under the action of the Holy Spirit. The Synod recommends to the bishops and to the episcopal conferences to take note that inculturation includes the whole life of the church and the whole process of evangelization. It includes theology, liturgy, church structures, and life. All this underlines the need for research in the field of African cultures in all their complexity.

The Synod thanks God for the abundant fruits which the efforts of inculturation have already brought forth in the life of our churches. The Synod Fathers invite pastors to exploit to the maximum the numerous possibilities which present church regulations provide in this matter. (The African Synod, Proposition 32)

At the end of the day, what the Bishops of Africa want us to do is to explain, to research into, to analyse the society and see in the society what matters to the people most and then leave it to the local Churches, communities, clergy, religious to see what they can do in such situations. In all this, the Bishop must continue to exercise a supervisory role.

(b) *Sunsum* is derived from the father. All human beings have the *bogya*. Yet human beings are different, one from another. What makes me different from you is my *sunsum*. It individualises me. Whether I am good or bad, etc. depends on my *sunsum*. It is what gives me my character. It is the *sunsum* that can be bewitched. If I have a strong *sunsum*, I am not afraid of any spirit, no matter how mischievous. The *sunsum* can be described as the individualising principle.

(c) *Okra* originates from God and is the humanising principle, the principle that makes me a human being and distinct from the brute animal, the tree, the river, the rope, etc., all of which have their *bogya* and their *sunsum*. The *okra* is also the principle of luck which makes me happy or sad. The Akan say, *ne kra adwane* (His *kra* has run away from him) when somebody is overcome by excessive fright.

(d) *Honhom* is the Breath of Life, coming from God, without which we would be dead. It is the principle of life in the human being.

When the *honhom* leaves me, I am dead. The *okra* goes back to God to be judged; the *sunsum* becomes *saman* (ghost) and the *bogya* is buried in the ground.

(e) The *sasa* is the protective principle which wrecks vengeance on anybody who does an abnormal harm to another person, like stealing from a blind person or killing somebody. It is said that when A murders B in circumstances that A will never be discovered, B's *sasa* is there to push A on to confess his sin. It can also kill A or make A mad. The *sasa*, therefore, can in one sense be described as the protective principle in the human being and in another sense the revengeful principle, depending upon how you look at it.

(f) The *ntoro* is the patrilineal principle which gives characters like nobility, respectability, courage and so on to the individual. There are 12 *ntoro* patrilineal groupings among the Akan. The *ntoro*, among other things,

VIII

CONCEPTION OF MAN

In the analysis of our society, we have to get hold of the conception of the African of the human person. Philosophers of all times have tried to give their idea of who the human person is. A well-known definition of a human being is that he is a rational animal. A French philosopher has said: *I think, therefore I am*. For him, rationality equals humanity. But who does the African think is a human being? Every African society has its idea of who the human being is and many of the practices and beliefs are based on this conception. I give two examples:

1. According to the Akan, a human being must consist of the *bogya*, *sunsum*, *okra*, *honhom*, *sasa*, *saman*, and *ntoro*, otherwise he is not a human being.

2. For the Yoruba, it is a combination of *ara*, *ojiji*, *okan*, *emi*, *ori*, *enikeji* that makes the human being.

In all Africa, we deal in dualities. Everything has two sides - the visible side and the invisible side; the spiritual side and the material side; the observable side and the unobservable side. The Akan people's conception of the human person is that everybody has the following components in him:

(a) *Bogya* (literally blood) is supplied by the mother. This is the tangible palpable aspect of the person. That is why the mother must take care of the child bodily. She gave the child his or her body. So, for things like food, water, succession, etc., the child goes to his or her mother's clan. The *bogya* can be described as the principle of *being*.

determines one's totems and totemic relationships, one's taboos and the response that should be given to one's greetings.

In the same way, for the Yoruba, a person has the *ara* which is, to the Yoruba, like the *bogya* of the Asante.

The *ojiji* is like a shadow; it always accompanies you wherever you go.

The *akan* is the heart. Like the *sunsum* of the Asante, it is the personality principle to the Yoruba.

The *emi* is like the *akra*, the part that God gives to us to humanise us.

The *ori* is one's destiny. It determines what one is going to do in this world.

These elements combine to make the Yoruba person.

At the end of the day, in addition to the elements that have been mentioned, for the Akan and the Yoruba, the human being, to be truly human, *must live in community*. If one were alone, one would not be a human being.

You must take part in community rituals, accept your responsibility in community, enjoy your rights in community and so on. Mbiti of Kenya has summed up the principle beautifully: *I am because we are; and because we are, therefore I am*. To put it differently, scholars who follow the trend of thought of Descartes would say, *I am because I think*. The African would say *I am because I am related*.

The Asante would describe a person who is kind, good, does not cause problems, as: *nye nipa* (He is a human being). If a person is a nuisance in the society, causing problems for everybody, he is described as: *nye nipa* (He is not a human being) or *nye ne ho nipa* (He does not behave like a human being). It is the way you relate to one another, the way you live in society that differentiates you from other inhabitants of our planet. This reminds us of Jesus who, in the story of the Good Samaritan, did not ask the question about the Good Samaritan as: *Who acted kindly?*, but rather as: *Who was his neighbour?*¹⁷ In other words, the Good Samaritan it was who acted as a neighbour, a human being.

If I am lying in the street dying and I raise my head and see a cow or a dog coming towards me, I will have no hope. On the contrary, if I see a human being, I will have hope. The cow, I am sure, would come and pass by without noticing me; so will the dog. If then the human being also comes and passes by, then, to me, what is the difference between the cow or dog and the human being? They have both acted as animals.

IX
**OUTLINE OF AFRICAN
 TRADITIONAL RELIGION**

traditional religion, such as morality, witchcraft, sorcery, taboo, totemism, medicine, mystical beings and forces, etc.

The most important aspect of African religion is the existence of the Supreme Being. We go back to what we said at the beginning, namely, that every religion comprises 3 essential parts.

It is what people believe in which constitutes their faith. This may be a personal being or an impersonal force. Whatever it is, it is believed that the object of faith has some influence over one's life. The next essential part of religion is *morality*. People who have such an object of worship mould their characters in accordance with their belief. From time to time, those with the same beliefs and morality come together on a regular basis to express their belief in *worship*. This is the third element of every religion, namely the *liturgy*. Unfortunately, early European writers on Africa who came here only concentrated on worship, weird dances, sacrifices and defined African religion in terms of those.

Supreme Being

The fact is that belief in a Supreme Being is central to African Traditional Religion. He has a name in all African societies; he is unique; he is creator of everything, including all the spirits, human beings, indeed the universe. He is a just judge and holy. He is the provider of everything; he is eternal, our Father, our Grandfather, our Consoler, our everything.

Our approach to God is practical. Hence most of the names and attributes we give him describe what he does for us rather than what he is in himself: The Asante call Him *Amowia* (The Giver of Light), *Amosu* (The Giver of Water), *Abomobuafɛ* (The One you go to with your problems), *Nya-amane-kɔse* (The Refuge of sinners). But they also call Him *Totrobonsu* (The Fount of Water), *Tetekwajramoa* (The Eternal).

The Supreme Being is entirely spiritual but his existence is known even by a child. The Asante have a proverb: *Obi nkyere akwadaa Nyame* (You do not have to show God to a child). In all aspects, he is the perfect Spirit.

Spirits

Africans believe in all kinds of spirits. These spirits can be divided into non-human or non-corporeal and human or corporeal. We believe that there are certain spiritual creatures who have never become human beings, therefore they have no body, but they have an influence on the life of the people. On the other hand, there are spiritual or semi-spiritual beings which have been human beings before or have had some sort of bodily appearance. In each category, we have good and evil spirits. The evil spirits' only aim is to cause havoc, misery, disease, death, poverty and so on. On the other hand, the good spirits, whether human or non-corporeal, are believed to help human beings, protect them, lead them, tell them what is wrong with them and so on. Among the good non-corporeal beings, we have the Supreme Being who exists in all African societies. Then we have the divinities and other benign beings. The Supreme Being, of course, is in a class apart. He is the Creator of everything. Some of the non-corporeal spirits are evil and among them we can count the devil.

We also have very good human spirits - the ancestors, good magicians, dwarfs - and very bad ones - sorcerers, witches, monsters of the forest, sea, rivers and *sasabonsam*.

Equilateral Triangular Representation

This is the sort of world that Africans have. The religion of the African can be represented by an equilateral triangle. At the apex is the Supreme Being who has his name in all African languages. On one side are the divinities, on the other, the ancestors and on the base are other aspects of

Tutelary Spirits

The rest of the spirits are all his creatures. Some are still in their natural habitats while some have been domesticated. Spirits from both categories may be worshipped. Every society has a name for them generically that is totally distinct from the name they give to the Supreme Being. The Asante call them *abosom* (singular, *abosom*). But each tutelary spirit too has its specific name, such as *oboo*, *dopo*, *hunuhata*.

These tutelary spirits have their priests and days of worship. Here in Ghana, the Krobo are famous for training women priests. The training lasts 3 years during which severe restrictions are placed on the novices. They undergo many tests. One who fails a test, even after 2 years of training, has to start the training all over again.

Priests are spokesmen of the tutelary spirits. They bring the wishes of the worshippers to them and interpret their decisions to the worshippers. They divine and tell future or secret things. They are held in high esteem in the society.

The tutelary spirits have the role of protecting their adherents from harm, both physical and spiritual. They are expected to diagnose diseases and prescribe medicine for them. They help their adherents to get what they need in life. They, together with good magicians, are the arch-enemies of witches and sorcerers.

It has to be emphasised that the tutelary spirits are not considered as gods, definitely not as the Supreme Being. They are creatures, children, superintendents, representatives, refractions of the Supreme Being. They form a group of spiritual beings by themselves.

Among the Asante and the Yoruba, it is believed that God has shared his functions among the divinities. For example, the Yoruba would say that *Olodumare*, their Supreme Being, has given part of his creative capabilities to *orishanla*. He is said to share his wisdom with *orunmila*. He manifests his power through *changu*, the spirit of thunder and lightning. To describe

African Traditional Religion as if it consists totally in the worship of spirits, therefore, is wrong.

People go to the "divinities" because they have felt needs and they think that the "divinities" can help them to obtain them.

That is why in terms of inculturation you have to know what to replace the "divinities" with. We have to preach the power of God; we have to devise rites for healing, for protection from all sorts of danger. We must produce meaningful rites for pregnant women, for times of harvesting, for babies, for fathers, for mothers, for the blessing of a school, etc.

Here, it might be good to note that the description of the tutelary spirits as "divinities", "gods" or "deities" is misleading. If you translate the Asante *Onyankopon* or the Yoruba *Olodumare* as God, then you cannot describe the tutelary spirits as gods. They have their own generic and specific names. In Asante they are called *abosom* (not little *Onyankopon*). Among the Yoruba, they are called *orisha* (not small *Olodumare*). Within the ranks of the *abosom*, we have specific *abosom* as we have among the rank of the *orisha*.

Hence African religion is strictly monotheistic. It is not possible for a Jew to call any spirit Yahweh or a Muslim to call any spirit Allah, except the Supreme Being. For Jews and Muslims, there can only be one unique Yahweh or Allah. In the same way, you cannot call any spirit *Onyankopon* or *Olodumare*, except the Supreme Being.

True polytheism exists where different gods are independent and one is not considered to be the creator of the others. When the bible talks of the gods of the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, it is talking of beings whose worshippers thought and believed that they were at least equal to the Jewish Yahweh. Hence God could say: *Thou shalt not serve any other god apart from me* (Ex. 20:3). The *Nebos*, *Baals* and the *Zeuses* were competing with Yahweh. A thing like this is simply unthinkable in African Traditional Religion. Yahweh has no competitor and the worshippers of the tutelary spirits know and acknowledge this.

The African Supreme Being is the explanation of all phenomena. Among the Akan, the best and most convincing defence of anybody who is falsely accused of a crime or an evil act is for him to say: "Nyame wo ho" (God is alive) or *Mede ama Nyame* (I have given everything to God).

Ancestors

The concept of the ancestor differs from one society to another. Among the Akan, to be an ancestor,

1. one must be dead. You cannot have a living ancestor.
2. one must die a "good" death. One who dies through certain diseases like leprosy, epilepsy and small pox, cannot be counted among the ancestors. In the same way, one who dies tragically through drowning or being shot accidentally or because a tree has fallen on one cannot be venerated as an ancestor. The worst death for a woman is to die in child-birth. One accused of being a witch too is excluded from veneration as an ancestor.
3. one must lead a good irreproachable life. No one wants to remember a good-for-nothing person, a thief, a murderer, a rapist, or people who, in general, have no respect for themselves. It is those whose lives are worth emulating that are venerated as ancestors.
4. a person must be an adult. Apart from strictly exceptional cases, one who dies as a baby or an infant and who has not yet married and preferably had children is not remembered as an ancestor.

Among the Akan, it is believed that when good people die, they go to a place of bliss known as *Asamando*. There they do not suffer pain or deformity or any hardship. They lead the life that they were leading on earth in peace. A king is a king there, a farmer is a farmer there and this explains why in the past human beings were killed when the king or a powerful chief died. Those killed were supposed to go with the leader to serve him

in various capacities. Some people even volunteered to be killed to accompany their chief.

It is the belief that from the *Asamando*, the ancestor can come back to be reborn in order to finish a job he started but could not complete. It is also believed that some of the dead can decide to come back for another lease of life. Another belief is that those who cannot get entry into *Asamando* roam about as ghosts frightening people, until they are born again. This type of return into the world is a kind of re-incarnation.

It is a very firmly held belief that the ancestors are keenly interested in the living and form one family with them. The African family, therefore, comprises the unborn, the living and the dead. It has a kind of similarity with the Church's doctrine of the Church Suffering, the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.

Here again, it is obvious that to call African Traditional Religion "ancestor worship", as some have done, is unfair. First, the ancestors are not the key elements in African Traditional Religion and, secondly, they are not worshipped.

Witches and Sorcerers

Witches and sorcerers are people who are supposed to possess extraordinary powers for causing harm to others or for selfishly acquiring blessings for themselves. A witch operates entirely psychically and achieves his effects psychically. Magicians can be known in the society. Magicians may even form an association. Witches are not known except after they have been "captured" by a tutelary spirit or a good magician.

A witch becomes a witch when he has witchcraft substance. The substance can be outside or inside the person. Witchcraft is a fiery emanation in the witch that leaves the witch at night, glowing like a brand of fire. In Asante, it is said that witches meet together on top of trees at night. They supply human flesh in turn. In many parts of Africa, a witch can only bewitch an

enemy. In Ghana, it is believed that a witch can only bewitch a close relative: the mother, father, son, sister, etc.

Some of the newly-founded religious groups are cashing in on this mentality of the people about witchcraft and splitting families, destroying relationships between parents and children by convincing their followers that the relatives of those followers, brothers, sisters, etc. are witches who harm them. These adherents go home furious that their relatives should be disturbing them. Some few Charismatic Catholics are causing the same harm when they are supposed to be preaching a God who has told us not to abuse one another or accuse one another of evil but rather to be united. How they reconcile such condemnation with the Gospel imperative that we should not condemn, is the mystery.

Witches are supposed to cause death, sterility, sickness, misfortune in business, etc. In the case of the Asante, it is the *sussum* that they are supposed to destroy. They are supposed to draw the victim's blood gradually until he dies. Incongruously too, when somebody dies suddenly, it can be attributed to witches. New stresses and tensions that have arisen in the society on account of social change too are being related to witchcraft. For example, about a person who suddenly develops migraine, it might be said that his head was used by witches as football in the night !!

Witches are people who are supposed to have extraordinary powers to harm others, to cause problems, misery, wretchedness in the society and make life very difficult for people. That is why nobody wants to be called a witch. To call somebody a witch is a serious matter.

The witch acts psychically and the effect of his operation is also psychical. You cannot sue a witch because you do not see or hear him or her. In all parts of Africa, about 90% of witches are supposed to be women. However, men witches, few as they are, are simply dreaded.

Witchcraft can be acquired in many ways. In some societies, it is believed that somebody who is a witch can pass the witchcraft on automatically to

his children. It is also believed that an object of an extraordinary size or shape can be a witchcraft substance. One who picks it up becomes a witch. It is said that old women transmit their witchcraft to young people through gifts. Hence many parents forbid their children to receive gifts.

Magic

The magician is somebody who uses words and objects to effect extraordinary things. Some differences between a magician and a witch are the following:

1. The technique of the magician is physical but the effect of the magician's operation is psychical. The magician is believed to be able to take say bread, pierce it with needles and say: *when 'X' eats bread, may she develop stomach cancer*. It is believed that whether the magician is near the victim or not, when the victim eats bread she will have the stomach problem. On the other hand, instead of saying: *when 'X' eats bread may she develop stomach cancer*, the magician can say: *may she conceive a healthy child*. In this case, the magician is a good magician.

Normally the same word is used for the spiritual poisoning brought about by the magician and the physical poisoning which occurs when one comes into physical contact with a venomous object. The Asante word for both is *adutoo*.

2. Magicians are known in the society. They may even form an association. People consult them for evil or for good.

3. A magician can be good or evil, depending upon the words he uses. One magician says *if 'X' eats bread may she develop stomach cancer*. Another one may say *when 'X' eats bread, may she have a fertile womb*. On the other hand there can be no good witch. The best witch is one who looks for something selfishly for himself.

The evil magician is often called a sorcerer. He uses his powers to harm people whereas a good magician uses his powers to help others. The

enemies of the sorcerer, the devil and the witch are the good magicians, the tutelary spirits and the person's own good life. If you destroy your own life with sinful acts and activities, then you become vulnerable to witches, you destroy your spiritual powers of resistance.

Magicians are often referred to as juju men, voodoo, etc. In all African societies, the best way of protecting oneself against evil forces, whether they are witches, sorcerers or the devil, is living good life. A person with an irreproachable life develops a strong *sunsum* and a strong *sunsum* is the bane of all evil spirits.

Herein lies a powerful way of inculcating morality in a cultural way. Young students should be reminded that even in our own societies, the best way of avoiding evil is to lead a good life. AIDS, for example, can be avoided entirely if we are morally upright. Sin weakens you and makes you a slave. But at the end of the day, again, we have to stress the power of Jesus Christ to save.

Witchcraft and magical beliefs have a great effect on social life. Accusations of witchcraft destroy the harmony in society. Since traditionally witchcraft is supposed to strike at short distances, sick people often go far away from home to avoid being seen by their relatives who may be witches. Nowadays, however, it looks as if the belief is that witches can travel to cause havoc even in Europe.

The question as to whether witches exist or not is irrelevant. The point is that people, including Christians, believe in witches and allow themselves to be influenced by this belief.

This is what poses a problem for us. Many things are happening in the society that need explanation. Some of these cannot be attributed to God because God is good and they are evil. On the other hand, most Africans do not believe in coincidence or chance. Everything must have a reason, a cause. The people find it satisfactory that they can attribute evil happenings to people who are supposed to be essentially malevolent. To tell people

that witchcraft beliefs are nonsensical is not helping them. What is important is that we sympathise with them, try to make their feelings ours and then do our best to help them by correcting them if we think they are wrong. Here, again, the power of Jesus to save becomes relevant.

Diviners

Divination is the art of finding out the future and hidden things. There are many forms of divination. The tutelary spirits can divine. We have divination by ordeal, divination through pots, divination through slaughtering animals, poison oracles and so on. In some parts of the world, divination has been developed into a whole system which is depended upon tenaciously. All priests are diviners but not all diviners are priests. The influence of divination in our society is considerable.

Medicine - men

Medicine - men are people who have knowledge of medicine. All priests are medicine-men but, again, not all medicine-men are priests. Sometimes medicine is practised in collaboration with a tutelary spirit. Medicine-men use roots, barks, leaves and seeds of trees for their medicine. Sometimes they mix these with parts of animals, eggs and so on. Since some medicine-men attach the practice of their medicine to a tutelary spirit and magic, they are sometimes shunned by Christians. But many types of medicine have nothing to do with mystical powers.

We have also found out that some of these medicine-men have scouts all over the place who spy for information on prospective customers. In this way, they are able to impress on them their knowledge of the mystical causes of diseases.

Traditionally medicine is linked to religion and approaches the patient wholistically. Traditional medicine often works wonders where "scientific" medicine has failed. In many cases, traditional medicine is successful in normal health situations. It is for this reason that it is still very popular in Africa. Moreover, traditional medicine is both available and cheap. However,

there are negative aspects of traditional medicine which we must note well. Some of these are:

1. Traditional medicine does not rely on accurate diagnosis.
2. Traditional medicine often neglects the importance of dosage.
3. Traditional medicine is often prepared in unhygienic conditions.
4. Knowledge of traditional medicine is not easily disseminated but kept by those who have it.
5. Traditional medicine may depend too much on divination which in turn may exploit the ignorance of simple people.

Totem

In many African societies, and in community, there is the belief that human beings have relationships with some animals and some plants. It has nothing to do with superstition. This relationship can be on the level of a group or the individual. We call that thing or animal **totem**. Individuals too can have totems. You cannot harm or kill your totem.

Taboos

Taboos form a great part of traditional religion. A taboo is something that must not be eaten or touched or seen or smelt or said. For example, it is a taboo to have sex in the bush even with your own wife. It is a taboo to curse the king. Some of the taboos are serious offences, like the taboo of sexual activities by a girl who has not had her menstrual period. Some are of lighter nature. There is a taboo, for example, that you should not sing when you are eating. This example shows that some taboos may be rules of practical importance that will be observed only when they are put in the form of a taboo. It is obvious that when you sing whilst you eat, you might be choked by the food.

There may be a taboo on fishing in the lake or hunting or collecting snails during certain periods of the year. Although couched in religious terms, such taboos obviously have utilitarian purpose. The ban enables the fish, the animals and snails in the lake and the forest to multiply. Without such a taboo, such very important commodities would gradually disappear.

X LIFE CYCLE

Everywhere in the world, all human beings pass through three major stages in life:

1. Birth
2. Adulthood
3. Death.

Each stage has its sub-stages as it were.

Birth

There is a time when the woman has not conceived. This is the pre-conception stage which is followed by pregnancy, gestation, parturition (labour), post-natal

Adulthood

There are many things that the infant is not supposed to do, to know or to take part in until he has become an adult.

There are two types of adulthood: physical adulthood and sociological adulthood. Physical adulthood has to do with the person as a species of *homo sapiens*. You become mature physically. Boys and even the girls, begin to grow hair on certain parts of the body. In the case of the boy, he also grows a beard, his voice breaks and he becomes boisterous. (Among our people, women with beard are supposed to be witches!!). The woman begins to develop breasts but in her case, the most obvious sign that she has become an adult is the menarche. The onset of menstruation means that she can now give birth to a child.

In all societies, physical adulthood alone is not sufficient for one to be allowed to do everything. Sociological adulthood is very important. In Europe, there is an age at which you can marry or cast votes or stand for election or become a president. Because a person has not attained sociological adulthood, he may be forbidden to go to a pub. Among our people, sociological adulthood opens the way for one to marry and, therefore, to have sex.

Death

Death is the lot of everybody. It begins with disease and passes through the agony of death before death itself. Then there are the post-mortem rituals, and celebrations and rites. The person is laid in state, respects are paid to him and he is buried. There may be celebrations after burial.

In Africa, each stage and sub-stage is marked by religious rites. Hence a person is immersed in religion from cradle to grave. A woman or man who wants to have a child may perform certain rites. When the child is conceived, there are many rites that should be performed to ensure easy delivery. In Asante, pregnancy and childbirth are supposed to be war. The rituals help the woman to win the war.

These rites performed at the turning points of a human being's existence are supposed to usher the person from one stage of life to the next.

These ceremonies are called **Rites de Passage** or **Rites of Passage**. Rites de Passage are rites, rituals and ceremonies that are performed at the turning point of a man's life. They usher the person from one stage or sub-stage to the next. The use of the French is more common, even in books written in English, but the English is also used.

Convergences

These rites have their corresponding ceremonies, some conspicuous, others not so obvious in all the Sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick, Confession, the Eucharist, have their embryonic form in these rites of passage. They are a kind of primitive sacraments.

It is to be stressed that there is no suggestion for a moment that these rites are Sacraments or like the Sacraments. All that is being said here is that there are similarities in the rites with the Sacraments. A close examination of the two would easily reveal that there are very serious differences between the two. Let us give an example with one of the rites.

Child - naming Ceremony

In all Africa, we have different ways of naming a child. Among the Akan, the father is responsible for the character (*sunsum*) of the child. That is why it is the father who names the child. A baby is not considered to be a proper human being until it has been named. To become a human being, the child has to have a name that identifies him. Without such a name, the child is only a *hohoo* (stranger).

The day on which one is born (*Kra da*) gives one a name (*Kra din*). For example, a male child born on a Sunday is called *Akwasi (Kwasi)*. Every day name has an appellation attached to it. That of *Akwasi* is *Bodua*.

On the eighth day of the child's birth, its father gives it a name. This is the name of anybody he wants to honour. The ceremony is not done by the father himself; it is done by his sister, in the extended term of the word. The sister asks the father what name he wants to give to the child. After getting the name, the woman says prayers, adding: *Your name is 'Kwaaten'*. The prayers may be long or short. They ask for long life from God, the ancestors and the tutelary spirits for the child. They seek health for him; they solicit wisdom and success so that he can fittingly take the place of the elders when they are no longer on earth.

Then the same celebrant dips her finger in water and putting a drop of the water on the tongue of the baby, says: *When you say water, it must be water (wose nsuo a, na nsuo)*. She repeats this twice. Then she takes palm wine and does the same, saying *Wose nsa a, na nsa*. This is a symbolic way of telling the child to be truthful.

Truthfulness can be of at least two kinds. For example, if you show a Pepsi Cola bottle to somebody and later he tells people that you showed him a Coca-Cola bottle, he may not be telling a lie. He may genuinely have seen a Coca-Cola bottle, but if he actually saw a Pepsi Cola bottle and yet tells others that he saw a Coca-Cola bottle, then he is telling a lie. In both cases, the same thing has been said and neither of them is true but one is not telling a lie, the other is. The ceremony is telling the baby not only to say what he has seen but to be sure that what he says he has seen is exactly what he says it is. What you say must be objectively and subjectively true and this is the only way to avoid problems in the society of which the child is becoming a member.

This is very important in religious life. You can believe that your Mother General does not like you or that that sister or brother hates you. This may not be true at all but how do we correct you? It is easier to correct the liar than to correct the person who is not deliberately lying but is not telling the truth either. I have a feeling that at least 80% of the problems of the world, whether they have to do with the family or a school or the Church or politics or war or work places, are due to this sort of untruth. One is convinced of something and nothing can move him from that stand.

To continue with the naming ceremony, if the baby is a girl, the officiant puts her in a basket, if a boy, she puts a cutlass in his hand. Both the basket and the cutlass depict hard work. The baby is now going to be part of human society. If he is going to be of any use to the society, then he must be *truthful in both senses of the word, and hardworking*.

The naming ceremony makes one a human being. Baptism makes you a member of the Body of Christ, the Church. The ceremony imposes certain responsibilities on the babies. Baptism makes one assume the triple role of Jesus Christ, namely the role of the priest, the prophet and the king. In the ceremony, one is given a name. In baptism, one sometimes assumes a name, in addition to one's own name. The similarities are there even though they do not touch the essence of the Sacrament. Baptism is the foundation Sac-

rament that opens the way to all the Sacraments. It makes one a member of the Body of Christ. It therefore makes one a universal human being. The baptism is given in the name of the Trine God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. These and some others are profound theological implications of baptism that cannot be found in the naming ceremony.

A study of the nomenclature of Asante reveals that a person normally has at least 4 names. They could be as many as 10, depending upon certain circumstances surrounding the person's birth - the year in which he was born, whether he was born a twin or after twins, whether he was born on a day on which something unusual took place, whether he was born on a festival day, whether he was born after the death of his father, whether he was born in a time of hardship, etc.

Sociological Adulthood

Sociological adulthood is marked mostly by initiation ceremonies for boys and girls. The ceremony can be long or short. It may last one week, one month, one year or two years. It can be simple or complex; it can be performed for the individual or collectively for a group. In some societies, through initiation, one becomes a member of a recognised, respectable secret society. Such secret societies are so important that often christian priests, brothers and sisters are forced to become members if they want to be accepted as full human beings. In some societies, you become a member of an age group from which afterwards you are promoted to another age group. Some societies have initiation ceremonies for boys alone, some for girls alone, some for boys and girls. A few African societies have no initiation ceremonies at all. These ceremonies may be done at specified times, at recognised intervals. They may also be done anytime the need arises.

Tests of endurance sometimes form part of these initiation ceremonies. These tests may consist in circumcision or clitoridectomy or incisions on the face or the body or being asked to kill a cow with one stroke of a hammer or being asked to produce the head of a member of an enemy group, or of a fierce

animal or the forcible extraction of the novice's tooth and so on. These tests of endurance are meant to find out the ability of the individual to assume adult responsibilities which often entail hardship and pain.

The point is that from infancy, you are going to be an adult. It is, therefore, important that you prove your readiness to fulfil your duties. For example, a woman, in becoming an adult, is destined to become a mother. Child-birth can be very painful. The girl has to demonstrate that she can bear the pain of labour. That is why if she fails the test by crying during her circumcision (which has wrongly been called genital mutilation), she may not be able to get a husband in the future except a man who himself failed his test. Obviously not every aspect of the celebration can be assumed indiscriminately but some can and should be adopted or adapted by christians. The training of priests and priestesses has clear similarities with novitiate life and can provide a good model for religious life.

XI WORSHIP

We now come to the area of worship. Worship is of the essence in every religion.

Worship deals with the social aspect of the human being. It is always important, when talking about the human person, to take both his physical and social nature into account. As social beings, we come together to express openly our dependence upon some power, or person, or spiritual overlord. This is what we call worship, liturgy or service. Religion is something communal. You have to worship God also as a social being. That is what liturgy is about. Religious service is resorted to to praise, thank, adore the object of worship and to make petitions to him for benefits or avoidance of evil.

When we Catholics talk about the liturgy, we are talking about the Sacraments, especially the Mass or Eucharist. The Eucharist is central to our religion. In the Eucharist we try to keep the command of the Lord: *Do this in memory of me*.¹⁸ It is a repetition in bloodless form of the sacrifice of himself on the cross. In the course of time, there have been many ways of celebrating the Mass. Jesus' own way of celebrating the Mass was the simplest. Talking to the disciples, at some point, he took bread and said, *This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. . . . This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you.* (Lk. 22:19-20).

After his ascension into heaven, his disciples would meet, pray and break bread. *Breaking of the Bread* was the name they gave to what we call the Mass. This Breaking of the Bread spread to all parts of the world and as it spread, it took on different characters, so much so that even during the apostolic times, we had different ways of celebrating the Eucharist. These

ways are called *rites*. We can mention the Mozarabic Rite, Malabar Rite, Byzantine Rite, Mennonite Rite, Tridentine Rite, Coptic Rite, Cyniac Rite, Maronite Rite, Roman Rite, Ethiopian Rite, etc.

Nowadays, many people are talking about rites for different parts of Africa but it is debatable whether we can call a way of celebrating the Mass a rite if it does not have an apostolic origin.

As the Church spread, the Mass took on the cultural character of the places where it went. With your knowledge of the Roman Rite, if you found yourself in a Church where the Byzantine or the Cyniac Rite was being celebrated, you might wonder whether it is the same Mass that you know that is being said.

We in Ghana have inherited the Roman Rite. It is this that we try to inculcate but so far what we have been able to do is only to introduce cosmetics to "decorate" the Roman Rite. It does not touch the structure of the Roman Rite itself. We only add a few unessential elements to the Roman Rite.

Not long ago, we were using the Tridentine Rite. This has been reformed into the present Roman Rite. In the same way, we are allowed to introduce elements into the Mass that do not alter its essence. Hence we sometimes dance at the beginning of the Mass or during the Offertory or after the Consecration or after the Holy Communion. These are not radical changes. The melodies of our songs are traditional. Yet we could, with some imagination, introduce radical changes without damaging the essential elements. Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy says: *In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed. And this entails greater difficulties* (No. 40).

That is why when I became a Bishop in 1970, one of the first things I did was to do something about the Roman Mass. What I find very sad was that my people would come to Church on Sundays but after Mass, many of

them would say *We are going to pray* (*Yereko mpaeba*). There is nothing wrong in going to pray. But the question is: If they think they did not pray at Mass, then what did they think they were doing? We the Akan have two words, both of which mean "Prayer" - *Asore* and *Mpaeba*. The faithful use the word *asore* for prayer in Church and the word *mpaeba* for prayer in one of these Charismatic or Pentecostal churches. *Asore* appears to mean formal, official prayer whereas in *mpaeba*, one involves one's whole personality. One feels one is praying. But why is it that people do not feel that they have said this kind of prayer when they go to Mass? That is the question we want to answer.

In my research, I came to the conclusion that the externals of the Mass are not attractive to the faithful. At Mass, there appears to be a one-man show. There is no personal touch; there is no spontaneity; there is no celebration; there is no flexibility; there is no real participation. In other words, there is no *relevance*. If somebody goes to pray, he wants what he is in need of to be the subject of the prayer, the centre of his attention. These are some of the marks of African worship.

There is another issue. The Mass is supposed to be a sacrifice and it is a sacrifice. But where do I see the sacrifice being enacted? In traditional sacrifice, there is a time when the animal is brought in, it is made sacred, immolated, offered to the tutelary spirit, cut up and shared. When you go to the Roman Mass, where is the sacrifice? It is there, of course. We also offer the Bread; we also immolate the Bread; we also share the Bread. But there are too many interruptions in the process.

On the two occasions that Jesus made the sacrifice, he did not interrupt what he was doing. On one occasion, he took bread, said a prayer, broke the bread, gave the bread to his disciples. It was clear. He was making a sacrifice. Then he took wine, said a prayer and gave it to the disciples. Jesus did a lot of things before the sacrifice began; but once he began, there was no interruption. When he finished the sacrifice, he did a lot of things. He had taken care that the sacrifice stood out clearly.

On the other occasion, when the time came for him to be sacrificed, there was no interruption anywhere. He was betrayed, arrested and brought to Caiphas, Caiphas brought him to Pilate, Pilate brought him to Herod, Herod brought him back to Pilate, he was condemned, he took his cross, he went to Calvary and he was crucified.

My first question was: *Why couldn't we have a Mass, the structure of which is like what Jesus did?*

Secondly, I asked myself: *What did Jesus tell us to do?* He took bread, said a prayer, broke it and gave it to his disciples. Then he took wine, blessed it and gave it to his disciples. That is the essence of the Mass - Taking bread, saying a prayer, breaking bread and giving it. Then taking wine, blessing it and giving it. That is what Jesus said we should do in his memory. The "this" is the essential thing. Woven around that are all kinds of things which are not essential to the sacrifice.

Some of us are trying to make the Mass better understood so that people will not come to Mass and then go "to pray". It was with these in mind that in the 1970s, I wrote my own Mass. I took into account the key characteristics of Asante sacrifice, namely, full participation, flexibility, joy, celebration, relevance and adaptability. I also took into account the structure of Asante sacrifice, namely, presentation of the sacrificial object, sacrilisation of the object, immolation of the object, offering of the object, sharing of the object and the meal. I submitted it to my priests to criticise. The reaction ranged from downright condemnation to half-hearted commendation. Only 4 priests thought I had done a good job. Some priests from Ireland even insulted me that I was comparing the unique sacrifice of the Holy Mass to pagan practices!! They, however, wrote to apologise to me later for their insults.

So, I recoiled into my shell. I think I made a mistake by not educating my people well. All religious men and women have a role to play in all these. The first thing I want to warn against is the mistake I made. I did not educate the people before introducing my suggestions. Do not think that

priests understand all these things. Some of them can be the worst enemies of inculturation. I always say that I have the ideas but I need people to help me put them into concrete reality. In inculturation you need an inter-disciplinary approach; you alone cannot do much. You need people to think and you need people to put ideas into practice.

The second mistake I made was not getting priests to reason along with me so that they could put the ideas into practice for us. I have had many unfortunate experiences. People simply refuse to understand. The point is that some people forget that you can praise God with words, your voice, by symbols and signs. Dancing is a very respectable way of praising God but if because they are not educated the faithful think that at the time of dancing, for instance after the Consecration, they are being entertained, then something has gone wrong. The most important part of the Mass is when with Jesus, in Jesus and through Jesus and in union with the Holy Spirit, we give all honour and glory to God the Father for ever by offering the sacrificial victim, Jesus, at one and the same time the victim and the priest, to Him. The Consecration makes him present as a sacrificial victim. It is after this that the priest, raising Jesus up, says: *Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory is yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever*. The congregation answers in appreciative confirmation, *Amen*.

It is at this point that we picture God the Father, to whom all honour and glory belongs, sitting in majesty and receiving our sacrifice. The dance at this stage is to adore Him, hail Him, praise and thank Him. Then we sing a song to Jesus who made Himself available for the sacrifice.

We rely on priests, brothers and sisters to come up with such ideas so that we can utilise them for the greater glory of God.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing, I have tried to make a few points:

1. Peoples differ although we are all the same, from the point of view of our nature as human beings. The way we behave as social beings is totally different from the way other people behave. It behoves us to engage ourselves in probably the most important activity of our life, serving God, in our own way, the way he himself has given us. We must use the beautiful ideas about God, goodness, justice, kindness, generosity, obedience, hard work, truthfulness, gratitude, hospitality, above all, godliness, redemption, that are endemic in our own societies to know about the Christian God and his qualities.
2. We have to go back to our roots to revive the beautiful values of our society, the values of love, hospitality, fatherliness, motherliness, sharing, etc. We have to make use of our own modes of worship to worship as Christians. The elements in our societies can be grouped into three. They are elements that are good and wholly acceptable to Christianity. Some elements are indifferent. Some others are downright evil. While we make full use of the elements that are wholesome, we should try to do away with the bad aspects in the indifferent elements. As regards the evil elements, we must try to get rid of them or else replace them. But we should do this with circumspection, knowing very well that institutions in our societies are inter-linked and the unwary destruction of one, for whatever reason, can affect the whole society adversely.
3. We have tried to show that inculturation is not a matter of drumming and dancing, even though this may be important. It goes much further than that.

It has to do with priestly and religious formation; it has to do with the way of teaching catechism; it has to do with Church music, the liturgy; it has to do with the architecture of Churches, education of children, formation of the laity, creation of parishes, etc.

4. We have tried to show also that in the life of each African society, there are ways which we can use to make the Christian message and the Christian life our own and have pointed out the crucial aspects of some of the key elements. For the rest, it is left to the reader to see how, if he can use them in inculturation.

This book is by no means a treatise on inculturation. It consists of indications towards serious inculturation.

END NOTES

1. Hebrews 2:17
2. Philippians 2:6 - 7
3. Matthew 28:19
4. Luke 15:13-16
5. Peter Schineller, S. J., *A Handbook on Inculturation*. Paulist Press, New York, 1990, pp. 36-37
6. Peter K. Sarpong, *The Ancestral Stool Veneration in Asante*. St. Francis Press, Takoradi, pp 12-13
7. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
8. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
9. Matthew 26: 26-28
10. Schineller, p.6
11. *The study of Evolutionary Theory in Zoology*, associated particularly with Charles Darwin in the 19th century, would throw a great light on this.
See also: John Beattie, *Other Cultures: Aims, Methods and Achievements in Social Anthropology*. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1964.
12. Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*. London, 1891.
13. Luke 1:63
14. Emile Durkheim (1897), *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952.
15. Beattie, *Other Cultures*
16. Matthew 5:43-44
17. Cfr. Luke 10:36
18. Cfr. Luke 22: 19