

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ATONEMENT THEOLOGY IN IGBO TRADITIONAL RITUALS OF EXPIATORY PURIFICATION/SACRIFICE (*IKPU ALU*) AND THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS (HEBREWS 10:1-18)**

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**Abstract**

*This study examines the atonement theology in Igbo traditional ritual of expiatory purification/sacrifice, known as Ikpu Alu, and the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 10:1-18). The study aim sat shedding light on the similarities and differences between the two systems of atonement, and the theological significance of these practices. The Igbo, indigenous to the southeastern Nigeria, have a rich cultural heritage that includes religious rituals aimed at appeasing deities. Central to these ceremonies is the Ikpu Alu ritual, which involves sacrificial offerings and acts of purification. The Hebrew, on the other hand, was an ancient Semitic group for whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. This biblical text presents a unique understanding of atonement through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. By employing a comparative approach, this study examines the underlying theological frameworks behind the Igbo traditional rituals and the Epistle to the Hebrews. It explores their shared emphasis on the need for purification and the removal of sins, as well as the specific sacrificial elements involved in each system. Additionally, the study investigates the theological implications of these rituals in terms of redemption, forgiveness, and restoration. Through an analysis of the relevant scriptural passages from the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 10:1-18) and an examination of ethnographic data on Ikpu Alu. This research aims to highlight the parallels, divergences, and possible influences between these two atonement systems. The results of this comparative analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the theological underpinnings of atonement in both the Igbo tradition and the Epistle to the Hebrews. It will offer valuable insights into the ways in which different cultures and religious traditions perceive and seek reconciliation with the divine, and the ways in which these perspectives can inform contemporary theological discourse. By exploring these themes, this study opens avenues for further research, dialogue, and cross-cultural understanding in the field of religious studies.*

**Introduction**

In the realm of comparative religious studies, the examination of various rituals and theological concepts across cultures can provide profound insights into the nature of human beliefs and practices. This essay aims to undertake a comparative analysis of the atonement theology in the Igbo traditional ritual of expiatory purification or sacrifice, known as *Ikpu Alu*, and the biblical Epistle to the Hebrews, specifically focusing on Hebrews 10:1-18. The Igbo people, residing in present day Nigeria, have a rich and vibrant cultural heritage deeply intertwined with their traditional religious beliefs. Central to their religious practices is the ritual of expiatory purification, known as *Ikpu Alu*, which entails the offering of sacrifices to appease the spirits and cleanse the individual or community of wrongdoing. This ritual holds great significance in Igbo society, and its principles and underlying theology bear striking resemblance to certain concepts presented in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Epistle to the Hebrews, a significant book in the New Testament, encompasses a profound exploration of Jesus Christ sacrifice and its redemptive nature. Particularly, Hebrews 10:1-18 highlights the superiority of Christ's atoning sacrifice over the ritual sacrifices of the Old Covenant. It delves into the idea that the previous sacrifices served as temporary means of purification, while Christ's sacrifice represented a once-and-for-all expiation of sin. By juxtaposing the Igbo ritual of *Ikpu Alu* and the biblical text of Hebrews 10:1-18, we

can discern intriguing parallels and divergences in their atonement theologies. The central focus of both rituals is the act of sacrifice as a means of achieving purification and reconciling with higher powers. Furthermore, both traditions recognize the need for a mediator between humans and the divine, as seen in the Igbo priest and the role of Jesus Christ in Hebrews. Nonetheless, significant differences arise between the two traditions. *Ikpu Alu* emphasizes communal reconciliation, seeking to restore harmony within the broader Igbo society, while Hebrews primarily focuses on personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the permanence and efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, as expounded in Hebrews, contrast with the cyclical nature of *Ikpu Alu*, where repeated rituals of sacrifices are necessitated over time.

### **The Concept of Igbo Traditional Rituals of Expiatory Purification/Sacrifice (*Ikpu Alu*)**

In Igbo culture, an expiatory purification ritual known as "*Ikpu Alu*" is a significant part of traditional and religious practices. These rituals are performed to cleanse individuals or communities of spiritual impurity or sin causes by various offenses or transgressions through sacrificial and cleansing rites. The aim is to restore harmony between the people and the spiritual realm. The ministers of expiation in Igbo land play crucial roles in facilitating these processes. This discussion will cover the three main ministers of expiation in Igbo culture: the Priest of *Ala*, the *Dibia-Afa* and the *Nri*-Priest. Firstly, Ugwu (1987) says that the Priest of *Ala* holds a significant position in Igbo society, acting as a mediator between the people and the various deities or spirits. The priest is responsible for leading and conducting religious ceremonies and rituals, including those of expiation. His primary duties include offering sacrifices, performing chants and incantations, and providing spiritual guidance to the community. Through their intimate connection with the divine, priests are believed to possess the authority to intercede on behalf of individuals or the entire community during expiation rituals. Secondly, Arinze (1970) wrote that the *Dibia-Afa*, also known as the diviner, plays a vital role in the Igbo expiatory process. The *Dibia Afa* is a practitioner of a unique form of divination called *Afa*. Divination is a means of seeking spiritual insight and guidance, and it holds significant importance in Igbo society. The *Dibia Afa* uses special symbolic objects, such as the *Afa* oracle and palm nuts, to communicate with the spiritual realm and interpret the will of the gods. During expiation rituals, the *Dibia Afa* is consulted to identify the nature of the wrongdoing or impurity, determine the necessary actions for atonement, and recommend the appropriate sacrifices or rituals to be performed. Lastly, Ogbalu (1979) acknowledged that the *Nri* priest plays a distinctive role in the Igbo expiation system, particularly within the *Nri* community. *Nri* is a town in present day Anambra State, Nigeria, regarded as the spiritual center of the Igbo people. The *Nri* priest, known as the *Eze-Nri*, is considered as the custodian of the town's sacred rituals and traditions. His responsibilities include conducting expiation rituals not only for individuals but also for the entire community. The *Nri* priest is believed to possess a special spiritual authority passed down through generations, thus playing a crucial role in maintaining spiritual harmony and ensuring the well-being of the community.

### **The Requirements for Expiation in Igbo Land**

There are number of items which considered important for any meaningful expiatory sacrifices in Igbo land. These include the following: rams, sheep, goats, fowl, chickens, or even human beings. Others are eggs, yams, *omu-nkwu* (tender palm frond), kola nuts, and *nzu* (traditional chalk). However, all of these are not used in expiating one abomination. Rather, two or more of these may be required depending on the gravity of the offence committed. The use of some these items are symbolic. For example, the *omu-nkwu* (tender palm frond) symbolizes the sacredness of the place, since a deity is believed to be present there. Sometimes the animal for the sacrifice is tied with a tender palm frond or the person who committed the abomination (*Aru*) may be touched with it. The Staff of office of the chief priest has a tender palm frond (*omu*) tied around it. It is with this staff that he goes round the compound of the offender with the following or similar incantation, *Aru puo*, "abomination depart". The traditional chalk and the kola nut are two important symbolic items used for sacrifices. Both symbolize goodwill, purity, and sacredness. Kola is a symbol of love, unity, peace, and sacredness. It is during the breaking of the kola nut that the worshipper invites the deities and ancestors to come and intercede for the offender who wishes to reconcile with them and his people. With this, a friendly relationship is maintained such that when the abomination is removed, the reconciliation with the offended family or community is demonstrated by the sharing of kola nut. The kola nut is therefore one of the items used to appease and

cleanse the defiled earth and also to restore the broken relationship due to the abomination committed against the community. Parrinder (1968) put it aptly when he says: the kola nut is a sign of friendship, if it split into two and a part handed to a friend, that binds him in a union, "we have eaten kola together"(p. 88). The other important item used in the expiatory sacrifice is the blood of an animal and it is highly valuable. Here the blood, which the Igbo regard as life, is given to the deity in exchange for the culprit's own life which he could have used to pay for the abomination he committed. The blood is normally poured on the earth for the gods to drink. Sometimes, it is poured onto sticks like *ogirisi* trees, representing the gods. Consequently, Jones (1995) has this to say: "if the sacrifice was for the removal of sin, it was always accompanied by the shedding of blood. The blood represented life and was therefore of special value to the spirits" (p. 119). The carcass could be eaten or thrown away as valueless as far as the spirits were concerned. The blood was poured on various objects (images) of the *Alusi* in which the spirits were presumed to dwell, and they were then regarded as placated. After such purificatory or expiatory sacrifice, the people are assured that the blood has become a sure and effective ransom since the pollution has been removed. The blood of animals was used in most cases but sometimes in some places in the olden days, human beings were used for the sacrifice of atonement. Igbo traditional religion regarded human sacrifice as the highest and most important form of sacrifice to a deity. It was the final appeal which they could not exceed. According to Ekechukwu A. (1982),

From time to time humans were offered as propitiation to angry gods, but in general human sacrifice was unusual and was reserved for very special occasions such as warding off of an epidemic or widespread disaster. It was done either to satisfy the demand of a divinity for a human victim so that the whole town might not perish or because it was necessary to give a respected reigning Chief and or a renowned dead hero some retinue to accompany him to the land of his forefathers (p. 144).

Ekennia J.N (1984) also commented on this issue when he said: "it was only when the offering of animals failed to bring about a cessation of the trouble that the people felt that the only course left to them was to offer a human being" (p. 73). This means that when an extreme abomination had been committed against the land, a human victim was chosen as a "scape-goat" to remove or drive out the abomination or great evil from the community. By so doing, the polluted land was purified and the offended spirits of the land were pacified. Generally, the human being to be used for the expiatory sacrifice was not from the community, but from a neighboring town or village. According to Aapengnuo C. (2009), "such a victim had to be sought from outside; it was a taboo to make use of a fellow villager" (p. 44). Normally it was a slave purchased from another town. Those kidnapped during the inter-tribal wars may also be used, and where there was no available victim, some people may be delegated to hunt for fellow human beings in a neighboring town to be used as a scape-goat for the sacrifice. The Igbo sacrificed human beings on rare occasions and the victim was never eaten. The confirmation of this is given by Agunwa (1993) when he writes: "generally a human being was not sacrificed except for very serious reason such as removing a plague or epidemic" (p. 77). However, after the advent of Christianity and the abolition of slavery in Igbo land, animals like ram, goat, sheep, etc. were used as substitutes for human beings. This means that even the nagging spirits which, in the olden days, were used to demanding a human victim were then forced, except in a few remote areas, to accept the lower animals for their sacrifices irrespective of the type of abomination or disaster.

### **General overview of the letter to the Hebrews and Atonement Theology in Hebrews 10: 1-18**

The letter to the Hebrews is an important letter found in the New Testament of the Bible. It is an anonymous work, as the author's identity remains unknown, but it is traditionally attributed to the apostle Paul or one of his close associates. The letter was written to a Jewish Christian audience, possibly in the first century A.D., who were facing persecution and considering a return to Jewish rituals and practices. The main purpose of the letter to the Hebrews is to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus Christ and the new covenant over the old covenant system of the Mosaic Law. It presents Jesus as the ultimate high priest who fulfills and surpasses the Levitical priesthood and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. The author uses various arguments, such as showing how Jesus is greater than angels, Moses, and the high priests, to establish the supremacy of Christ. The letter to the Hebrews emphasizes the importance of faith and encourages its readers to persevere in their faith despite hardships and

persecution. It includes warnings against apostasy and falling away from the truth, while also giving practical exhortations for holy living and mutual love within the Christian community.

Certainly, in atonement theology, the role of Jesus Christ as the ultimate sacrifice for sins holds great significance. This idea is particularly emphasized in the letter of Hebrews, especially Hebrews 10: 1-18. This passage discusses the superiority of Christ's sacrifice compared to the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. Hebrews 10: 1-4 highlights the limitations of both the Old Testament and Igbo traditional expiatory sacrificial systems. It states that the sacrifices offered year after year were insufficient to permanently take away sins. These animal sacrifices served as a temporary covering, symbolizing repentance and the desire for forgiveness. However, they could not bring about complete atonement due to their inability to cleanse the conscience of the worshipers. The passage goes on to explain that God's plan for redemption involved sending Jesus Christ as the ultimate sacrifice. In verse 5, the author quotes Psalm 40:6-8, where the psalmist is depicted as saying, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body has you prepared for me." This indicates that the sacrifice of Christ's own body was God's ultimate plan for the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 10:10 states, "And by that will, we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Here, the author emphasizes the significance of Christ's sacrifice being a one-time event that accomplished eternal redemption for humanity. Unlike the repeated animal sacrifices, Jesus' sacrifice was sufficient to permanently cleanse and sanctify believers. The passage further clarifies that Christ's sacrifice was effective in accomplishing what the Old Testament and Igbo traditional rituals of expiatory sacrifices could not. Hebrews 10:14 asserts, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." This highlights the eternal impact of Christ's sacrifice, as it made possible the complete forgiveness and righteousness of believers. Additionally, Hebrews 10:18 declare, "Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin." This statement underscores the finality and sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. It implies that there is no need for any further offering or sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins because Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled that requirement completely.

### **Comparative Analysis: *Ikpu Alu* and Hebrews 10:1-18**

*Ikpu Alu* and Hebrews 10:1-18 are two distinct sources that discuss different aspects of religious practices and beliefs. In this comparative analysis, we will examine these sources, highlight their key points, and draw potential connections or differences between them.

*Ikpu Alu* is a traditional African religious practice that originates from the Igbo tribe of Nigeria. It involves the act of ritual sacrifices to appease the gods and ancestors, seeking their blessings and protection. On the other hand, Hebrews 10:1-18 is a biblical passage found in the New Testament that addresses the concept of sacrifices in early Christianity, emphasizing the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the ultimate atonement for sins. To begin the analysis, we will first explore the key points of *Ikpu Alu* as discussed by Afigbo (1985):

1. **Ritual Sacrifice.** *Ikpu Alu* centers on the practice of offering sacrifices to deities and ancestors. These sacrifices often include animals, food items, or libations.
2. **Spiritual Connection.** The purpose of these offerings is to establish a connection and communication with the spiritual realm, seeking divine intervention, blessings, or protection.
3. **Ritualistic Practices.** *Ikpu Alu* involves specific ceremonies, often led by spiritual leaders or priests, to perform the sacrifices and uphold the traditions of Igbo people.
4. **Ancestor Veneration.** Alongside deities, ancestors hold an important place in *Ikpu Alu*, and the sacrifices can be made to honor and remember them.

Now, let's explore the key points of Hebrews 10:1-18

1. **Jesus Christ's Sacrificial Atonement:** Hebrews 10:1-18 emphasizes that the sacrificial systems of the Old Testament and that of Igbo traditional ritual of expiation was insufficient in permanently removing sins. Jesus Christ, through his sacrificial death on the cross, becomes the ultimate and perfect sacrifice.

2. **Salvation and Forgiveness:** The passage highlights that Jesus' sacrifice provides believers with forgiveness and salvation, reconciling them with God.
3. **Abolishment of Ritual Sacrifice.** Hebrews 10:1-18 suggests that Jesus' sacrifice made the need for further ritualistic animal sacrifices obsolete. It presents Jesus as the high priest who offered himself as the final sacrifice to cleanse humanity from their sins.
4. **New Covenant.** The passage refers to the establishment of a new covenant through Jesus' sacrifice, indicating a shift in religious practices and emphasizing faith and spiritual transformation.

In comparing *Ikpu Alu* and Hebrews 10:1-18, some similarities and differences can be identified:

1. **Sacrificial Aspect.** Both *Ikpu Alu* and Hebrews 10:1-18 involve the concept of sacrifices. However, in *Ikpu Alu*, the sacrifices are directed towards deities and ancestors, while in Hebrews, the focus is on Jesus' sacrifice for the salvation of believers.
2. **Spiritual Connection.** Both practices seek a spiritual connection, with *Ikpu Alu* aiming to gain blessings and protection from deities and ancestors, and Hebrews emphasizing a personal relationship with God through Jesus' sacrifice.
3. **Ritualistic Practices vs. Faith.** *Ikpu Alu* heavily relies on ritualistic practices led by priests, while Hebrews emphasizes faith in Jesus' sacrifice, as the key to salvation, highlighting a profound shift from external acts to internal belief.

### Implications for Understanding Atonement and Salvation

Understanding atonement and salvation carries significant implications for various religious, theological, and philosophical traditions. Here, we explore some of the implications as follows;

1. **Atonement and Justice.** One implication is the relationship between atonement and justice. Within Christian theology, the concept of atonement emphasizes Jesus Christ's sacrificial death as a means of reconciling humanity with God and providing forgiveness for sins. This understanding raises questions about how justice and mercy intersect. As McGrath (2013) states, "The atonement is an act of divine justice that ensures that evil is appropriately punished while enabling redemption" (p. 51). This view suggests that God's justice is satisfied through the atoning work of Christ.
2. **Universal vs. Particular Atonement.** Another implication lies in the debate regarding universal and particular atonement. Universal atonement implies that Christ's sacrifice has the potential to save all of humanity, while particular atonement suggests that it is intended only for the elect. This discourse raises questions about the scope and extent of salvation. Pipe (2012) argues for particular atonement, stating that "Christ's death did not merely make salvation possible; it effectively secures it for those chosen by God" (p. 92). Conversely, Moltmann (2015) advocates for universal atonement, emphasizing God's inclusive love extended to all (p. 186).
3. **Cultural Context and Salvation.** Understanding atonement and salvation also necessitates considering cultural and contextual interpretations. Different religious traditions offer diverse perspectives on the nature of salvation and how it is attained. For example, in Buddhism, salvation is often understood as liberation from the cycle of rebirth and suffering (Humphreys, 2000, p. 213). Hinduism, on the other hand, emphasizes union with the divine (Brass, 2013, p. 213). These variations highlight the impact of cultural and philosophical contexts on the understanding of salvation.
4. **Ethical Implications.** Furthermore, understanding atonement and salvation can have ethical implications. In Christianity, the belief in salvation through grace can inspire individuals to cultivate virtues and engage in acts of compassion and love. This connection between theology and ethics is highlighted by various theologians, including Niebuhr (1996), who states, "True participation in the divine life and grace cannot but result in a life that imitates the divine self-giving" (p. 203). Therefore, the concept of salvation influences personal and communal moral perspectives.

### **Danger of Practicing Sacrifices to Ancestors (*Ikpu alu*) in Igbo Land**

The practice of sacrifices to ancestors is a ritual practice for the adherents of African Traditional Religion not Christianity. In the African Traditional Religion, ancestors are the intermediaries between God and the tribe; in Christianity, intermediary is Christ. Therefore, when an African converts from ATR to Christianity, she/he needs to reconsider some issues, which she/ he should leave behind. The central question is: What is the implication of practicing ancestral sacrifices in the midst of Christ sacrifice?

#### **Idolatry**

Within the Christian context, ancestors become rival mediators to Christ. According to Gehman R. (1993), in the African Christian context, communion and sacrifices to ancestors lead to an act of idolatry and syncretism. First, Gehman (1993) points out that idolatry is merely a spiritual force represented by that image, and this spiritual force makes believers unclean (Dt. 7:25). In the African context, the spiritual power behind ancestral sacrifices is the ancestral spirit, not the spirit of Christ. Secondly, Gehman (1993) further mentions that the power of fallen spirits who are serving Satan and who are hostile to God are behind idols (1 Cor. 8:5-6). Lastly, Gehman describes idolatry as a process of giving a creature the devotion that belongs to God and to allow it to take precedence over God's will. The existence of ancestral veneration, commemoration or worship for that matter, perpetuates the performance of sacrifices; all these rituals to ancestors are unnecessary, make us enemies of God, and prevent us from doing the will of God imprinted in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. Gehman (1993) concludes as follows about the worship of ancestors: "Among the ancestors idolatry is a living danger". This is true, because the worship, veneration or commemoration of ancestors draw attention away from God and what he has done for us in Christ (Nürnberg 2004). In contextualizing the above discussion, Nürnberg (2004) argues that, like every nation, Israel had their ancestors, but they were regarded as dead and gone. The memory of ancestors reassured Israel of Yahweh's ongoing commitment. Yahweh was the centre of worship, the source of life and identity, and Yahweh was jealous of any rival deity. By contrast, in the African/Igbo context, memory of ancestors assures and reminds Africans of their source of life, identity and history embedded in their ancestors (Oduyoye 1981). Unlike Israel, ancestors are viewed as the source of life, identity, meaning and right to existence. It is this kind of perception that should be transformed when Africans/Igbo man/ woman converts to Christianity. In African Christianity, Christ should play the central role and lead them to God. Ancestors should be viewed as dead and gone; there is no longer communion with them as they belong to the old order. For African Christians, communion with the ancestors for, among other things, seeking help leads to idolatry, as communion with ancestors hinders the role of Christ given by God.

#### **Syncretism**

Magesa (1994) argues that, when Christianity was introduced in Africa, it was already a syncretistic unit of lived faith as it had absorbed components of different cultures and religions. Magesa adds that, in the process to achieve maturity in faith, Africans must be allowed to make mistakes, even mistakes of syncretism. In response to Magesa, the following is essential: Communion and offering sacrifices to ancestors as a Christian is an act of syncretism. Gehman (1993) explains syncretism as the joining together of elements of two religions which are incompatible, and deny any unique revelation from God or Christ. On the one hand, Nichols (1979) argues that the practice of sacrifices to ancestors is a commitment of cultural and theological syncretism. Nichols (1979) further elaborates that theological syncretism is more destructive than cultural syncretism in the sense that it rejects the finality of the revelation in Christ and relativises the core truths of the scripture. On the other hand, Gehman (1993) also mentions that there are two kinds of syncretism, namely conscious and deliberate syncretism usually practiced by African Independent Churches, and spontaneous syncretism which entails mixing unknowingly that which does not mix. African Traditional Religion, with its worship of ancestors and sacrificial rituals, and Christianity are two different religions. If Africans bluntly combine them, they commit conscious, deliberate and theological syncretism; deny and hinder the unique revelation of God, and commit a deliberate sin. According to Hebrews 10:29, if we profane the blood of Christ, we insult the Spirit of Grace and reject Jesus as Son of God. Consequently, we will have to expect fearful judgment from God (Heb. 10:27) and forfeit the promises of the New Covenant. In response to Magesa, I acknowledge that Christianity received by Africans was mixed with elements from other cultures and religions. I also acknowledge that Africans are fallible human beings. However, this does not absolve

Africans from the fact that they are responsible for the appropriate response to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this regard, communion and doing sacrifices to ancestors as a Christian is an act of theological and deliberate syncretism. The rejection of sacrifice to ancestors and other deities, the denial of communion with the dead and the acceptance of Christ sacrifice as final, perfect and eternal are the mandate to the universal Church. African Christians, including other nation's still practicing sacrifice to the ancestors, are obliged to heed the authoritative word of God from the scripture that ancestral sacrifices are annulled and replaced with Christ's once for all sacrifice. The refusal or rather hesitance to accept the implications of the sacrifice of Christ hinders one's personal relationship with Christ.

### Conclusion

*Ikpu alu* is a traditional religious practice that is still prevalent in Igbo land. The practice helps an adherent to Igbo traditional religion to atone for his/her evil deeds. The end is forgiveness and reconciliation. In the New Testament, Christ atoned for the sins of humanity and reconciled it to God. Simple observation indicates that an Igbo Christian believes that anyone who violates the norms of the land (*Omenala*) will never be at rest, for the land always pursues him until the ritual of *Ikpu alu* is performed. This practice should help Christians to see the necessity of confessing one's sins, the effect of guilt and the need for reconciliation. It should also enable them to better understand the Christian doctrine of reconciliation. This is important since the majority of the Igbo are now Christians. Incorporating Christian process of reconciliation into the Igbo ritual of *Ikpu alu* or vice versa will go a long way in socializing an Igbo into being an authentic Igbo who is a Christian and not cut off from his Igbo roots.

### Recommendations

First, to enrich the quality of Christian faith, one needs to acknowledge the implications of the sacrifice of Christ, which is superior to all other rituals or forms of sacrifices. It is the duty of the Christian Church and the individual Christian to teach this truth to everyone, especially those from indigenous cultures converting to Christianity. In addition, for Igbo Christians, the memory of sacrifices to the ancestors should not tempt them to relapse into African Traditional Religion, but should enrich and confirm their hope in the implications of the sacrifice of Christ. Igbo people should allow the gospel to transform the perception of sacrifices to the ancestors towards a new direction, and should not resist the introduction into African culture of the special revelation about Jesus' supreme sacrifice, in order to enrich and develop the people.

Secondly, for the Igbo Christians, sacrifice to the ancestors is replaced by Christ's perfect and superior sacrifice. It is no longer necessary to offer sacrifices to ancestors in fear or exchange of favours, for Christ has secured for us all we need. Therefore, let us sincerely approach God in faith in Christ. Let us adhere to our hope in Christ. Let us help one another in love to come to faith in Christ. However, we should note that, if we ignore the marvelous work done by Christ's sacrifice, we profane the blood of Christ and insult the Spirit of grace. There is no other sacrifice that shall guarantee our forgiveness of sins.

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