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THE INTERFACE OF FAITH AND REASON: UNDERSTANDING DEITIES, ANCESTORS, AND THE NATURAL WORLD IN MORAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

African Traditional Religion is a rich and diverse belief system that has shaped the spiritual and cultural landscape of the African continent for centuries. The profound role of faith and reason lies at the heart of this religion. Faith permeates every aspect of African traditional religion, from the belief in a Supreme Deity to the veneration of ancestors, from the performance of rituals to the practice of divination. Faith in the unseen and the divine is fundamental to African traditional religion, providing a spiritual foundation for individuals and communities. African Traditional Religion (ATR) is a vibrant tapestry of spiritual beliefs and practices that have withstood the test of time. It encompasses a wide range of rituals, customs, and deities, often interwoven with the natural world. This article will identify the intriguing relationship between faith and reason within the framework of African Traditional Religion. It will explore how these two concepts intertwine, supporting and enriching each other in the religious lives of millions across the African continent. This is done to promote a deeper understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural heritage that continues to shape the spiritual landscape of Africa.

Keywords: *Faith, Reason, Deities, Ancestors, Natural World, Moral Perspective*

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Introduction

In Hebrews Chapter 11: 6, the scripture records that “But without faith, it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.” Both in Christian and Traditional religions, faith is an essential factor in the worship of the creator God. By faith and the purpose for seeking God, traditionalist seeks God; favor and presence through inanimate mediums, trusting that the sacrifices made through the ancestors will attract the grace and mercy of God.

However, Chidi Dennis is careful to stress the Christological elements of faith whose parallels are not found in African Traditional Religion. To him, faith is applied when there is a reason for the application. For centuries, African traditional religion and its beliefs and practices have survived the test of time, solidly holding on to their faith and the reason(s) for 'being.' This is one of the major reasons scholars from both Africa and all other continents of the world have deemed it fit to study the influence of faith and reason in managing religious and moral situations in a community. "One of the contributing factors of religious elasticity is its traditional foundation and the traditional impact on the environment.” (Omatseye 533-535).

According to Nweke, faith in African Traditional Religion projects basic principles of hosting people's cultural practices as follows:

a) An adherence to cultural principles and practices grounded in a deep trust and reverence for the spiritual forces and ancestors that shape the relevant tradition in the society.
b) Faith in ATR is a vibrant, dynamic force that permeates every aspect of life, providing adherents with a sense of purpose, identity, and connection to the divine. Within the ATR context, faith is not divorced from reason but is rather intertwined with a profound understanding of nature.

©Africans have long recognized the intricate interplay between humanity and the environment, acknowledging the presence of spiritual forces in every living thing. This holistic worldview necessitates a harmonious coexistence with nature, where reason and observation guide believers to discern the sacred in their surroundings (Omatseye 533-535).

Faith and Reason in African Traditional Religion

The role of reason in ATR involves a deep appreciation for the wisdom of the elders, the collective knowledge passed down through generations. It encompasses observation, critical thinking, and reflection, serving as a guiding light to navigate the complexities of life. Reason aids believers in interpreting and understanding the mysteries of the universe while providing a framework for ethical conduct and decision-making. In African Traditional Religion, reason is often applied in conjunction with rituals, divination, and ancestral guidance. This synthesis of faith and reason allows adherents to seek answers to profound questions, resolve conflicts, and find guidance in their daily lives. By employing reason, believers maintain a delicate balance between their spiritual beliefs and the practical realities of their faith

Jacob, Olupona in his view added that the concept of faith and reason in African Traditional Religion transcends the simplistic dichotomy often presented in discussions of religion and philosophy. In ATR, faith and reason are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary aspects of a holistic understanding of the world and human existence. The religion’s cosmology, rituals, and philosophical underpinnings demonstrate a nuanced integration of rational inquiry, spiritual insight, and communal values. It embodies the unity of spiritual and rational exploration, seamlessly intertwining ancient wisdom with contemporary challenges. This integration fosters a deep sense of interconnectedness between humans, nature, and the divine, emphasizing the holistic nature of African religious thought. As we delve deeper into the intricate tapestry of African Traditional Religion, we begin to uncover a profound spiritual tradition that embraces both faith and reason. By honoring the collective wisdom of ancestors, observing the natural world, and engaging in meaningful rituals, believers in ATR find guidance, solace, and enlightenment in their spiritual experience through faith and reason (Nweke 255-259).

Functions of Faith in African Traditional Religion

The traditional African religion is widespread across Africa, and the beauty of its ideology lies in its versatility and related complexities. Although millions of people from sundry countries practice ATR in their cultural dimensions, the religion has one purpose and dogma, which is faith and reason. They do so uniquely as each person’s tradition and beliefs differ from other stands which is seen as their guardian of knowledge, tradition, and cultural heritage. This general reverence for ancestors fosters a deep sense of connection to the land, the community, and the divine. At the heart of ATR lies a profound respect for ancestral wisdom, which is the reason for African Traditional Religion. The ancestors are similar in infinitesimal ways as they are linked together by the faith of the adherents and the wisdom of the ancestors.

In this regard, Adamo quotes, "Mbiti testified to this fact when he stated that millions of Africans are followers of more than one global religion, but are still united by the wisdom of their ancestors (Idioms, traditions, parables, etc.) which remains the reason for dual allegiance in most cases. In African traditional religions, faith guides the religious activities and practices of individuals and communities. While specific practices and beliefs may vary across different African cultures, there are some common functions of faith in African Traditional Religion. (Adamo 9-10)

Belief in Deities

Faith and reason in African traditional religions serves as sub-conscious platforms of establishing a connection with the ancestors and the creator God. It involves believing in the existence of gods, ancestral spirits, and other supernatural entities. Through faith and reason, individuals seek to communicate, honor, and appease these entities, seeking their guidance, blessings, and protection. For Example, Nigeria's Yoruba religion strongly emphasizes faith in various deities known as ***Orisha.*** adherants have faith that by worshiping and offering sacrifices to these *Orishas*, they can establish a connection with them and gain their favor and assistance in various aspects of life.

While specific names and attributes vary, many African traditional religions recognize the existence of a Supreme Being or High God. This Supreme Being is often associated with creation, order, and

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ultimate authority. However, the concept and understanding of the Supreme Being can vary across different African cultures.

Africans respect their gods and sacred objects because they belief that their lives could be taken from them if they dared to defile them and their holy places. they are instructed not to enter or tamper with such sacred symbols or materials. The sacred places are where diviners, spiritualists, and herbalists perform their duties undisturbed. It is also in such sacred places that the people take part in the worship of tutelary deities. Their gods are usually carved from special woods. In sacred places too, necessary exorcism is performed on individuals who are being disturbed by evil spirit; They do this through various means; a diviner might say that the demon will be cast out through singing or flogging or chased out literally by shaking the person vigorously. Africans believe that this is necessary because only then can healing and freedom is gained (Ogbonoka 22-25).

Furthermore, sacrifices are performed in sacred places, they believe they ought to offer animals to their gods and ancestors for better growth, fewer enemies, less war, prosperity, and peace. Animals are also offered there for religious transactions. An animal may be offered in exchange for a person's life to be restored as well or simply as a way of greeting and maintaining good relationships with the deity. Libations, are poured to gods in sacred places because libations are the most common ways of sending regard to gods and ancestors and to receive daily blessings. It is a short form of prayer where drinks are poured to gods, beckoning on them to hear their prayers (Ogbonoka 20-23).

Some Pantheon Deities

A rich and diverse pantheon of deities and spirits that vary across different cultures and regions characterizes African traditional religions. It is important to note that the names, attributes, and roles of deities may differ significantly from one culture to another. One of the deities in African traditions is the Creator God. (*Oludumare/Olorun* is a widely recognized Supreme Being in the Yoruba religion, the *chukwuokike-abiama* in Igbo culture, etc). This Deity is often considered the creator of the universe and the source of all life, *Olodumare* is associated with transcendence, cosmic harmony, and divine justice. *Shango* is another important deity in the Yoruba religion and is associated with thunder, lightning, and fire. He represents power, strength, and divine justice. Shango is often depicted as a strong and virile king, and his worship includes drumming, dancing, and ritual performances.

Oya is a Yoruba deity associated with winds, storms, and transformation. She is seen as a powerful and unpredictable force of nature. *Oya* is also associated with the realm of the ancestors and is considered a guardian of the gates of the spiritual world. Ogun is a deity widely revered in Yoruba religion and some other West African traditions. He is associated with iron, metalworking, warfare, and technology. Ogun is often depicted as a powerful warrior and is invoked for protection, success in battles, and overcoming obstacles. Mawu-Lisa is a pantheon of twin deities in the Fon and Ewe religions of Benin and Togo. *Mawu* represents the moon and is associated with femininity, fertility, and creation, while Lisa represents the sun and is associated with masculinity, justice, and order. Together, they represent the duality and harmony of the universe (Idowu 25-29).

Osun or *Oshun* is a deity revered in the Yoruba and other West African traditions. She is associated with rivers, fertility, love, and beauty. Osun is often depicted as a beautiful and seductive goddess, and her worship includes rituals at rivers and offerings of flowers and sweets. *Orishas* are a group of deities in the Yoruba religion, each with their distinct characteristics and domains. They include deities like Obatala (associated with creation and purity), *Yamoja* (associated with the ocean and motherhood), Oya (as mentioned earlier), and many others. Orisha worship is central to Yoruba religious practices and ceremonies.

Additionally, the characteristics and roles of deities may vary within and across different African cultures. The rich diversity of deities in African traditional religions reflects the complex and nuanced belief systems that have developed over centuries within specific cultural contexts. There are many names given to gods in the African traditional religion which Africans pay honest homage to. In Igbo culture in Nigeria, there are names like *Ala, Agwu, Ikenga, Ekwensu, Njoku Ji, Idemili, Chukwu, Elu, Anyanwu, Juma, Ogun, Olodumare, Amadioha, Aja, Elegba, Osún, Oya, Obatala, Sangó, Oshoshi.* In South Africa, you will find names like *Turu, Yao, Kamba, Kikuyu, Nyamwezi, Sukuma, Rufiji, and Ameru*. In Tanzania, *Indessa, Ilanzi, Djua, Mulungu, Irioba, Iruva, Isewahanga, Izuwa, Ithuwa, Kazyoba, Katavi Nyamwezi, Kyumbe, Mhaya, Wamara, Warongoe* and others. In Rhodesia, their *Mwari* is almost like their general term for referring to their other gods because this one is supreme.

Another point to note is that the natural worship done by African traditional religious groups is one of which they highly revere the five natural elements: water, earth, wind, fire, and space. Some traditions replace space with metals and practice veneration of relics through this. In addition, through natural worship, religious Africans practice shamanism. Shamanism is the practice of interaction between humans and the spirit world. Most times, a human who is a shaman can only communicate in a trance state to get all sorts of information from the other side (wotogbe-weneka 638-639)

Belief in Ancestral Veneration

Ancestor veneration is a prevalent feature in many African traditional religions. Ancestors are believed to play a crucial role as intermediaries between the human and the spiritual realms. They are revered, honored, and consulted for guidance, blessings, and protection. Ancestor veneration often involves rituals, offerings, and commemorative ceremonies.

According to Mbiti, faith in traditional African religions often involves honoring and venerating ancestors. Ancestors are believed to play a vital role in the lives of their descendants, acting as intermediaries between the living and the divine realm. Faith in ancestral spirits is manifested through offerings, prayers, and rituals to seek ancestral guidance, protection, and blessings. For Example, The Akan people of Ghana have a strong belief in the presence and influence of ancestral spirits. They maintain a close relationship with their ancestors through the faith offering a gift that is attractive to the ancestors, seeking their wisdom before making a particular decision for an individual or family, protection, and assistance in daily activities (Omatseye 530-535).

Belief in Rituals and Ceremonies

Parrinder opined that rituals and ceremonies play significant role in African traditional religions. These practices are conducted to establish communication with the ancestors and the realm, they seek blessings, express gratitude, and ensure the well-being of

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individuals and communities. Rituals often involve music, dance, drumming, chanting, offerings, and symbolic actions.

Faith in African traditional religions is expressed through various rituals and ceremonies. These practices are designed to invoke the presence of the divine and ensure the well-being of individuals and communities. Rituals often include offerings, prayers, dances, music, and other forms of worship. A good example is the Shona people of Zimbabwe who have faith in the effecacy of traditional ceremonies like the Bira, which involve music, dance, and offerings made to to communicate with their ancestors. These ceremonies are seen as essential for maintaining harmony, healing, and spiritual well-being of the people (Ogbonoka 23-25).

Belief in Nature Worship

In Awolulu's view, African traditional religions typically emphasize a deep connection with nature and the spiritual significance of the natural world. Natural elements such as rivers, mountains, trees, and animals are often seen as agent of spirits and deities. The reverence for nature is intertwined with the religious and spiritual practices, which may include rituals and cultural ceremonies held in natural settings. Many African traditional religions do emphasize the belief in a life force or energy that permeates all living beings and the natural world. This life force is often associated with vitality, power, and spiritual essence. It is believed to be present in humans, animals, plants, and even inanimate objects. It is also a well-known practice of the worship of natural phenomena such as the Earth, the Sun, the Moon, the rivers, stones, sticks, grasses, and more. It is this nature worship that made African traditional religion practitioners practice totemism. Africans who practice totemism thus give reverence to an object not for itself but for what it represents, which is the supernatural. (wotogbe-weneka 638-639)

A family's totem could be a tree, a stone, or an altar built with different ornaments. Some also choose to totemize living things like birds, lizards, snakes, monkeys, ants, owls, eagles, vultures, etc. Most times, they tend to keep these animals alive, build special houses for them, feed them, and see their murder as a taboo with grave consequences. Others may carve these animals from stones or wood and pay homage to them when they want to offer sacrifices or speak to their ancestors. This led African traditional religious groups to core ancestral worship. Most times they place them on a high pedestal especially when such an ancestor was a great warrior, hunter, diviner, or farmer.

Belief in Divination

Africans who take their traditional religion seriously know well that divinations are an extension of traditional African medicine, because many diviners are also medicine men and women. However, it becomes different when there is something bigger than just an ailment that requires deep knowledge to be extracted from the world beyond. Amongst the numerous materials they use in divination are bones, cowries, specific wood for specific functions; shells, pearls, and ropes, these objects faith material and factors of reason used in getting answers, communicating, healing, and prophecy from the ancestors. (wotogbe-weneka 638/639).

Belief in Reincarnation

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Reincarnation in Religion and Philosophy, is the rebirth of the aspect of an individual after bodily death, whether of the physical or of the mind. This reason process in African traditional religion brings extreme closure to Africans who practice it. People from Eastern Nigeria (Igbo) call it '*Ilọ ụwa*'. It is the belief in the return of a relative in a new childbirth. Most times people who reincarnate are people who died of an ailment, war, or accident. Rituals of pleading with the dead person's soul to return and complete their mission and life circle on earth are made before such a person is buried. (wotogbe-weneka 639-643)

Belief in Traditional African Medicine

Traditional African Medicine (TAM) encompasses a wide array of functions within the framework of African Traditional Religion. These functions serve various purposes and address different aspects of human existence. Here are the categories that capture the diverse functions of TAM in ATR:

1. Healing and Healthcare: TAM is primarily known for its healing properties and its role in healthcare. It encompasses a range of practices, including herbal remedies, spiritual healing, and ritualistic interventions aimed at restoring physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. TAM practitioners, often referred to as traditional healers or medicine men/women, employ their extensive knowledge of medicinal plants, divination, and ancestral guidance to diagnose and treat illnesses. Healing ceremonies and rituals are conducted to address ailments, promote holistic healing, and restore balance within individuals and communities. Two, spiritual protection and cleansing – TAM plays a crucial role in providing spiritual protection and cleansing against negative energies, evil spirits, and malevolent forces. Traditional healers utilize various methods such as smudging, prayer, incantations, and amulets to ward off spiritual afflictions and maintain spiritual equilibrium. These practices serve to shield individuals from harm, promote spiritual well-being, and foster a harmonious relationship with the supernatural realm (Mbiti 24-36).
2. Divination and Prophetic Guidance: Divination is a fundamental aspect of TAM, serving as a means to access spiritual insights, divine guidance, and prophetic messages. Traditional diviners, through various techniques such as casting bones, interpreting patterns, oracles, or dreams, connect with the spiritual realm to gain knowledge about the past, present, and future. Divination assists individuals and communities in making important decisions, resolving conflicts, and navigating life's challenges by seeking guidance from ancestors and deities.
3. Ritual and Ceremonies: TAM is deeply intertwined with rituals and ceremonies that hold significant cultural and spiritual values. These rituals may include initiations, rites of passage, fertility rites, ancestral worship, and harvest ceremonies. TAM reinforces social cohesion, cultural identity, and spiritual connection through these practices, promoting communal harmony and honoring the ancestors (Gyekye 68-75).
4. Enhancing Mental and Emotional Well-Being TAM recognizes the importance of mental and emotional well-being in overall health. Traditional healing practices often involve therapeutic methods such as counseling, storytelling, and spiritual counseling to address psychological distress, trauma, or health imbalances. These approaches aim to restore emotional harmony,

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promote resilience, and nurture individuals' psychological well-being.

5. Communal and Social Function: TAM serves as a unifying force within African communities, fostering social cohesion, and promoting a sense of belonging. Traditional healing practices often involve the active participation of community members, emphasizing collective responsibility for health and well-being. TAM rituals and ceremonies provide opportunities for community members to come together, share knowledge, and strengthen social bonds.

It is important to note that the functions of Traditional African Medicine may vary across different regions and cultures within Africa. Nonetheless, these categories offer a broad overview of the diverse roles and functions TAM fulfills within the context of African Traditional Religion. In this context, Africans practicing the traditional religion remain committed and strong believers in their ancestors, which has since been working for them. Africans generally have always believed in the use of traditional medicine that comes from herbs, tree bark, animal waste, and so on. A typical African traditional religious person may combine these healing instruments with fervent prayers to the gods and ancestors for speedy response (Gyekye 75-77).

Traditional medicine practitioners are also called spiritualists, herbalists, or midwives. They are identified peculiarly by the names they are given in their different cultures. In Nigeria, they are often called *dibia, boka,* or *Babalawo.* In South Africa, *Sangoma* or iyanga; in Zambia *nga:nga. In* Ghana, *Akomfo* or *bokomowo;* in Tanzania, *mugwenu, shaman* or *niam-niam,* et cetera. Furthermore, quoting Alegbeleye; "*African traditional medicine as a holistic health care system is organized into three levels of specialty, namely, divination, spiritualism and herbalism".* To sum it all up, Nweke had this to say; "*In the African worldview, magic, and medicine are based on the belief of some vital forces in the universe."*

Communal and Social Ethical Values

African traditional religions are often transmitted through oral tradition rather than written scriptures. Cultural knowledge, worship rituals, and practices are passed down from one generation to another generation through storytelling, proverbs, songs, and other forms of oral communication. Their religious standards are often communal, involving active participation and engagement of community members. They also encompass a moral and ethical framework that guides social behavior. These values emphasize communal harmony, respect for elders, hospitality, justice, and reciprocity. They provide a foundation for social cohesion and the maintenance of social order within the community (Menkiti 37-64).

Faith and Reason in the African Belief System

African Traditional Religion encompasses a wide range of indigenous belief systems that have been practiced on the African continent for thousands of years. In these belief systems, faith and reason play a central and significant role in the rites and rituals of African Religion:

1. The belief in the Supreme Deity: Many ATRs acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being or High God. This belief in a higher power requires faith in the unseen and the divine. Different ethnic groups have different names for this Supreme Deity, such as *Olodumare* among the Yoruba people or *Nyame* among the Akan people. Faith in the Supreme Deity forms the foundation of the Traditional Religious worldview (Idowu 27-31)
2. Ancestral Veneration: The belief and veneration of African ancestors hold a central position in traditional African religion. They are believed to have a continuous existence and influence in the lives of their family members. Ancestral veneration is not worship, but rather a humble way of acknowledging the significance of ancestors in one's life. Almost in every African culture, the practice is carried out with the use of the following spiritual platforms: Prayers, songs or chants addressed to ancestors. Alters or shrines dedicated to ancestors. Visitations of ancestral burial sites, and rituals and ceremonies to mark important life events or anniversaries (Idowu 37-40).
3. Rituals and ceremonies: Rituals and Ceremonies are integral parts of African traditional religion which require faith and reason for their efficacy. These rituals establish communication with deities, spirits, and ancestors. Faith in traditional rituals and ceremonies connects people to their cultural and religious heritage which gives them a sense of belonging and identity. Often rituals and cultural ceremonies bring people and communities together and foster social cohesion and collective identity among clans. Furthermore, faith and reason in African Religion employ symbolism and metaphor to convey deeper meaning and spiritual truth in every traditional religion (Idowu 39-40).

4. Divination is a common practice in African traditional religion. It involves seeking guidance or insight from the spiritual realm through mediums, oracles, or diviners It is important to note that African traditional religion is diverse with variations across different ethnic groups and regions. It is a complex and multifaceted worship practice which reflects the richness and diversity of African culture and spiritual traditions. Examples of African divination systems include *Ifa(Yoruba, Nigeria), Sangoma(Zulu in South Africa), Ogham 9Igbo, Nigeria), etc. (*Idowu 43-49).

Interpretation of Symbols and Rituals

Reasoning is crucial in interpreting symbols, rituals, and mythologies present in ATR. Symbols and rituals often convey deeper meanings and messages that require thoughtful reflection and interpretation. Idowu in his view added that, reasoning allows individuals to engage with these symbolic expressions and understand their significance within the religious and regional context. The interpretation of divination practices in ATR requires reasoning. For instance, in *Ifa* divination among the Yoruba people, the diviner uses reason and knowledge of symbolic patterns to interpret the messages conveyed by the divination tray by the positioning of the divination chain.

Reasoning plays a critical role in moral and ethical decision-making within ATR. It helps individuals navigate complex moral dilemmas and make informed choices based on the moral principles and values upheld by their cultural and religious

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traditions. In the Akan tradition of Ghana, the concept of "*Sankofa"* emphasizes the importance of reasoning and reflection in making ethical decisions. *Sankofa* encourages individuals to look to the past, learn from the wisdom of their ancestors, and use reason to apply that wisdom in addressing present-day ethical challenges and problems (Mugambi 19/20).

Understanding Cosmology and Ontology of Reasoning

Reasoning assists in comprehending the cosmological and ontological beliefs of ATR. It allows individuals to explore the nature of existence, the relationship between the spiritual and physical realms, and the interconnectedness of all beings. In the Dogon cosmology of Mali, reasoning is fundamental in understanding their belief system. Understanding the cosmology and ontology of reasoning requires exploring how these aspects of traditional worship intercept and influence one another. This knowledge helps in comprehending the nature of reality, human cognition, and understanding (Idowu 73-75).

Intellectual Engagement and Critical Reflection of Reasoning

Reasoning encourages intellectual engagement and critical reflection within ATR. It allows individuals to question, explore, and deepen their understanding of their religious beliefs, traditions, and practices. It facilitates intellectual growth and contributes to the ongoing development and adaptation of ATR. Among the Igbo people of Nigeria, reason is highly valued in the practice of Igbo philosophy known as *"Igwebuike." Igwebuike philosophy* encourages critical thinking and intellectual engagement in exploring moral and ethical principles, social values, and communal well-being of the people.

Syncretic Interactions with Christian Faith

According to Mugambi, syncretism in the context of this paper is defined as "the mixing of one's faith and belief with another. This concept may apply to Christians who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ and who believe in the word of God as contained in the holy Bible, but the constraints of faith and reason in their cultural beliefs would persuade them to compromise their faith with cultural standards and practices.

Central to syncretism is the belief that all religions offer truth or have unique but similar information about God. With the application of faith and reasoning in this dispensation of indigenous traditional worship, many Christians assume that combining certain cultures and religious teachings may produce a better way of knowing or reaching God. Examples of such syncretic movements include:

1. Rastafarianism: This is a religious syncretic practice in which Christian religion is blended with Pan-African ethnic identity and Caribbean slave religious practices. This religious and cultural blending has become internationally recognized with multiple Christian undertones.

2. Godianism (also called Chiism) is a neo-traditional religious movement that started in the late 1940s in Nigeria and was originally known as the National Church of Nigeria. Godianism tolerates some Bible principles like creation, universal unity, peace, love, and life. It is an extension of the Abrahamic faiths, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

3. Other notable examples of this religious blending of faith and reasoning include Dodoism, Candomble, Santeria, Unification of Churches, etc. In contemporary Christian teachings and practices, basic elements of the gospel have been replaced by religious elements from the host culture. Such a syncretic act occurs with the attempt to undermine the uniqueness of the gospel as found in the Bible for the personal, selfish, or corporate interest of some people. In addition to this Challenge, faith, and reasoning as applied in contemporary indigenous religious practices have supported or introduced modern syncretic movements like Mysticism, Occultism, modern astrology, Neopaganism, observance of Christmas as Christ's birthday, and the New Age Movement. All these romantic and syncretistic Christo-Cultural movements have contributed to issues of dual allegiance and faithlessness in some Christians (Mugambi 25-37).

Conclusion/Recommendation

Religious reasoning mostly deals with the process of forming religious beliefs and how they impact the immediate adherents. While religious reasoning aims at revealing the empirical truth, faith, as applied in religions emphasizes absolute trust in a given grace of a supreme deity. In African Traditional Religions, Faith and Reason intertwine to guide the general belief in a deity. In ATR, reason elucidates experience, discerns meanings, and makes explicit that which was simply implicit as apostle Paul did in his address to the Athenian traditional worshipers on Mass Hill (Acts 17:22-31).

Another effect of the dialogue between faith and reason in Traditional Religion is the syncretic evolution of contemporary Trado-Christian religious practices that give birth to new religious movements or practices like Rastafarianism, Godianism, the Aladura Churches, incantation prayers in Christian Churches, etc.

African Traditional Religion's synthesis of faith and reason offers a powerful challenge to dominant Western epistemologies. By recognizing the ancestral wisdom embodied in ATR, we can better appreciate the richness and diversity of human knowledge and experience.

This article provides insights into the role of reasoning in African traditional religion. It highlights how reasoning enables individuals to interpret symbols and rituals, make moral decisions, understand cosmology, and engage critically with their religious traditions. Reasoning allows individuals to actively participate in their religious practices and contribute to the ongoing evolution of ATR.

As Africa continues to evolve and embrace new influences, preserving and understanding African traditional religion become crucial in celebrating the continent's rich spiritual heritage. By appreciating the role of faith in African traditional religion, we can gain insights into the profound depths of human spirituality, the power of cultural diversity, and the enduring bonds between people and their cultural roots.

The statement in James 2:14-26 which says that "faith without work as dead" means that the end product of true faith is good works. A living body without the spirit of God and the truth of His word needs help. In African religion, faith is not expressed through doctrines or theological statements as found in Christianity and

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other world religions. Still, faith is the substance used in solving day-to-day encounters with the challenges of life. To support these cultural standards, this articles recommends the following:

1. Belief in Spiritual Practices: Traditional adherents should believe and engage in spiritual practices like prayer, meditation and rituals to deepen community connection with the divine. While Christians and other religious adherents should remain faithful to their dogmas and avoid dual allegiance.
2. Respect for Traditions and Ancestral Wisdom: Traditions and cultures that promote good morals, peace, and unity in society should be tolerated and respected, and should not be degraded or weakened by other religious biases.
3. Dialogue and Discussion: Religious movements and Institutions should encourage dialogue and discussions that may proffer common ground among religions of different practices. This approach will help faith leaders, scholars, and community members promote mutual understanding.

Emphasis on Paradox: Religious leaders, Community members, their leaders, scholars, and students should recognize that faith and reason can coexist with paradox and mystery, accepting that some aspects of faith may transcend human reasoning. By embracing both faith and reason, African traditions can promote rich and enduring cultural practices that will endure the past, present, and future.

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