



AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF CULTURAL REDEFINITION AND REALIGNMENT IN IGBO SOCIETY: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *ITU MMANYA NA ANI* AND THE BIBLICAL PRECEDENT IN GENESIS 35:14

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Abstract

An Exploratory Examination of Cultural Redefinition and Realignment in Igbo Society: A Comparative Analysis of Itu Mmanya na Ani and the Biblical Precedent in Genesis 35:14. This paper investigates the theological and ontological discrepancies between the Igbo practice of Itu Mmanya na Ani (the pouring of libations or the ritual use of kola nut to honour ancestors) and the biblical religio-cultural framework. By utilizing Genesis 35:14 as a comparative locus, the study posits that the divergence between these two contexts is rooted in a fundamental disconnect regarding creational knowledge and the subsequent formulation of cultural concepts. This paper argues that this conceptual gap can be bridged through a realignment with Biblical Recreation Accounts and Biblical Human Anthropology. Such a framework facilitates a transformative shift in the Igbo consciousness, providing the necessary epistemological tools to identify the historical and spiritual inflection points where indigenous concepts began to conflict with the character, nature, and moral laws of the Creator. Adopting a dual methodology that integrates theological inquiry with ethnographical analysis, this study advocates for a systematic re-evaluation of traditional rites. The findings suggest that while the Igbo practice of Itu Mmanya na Ani may share a structural resemblance to the drink offerings recorded in antiquity, it has diverged significantly due to influences encountered during periods of transitional migration. Consequently, the paper concludes that a culturally constructive and "Creator-friendly" realignment necessitates discontinuing these traditional libations in favor of sound, biblically-based conceptualizations.

Keywords: *Itu Mmanya na Ani*, Igbo Ontology, Cultural Realignment, Biblical Anthropology, Theological Inquiry, Creational Knowledge

Introduction

This essay investigates the deep-seated theological and ontological discrepancies between the traditional Igbo practice of *Itu Mmanya na Ani*—the pouring of libations and ritual use of kola nut to honor ancestors—and the religio-cultural framework established in the Holy Scriptures. By utilizing the drink offering in Genesis 35:14 as a comparative locus, the study posits that the divergence between these two contexts is rooted in a fundamental disconnect regarding creational knowledge and the subsequent formulation of cultural identity. It is argued herein that this conceptual gap can be bridged through a rigorous realignment with Biblical Recreation Accounts and Biblical Human Anthropology, providing the necessary epistemological tools to identify the historical and spiritual inflection points where indigenous Igbo concepts began to conflict with the character and moral laws of the Creator. Adopting a dual methodology that integrates theological inquiry with ethnographic analysis, this research advocates for a systematic re-evaluation of traditional rites, suggesting that while *Itu Mmanya na Ani* may share a structural resemblance to ancient biblical offerings, it has diverged significantly due to influences encountered during periods of transitional migration. Ultimately, this examination concludes that a culturally constructive and "Creator-friendly"



realignment necessitates the discontinuation of these traditional libations in favor of sound, biblically-based conceptualizations that restore the Igbo consciousness to its original divine intent.

Pouring of Wine to the Ground

Ancient Near East and Palestine Culture and Religion

The practice of libations, including pouring of wine on the ground, was a widespread custom in the ancient Near East, predating and continuing alongside Israelite worship. It was a way to connect with the divine, express gratitude, and demonstrate devotion. The Bible first records the pouring of wine as part of a drink offering made by Jacob at Bethel, as mentioned in Genesis 35:14: “And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with Him, even a pillar of stone, and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon.” This sacrifice signifies Jacob’s devotion to God and remembrance of God’s presence and his encounter with Yahweh, and it symbolizes a memorial offering to God, which the pouring of wine to the ground represents. Not to the dead but to the living-Yahweh who is eternal. Pouring of wine to the ground is an ancient Jewish practice, and it is more significantly observed in the days of Jacob. It was in Jacob’s days that the Bible recorded its first practice, and it lived through the Old Testament. The ritual of pouring wine to the ground is a libation. However, in the context in which it was first observed, the focus remained that God was central and not the ancestor nor the Mother Earth. It was a ritual that was meant for God to cement a relationship between the one who sacrifices or the one who pours out wine to the ground and to whom it was poured out, which is God. Ancient Israel adopted this and kept to it to the point that it became a very essential religious and cultural practice among the Jewish people. It has so many spiritual significances. This is the earliest instance of pouring wine as a religious ritual in the Bible. This act was a form of worship and dedication, symbolizing the pouring out of one’s life in devotion to God. In ancient Israelite worship, the pouring of wine (a drink offering) symbolized joy, gratitude, and the complete surrender of life to Yahweh. It represented God’s blessings and provision, as well as the worshiper’s dedication and devotion. The act of pouring out the wine mirrored the complete offering of oneself to God. The act of pouring out the wine on the altar signified the complete dedication of the worshiper’s life and resources to God. It was a symbolic representation of offering oneself entirely to God’s service. The drink offering was a regular part of sacrificial rituals in the Old Testament, symbolizing the covenant between God and Israel. It served as a reminder of the promises and commitments made by both parties, strengthening the bond of faithfulness and obedience. Wine, a symbol of joy and abundance in the Old Testament, was poured out as a drink offering to God, signifying the worshiper’s recognition of God as the source of all blessings. The primary significance of the drink offering was designed to invite God into worship between him and the mortal. It was also meant to show gratitude to God and also an avenue to appreciate God for what he has done and an expression of joy by the celebrant.

There were other biblical passages where wine was poured to the ground and was regarded as a wine offering, which was a practice recognized in Mosaic laws as a drink offering. Instances where such practices were mentioned in the Torah could be found in:

Old Testament Passages (Israelite Worship)-

Exodus 29:40- God instructs Moses to offer a drink offering of wine with the burnt offering of each lamb: “With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with a quarter hin of oil from pressed olives, and a drink offering of a quarter *hin* of wine”.

Numbers 15:5- This passage specifies the amounts of wine required for different sacrifices: “With the burnt offering or sacrifice of each lamb, prepare a quarter *hin* of wine as a drink offering”. (Ref Num 28:7)



Leviticus 23:13- This verse lists the drink offering as part of a grain offering for feasts, noting it was a “food offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma”.

Psalm 16:4 -refers to “drink offerings of blood,” which the psalmist would not offer, contrasting with the “abominations of the heathen” who mixed the blood of sacrificed animals with wine.

New Testament and Later References-

In the New Testament, the imagery of the drink offering is used to describe sacrificial service, particularly in Paul’s writings, highlighting the idea of pouring out one’s life for the sake of others and the Gospel.

In the context of worship to Yahweh, the act of pouring wine on the ground (a drink offering) signifies a symbolic act of consecration, gratitude, and covenant renewal. It represents giving back to God what He has provided, acknowledging His ownership of all things, and reinforcing the relationship between God and His people. The practice and use of wine in Jewish religious history, later in the New Testament, was replaced with the blood of Jesus; a symbolic element in the Eucharistic order. In the New Testament, the wine used in the Eucharist (Holy Communion) symbolizes the blood of Christ, offering another layer of symbolic meaning connected to sacrifice and redemption.

Philippians 2:17 -The Apostle Paul describes his life being “poured out” as a drink offering in service to the faith of the Philippians, using the sacrificial term metaphorically.

Revelation 16 mentions the act of libation, describing large bowls used in ancient practice for pouring out wine as part of religious rituals.

In light of this practice, we could also find in the Holy Scriptures where a similar practice of pouring wine was strongly condemned and forbidden because there was a deviation from its foundational aim, objective, and purpose in worship of Yahweh. The aforementioned ideas as practiced in Judaic religion and culture were ascribed only to Yahweh and not to any other gods and neither was it intended for the dead or the ancestors. In Jeremiah 7:18 and Jeremiah 19:13, we saw where the practice of pouring wine to the ground was condemned because the purpose for which it was done was contrary to its root conception. The practice of making drink offerings to the “Queen of Heaven” and Baal was a form of idolatry forbidden by God. It is also good to remember that Baal was the principal deity whom the Amorites worshipped. Its altar was located in Gilead, east of the Jordan River; a place believed to have been allocated to the descendants of Gad as their inheritance. This background history could also help to lend credence to where such practice could have been picked up and transferred to subsequent generations of people who had lived there and later migrated out of the region during the Assyrian conquest in 722 BC. If the Igbos could be traced to having Jewish descent and most likely to the tribe of Gad, the answer is not far-fetched, which suggests that the *itu mmanya* ritual in Igbo cosmology may have had its roots in the culture that was practiced in the east of the Jordan River. It is a corrupt practice, a ritual that is common in Igbo society, which Equiano saw his people doing in his childhood. He writes thus, “After washing, libation is made by pouring out a small drink on the floor and tossing a small quantity of the food in a certain place, for the spirit of the departed relations” (Equiano, 1837). It was a deviation from what Jacob did and focus here was not but on the ancestors; an act God rejected and condemned as the same libation was in the days of Jeremiah. Jeremiah 44:17-19 reveals details that the people continued in the rebellious practice of pouring out libations to the Queen of Heaven, despite God’s warnings. Jeremiah 7:18, 19:13, and 44:17-19 show where the practice is described as part of the forbidden worship of the “Queen of Heaven” and Baal. A practice of this nature represents a parallel idea to what we see today in traditional Igbo society. It was an idea that had its root in Gilead. The Gadites, who had their share



of inheritance in Gilead, were not only attracted to the Amorites' wicked practices but also copied some of their religious ritual practices of pouring wine to the ground for their ancestors and to their deities. The practice of pouring wine to the ground was one of the acts that resulted in the expulsion of the Gadites and the other two tribes living in the east of the Jordan River. However, before their expulsion, the Bible reveals that Jacob was the first to initiate or begin the practice of pouring out a drink offering of wine to the ground, and its aim and purpose were God-focused and land venerated, and it was not directed to his ancestors. Neither the ancestors nor the land was central and a basis for the sacrifice.

Therefore, at this point, one would pause to ask, why is land an essential element in the act of wine to the ground? Land is essential because, in ancient Israel, it held a significant symbolic meaning, particularly when associated with the pouring of wine. It represented God's blessing, prosperity, and the covenant relationship with his people. The land, with its vineyards, was often described as a source of joy and abundance, and wine, as a product of the land, became a symbol of God's favor. In the Bible, land holds profound spiritual significance, extending beyond its physical definition. It symbolizes divine gifts, covenant faithfulness, and a place of dwelling with God. The land represents God's promises, His provision, and the fulfillment of His word. It also reflects the spiritual state of a nation, acting as a "thermometer" of covenant faithfulness.

The practice of pouring wine to the ground, as it were, in Judaism is a ritual that is equally observed and practiced by the Igbos of the south-east and south-west of Nigeria. In the traditional Igbo society, a contrast has earlier been noticed, which the author has linked to a borrowed idea that resulted in a divorce with God. In traditional Igbo society, the ritual of pouring out to the ground, known as *Itu mmanya na ani*, was not primarily to God, rather, the focus was calling the ancestors and other deities to come and partake in the sacrifice. Efforts to find reasons beyond calling the dead ancestors did not yield much since most people interviewed said it was a practice inherited from their ancestors. However, Charles Nneke gave a brief explanation on why this ancient practice still lives among the Igbos, though in line with the author's earlier observation. Nneke defines the practice as one of those ancient cultural practices of the Igbo people that are anchored on four things: the source of man, ancestral veneration, personality, and protection.

Itu Mmanya - Libation

1. **Source of man:** One of the concepts of pouring libation amongst the Igbo People is as a result of their belief that man came from the earth/land. With the above belief at the back of the Igbo man's mind, he sees land as his mother. This is reflected in the idea of referring to land as mother, hence it is called Mother Earth. Therefore, by pouring libation, an Igbo man is paying allegiance to the land as his source and where he will return at the expiration of his life on earth.
2. **Ancestral veneration:** Another concept of pouring libation by the Igbo man is as a result of his tie to his ancestors. He is so much linked to his ancestors that he believes that every good thing happening in his life is a result of his great ancestors. The Igbo man believes that his ancestors have good thoughts for him. On this note, he is reciprocating the kind gesture of his ancestors by pouring libation to them. This is also known as ancestral veneration.
3. **Personality:** Another concept of pouring libation by the Igbo man is that he sees the land as a person. Therefore, pouring libation or throwing any food item on the land is part of sharing, which is said to show that there is love in it. An Igbo man believes in the common good for everyone. By pouring libation, he expresses the same thought towards the land. It is also a way of courting a relationship with the land. Therefore, pouring of libation is like gifts people give to one another to gain their favor.



4. **Protection:** Another concept of pouring libation by the Igbo People is to attract protection. They believe in her physical and divine protection and form the habit of pouring libation or throwing anything they receive from unknown people and known people with questionable characters first to the land to neutralize whatever diabolical substance is in the item (Nneke, 2024). In summary, Nneke's supposition on the Igbo reasons for pouring wine to the ground suggests the following:

1. An Igbo man believes that man derives his identity from the land, and the land is the basis for human social constructs.
2. They hold the belief that their ancestors live in the land, and they are alive and involved in everyday activities of the living; hence, the ancestors (also known as *ndichie*) should be consulted and venerated, and land should also be venerated because it provides sources of living and houses the ancestors and a place where the living will finally return.
3. They see land as a person from an anthropomorphic perspective, which creates the belief that land has the power to protect, hence the libation.

Both the Jews and the Igbos share a common religious and cultural philosophy when it comes to pouring of wine to the ground. The duo share common psychological, sociological, philosophical, and spiritual attachment to land. We found out that both practice the sacrifice of pouring wine to the ground, which points to a shared common spiritual connectivity. Also, both also had corrupted practices, which are still in practice in the Igbo society today. It was a practice which demands their faithfulness in worship and gratitude to God for giving them the land to live and life to experience His providence. In conclusion, the overwhelming pieces of evidence of a common idea and common purpose, in the cultural and religious practices of pouring of wine to the ground and washing of hands, suggest common ancestry or common origin.

Understanding people's culture through the lens of the Scripture is an effective missiological approach in bringing the gospel to a people in their cultural context.

In biblical parlance, there are many instances where God used physical things familiar to the human mind to teach spiritual truths and to explain why such approaches are necessary. Approaches of this nature have become necessary because humans can easily identify physical things rather than spiritual ones, since physical things are found within the human domain. Hence, a metaphorical or symbolic approach can help to address pagan pouring of wine or throwing of food to ancestors, looking at a similar act when Jacob poured wine to the ground where he had an encounter with God. God frequently uses familiar, physical elements and situations to convey profound spiritual truths in the Bible. These tangible metaphors and parables help human minds grasp abstract heavenly realities.

Applying the Metaphorical Approach to Address Pagan Practices

The metaphorical approach can effectively address pagan practices. These practices include pouring wine or throwing food to ancestors, by highlighting the crucial distinction between the physical act and the underlying spiritual intent and object of worship.

When Jacob poured a drink offering on the pillar where God had spoken to him (Genesis 35:14), the act was one of worship and consecration directed solely towards God in response to a divine encounter [1]. It was a physical expression of reverence and devotion to the living Creator.

The Bible verse where Jacob poured out a drink offering (often understood as wine) and oil onto a stone pillar in worship to God is Genesis 35:14. "Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it." (Genesis 35:14, NASB1995) (<https://www.bible.com>).



Key Details of the Event Location: Bethel, where God had spoken to Jacob.

At this location, Jacob erected a stone marker (a pillar) and poured a libation—a “drink offering”—onto it to mark the place as sacred and to worship God. Looking at the biblical concept of symbolism, the drink offering signified pouring out one’s life in total consecration to God, while the anointing of the pillar with olive oil is a typical action representing setting something apart for God. This act was done in gratitude and to fulfill a vow, marking the spot “Beth-El” (House of God).

By the foregoing narratives, it becomes imperative to bring a similar practice within biblical history, focusing on how the Jews contradicted and corrupted the practice of pouring wine to the ground. Its contrasting purpose, meaning, and worship would help one understand how the Igbos moved away from the biblical concept of pouring of wine to the ground, first practiced by Jacob. The contrasts between the pouring of wine in Genesis 35:14 and Jeremiah 44:17 center on the recipient of the offering, the intention of the act, and the spiritual state of the worshiper. While Genesis 35:14 describes a holy act of consecration to the true God, Jeremiah 44:17 depicts acts of idolatrous worship to a false deity.

Here are the Specific Contrasts Based on the Text:

1. Recipient and Purpose of the Offering

Genesis 35:14 (Holy Consecration): Jacob pours a drink offering (wine) on a stone pillar at Bethel to honor and dedicate the place where God spoke to him. It is a voluntary act of gratitude, devotion, and total surrender to Yahweh, the true God.

Jeremiah 44:17 (Idolatrous Rebellion): The people of Israel are pouring drink offerings to the “Queen of Heaven” (a pagan goddess, often identified with Astarte/Ishtar). This is a rebellious, idolatrous act intended to honor a false deity rather than Yahweh (<https://www.bible.com>).

2. Context of the Act

Genesis 35:14 (Worship of the True God): Occurs within the context of Jacob returning to Bethel, obeying God’s call to dwell there, and building an altar, marking a moment of personal spiritual renewal and covenant fulfillment.

Jeremiah 44:17 (Idolatry in Judgement): Occurs during the Babylonian exile, when the remnant in Egypt justifies their idolatry, claiming that when they worshipped the Queen of Heaven, they had plenty of food and peace, attributing their prosperity to the idol rather than to God.

3. Spiritual State of the Worshiper

Genesis 35:14 (Devotion): The act symbolizes the pouring out of one’s life in gratitude to God; it is a “sweet savor” offering reflecting a heart surrendered to God’s will.

Jeremiah 44:17 (Stubbornness): The act represents a “stubborn heart” that refuses to obey God’s warnings, despite the consequences of exile.

4. Association with Oil

Genesis 35:14 (Anointing): Jacob pours both wine and oil on the pillar, symbolizing both the joy of dedication and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit (oil). Jeremiah 44:17 (Sacrifice to Idols): The focus is strictly on burning incense and pouring libations for the “Queen of Heaven” in a ritualized defiance of the law. The pouring of wine in Genesis 35:14 and Jeremiah 44:17 represents a sharp contrast between holy worship and idolatrous rebellion, despite the similar physical action of pouring liquid (<https://www.bible.com>).

Contrasts in Wine Pouring



Genesis 35:14 (Holy Offering): Jacob pours a drink offering on a stone pillar to consecrate it to the Lord (Yahweh) after receiving God’s promise and blessing. It is an act of thankfulness, surrender, and obedience to the true God. The wine represents a “sweet savor” dedicated solely to Jehovah.

Jeremiah 44:17 (Idoltrous Sacrifice): The remnant in Egypt pours drink offerings to the “Queen of Heaven” (a pagan deity, likely Ishtar or Astarte). This was done to provoke God to anger, acting in direct violation of the covenant and the first commandment.

Summary Table of Contrasts

Feature	Genesis 35:14	Jeremiah 44:17
Recipient	The Lord (Jehovah)	Queen of Heaven (Idol)
Context	Worship/Consecration	Idolatry/Rebellion
Purpose	Gratitude & Vow fulfillment	Seeking prosperity through paganism
God’s View	Accepted/Commended	Condemned/Abomination

Fate of One Who Pours Wine to Ancestors in contrast to Genesis 35:14

In the biblical context (specifically regarding the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets), pouring wine to honor ancestors or spirits is categorized as idolatry or “necromancy” (consulting the dead), as outlawed by Saul (1Samuel 28:), which carries severe spiritual consequences. These consequences can be grouped under the following headings:

Defilement and Separation: Such acts defile the person and separate them from the covenant protection of God.

Divine Anger: The prophets indicate that such practices provoke the Lord to anger, as seen in Jeremiah 44, where the people insisted on performing these rituals.

Judgment and Destruction: In Jeremiah 44:27-28, God warns that those who pour libations to idols will be consumed by sword and famine and will not survive to return to their land.

The Lesson of the Rechabites (Jeremiah 35): Conversely, Jeremiah 35 shows that those who obey their ancestors’ instructions to abstain from such foreign, pagan practices (as the Rechabites did regarding wine) are blessed, honored, and preserved by God. However, inasmuch as the act of pouring liquid might be a cultural sign of respect, the Bible still condemns the religious veneration of ancestral spirits through liquid offerings (libations) because such worship should be directed to God alone, not to the ancestors. In light of the contrasts in Genesis 35:14 and Jeremiah 44:27-28, what are the possible contrasts in the pouring of wine in Genesis 35:14 and the fate of one who pours wine to the ground in honor of his ancestors? Why is it a grievous offence for one to pour out wine to his/her ancestors?

The pouring of wine in Genesis 35:14 and of the fate of one who pours wine to the ground in honor of his ancestors contrasts the legitimate worship of the Creator against the idolatrous, forbidden worship of other spirits/ancestors. Here is a breakdown of the contrasts, the potential fate, and why this is considered a grievous offense.

1. Contrasts in Pouring Wine: Genesis 35:14 vs. Jeremiah 44:17 and one who pours wine to the ground in honor of his ancestors

Genesis 35:14 (The Holy Offering): Jacob sets up a stone pillar at Bethel, a place where God (Jehovah) spoke to him. He pours out a “drink offering” (*neseke*) of wine and oil on it.

Context: This is a voluntary act of worship, thanksgiving, and dedication to God alone. It is a consecrated act to the true Creator.



1. practice of burning incense and pouring libations (wine offerings) to the “Queen of Heaven” (a goddess), and one who pours wine to the ground in honor of his ancestors

Context: This is an act of syncretism and rebellion. They argue that when they did this previously, they had plenty of food and prospered, equating the worship of a pagan deity with economic success, direct defiance of God’s commands (<https://www.agodman.com>).

Key Contrasts:

Feature	Gen 35:14 (Jacob)	Jer. 44:17 (Remnant)
Recipient	Jehovah (God)	Queen of Heaven (Idol)
Purpose	Devotion/Gratitude	Seeking prosperity/protection
Nature	Obedient worship	Disobedient/Idolatrous
Location	Bethel (Consecrated)	Streets of Judah/Egypt

1. Why is it a Grievous Offense to Pour Wine to Ancestors

In the biblical context, pouring out wine to ancestors (or any spirit other than God) is a severe sin for several reasons:

Idolatry and False Worship: The Bible strictly forbids worshiping or offering sacrifices to any entity other than Jehovah, including ancestors or dead spirits (Exodus 20:3-5; Deuteronomy 18:10-11).

Worshiping Demons: Scriptural interpretation suggests that sacrifices offered to false gods or spirits are actually being offered to demons, not to God (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

Lack of Faith in God’s Provision: It suggests that the deceased, rather than God, controls the living’s prosperity, protection, and success.

Rebellion Against the Covenant: As shown in Jeremiah 44, this action is directly tied to a refusal to listen to God’s messengers, choosing instead to follow pagan traditions (<https://www.bible.com>).

Based on biblical narratives, particularly the context of Jeremiah 44, the consequences are spiritual and, at times, physical:

Divine Judgment and Rejection: In Jeremiah 44:20-23, God responds to the people by reminding them that it was because of this very idolatry—burning incense and pouring drink offerings to other gods—that their cities became a “desolation and an astonishment, a curse, without an inhabitant”.

Spiritual Separation: The act separates the individual from the protection of God, leaving them vulnerable to spiritual forces they are trying to appease.

“Woe” and Shame: While not directly referring to ancestors, Habakkuk 2:15 pronounces a “woe” (divine curse) on anyone who gives drink to their neighbor for immoral or idolatrous purposes, stating they will be filled with “shame instead of glory”.

In summary, Genesis 35:14 depicts a holy, dedicated act, while Jeremiah 44:17 portrays a forbidden, idolatrous act. Pouring wine to ancestors is a grievous sin because it transfers worship and reliance away from God to creatures or spirits, inviting divine judgment.

Pouring out wine (libation) to ancestors is considered a grievous offense in biblical theology because it constitutes ancestor worship or spiritism, whereas the act in Genesis 35:14 was an act of exclusive



worship to Yahweh. While the physical action looks similar, the biblical distinction rests on the recipient of the offering and the spiritual significance behind it.

1. Genesis 35:14 – A Sacrifice to God (Yahweh)

In Genesis 35:14, Jacob sets up a pillar at Bethel and pours out a drink offering (wine) and oil. This is an act of consecration, setting aside a monument to dedicate himself and his household to God (Yahweh) (<https://tips.translation.bible>).

Significance: It was a “sweet savor” offering, symbolizing total surrender and devotion, mirroring how Paul later described his own life being “poured out” for God (2 Tim 4:6).

Purpose: Jacob is not communicating with or worshiping dead family members; he is worshiping the living God who appeared to him.

2. Why Libation to Ancestors is Considered a Grievous Offense

Violation of First Commandment: The Bible forbids creating a “bridge” between the living and the dead. Offering sustenance (wine) to spirits suggests they have power, knowledge,

or presence that belongs only to God, violating the command against idolatry and having no other gods before Him.

Necromancy/Spiritism: Offering libations is often accompanied by calling on the names of the dead, which is defined in Deuteronomy 18:10-12 as a “detestable” practice (necromancy).

Misplaced Trust: It places trust in ancestral spirits for protection or guidance rather than in God.

Subversion of Christ’s Work: In Christian theology, Christ is the only mediator (1 Tim 2:5). Ancestor veneration is seen as implying that Christ is insufficient, needing the intervention of departed humans (<https://www.scielo.org.za>).

Summary of Differences

Feature	Gen 35:14 (Jacob)	Libation to Ancestors
Recipient	Yahweh (Creator)	Spirits/Dead Ancestors
Purpose	Consecration/Worship	Appeasement/Honoring/Intercession
Biblical Status	Approved Worship	Forbidden (Idolatry)

Therefore, the “grievousness” of the offense lies not in the act of pouring liquid, but in the spiritual transfer of devotion from God to spirits. While Jacob was worshipping God through a memorial, libation to ancestors is seen as engaging in forbidden spiritualism. The act of engaging the spirit of the ancestors or consulting them is also known as necromancy.¹

¹ Necromancy, defined as consulting the dead or using mediums/spiritists, was strictly outlawed in Israel under the Mosaic Law, which King Saul enacted before his famous consultation with the witch of Endor, (Marg Mowczko). Similar acts of necromancy, sorcery, and divination were prohibited in the following books and passages of the Bible:

Leviticus 19:31: Explicitly forbids turning to mediums or necromancers, stating it makes the individual unclean.

Leviticus 20:6: Warns that God will turn against those who turn to mediums and “familiar spirits”.

Leviticus 20:27: Mandates the death penalty (stoning) for any man or woman who acts as a medium or necromancer.

Deuteronomy 18:10-12: Provides the most comprehensive list of banned practices, including casting spells, interpreting omens, witchcraft, or “one who inquires of the dead”. It describes these actions as a “detestable” practice borrowed from pagan nations.

An Exploratory Examination of Cultural Redefinition and Realignment in Igbo Society:

A Comparative Analysis of *Itu Mmanya Na Ani* and the Biblical Precedent in Genesis 35:14.



While Genesis 35:14 shows Jacob pouring a drink offering, the target of that offering is the crucial distinction between biblical worship and forbidden ancestor veneration.

1. Why Pouring Wine to Ancestors is a Grievous Offense

Wrong Recipient (Idolatry): In Genesis 35:14, Jacob poured the wine and oil on a stone pillar to consecrate it specifically to Yahweh (God), not to dead ancestors. The Bible strictly prohibits offering sacrifices or libations to anyone other than God (Exodus 20:3; Exodus 22:20).

Prohibition Against Consulting the Dead: Scripture expressly forbids necromancy or any form of communication with the deceased, deeming it a detestable practice (Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Leviticus 19:31). Pouring libations is often accompanied by prayers asking ancestors for protection or favor, which is seen as “consulting the dead”.

The Nature of the “Spirit”: The Bible teaches that the deceased cannot return to communicate with the living (Luke 16:19-31). Therefore, many Christians believe that entities responding to ancestor libations are not the ancestors themselves, but familiar spirits or demons posing as ancestors to deceive the living (<https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org>).

2. Can Ancestors Speak, Listen, or Respond?

According to strict biblical interpretation, deceased human beings cannot hear, listen, or respond to libations poured out to them.

The Fixed Chasm: In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), Jesus describes a chasm that cannot be crossed, preventing communication between the dead and the living.

No Further Part on Earth: Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 states that the dead “no longer have a part in anything that is done under the sun”.

The Danger of Deception: Because ancestors cannot hear, the responses worshippers often experience are interpreted by many Christians as deception by evil spirits.

3. Jacob’s Act in Genesis 35:14 vs. Ancestor Libation

Feature	Jacob (Gen 35:14)	Ancestor Libation
Target	Yahweh (God)	Deceased Ancestors/Spirits

Purpose To consecrate a sacred site to God. To invoke, venerate, or seek help from the dead

Biblical View: Valid worship/Consecration, Idolatry/Forbidden communication

In summary, the offence is not the act of pouring liquid, but the act of directing worship, reverence, or requests to the dead rather than to God.

Why is it a grievous offence for one to pour out wine to his/her ancestors in light of the practice in Gen: 35:14? Do these forbidden ancestors have the ability to speak, listen, and respond to the ones who pour libation on them? Why are such acts detestable and condemnable before God?

Exodus 22:18: Explicitly states, “You shall not permit a sorceress to live,” a law that was used as the basis for Saul’s earlier purge of mediums.

Isaiah 8:19: Condemns the act of consulting the dead, on behalf of the living, urging people to seek God instead.

1 Chronicles 10:13: Explicitly cites King Saul’s consultation with a medium as one of the reasons for his death, reinforcing the legal prohibition. These practices were considered idolatry and a direct violation of the covenant with God.



Pouring out wine (libation) to ancestors is considered a grievous offence in orthodox Christian theology because it violates the fundamental commandment against idolatry, shifting devotion from God to created beings. While Genesis 35:14 depicts Jacob pouring a drink offering, it is differentiated from ancestor veneration by its intended recipient and purpose.

Here is a breakdown of why this act is condemned and the theological perspective on ancestral spirits:

1. The Context of Genesis 35:14 vs. Ancestor Libation

Genesis 35:14: Jacob poured oil and wine on a stone pillar to consecrate that spot, marking it as a holy place of worship dedicated to Yahweh (God) after a personal meeting with Him. The offering was part of a covenant renewal, focusing entirely on God's presence. Pouring libation (wine/water) to ancestors is interpreted as an act of worship, offering, or appeasement to the dead. The Bible condemns pouring libations to any entity other than God (e.g., the "queen of heaven" or other "gods") as an act of pagan idolatry that provokes God's anger (<https://tips.translation.bible>).

2. Can Ancestors Speak, Listen, or Respond?

According to biblical theology, deceased ancestors do not possess the ability to communicate with, hear, or respond to the living on earth.

No Communication: The dead do not play a role in the lives of the living, as death irrevocably severs that earthly connection.

Judgment and Location: Scripture states that human beings are destined to die once, and after that, they face judgment, leaving them in the presence of God (if righteous) or separated from Him.

Familiar Spirits (Demons): The Bible teaches that whenever people attempt to contact the dead, they are not talking to their deceased relatives, but to demons (familiar spirits) masquerading as them.

1. Why are such acts detestable to God, when humans pour libation for idols/ancestors.

Idolatry and Spiritual Prostitution: Pouring libation to ancestors treats the dead as divine or semi-divine, taking the honor that belongs only to God.

Denial of God's Sufficiency: It suggests that the living need intermediate spirits for blessing or protection, rather than relying on God alone.

Explicit Prohibition: God specifically forbids consulting the dead, mediums, or necromancers (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, Leviticus 19:31).

Replaces Christ: Christian theology teaches that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and mankind (1 Timothy 2:5-6), rendering communication with deceased ancestors unnecessary and unbiblical (<https://africa.thegospelcoalition.org>).

In summary, while the act of pouring liquid is mentioned in Genesis 35:14, it is the recipient and the intention of the act that dictate its spiritual legality. Dedicating honor and offerings to ancestral spirits is viewed as spiritual adultery against God.

The act of *Itu Mmanya* in traditional society when contrasted with pagan libations, as found in Jeremiah 44: 27-28 which involved pouring out wine or food with the intent of appeasing or



communing with the spirits of the dead (ancestor veneration or worship), violates not only the nature of God but also transgresses against his law which is an act of idolatry in the biblical context.

The distinction lies in: The Object of Veneration: Jacob's act was directed toward God; pagan acts are directed toward ancestors/spirits. The biblical worldview maintains that only God is worthy of worship.

The Spiritual Intent: Jacob sought to honor God's covenant and presence, whereas pagan practices are often rooted in a belief that the dead can intervene in human affairs, a belief contrary to Christian scripture.

The Source of Authority: Jacob acted within the context of his direct covenant with God, while pagan practices are often rooted in tradition and superstition, without divine authorization in the biblical narrative. By using the biblical metaphorical approach, one can challenge the pagan worldview that acknowledges and recognizes similar physical actions (pouring a liquid), which exists in Igbo culture of *Itu Mmanya*. *Itu Mmanya na ani*, or throwing things like kola nuts to the ground for the ancestors, is a culture that enjoys a wide range of patronage among the Igbo "Christians." The society seems to enjoy an avalanche of syncretistic practices done with disregard for God's universal theistic laws, which shows obvious poor knowledge of God's aseity and his demand to maintain absoluteness to his transcendence. Here is a view of an Igbo Christian, Ngozi Ugonna Ihediuko, who, in spite of her Christian heritage, still maintains superiority of her culture over God's universal laws and standard of what true cultural life should be, and which ought to conform to his nature and character. Therefore, any culture developed outside his character and nature stands in conflict with his personal qualities. Ihediuko writes thus:

Pouring libation is not idol worship. It's a symbolic act of honoring our ancestors—those who walked this earth before us, who made sacrifices, who fought battles (some even to death) to preserve the land, values, and legacies we now enjoy.

If Catholics venerate saints and draw strength from their lives, why can't we honor our ancestors too? (The setback here is that we never had written or documented history). They were our own "saints"—not perfect, but courageous, selfless, and rooted in purpose.

I am a Christian, yes.

But I am also Igbo.

My faith is in God Almighty—*Chukwu Okike*—the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

My identity is not only shaped by my faith, but also by my culture, which is not demonic or barbaric, but rich, dignified, and spiritually grounded. Christ himself said:

"Give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and unto God what belongs to God."

That wasn't just about taxes—it was a powerful statement about respecting divine order and cultural structure.

Jesus was born a Jew. He respected Jewish customs and didn't abolish the traditions of His people—He fulfilled them.

So, why should we abandon ours when they do not contradict God's commandments?

Let's be clear:

What is wrong is idol worship—that is, giving reverence or worship to any being, object, or force other than God Almighty.



But pouring libation to honor lineage, to remember those who paved the way—that is not idolatry. It is gratitude, it is identity, and it is heritage.
I am a Christian.
I believe in Jesus Christ.
I worship only *Chukwu Okike*.
But I will not be ashamed of my roots.
My culture is not a curse—it is a covenant of memory (Ihediuko, 2025a).

Concerning *Itu Mmanya* or pouring libation to the ancestors, Ihediuko did not only fail to see that such an act violated the nature and character of God but also failed to recognize that such a sacrifice or practice, which involves the invocation of the dead, infringes not only the first item of the Ten Commandments but also other subsidiary laws as cited in Leviticus and 1 Samuel 30. However, her strong belief in holding tenaciously to her culture is found in the concluding section of her essay, where she says that pouring libation to honor lineage, to remember those who paved the way, is not idolatry. She says it is gratitude, it is identity, and it is heritage (Ihediuko, 2025b), which point to her love of a particular cultural practice. This she affirmed by declaring her allegiance to her Christian belief, thus, “I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus Christ. I worship only *Chukwu Okike*. But I will not be ashamed of my roots. My culture is not a curse—it is a covenant of memory” (Ihediuko, 2025c). Ihediuko is not the only one who strongly professed her Christian faith, yet would let her cultural heritage go even when such culture violates the principles of the Christian faith. There are many young Igbo Christians who have been trapped in cultural web of *Ozo* cult, and currently, there are many other ones who are marching fervently to join the same *Ozo* cult even when the obvious danger associated with it is in the public domain. They would rather compromise their Christian faith to wearing the *eriri Ozo* (*eriri Ozo* is known as leg bracelet thread that those who are fully initiated into the *Ozo* cult wear at the ankle of their legs). According to the presentation made by Bishop Ephraim O. Ikeakor, titled Understanding *Ozo* title (Part1).² Bishop Ikeakor is an Anglican Bishop of Amichi Diocese in Nnewi South Local Government Area. The bishop’s presentation came out of his dissertation, in which he reveals that at the demise of any member of this *Ozo* cult, the deceased is never buried with the leg bracelet thread at his ankle. His research shows that the rituals involved in removing the leg bracelet thread are pagan-driven, pagan structured, and pagan in every ritual involved in removing the leg bracelet thread, since it is not the property of the dead but for the living.³ If Christians are for the *Ozo* title, the separation process should be redefined through the lens of the Scripture, and members should be aware of the consequences of living a double opinion life. The deceased may seem to have lived his life as a Christian, but the end will tell a different story, as long as the process of separating the living from the dead through the severance of leg bracelet thread is involved. The practice of pouring wine or throwing kola nuts to the ancestors, which many Igbo elders and leaders are practicing, must not be treated with gloves because most people do not understand the enormity of the danger and its associated consequences that communities and families would face because of such idolatrous practices. If one should make an exploratory examination of her essay, it would be clearly seen that the crux of her argument is rooted in her deep attachment and the understanding her culture had of her, which makes it difficult for transformation and renewing of her mind (Romans 12:2). Even after she had embraced the Christian faith, her culture still prevailed over her.

² Bishop Ephraim O. Ikeakor, titled Understanding *Ozo* title (Part1). At Stephen’s Anglican Church Osunenyei, Diocese of Amichi, in Nnewi South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria.

³ Bishop Ikeakor reiterated his teaching on Igbo *Ozo* title by saying that “Nothing concerns a church member with *Ozo* title, no matter who approves this for you. Did you hear me this morning? *Ozo* title is paganistic, hedonistic, (heathenism I think this is what he intends to pronounce) and idolatrous. But these are areas we disobey God.” An Exploratory Examination of Cultural Redefinition and Realignment in Igbo Society:



At this point, one would be prompted to ask what culture is, how it is formed, propagated, transferred, and entrenched in one's society. It is on the premise of answering these hypothetical questions that Ihediuko and those who share the same line of thought would be arrested and transformed. It is also good to know that culture is fundamentally dynamic, not static. Hence, humans by nature are designed to be creative, with the ability to adapt to environmental changes, since seasons are not static. Looking at her limitedness in the understanding of what culture is, along with those who are on the same page with her, it becomes incumbent for the author to begin with how the early proponents of culture, both in primitive and modern societies, have defined culture, and the elements on which the idea of culture is conceived, and sustained. Culture, by the aggregation of literature the author has read over time, is a shared communal set of beliefs, values, and attitudes of a people in any geographical space. Having said this, the author would begin by considering a few of such definitions by scholars who have made a mark in the study of Culture.

Charles Taylor opines that culture entails “individuals being immersed in (semantic or symbolic) webs of interlocation” that both shape the self (Taylor, 1985). Culture is the complex whole of shared, learned behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, values, and material objects that characterize a group, transmitted across generations rather than inherited biologically. Clifford Geertz defines culture as “webs of significance”; he goes on to explain that culture is essentially a semiotic one, focusing on an interpretative approach to meaning rather than on experimental science in the study of law (Geertz, 1973a), offering an interpretative approach, Geertz described culture as an “interworked system of construable signs” or “webs of significance” that humans themselves have spun. He believed that culture is public because meaning is public. Geertz viewed culture as a system of shared symbols and meanings that give shape and direction to human behavior.

Geertz Hofstede sees culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another” (Geertz, 1973b). Hofstede, a seminal figure in organizational studies, defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Geertz, 1973c).

Edward Burnett Tylor defines culture from an anthropological perspective in his article titled *Primitive Culture* as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1871). Tylor further states that culture is the holistic, learned, and shared system of beliefs, values, behaviors, and material objects that define a group's way of life. Tylor coined the foundational anthropological definition as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”.

Franz Boas, a pioneer of American anthropology, emphasized that culture is not biologically determined but learned, and he focused on the historical development of cultural patterns within specific, localized societies. He argued that the characteristics of culture do not depend upon race, and asserted throughout that cultural traits are acquired socially and developed through specific historical, geographical, and social interactions (Boas, 1938). A.L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, in *A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, defined it as “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols,” highlighting its role in traditional ideas and values (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Kroeber and Kluckhohn went on to say that culture constitutes the distinct achievements of human groups. From a sociological perspective: focuses on culture as a “fuzzy set” of attitudes, goals, and practices that create social cohesion and structure interaction.

Raymond Williams, in his work, “Culture is ordinary” argues that culture is ordinary and not an elitist invocation of ideas; culture is “a way of life- the common meanings” that are “made and remade in



every individual mind”. He says that culture defines one’s way of life, which could be material, intellectual, and moving beyond just “high culture” (art/literature) to everyday lived experience (Williams, 1958).

Core Characteristics of Culture:

Learned: Culture is not innate or genetic; it is acquired through socialization.

Shared: It is a collective phenomenon shared by a group, not an individual’s personal habits.

Symbolic: Culture relies on symbols, most notably language, to represent and communicate meanings.

Integrated: Different aspects of culture—economic, social, religious—are interconnected; changing one often impacts others.

Dynamic: Culture is constantly evolving, adapting to new environmental challenges and interaction with other groups.

Transmitted: Culture lives across generations rather than being inherited biologically.

Redefining Culture in Light of Biblical Scriptures

Biblical Scripture offers a transformative perspective that challenges and reframes human-centered definitions of culture. From Autonomous to Stewardship (Genesis 1:28, 2:15): While sociology sees culture as man-made, the Bible defines it as stewardship. Culture is the result of humans—as God’s image-bearers—cultivating the earth. It is human effort within a divinely created environment. From Conformity to Transformation (Romans 12:2): Culture is not merely to be accepted as learned behavior. Christians are called to be “transformed by the renewing of your mind,” making culture a subject to biblical critique rather than merely a transmitter of tradition. From “Pattern of the World” to Kingdom Identity (1 Peter 2:9): Culture often reflects fallen human nature, but the church is called to a new culture—a “chosen race” (1 Peter 2:9) that produces behaviors and values aligned with God’s holiness, not merely cultural tradition. From regionalism to global worship (Revelation 7:9): The Bible presents a “great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language”. This suggests that true culture is ultimately redeemed to serve God, where cultural diversity remains, but is unified under the Gospel rather than fragmented by it.

From mere belief to active obedience (Matthew 28:19-20): Culture is not just shared beliefs; it is to be reshaped by the “teaching” of all that Christ commanded, challenging cultural practices that contradict divine law.⁴

Redefining Culture Through the Lens of Biblical Scriptures

Since culture is shared beliefs, values, and learned behaviors, how can it be redefined in light of the biblical Scriptures? Redefining culture through a biblical lens means transforming shared beliefs, values, and behaviors to align with God’s Word, rather than conforming to worldly patterns. It involves evaluating all traditions against Scripture (1 Thess 5:21), making Jesus the center of communal life, and shifting focus from self-actualization to godly service, humility, and justice. This can be achieved when the Scripture becomes the foundation that shapes everything that comes to the human mind; it becomes the ultimate, objective authority for all matters, replacing cultural relativism. At any point, the Scripture takes the whole of the human mind conforming to worldly patterns as an uphill task, if not an impossible one. Then, believers are seen transforming by changing how they think, allowing them to discern God’s will because their minds have been transformed and renewed

⁴ Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by the working of the Holy Spirit. Cultural practices that often hold them bound to do what they often love to do by conforming to the old pattern would become a thing of the past. A biblical redefinition ensures that supreme value is placed on God alone. Community and Stewardship values will be redefined based on the character and nature of God, which are geared to supporting and loving neighbors and every creation of God, and are aptly desirous of managing God's creation with integrity. Christians are called to redeem, not abandon, their culture by acting as salt and light, transforming elements of art, work, and community to reflect the Kingdom of God.⁵

Practical Steps in Redefining Cultural Elements

Evaluate Beliefs: Test existing cultural beliefs against biblical truth.

Adjust Values: Shift focus to the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—rather than materialistic or individualistic values.

Transform Behaviors: Adopt habits of service, humility, and regular engagement with Scripture over cultural traditions that cause division or compromise faith.

Summary

The goal of culture in a biblical context is not to abandon culture but to bring it into obedience to Christ, transforming shared behaviors and values so that they reflect God's truth, justice, and love, and in no way would it contradict the nature, character, and holiness of God. The Bible contains specific ancient cultures, and God is revealed as the "God of all cultures," able to work within any cultural context. *Itu Mmanya*—the act of pouring wine onto the ground—is a form of libation performed to appease, venerate, or seek the guidance of departed ancestors, as well as to reaffirm covenant relationships with them. This practice is rooted in the Igbo interpretive concept of culture. Given that the elements of culture are built, sustained, and transmitted across generations, the culture of Christ eventually supersedes all others; being faultless, it exists in perfect harmony with nature, character, and the laws of God. Also, where it is initiated, conceived, and becomes an idea, it therefore becomes easier to localize, redefine, transform, and replace with a superior value that has eternal origin. Since culture is a product of a fallen human mind, it is very obvious that what this mind produces can never be perfect, and therefore, its products are subject to change and must adhere to superior eternal cultural influence. Therefore, be it the appeasement or the invocation of the ancestors through *Itu Mmanya an ani* is a violation of universal theistic physical, moral, and spiritual laws, which attracts severe penalty with an unimaginable consequence. God is the Creator of cultural phenomena, and he is the same who, in his eternal wisdom, created human beings in his image and likeness, so that they can become culture-makers (the "cultural mandate" in Genesis 1:28), designed to work the world for His glory and the good of their neighbours. In Igbo society, it is an uncontested knowledge that Chukwu Okike Abiama is the one who created all things and therefore, no mortal or spiritual has power to unturn his decrees and statutes. Therefore, no human culture can stand against his culture or question the authority of his culture over other cultures, and *Itu Mmanya an ani* is not an exception. It is anathema to challenge what is detested or considered an abomination. Furthermore, from a biblical perspective, culture that is not redefinable through shared beliefs, values, and behaviors of a people or in opposition to God's kingdom should be considered as a corrupt culture and ought to be discontinued. While secular definitions often view culture as subjective, a biblical view sees all cultural expressions as accountable to God's truth, requiring them to be redeemed and corrected by Scripture (Kuza App, 2026).

Necromancy: A Forbidden Act

⁵ Trinity Western University.



God strictly forbids practices such as pouring libation and food for the dead, as well as necromancy, because the Bible teaches that the dead cannot communicate with the living or offer help, and attempts to contact them open the door to demonic deception. These acts are considered an abomination because they bypass God, the sole source of wisdom and guidance.

Why God Forbids Libation and Necromancy

The Bible provides clear reasons for the prohibition of practices like offering food/drink to the dead (libation) and necromancy (attempting to communicate with the dead):

Reliance on God Alone: The core reason is that God wants His people to rely solely on Him for guidance, protection, and blessings. Turning to other sources, including the spirits of the dead, undermines His authority and sufficiency.

Spiritual Danger and Deception: The Bible teaches that the dead “know nothing at all” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and are in an unconscious state, unable to interact with the living. Any perceived communication is, therefore, not from the deceased ancestor but from evil spirits or demons who impersonate loved ones to mislead and harm the living.

Abomination and Idolatry: Practices like necromancy and spiritism were common among the pagan nations surrounding ancient Israel, and God expressly commanded His people not to follow these “detestable” customs. Engaging in such acts is viewed as a form of spiritual adultery or idolatry because it involves seeking power and knowledge from sources other than the Creator.

God’s Appointed Mediator: God has established a path for communication and mediation through Jesus Christ. The living is encouraged to approach God through prayer and the study of His Word (the Bible), not through spirit mediums or rituals involving the dead.

Can the Dead Talk or Offer Help?

According to the Bible, no, the dead cannot talk or offer help to the living.

No Consciousness or Activity: The book of Ecclesiastes states that “the dead know nothing at all, nor do they have any more reward, for their memory is forgotten. Also, their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished, and they no longer have any share in all that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6).

God’s Position

God’s position against those who practice necromancy and libation is one of strong condemnation. The Bible explicitly forbids these activities and describes them as an “abomination”. Specific consequences were outlined in the Old Testament law, including being “cut off from among his people” or even the death penalty. The New Testament also lists sorcery (which encompasses necromancy) among the “works of the flesh” that prevent inheritance of the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:20).

Instead of seeking the dead, individuals are instructed to seek God through prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the wisdom provided in the Scriptures. God strictly forbids practices like libation and necromancy because they are considered an abomination, a form of idolatry, and a potential opening to demonic deception that undermines trust in Him alone. The Bible teaches that the dead cannot communicate with the living or offer help in the physical world.

Why God Forbids These Practices

Idolatry and Exclusive Worship of God: Pouring wine and food to the dead (libation/offering) was a common practice among ancient cultures to honor ancestors or gods. The Bible mandates exclusive

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worship of the one true God and views such offerings as turning to other sources for guidance and blessings, which is a form of spiritual adultery and idolatry.

Sovereignty of God: These practices seek guidance or intervention from the dead rather than relying on God's sovereignty, power, and provision. God is the only mediator between the living and the spiritual realm (1 Timothy 2:5), and attempting to bypass Him through other means is a rejection of His authority.

Spiritual Protection and Deception: The Bible indicates that the dead "know nothing" of the affairs of the living (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and are in a state of rest or separation. Any spirits that appear or communicate are believed to be evil spirits or demons masquerading as departed loved ones to deceive and lead people astray (2 Corinthians 11:14).

Finality of Death: The Bible teaches that a great chasm is fixed between the living and the dead, and the dead cannot return to their former lives or interact with the living (Luke 16:19-31; Job 7:9-10).

Old Testament

The Old Testament explicitly forbids consulting the dead and engaging in practices like divination and witchcraft, deeming them detestable to the Lord. Leviticus 20:27 even specifies capital punishment for mediums and necromancers. A notable instance is King Saul's consultation with the medium at En Dor, which is presented as an act of disobedience, leading to his death because he sought counsel from a medium instead of God. Isaiah 8:19 questions why people would consult the dead, on behalf of the living, rather than consulting their God.

New Testament

The New Testament continues this stance by classifying sorcery and similar occult practices as "works of the flesh" that are contrary to God's will and prevent entry into the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21 lists sorcery alongside other sinful acts. Revelation 21:8 also includes sorcerers among those who will face judgment. The casting out of a spirit of divination by Paul in Acts 16:16-18 further demonstrates that such spirits are not from God. The New Testament emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the only mediator, and believers should seek guidance through prayer, the Holy Spirit, and the Scripture.



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