

Comparative Religions

ATR (African Traditional Religion)

Introduction

Three religions dominates African continent: ATR, Islam and Christianity. African Traditional Religion has grown out of the African soil. It is not brought from outside. It is best distinguished as ATR. It is described as the product of thinking and experience of African forefathers and mothers of former generations. This religion is found in all African peoples. Africans who live according to their traditional ways are very religious.

Africans have many different kinds of beliefs due to the fact that there are many ethnic groups and tribes in Africa. It is not proper to say there an African Traditional Religion. The truth is, every ethnic group has its own set of beliefs. The observation that is understandable is that there are many similarities between the traditional beliefs of Africans in Africa. Therefore we speak of African Traditional Religion thinking of those common things.

The African Traditional Religion has no founder. It evolved through many centuries, before the westerner come to Africa. Different fathers played a role in the development of this religion. It is not documented. It has no sacred book or Scripture. It is written in the hearts, history and experience of the people. It is passed with the word of mouth. It has never been accused of heresy, falsehood or deception. There are no religious controversies. There is no claim of purity. There is no authority to say what it was before or what it would be in the future. African Religion is open to new ideas. Some ideas of the past has been forgotten because people found them useless and did not carry them over to the next generation.

It affects the whole person, the whole clan or tribe. Some writers use to say an African always carry his religion even to the parliament. It is taken everywhere around the world.

The practice begins at early childhood until the last moment at death.

A person must be born in a particular African people in order to be able to follow African Religion.

The people from Europe, America, and Asia cannot be converted to African Religion as it is more removed from their geographical and cultural setting.

African Traditional Religion is very pragmatic and apply to the need as it arises. It has supplied answers and direction to many African life, as such people are unwilling to abandon it quickly otherwise they feel insecure afterwards, unless something else give them additional or greater sense of security. It is said that even if they are converted to another religion like Christianity and Islam they do not completely abandon their traditional religion immediately. The religion remains with them for several generations and sometimes centuries. In reality the converted mix their traditional religion with the newly embraced religion. The idea behind is to gain from both religions.

African Traditional Religion influences every area of an African life. It shapes the character, and culture of the people. It is hard to destroy its beliefs.

Wrong ideas:

- African Religion is ancestor worship. This is just one part of it
- It is superstitious
- It is animism or paganism
- It is magic or fetishism

African Religion embraces all these four ideas in its belief.

Where to look for and find African Tradition Religion?

- It is found in rituals, ceremonies and festivals of the people: Birth, giving of names, circumcision, initiation ceremonies, marriage, funerals, harvest festival, need for rain
- It is found in shrines, sacred places and religious objects: Graves, caves, rocks, hills, mountains, tree, objects tied around people's neck, legs and waists. Other objects are kept in pockets, bags or placed on gates or ground.
- It is found in art and symbols: wood, stools, calabash, bones, sticks, pots, handcraft, domestic animals, and human bodies. It is represented by insects, birds, animals, trees, colours, etc.
- It is found in music and dance: Drums, flute, rattle, etc.
Religious festival are accompanied by songs and dance. Music is used to spread religious ideas.
- It is found in proverbs, riddles and wise saying: There are proverbs that speak of God, human relationship, man, nature of things etc. Riddles are for entertainment but some contain religious ideas. Wise saying are about the world in general.
- It is found in names of people and places: African names have meaning that are also religious.
- It is found in myth and legends: Stories, myth, legend, biographies
- It is found in beliefs and customs: religious ideas, and that which people approve and do. Beliefs influences behaviour and what to do in life.

Five essential parts of African Religion

- Beliefs: God; Spirits; human life; magic; witchcraft; the hereafter
- Practices, Ceremonies and festivals: Praying, sacrifices, offering, rituals, customs, birth, harvest, raining seasons, dancing and singing
- Religious objects and places: Holy places, shrines, groves, hills, mountain, rivers, caves, amulets, charms, marks
- Values and morals: Truth, justice, love, right and wrong, respect, decency, agreements, promises, integrity, blame
- Religious officials: Priests, rain makers, ritual elders, diviners, medicine men, kings and rulers

Question: Conversion of Africans does not mean that they have abandoned ATR? How true is this?

Three types of heritage

Historical heritage

Cultural heritage

Religious heritage

Culture deals with things such as the way people live, behave, act, and their physical as well as their intellectual achievement. It is shown in art and literature, dance, music, drama, style of building and people's clothing, in social organization, political system, in religion, ethics, morals, philosophy, in customs, and institution of the people in their values and laws and their economic life (John Mbiti, 1975:8)

Structure of African reality (Hierarchy of power)

GOD

SPIRITS (ANCESTORS)

SPIRIT MANIFESTATION

WORSHIP

Ceremonial items: Home made brew; blood of a goat, chicken, sheep or cows

Material used: For knowing the will of ancestors: bones, shells

For healing: herbs, roots, and human body parts

For power: beads, amulets, buffalo tail, fetishes

PRACTIONERS

Doctors: specializes in one disease or a general doctors

Diviners: experts at unveiling the spiritual causes of disease

Sorcerers: Claim power and contact with spirit and can cast spell

KINGS AND CHIEFS

PARENTS

Major Beliefs of African Traditional Religion

THE SUPREME BEING

All Africans generally believe in the Supreme being, called God

Origin: No one knows how this belief originated.

How did Africans come to know that there is God?

People believed through reflecting on the universe (general revelation)

People realized their limitations

People observed the forces of nature

The Supreme being has name or names. Almost every ethnic group has a name for this great God.

What is the name of God used in your tribe or people?

What personal pronoun and gender used to describe this God?

The names reveals what people think about God.

The names reveal His attributes

What God is:

God is spirit. He is not a human being. He is not visible, for one has ever seen Him. No one can surely describe Him. He is not made. He exists on His own. He has no father, mother, neither child.

God is the creator of everything. He is the first cause, the original source. He sustains.

He is all knowing and nothing is hidden from Him. He shares human images: He sees, hears, smells, tastes. He eats, sleeps, play, walk, rejoices, get angry, thinks, remembers.

He is everywhere present like air. At the same time He is very far from the universe and His creature.

God is unknowable. He cannot be explained.

African turn to God when in trouble and seeking peace, happiness, and security.

He does not do anything more for people. He does not interfere with man who is the centre. Man ignore Him and wait for the need to arise.

Worship is to keep contact with the invisible world so that there is harmony. In this way prayers, sacrifices, offering are done and rituals performed. No human being can get near to God or talk to Him.

He is the author of both good and evil. He causes people to sin. He is feared as a judge and full of wrath.

How different is this God with the God of the Bible whom Christian believe?

Is this God the same with the Christian God?

ATR	versus	Christianity
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deism (far from people)		Omnipresent and Transcendent Psalm 139
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no personal contact		Jesus is the way to God John 14:6
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ancestors are mediators		Jesus is the only mediator between God and man 1 Timothy 2:5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No relationship with God		Personal relationship through Jesus (Father) John 1:14, 3:16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He is not interested with Creation		Jesus is God incarnate, Emmanuel, who died John 1:14
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He is full of wrath and is a judge		Wrath and love are His attributes John 3:36; Romans 1:18
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He does not communicate		He speaks directly through His word Hebrews 1:1-2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• He is regarded as the fist ancestor		God is eternal Psalm 90:2; Genesis 1:1
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No mention of His holiness		God is holy and hates sin 1 Peter 1:16
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God is not concerned with sin		Every sin is against a holy God Genesis 6:5; Romans 3:23; Psalm 51:5

THE SPIRITS

There are two kinds of spirits:

Human spirits: The spirits of those who were people on earth

Those who died long ago and are forgotten

Those who died recently and are remembered up to the 4th and 5th generation. They indwell people. They are used by diviners, mediums and medicine men.

Nature spirits: The spirits that were created as spirits

The spirits are found all over Africa. The animistic belief is embraced. Animism is a religious belief, which recognizes the spirits as indwelling every created things and controlling the physical world. Most world religions share the belief of animism, even though they would not call themselves animists.

Animists or those who follow this belief, build their lives around the belief that nature spirits are powerful. The spirit world is stronger than humans. The nature spirits live in forests, trees, waterfalls, strange shaped rocks, caves, villages, hills, etc.

Some of those spirits are believed to follow people as they move like the shadow.

The spirit also indwell animals like, snakes (python), goats, bulls, tiger, giraffe, baboon, etc.

The spirits also manifests themselves in the form of these animals. They are easily recognized by the locals, thikoloshe, mamlambo, house snake, perennial or fountain snakes, etc.

Different things are done to protect people from the spirits.

The spirits are highly honoured and feared. Their help is sought for anything. ATR man can do nothing without consulting the spirits for permission or approval. In occasion like illness, marriage, childbirth, work, study, trip, poor harvest, accidents, family conflict, and war, spirits are consulted. Relationship between the spirits and the physical world is going on and requires human effort. Human effort is required to ensure the goodwill of the spirits and to ensure that they are not offended or neglected. Spirits want to be served and as such hold people in fear.

Special methods are used for contact:

- Trained or gifted men are required to help
- Ecstatic trance is practiced just like the shaman
- Mediums, or divination, fortune telling
- Offering some rituals
- The local healers prescribe certain plants and herbs for use.

We cannot deny the existence of spirits. They are around, but do not control the world and neither possess or indwell all created things. The spirit that we know, are created by God, and can only function as long as God permits them to function. The Almighty God is the creator and sovereign ruler of heaven and earth (Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:16; Psalm 24:1; Psalm 50)

Man should not seek protection or help from the spirits , but only from Jesus Christ because of His work on the cross. He defeated all evil angels and He also controls them.

The knowledge of Jesus Christ through Salvation should liberate all Christian with African Traditional belief or Animism from the fear of spirits who indwell all created things.

Christians must also know that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and therefore cannot be indwelt by evil spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20; Romans 8:9-10; John 14:23).

Christians can boldly and fearlessly evangelize all men without fear of being indwelt by a demon. There could be demonic attacks of different kind though, but remember the power of God and the one who is in you that He is greater than the one who is in the world.

Who are the spirits according to the Bible?

The Bible speaks of evil spirit, wicked spirit, unclean spirit, demons and Satan. These all were created holy by God but they chose to sin with Satan. God cast them out of heaven. Now they operate on earth in the sky above (Ephesians 6:10-17).

ANCESTOR SPIRITS (ANCESTOR WORSHIP)

The main point of interest in African Traditional Religion is the belief and worship of ancestors. Ancestors are used as the mediators between the Supreme Being and man.

It is known that not everyone who dies becomes an ancestor.

He has to have had a position of authority

He had to have adult sons or children depending on the tribe

The spirits of those who died and come back to life are the ancestors

These ancestors receive honour and worship as long as the tribe still remembers them. Only those who are remembered are worshipped.

The names of the forefathers are sometimes forgotten and for fear of harm, when worshipping the priest or head of the family would announce the word even you whom we do not know.

The dwelling place of the ancestors is not known. Some say in the caves, in the trees, grave, under the earth, in the high places (forests).

The effective way to contact the ancestors is through sacrifices done either by the head of the family or the aunt.

The items used are normally meat, blood of animal, or human blood or part, homemade beer, etc.

The people do not know whether the ancestor will do them harm or good. Therefore, it is important to appease them or keep contact at all costs.

Ancestors may cause sickness or difficulties in the family that would require the diviner or medium to deal with it. Generally, every time the diviners are called or consulted, the ancestors would say the people have done something wrong in the religion or custom.

Africans worship the ancestors because that answers the deepest need of their relationship with those they know.

What is the Christian response to ancestor' spirits?

First we must clarify that ancestor spirits are spirits of the departed forefathers and mothers. The spirits of people you know died. This is the general understanding of ancestor spirit. These spirits have gone to either Hades to wait for final judgement or to heaven in the presence of Jesus.

Secondly ancestor spirits are what the Bible calls demons or evil spirits (1 Corinthians 10:18-22).

These are the fallen angels who rebelled with Satan, the Devil in heaven and were cast out. They are waiting for their judgement and damnation (Matthew 8:28-32; 25:41).

Their main function is to deceive men and encourage unbelievers to continue living in opposition and rebellion against God. These evil spirit (demons) impersonate the deceased and act as if they are the person.

Helping people who live in fear of ancestor spirit

The unbelievers must be evangelized. They need the gospel. The message of the cross is the power of God to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:18; Romans 1:16; Acts 8:18-23; 13:8-11; 16:17-18).

- We should teach the people and inform that Adam the first man had no ancestor, and ancestor spirit (Genesis 2:5, 7; 1 Corinthians 15:44-47)
- We should preach the cross (death of Jesus Christ: atonement, sin, forgiveness and purity). Emphasis must be made on Christ's defeat of the supernatural beings (evil spirits including Satan): Colossians 2:14-15; Ephesians 4:8-10; Hebrews 2:14-15; Revelation 1:17-18; Matthew 12:22-30; 1 John 3:5, 8).
- Christians need a lot of pastoral care and counselling. Inform Christians that issues such as death, sickness, poverty, impotency (barrenness), demonic attack, unemployment, dreams, etc. lead to reversion to ATR.
- We should teach Christians the sufficiency of Christ using Colossians and Hebrews. Encourage the people to read the gospels.
- We should inform Christians that we are in spiritual warfare, therefore we need the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-17).
- It is important to build strong spiritual foundation by teaching the doctrine of sin (total depravity), the sovereignty of God in salvation, creation and redemption, angelology and the victory of Christ over supernatural evil spirits as well as eschatology (Revelation 12:9; 20:7, 11-20)
- We should teach Christians to trust Jesus, His word and the finished work on the cross and the resurrection. Every believer should wholeheartedly believe God's unfailing promises (1 John 4:4; Matthew 28:20; John 1:12-13)
- We should encourage our people to receive medical attention where need be (James 5:14-16; 1 Timothy 5:22-25)

DEATH AND LIFE AFTER DEATH

Death is one of the most feared act in African environment. The origin of death is unknown. As such many myth were introduced. Death cam because the messengers failed to carry their given tasks. There is no myth on how death will be removed from the world. Death meant a separation of God from man.

Causes of death

Someone is often blamed for the death of a person

- Sorcery, witchcraft, and evil magic
- Spirits: the body was not properly laid or some taboos broken and that angered the spirits
- Curse, breaking the taboos or oath
- Natural death: It is sometimes acknowledged that God call old people to leave this life, but its rare. Even in this instances physical causes are attributed to somebody i.e. sicknesses, disease, old age, accident, lightning, earthquake, flood, drowning, animal attack, etc.

Rituals of death

Disposal of the body requires certain ritual to be performed in preparation for disposal

Burial of belonging with the body, some items are placed on the graveyard after burial. In other parts of Africa

The belief is that the departed need weapons to defend himself along the way, food because he might be late for evening meal or need that on his way, other properties so that he may not arrive empty handed, etc,

Funeral rites for different age groups: children, unmarried people, married, chiefs or kings, etc. The rites are intended to send the departed peacefully and to keep the link between the living for normal life.

Feasting and sons of mourning: there are various signs and symbols to show that there is death.

Manual labour stops for a day or more. Shaving of the hair as sign of separation and new hair is sign of new life, smearing white, etc.

Hereafter

According to African Traditional Religion, there is no break between life and death.

After death a proper funeral must be organized with necessary ceremonial rituals. This is done to prevent the dead person from wandering around. It is believed that if the dead person fails to get a place he wanders and becomes a ghost.

Place of the departed.

It is unknown. Different beliefs. Among those beliefs there is no one mentioning heaven or hell.

- Neighbourhood of the homestead
- Woods, forests, lakes, hills, rivers and riverbanks
- There is a land of spirits in the underworld or underground
- The dead goes to a place just similar to this world. It is another world. They do all that is done in this world.

When a person dies his body is destroyed but his spirit lives on. The spirit receives his body which is identical to his earthly body so that he can move around as spirit.

A deceased is gathered to his forefathers, and it is finished with him. He is completely dead if no one remembers that ancestors. There is no hope of heaven or despair if hell.

Witches and sorcerers are not allowed in the spirit world (world of the dead) because they are cut off from the tribe. Some tribes feed witches and sorcerers with hyenas.

Remembering of the ancestors

Food and drink for the dead during festivals

Consultation and rituals through the diviner or medium

Naming the dead in prayer

Naming children after the deceased

What is the destiny of man according to the Scripture?

The Bible clearly teaches that there are two different places where spirits of a person goes after death. He goes to Hades if he is an unbeliever or heaven (Paradise) if he is a Christian: Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:2-4; Revelation 6:9

After the final judgement the unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire (Gehenna): Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15

Christians will not be judge but enter into eternity with Christ the Sovereign Saviour and Lord (John 5:24; Revelation 21-22).

There is no teaching on heaven and hell in ATR. As a result people live and die without hope and only fear of hell. They comfort themselves by saying they are going to their ancestors whom they have no idea where they are.

In reality ATR has no definite answer as to where do the spirits go after death. They believe the spirit depart from the body and lives on. Some say they go to places like caves, forest, valleys, rivers, graves, or indwell people or animals, etc. Before the spirits get a permanent place they just wander all around the earth.

What is the doctrine of sin and salvation in ATR?

Salvation is surely taught in the Bible. It is totally foreign and unknown in ATR.

There is no teaching on inherent sin (Sin nature, total depravity, total corruption and human inability). There are expression and proverbs that are used to describe a depraved heart, wicked or evil heart.

The doctrine of sin and the fall as taught in Genesis 3 is unknown in ATR. Adam and Eve are not found in their stories (myth). People in Africa do not ~~basically~~ sin against God, but rather they sin against the ancestors, against the members of the family or clan. Sin is evil acts to those whom one is related to. There is no sin of omission, but emphasis is on commission. An act becomes sin, more especially when the act is found or discovered. If not discovered it is fine.

Issues like failure to take parental responsibilities, child abuse, and maltreatment of wives is not sinful in African Traditional beliefs. It might raised as a concern by some parents or families.

ATR emphasizes that people should live in peace with one another especially those of the same family and clan. The truth of the matter is that there is no genuine peace outside Christ. Peace starts with ~~out~~ ^{our} relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Then we have peace in our hearts, and peace with fellow men. And then continue to pursue peace and endeavour to live at peace with all men (Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18). The Bible says, "Sinners have no peace" (Isaiah 57:21).

The word of God reveals that the heart of the problem is the heart. All evil acts and thought comes out of the heart (Mark 7:21-23; Jeremiah 17:9; Genesis 6:5; 8:20).

ATR is mainly concerned with physical world full of spirits and the inhabitants thereof. As such the problem Africans Religion face is physical: illness, drought, barrenness, poverty, conflicts, death, marriage, etc.

Therefore deliverance is from all these misfortunes. One is then delivered or saved from demonic attack, evil spirits attack, or witchcraft, etc. The practice of deliverance is either offering a sacrifice or receiving protection from a diviner or a religious man (priest or prophet).

A person is also saved from sickness, troubles or bad luck / misfortune or curse. These are done through prayers, laying on of hands, getting some items or obeying the instruction of the diviner or religious figure head.

Salvation is also from witchcraft (Sorcery) and other enemies. This needs some items or object to keep at home or carry on your body.

The effect of being saved or delivered is seen through the physical health, calm situation or prosperity enjoyed by the family through a member who gets a well paying job or accumulate a lump some of money.

To those who mixed ATR with Christianity or biblical practices, salvation is through baptism or being a member of the church, etc.

The question we should ask our ATR followers is: What are you saved from? And Who saved you?
Romans 3:23; 5:12-14, 18:21; 6:23; Matthew 1:21; John 16:8-11

MAGIC AND TABOO

Africans believe that everything has life force, which cause good thing or evil. The force is found in arm bangles, special words uttered, African medicine, etc. Diviners (witchdoctors) are considered the ones having more power in ATR.

Magic

This form part of the African Religion or belief. There two kinds of magic:

White Magic

Black magic

White Magic: This magic is used for good reason

Traditional healers or medicine man use it. They try to find the source of evil, whether it is a sorcerer or a taboo. When the evil is discovered, the medicine man or healer gives the afflicted protection against his enemy. He may use bangles, powder, tattoo markings, leather necklaces, etc. Some of those items received from the medicine man or healer are believed to bring happiness, harmony and prosperity.

Black Magic: This magic is used for bad reason or purpose

People use this to harm someone.

Those who use this magic are called sorcerer or wizards who practice witchcraft. Africans believe that witches must be destroyed. More often people who are disliked by the community are associated with witchcraft and are called witches. This leads to suffering, expulsion from the community or death.

People are warned to take care of things such as hair, nails, clothes hanging outside at night, using certain words or phrases, visiting certain places, eating food from certain families, receiving gifts from certain people, etc.

The witches or sorcerer are believed to have power to pick the ground where one has tread and cause cancer or something evil.

Taboo

Defined: prohibition imposed by social custom, isolation of something as sacred or accursed.
Words or speech, items or clothes, conduct, food, places

What is the Christian answer to white magic, black magic and taboos?

Magic is sinful and associated with activity of Satan. It does not matter whether it is white or black magic.

Old Testament forbids the practice as sinful, as well as those who use magic as means of getting help as involved in sin.

Leviticus 19:31: mediums and familiar spirits defile the seeker

Leviticus 20:6

Deuteronomy 18:10-12

Isaiah 8:19-20

Groups who practiced magic

Egyptian magician and wise men: Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19

Babylonian magicians: Daniel 2:2, 10-11

The New Testament addresses magic as sinful (Members of the flesh)

Galatians 5:19-20 sorcery

Revelation 21:8

Revelation 22:15

Individuals and groups who practiced magic

Acts 8:9-11 Simon Magus

Acts 13:8-11 Elymas

Acts 19:19 Magicians

The Bible speaks of miracles wrought by human agents in the name of Jesus, not magic.

All man-made rules are set to instil fear in the hearts of children and other people. Taboos are key elements used to keep the people in bondage. Taboos are not vows or oaths, but certain words forbidden to be uttered as it is believed that they would bring harm or disturbance in a person or family. The English word for that is "Spell" (Deuteronomy 10:10-12). There are also practices forbidden and even places not to be visited, and even food not to be eaten (1 Corinthians 8:4-13). Taboos includes the prohibition to do certain things or sit at a particular places.

We are delivered from all fear of magic and taboos. We are forbidden to practice them or encourage people to do them (Colossians 2:22). We do believe that no man has power to inflict harm or cause damage through or by his words from a distance, unless there is demonic connection.

THE CREATION OF MAN AND THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD

There are so many myths about the creation of man and beginning of the world. Almost every tribe or people in Africa has its own story.

Majority believe that God created the universe. Others say someone great created the world. Evolution is a concept foreign to African Traditional Religion. There is no clear evidence how the creation took place.

Africans has no slightest thought that the universe will come to an end.

Man is said to have come from the clay, from marsh, from a hole, from the leg of god, he was brought from the sky to earth. It is thought that at first man was living in harmony and immortality and in fellowship with the Supreme Being (God). Man is the centre of the universe. At that time heaven was very close to earth, and that a rope tied them up.

Later on God went away from man because of sin. He went away not to be interested in him forever. There are many reasons given coming from different tribes, as to why God left.

God was tired of man's requests

Man wiped his dirty fingers on the sky

A woman pounding in her mortar lifted her pestle too high and kept poking God in the eye, and God decided to go up higher.

Smoke get into God's eye, when man set the grass on fire.

The hyena broke the rope joining heaven and earth.

There is a sense of disobedience on the part of man in all the myths.

Consequences

Man lost his immortality

This came about because God's messenger was too slow to bring the message to man that he would die. Others say that the hyena was sent with the message that man would die and reach man first.

A great division or separation existed which cannot be mended by anyone.

What is the biblical doctrine of creation and separation?

There are many stories about creation of man in Africa. There are also many myths about the separation of God and man.

The Bible teaches that God created man from the dust and gave him the breath of life (Genesis 2:7).

Man was created good and righteous according to the likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-28).

The Bible teaches that man separated himself from God because of disobedience (Sin): Romans 5:12; Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-16, 22-24.

God did not go away from man, but man ran away and hid himself from the presence of God. God showed great interest in man. He also showed His care and love. He sought the man, found him and asked him what happened, disciplined him and reminded him of the consequences of sin (Genesis 3:7-9, 10-24). More than that He promised a deliverer who will come on behalf of man to deal with man's problem and enemy (Genesis 3:15).

God spoke directly with Adam and Eve. He clothed them (Genesis 3:21). Then he banished (sends them out of His garden).

Man is born an enemy of God. He sees God as unjust and unapproachable. Man created his own way of appeasing God and worship (Isaiah 53:6; 59:1-2). ATR introduced ancestral worship. All that was rebellion and sinning.

Because of the separation there was no relationship between man and God. Man opted to follow the devil and his demons (John 8:44)

Jesus, the deliverer, Son of God came to reconcile man to God through the cross (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Romans 5:20; John 3:16; 1 Timothy 2:5).

The weaknesses of ATR

- There is no Jesus Christ. There is no Grace and Faith in Christ
- There is no special revelation of God through the Scripture. Due to the fact that it is not documented anywhere, it is open to changes and can also be in different form in other ethnic group.
- There is no teaching on total depravity and repentance. But there is promotion and encouragement of sin and sinful activities.
- God is not concerned about the sin of the people. There is no final judgement (Hell)
- There is no hope of the future. Heaven and eternity with God is foreign to an African rooted in ATR.
- Salvation is only physical and not spiritual
- The mediator of Africans are both saved and unsaved ancestors
- This religion promotes fear in the lives of the people
- Since then, they have not found the remedy for death.
- There are endless sacrifices offered without intended result. The ancestors demand things from the people without providing for them.
- It is ethnic and cultural. It depends on specific tradition and culture.
- There is no absolute standard of morality (lying, adultery, polygamy, greed, incest, etc.)
- It emphasizes nature worship, worship of man and spirits.
- Most of its ritual practices are done at night
- It claim special revelation in the form of dreams and visions
- It is a family, communal religion

Why ATR should be rejected?

- ✓ It has no inspired Word of God. It contradict the Bible in its understanding of the mediator.
- ✓ It does not provide salvation of the soul by grace through in faith in Christ
- ✓ It does not have a Saviour
- ✓ It does not clarify the purpose of life

Questions

- ✓ Why is ATR still exerting much influence on African people despite many years of intensive missionary work and evangelism?
People are sinners from birth. Poor evangelism (pragmatic methods). African Theology encourages appropriation of it. Syncretistic practices in the church. Traditional leaders promote it. Africans do not want to lose what their forefathers established. There is a need of identity.
- ✓ Why do those who convert to Christianity return in certain moment of their lives to some aspects of ATR?
Lack of discipleship and counselling. Immaturity and bad advice. Parental authority. Profession of faith without genuine conversion.
- ✓ What are things that sustain ATR in Africa?
Fear: ancestral spirit, witchcraft, taboos, death
- ✓ What is the future of ATR?
Unsaved Africans start practising ATR at an early age. The traditional leaders hold strongly to ATR. The government leaders (State presidents) are followers of ATR and promote it.

Practical questions (Kurios and Morena)

- The home of your friend has been struck by lightning twice and one of the children has died already. Your friend asks you what can he do about the problem. What do you advise?
- A Christian woman is plagued by disease all the time. Her grandmother who is a traditional healer tells her she should go and be trained to become a traditional healer herself. What should she do?
- You have a baby that cries a lot during the night. Other people tell you this problem has something to do with the ancestors spirits. You should probably change the name of the child. What are going to do?
- New people have moved in and become your neighbours. Since they move in one of your children has become ill and you yourself have lost your job. People say these people are practicing sorcery on you. What are going to do?
- Should the church allow church members to consult ancestors?
- If a church member consult a diviner because of some serious problem, should he or she be disciplined?