



Enhancing the Role of Christianity in Overcoming Economic Difficulties in Southeastern Nigeria Caused by Expensive Traditional Funeral Costs

Dingba Dingba Esowe
esowe@clifforduni.edu.ng
Religious Studies Department
Clifford University, Owerinta, Abia State, Nigeria,

Abstract

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The belief in consciousness after death by African Traditionalists and its consequent customary burial ritual demands have created economic burdens for many of the people of South Eastern Nigeria. These rituals that are believed to aid the transition of the dead into the ancestral world of spirits require killing of animals such as fowls, goats, and cows as the case may be. Added to these are several steps of information chain that have to be followed before burials are conducted. The enormous funds that go into these processes in comparison to income levels of the people have left many a family in Igbo Land travailing economically. Thus it becomes expedient for the Christian religion founded by Christ Jesus for the alleviation of the sufferings of mankind to improve on its teachings on the state of the dead. Through the lifeworld phenomenological method, this work avails the Christian religion insights that should enhance its role in educating the people of South Eastern Nigeria on the truth about the state of the dead and how best to invest their income for a better life among the living.

INTRODUCTION

The saying that “one cannot run away from one’s shadow” is true to the fact that as human beings, people cannot do without burying their dead. One of the most obvious reasons why there has to be continued burials is the fact of death. When death occurs, the human body begins to decompose and if not buried over time, the odor of the decomposing matter - the body -would constitute health hazards to the living through environmental pollution and the triggering of airborne diseases. Okoro (*Journal ... Anthropology* 2024:3) affirms this view by stating thus: “To avoid pollution and toxicity, grave is dug six feet below by young boys, who also lower the coffin.” In this present world humans cannot escape death for as Heidegger cited by Omoregbe (*A Simplified ... Philosophy* 1991:52) puts it, “death is a phenomenon of life and is defined only in reference to life. As the ending of that which lives, death is perishing; it is something, which a living organism meets at the end of its life.”

Since deaths will continue to occur, burials will be continually done. How burials are done and the various funerary activities connected to them, is what has evolved into problematic causalities in some parts of the human society. The Igbo race in South Eastern Nigeria is experiencing in some of its communities, customary burial ritual demands that are causing economic travails in the lives of its citizens. In Nnawfia Community in Anambra State, burial cost is less than in Ogbaru, even as both Communities are in the same state. In Ogbaru as well as in some parts of Ngwa land in Abia State, you do not just go to tell your Mother’s relatives that she is dead. Muodozie is cited by Kalu (*The Sun Nigeria* 2022) in The Sun Nigeria Newspaper as intimating that, if one’s Mother dies, the person goes first to tell the mother’s paternal family that she is sick and is in the hospital. Next day the person returns to tell them she is recuperating. Then on the third day the person breaks the news that she is dead. They will then demand for a live cow from the children, in addition to some drinks, before the burial is sanctioned.

To compound matters for people, these expensive demands prior to burying the dead transverses both the traditional and the Christian religions. Okoli, et al. (*Vanguard Newspapers Nigeria* 2021) report that something is trending in Igbo communities as churches charge certain amount of money, sometimes coupled with accumulated levies, other payments and rites before agreeing to bury their congregant. They further intone that these attitudes have led some families to postpone the burial of their deceased till they are able to source funds to clear debts they owed the church before burials could hold. Incidentally this has led some families to incur debts, sell their belongings, including landed properties, to be able to meet up, for the burial to hold.

Ironically the Christian religion is supposed to be the Church of Christ, Who States: “come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11:28-30). The acts of some Christian Churches as enunciated above, is a negation of the aim of its founder and foundation. This is why Ononuju as cited by Okoli (Op. Cit. 2021) avers that “some people in the church have abandoned the doctrine of compassion and love set by Jesus Christ to make laws to cause confusion and deceive members in the church.”

METHOD

How can the Christian religion remodel itself to properly assist people in the society, especially in Igbo Land of South-Eastern Nigeria amidst these trending customary burial rituals and their attendant financial hangovers? Adopting the lifeworld phenomenological research approach, this work which is qualitative in nature makes use of both primary and secondary sources. Edmund Husserl developed and popularized the lifeworld research method in phenomenology whereby peoples’ lived experiences are taken into consideration in analyzing research information. This method also incorporates hermeneutical analysis where necessary. Its information gathering is from interviews, participant observations, and literature reviews. The ultimate aim is to proffer ways to enhance the role of the Christian religion in curbing the economic travails of the people of South-Eastern Nigeria arising from expensive customary burial ritual demands.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

South-Eastern Nigeria

The designation “South-Eastern Nigeria” connotes the present day states of Abia, Anambara, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. Igwe and Ogbodo (*Journal of Advanced ... Studies* 2025:41), in corroborating this fact, adds: “Nonetheless, Igbo-speaking people also form the major ethnic groups in Delta and Rivers States (although some of these claim they are non-Igbo).” While this work at times uses the designation Igbo Land, it should be noted that it concerns itself with those in the five states afore-mentioned. The territory is bounded by the River Niger on the West; the Cross River on the east; the Benue and flat North-Central lands by the North; and the Niger Delta on the South. While there are three major religions in Nigeria: African Traditional Religion (ATR), Christianity, and Islam (Ogbonna *Sapientia Global Journal of Arts ... Studies* 2021:189); the South-Eastern States Indigenes practice mainly two - African Traditional Religion (ATR) and Christianity.

To many people in Igbo Land, when it comes to death and burial, a dilemma of syncretism erupts. This is because as Ademiluka (*Online* 2025) puts

it “both the traditional and Christian burial rites coexist and influence each other in such a syncretic way that Nigerian Christian Communities are faced with the complexities of maintaining traditional ritual practices in the face of dominant Christian rites.” These problems exist due to inadequate understanding of the State of the dead by Christians who as it were, join the traditionalists to uphold the belief of consciousness after death. Corroborating this fact, Ngbea and Achunike (*International Journal of Sciences ... Research* 2014:158) aver that Traditional Religion of Africa which have been transmitted orally, and is visible in arts, rituals, beliefs and customs have syncretized with Islam and Christianity to a degree hard to estimate. A critical assessment of the following assertions of Gire (*Online Readings ... Culture* 2014:4) will suffice here:

The differences in conceptions about death extend to what exactly happens when one is dead, however defined. Some religious and cultural traditions, such as Hinduism, envision a circular pattern of life and death where a person is thought to die and is reborn with a new identity. This exit and reentry into life can occur multiple times. This contrasts with the Christian view where death is believed to occur only once. However, Christians do not believe that everything ceases at death. The person sheds his or her bodily form but continues on in spirit where there are consequences: the faithful - believers who kept the faith - are rewarded with eternal joy in heaven, and sinners proceed to hell where there is endless pain and suffering.

Gire believes that there is a contrast between the Hindu cyclical process of life, death, rebirth, etc and the supposed Christian belief of death of the body and the exit of the human spirit to face judgment followed by either a life of joyful bliss in heaven or eternal torment in hell. However, what Gire states as, the Christian position, is not quite in line with biblical assertions, which should be the Christian belief. The Bible states in Genesis 2:7 that after God formed man from the ground, He breathed into man’s nostrils “the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” So when in Ecclesiastes 12:7 the dust returns to the earth as it was, it follows that the spirit which returns to God who gave it is the breath. The living soul – man - is a composite of breath and dust. In the event of disintegration of these elements, consciousness ceases. The breath that leaves man at death lacks consciousness. That is the reason the Bible asserts in Ecclesiastes 9:5 that the living know that they shall die: but the dead know nothing.

On their part, the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria just like other Traditional Africans believe that there is consciousness after death. Nwankwo and Anozie (*Review of Knowledge Economy* 2014:62) affirm that African religious culture teaches that life does not end with death, but continues in another realm.

This belief has led the Igbo to several customary activities which have entangled its people in ritual practices of enormous consequences. Existentially, the economic consequences have become more pronounced.

Burial Customs in South-Eastern Nigeria

Although there are slight variations in some communities, burial customs and their associated rituals and rites lay heavy economic burdens on people in the south-eastern part of Nigeria. During interviews conducted in the course of this work, respondents intimated variously as to their community's requirements. Alala (Interview 2025)¹ informs that in his native Obingwa, in Abia State, there is a sequence of protocols to be followed from informing the people about the death of a parent to the burial activity proper. He states that when someone dies, the children will perform a formal call of the kindred elders with the following items: plenty native kola nuts, 2 bottles of wine, 1 carton of malt, a bowl of garden eggs, a big bowl full of good quality and quantity of meat. After presenting these items, the elders are informed that their brother is dead.

Next in line to be notified is the Amala or the entire village council. This protocol requires a double of what was given the kindred elders. Thus it includes a larger quantity of native kola nuts, 4 bottles of wine, 2 cartons of malt, 2 bowls of garden eggs, 2 big bowls of good quality and quantity of meat, and good quality of sizeable groundnut and pepper blended and poured in a small bowl as source for the kola nut, garden eggs and meat. When this has been accomplished, the Amala or Village Council then appoints a delegation to accompany the children to the maternal home of the deceased for notification that their child, the father or mother of the accompanied children is no more. In this mission, the information on the first visit is that their child is sick and has been taken to the hospital. The Maternal family is given a bottle of wine with some money. On the next visit, they are now informed that their child is dead. If it is a woman, the maternal family will ask the delegation to come back on another day when they will receive a list of what the children must bring to pacify them (the maternal family of the woman) before the date for the burial is arranged.

Furthermore, Alala (Interview 2025) states that the list comprises of all that was done during the marriage of the woman. This means that the children will repeat what their father did when he went to marry their mother, in spite of the fact that prices must have changed considerably in the market. When this requirement is fulfilled, either materially or in cash, then a date for the burial will now be comfortably acceptable to the maternal family. Finally, he averred, on the day of burial, a separate canopy is designated for the maternal family and they are given the following: 1 big cooler of rice, plenty meat, 2 bottles of wine (if you are a Christian, Eva wine is accepted), 2 cartons of malt, 2 crates of soft

drinks, plenty kola nut, garden eggs, bitter kola, alligator pepper and a live cow which they must take home as they return.

Customary Burial Rituals Demand Financial Involvement Chart 1 - Alala

Kindred Elders' Notification

1. Native Kola nuts - N2,000.00
2. 2 Bottles of Wine - N8,000.00
3. 1 Crate of Malt - N12,000.00
4. 1 Bowl of Garden Eggs - N8,000.00
5. A blended pasta of pepper and groundnut - N1,000.00
6. A Big Bowl of Cow Meat - N30,000.00

Sub-Total = N61,000.00

Amala (Village Elders) Notification (2X)

1. Native Kola nuts - N4,000.00
2. 4 Bottles of Wine - N16,000.00
3. 2 Crates of Malt - N24,000.00
4. 2 Bowls of Garden Eggs - N16,000.00
5. A blended pasta of pepper and groundnut - N2,000.00
6. 2 Big Bowls of Cow Meat - N60,000.00

Sub-Total = N122,000.00

Maternal Family

First Notification Visit:

1. 1 Bottle of Wine - N4,000.00
2. Money in Cash - N5,000.00

Second Notification Visit:

1. 1 Bottle of Wine - N4,000.00
2. Money in Cash - N10,000.00

Remarriage List:

Conservative estimate - N800,000.00

Burial Day Required Items:

1. 1 Healthy Live Cow - N800,000.00
2. 1 Big Cooler of Rice - N40,000.00
3. Plenty Meat - N30,000.00
4. 2 Bottles of Wine - N8,000.00
5. 2 Crates of Malt - N24,000.00
6. 2 Crates of Soft Drinks - N16,000.00
7. Native Kola nuts - N4,000.00
8. 2 Bowls of Garden Eggs - N16,000.00
9. Plenty Bitter Kola - N10,000.00
10. A blended pasta of pepper and groundnut - N5,000.00

Sub-Total = N1,776,000.00

Grand-Total = N1,959,000.00

One Million Nine Hundred and Fifty-Nine Thousand Naira.

While corroborating the afore-said, Nwasuka (Interview 2025)² adds that in his own Community Owo Ahiafo in the same Obingwa Local Government Area

of Abia State, certain more requirements are met. These are that: To be able to set the burial date the Children of the deceased are asked to give the following: First son – 1 Goat for the compound brethren, 3 crates of malt and ₦50,000.00 (fifty thousand naira); First daughter – 1 Cock, 2 crates of malt, 1 piece of George wrapper cloth and the charge for the casket; 2nd son – 1 Goat, 1 crate of malt and ₦30,000.00 (Thirty thousand naira); an unmarried daughter gives 2 crates of malt. The above process leads to the igu ngwa ozu (itemizing the things needed for the burial to done).

Furthermore, Nwasuka intimates that the Umuokpu (Umuada), that is, daughters of the maternal community of the deceased, will bring a list of what they are to be given. The list includes 50 Tubers of yam, 1 bag of rice, 20 liters of vegetable oil and 1 Goat. On the day that they are to collect these items, they will be given on arrival at the deceased's home, 2 Coolers of well-prepared rice and ₦50,000.00 (fifty thousand naira). However, these particular demands can be settled monetarily. Another addition in Nwasuka's narrative is that the Community of the deceased collects 1 big- live cow, 5 crates of malt, 3 crates of soft drinks, 5 crates of Beer(or 8 crates of malt if the deceased and his children are Christians), before the burial is sanctioned to hold.

Customary Burial Rituals Demand Financial Involvement Chart 2 – Nwasuka

Notification of the Kindred Elders

1. 5 Native Kola nuts - N1,000.00
2. A Bowl of Garden Eggs - N8,000.00
3. A blended pasta of pepper and groundnut – N1,000.00
4. 3 Crates of Soft Drinks - N24,000.00
5. A Bowl of Cow Meat - N30,000.00

Sub-Total = N64,000.00

Notification of the Larger Community Elders

1. 1 Bottle of Wine - N4,000.00

Burial Date Notification

A repeat of the first set of items: A general requirement to call the Elders together:

1. 5 Native Kola nuts - N1,000.00
2. A Bowl of Garden Eggs - N8,000.00
3. A blended pasta of pepper and groundnut – N1,000.00
4. 3 Crates of Soft Drinks - N24,000.00
5. A Bowl of Cow Meat - N30,000.00

Sub-Total = N64,000.00

First Son:

1. 1 Goat - N120,000.00
2. 3 Crates of Malt – N36,000.00
3. Money in Cash - N50,000.00

Sub-Total = N206,000.00

First Daughter:

1. 1 Cock - N10,000.00
2. 2 Crates of Malt - N24,000.00
3. 1 Piece of George Wrapper - N5,000.00
4. Casket Money - N60,000.00

Sub-Total = N99,000.00

Second Son:

1. 1 Goat - N120,000.00
2. 1 Crate of Malt - N12,000.00
3. Money in Cash - N30,000.00

Sub-Total = N162,000.00

Umuokpu (Daughters of the Maternal Home) Demands

1. 50 Tubers of Yam - N250,000.00
2. 1 Bag of Rice - N95,000.00
3. 20 Liters of Vegetable Oil - N25,000.00
4. 1 Goat - N120,000.00
5. 2 Coolers of Cooked Rice - N80,000.00
6. Money in Cash - N50,000.00

Sub-Total = N620,000.00

Community Demands on the Burial Day

1. A Healthy Live Cow - N800,000.00
2. 5 Crates of Malt - N60,000.00
3. 3 Crates of Soft Drinks - N24,000.00
4. 5 Crates of Beer or 8 Crates of Malt - N96,000.00

Sub-Total = N980,000.00

Grand Total = N2,199,000.00

Two Million, One Hundred and Ninety-Nine Thousand Naira.

In Lorji, Aboh Mbaise, Imo State, Nwachukwu (Interview 2025)³ intimates on the customary burial rituals. He states that if a woman dies, as was the case of his mother, you go to tell the maternal family that she is sick. You invite them to come and see her. They will send a delegation that will come to see things for themselves. Thereafter the children will go to give them wine called the process of iga ncho (going to search for). Before burial plans are made, the children will give their maternal kinsmen a live cow. They will also be asked to bring ewu mmiri ara (a goat for her breast milk) which she used to breast feed her children.

On an appointed day Nwachukwu (Interview 2025), intimates further that, all the women of the deceased's maternal community will come to sweep the compound where their sister was married to. After sweeping the compound they will demand for and be given a live goat which will be taken home. On arrival, they will kill the goat and eat the meat. Finally, at the time of digging the grave,

it is the maternal relatives that come and as they are shown where the grave will be dug, they will perform the ritual of *ikanye nma n'ala* (that is, marking the soil with a cutlass). Thus, they would have given their permission for the grave to be dug where their daughter's corpse will be buried.

At Eziamaka Ubakala, in Umuahia South Local Government Area of Abia State, comes the intimations of Nwachukwu-Ij (Interview 2025).⁴ She narrates of a 3-tier information process which begins with the children informing their immediate kinsmen with the presentation of native kola nuts and garden eggs. Second, the kinsmen will accompany them to go and inform the village leaders with kola nuts and drinks. The third step will be to go to the larger community to notify them of the death of one of their own. The larger community then issues a customary burial rituals items list. This comprehensive list contains both the paternal and the maternal demands.

Further more, she informs that where a particular family is found not to be able to present a live cow, they are allowed to give the community a goat and follow that tradition subsequently. However, should the grand children in future want to kill a cow for their succeeding parents' burial, they cannot, unless they kill a cow for the previous late grandparent whose burial ceremonies were conducted without a cow. The number of such previous burials will determine the number of cows to be killed before that for the present burial that the now capable children want to kill. In this community, it is the 1st daughter of the deceased that buys the casket, pays the grave-diggers, and pays for the mortuary expenses and the Ambulance vehicle that conveys the corpse home from the mortuary. The in-laws of the deceased are required to give the son of the family that is bereaved, a goat and drinks, to assist in the burial requirements. Those who are wealthy can give a cow, provided the earlier condition is met, that is, if they had been using cows for their burials.

Other researchers corroborate the testimonies of the interviewees above. While Okoro (*Journal of Cultural ... Anthropology* 2024:4) posits that it was an expensive venture to conduct funerals in the days before Christianity, the above testimonies show that even now it is very expensive in some parts of Eastern Nigeria, to perform burials. Kalu (*The Sun Nigeria* 2022) affirms the expensive nature of burials in the region by asserting that "... You have to budget more than ₦2 million, including entertainment." Ezeokike (*Online* 2017:113) expresses a concern that in spite of the fact that there is a great number of Catholics (Christians) in Igboland, there are still prevalent pagan beliefs and practices mostly in relation to burial and funeral rites. Added to customary requirements burden is the quest of some people to make fame. This they do by engaging in extravagant display and show of financial might which at long last pulls poorer family members into financial travails and pain. This is why Nwinya (*Journal of the Association ... of Nigeria* 2022:88) avers that: "The problem is that people no longer perform the rituals of burial out of choice but with secret grudges to fulfill the demands of traditional social trend." Eleke (*Online* 2017) intones that he has witnessed families that sold their real estates, other property and personal

belongings just to impress their community and the wider society by executing a grade “A” funeral.

Giving further insight in this regard, Nwinya (Op. Cit. 2022:89) informs that:

In 2014 when Ogbuinya Nwibo Nwinya of Igbeagu Izzi Ebonyi State died, nine cows were required for his proper traditional burial rites as a title holder. This was in addition to the food and drinks served the whole community for a week long funeral with an average of three sets of fifty rounds of canon shot per day. Recently, Simon Odo, a popular native doctor from Aji in Igbo-Eze North of Enugu State was buried in a car. People had it that the car was worth eight million naira ... which served as coffin. Similarly, Late Anthony Obiagoso Erukeme, CEO Tonimas oil and Gas, was buried in a casket worth thirty-four million naira in August 2020 In July 2021, the whole South-East Nigeria was shut for the burial of Inyom Ezinne Uche Iyiegbu, mother of Obinna Iyiegbu (Obi Cubana), at Oba, Anambara State, Nigeria, and the entire world were (sic) amazed at the culture of profligacy and wastage orchestrated at the event that lasted more than a week.

The chief reason why these acts of rituals and the fun-fare that are attached to them persist is, as Ogbuagu (*Anthropologica* 1989:88) and Ekeopara (*African Traditional ... An Introduction* 2005:88) affirm, the belief that the dead are conscious and benefit from these rituals such that their status in the spirit world are positively impacted by their performance. Coupled with this is the fear factor. The Igbos like other Africans fear that failure to perform the required customary burial rituals and its perceived distortion of the status of the dead in the spiritual world will make the dead to attack their living relatives, causing misfortune for them in this present world. Thus Nwokoha (*International Journal ... Relations* 2020:81) avers that, it is for the sake of good behaviour that customary burial rituals were religiously crafted. But this craft of man for himself has become anathematic. As Emelike and Salau (*Business Day Newspaper* 2024) observe, these requirements have driven some people into crime just to make enough money and impress the society. They also attest that “no matter how fast the dead is buried, the burials are still very expensive because of the requirements, cultural rites, especially multiple layers of consultations with the deceased’s relatives, in-laws, maternal people, the community and the church.” From their findings, they intimate that these days, people have to plan for between ₦5 million and beyond to be able to hold a burial. Furthermore, they attest of having encountered people who boast of having spent ₦10 million to ₦15 million in the burial of their dead one.

Further inquiry into these customary burial rituals and their effect on the Igbos leads to Okwueze (*A Bountiful Harvest* 2012:144), who intones that though the items to be presented may vary from place to place it still presents some conflicts between traditionalists and Christians. While affirming that animals in life form ranging from the fowl to the cow are demanded, the conflicts involve answers to certain questions such as (a) who receives the animal? (b) how should

the killing be done? and (c) what purpose does the killing of the animal serve? In an attempt to answer the third question of Okwueze, Ejizu (1986:71) states that by his ritual acts, man demonstrates his internal religious mindset, his perception and convictions about the cosmos. Further expatiation is given by Ossai (*Online* n.d.) who avers that it is done to facilitate the dead into acceptance in the spirit world. In a subtle ease of tension, Kavulavu and Achar (*International Journal ... Social Science* 2023:864) assert that, although these ritual rites must be memorable, they are not specific. This could be the case in a place like Ezianya Ubakala as attested to by Nwachukwu-Ij but in most places requirements are specific.

Insight as to who receives the animals, which is the first question of Okwueze above, can be grasped by noting the assertions of Emanuel (Interview 2011)⁵ and Agbo (Interview 2011)⁶ both of Edem Nru, Nsukka. They state that the relatives of the dead who come from the maternal home receive the animal and return home with it, processing in fun-fare with the consolation that their dead relative achieved something, and was fruitful. However, whether the animal is for the maternal relatives or for the deceased's village or community, it is the head of the community that receives and directs the people to handle the animal accordingly. As to how the killing is to be done, the answer depends on the prevailing belief of the leader of the kindred, village or community. For further insight, the narrative of Nnaji (Interview 2011)⁷ of Umuezejo, Obollo Afor Enugu State will suffice. He intimates that two animals are brought. The first is "*Ugodo nbishi n'agada*" (ritual burial dog). The second is "*mkpi ejiaka*" (a ritual he-goat). The dog's head is severed from the body and placed under the laps of the corpse in the grave. The remaining parts of the dog is prepared for consumption as pepper soup together with the he-goat and is consumed only by people who are qualified to eat such in the community. So it depends on the community. Affirming the afore-stated, Adewuyi (*Online* 2020), states that Igbos believe in life of consciousness beyond our physical realm. In light of this, he continues: prayers, sacrifices and other acts thought to be beneficial to the dead in the spirit realm form central practices of their funeral rites.

Income Levels in South-Eastern Nigeria

One of the key factors that determine people's income is wages and salaries. This is because in Nigeria as a whole and South-Eastern Nigeria specially, the quest for white-collar jobs, owing to the rapid rise in educational attainments of the people, has so increased that, people find it difficult to engage in farming and other agricultural activities, to earn their living. Yet the illusion of every educated person securing a paid employment remains with the people as unemployment rate soars higher and higher each year. The irony remains that these people who refuse to return to agriculture tie themselves to few who have employment to share the meager wages and salaries available.

Tolu-kolawole, et.al (*Punch E-Paper* 2024) bring to lime-light the current salary structure of Nigerian workers. They intimate us based on documents they aver that was obtained by the Punch Newspapers from National Income, Salaries and Wages Commission. They state that the ₦70,000 new minimum wage

approved by Nigeria’s President was to be implemented beginning from September 2024. They intoned that “over 1.2 million civil servants on the payroll of the Federal Government will be paid the newly approved minimum wage in September.” The breakdown of wages and salaries according to grade levels and per annum as indicated in their report are as follows, by paraphrase : level one ₦930,000.=; level two ₦934,160,=; level three ₦937,713.=; level four ₦950,243.=; level five ₦973,123,=; level six ₦1,041,786.=; level seven ₦1,277,667.=; level eight ₦1,479,276.=; level nine ₦1,641,226.=; level ten ₦1,806,041.=; level 12 ₦2,007,152.=; level 13 ₦2,182,637.=; level 15 ₦2,358,936.=; level 16 ₦3,611,689.=; and level 17 ₦6,918,560.=; level 11 and 14 were not indicated in their write up.

To expatiate the more on the figures above, this work further breaks down the income to monthly, weekly and daily figures in the chart below:

| Grade level | Annual salary | Annual/12 Monthly salary | Annual/52 Weekly salary | Annual/365 Daily salary |
|-------------|---------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Level 1 | ₦930,000 = | ₦77,500. = | ₦17,884.61 | ₦2,547.94 |
| Level 2 | ₦934,160 = | ₦77,846.66 | ₦17,964.61 | ₦2,559.34 |
| Level 3 | ₦937,713 = | ₦78,142.75 | ₦18,032.94 | ₦2,569.07 |
| Level 4 | ₦950,243 = | ₦79,186.91 | ₦18,273.90 | ₦2,603.40 |
| Level 5 | ₦973,123 = | ₦81,093.58 | ₦18,713.90 | ₦2,666.09 |
| Level 6 | ₦1,041,786 = | ₦86,815.50 | ₦20,034.34 | ₦2,854.20 |
| Level 7 | ₦1,277,667 = | ₦106,472.25 | ₦24,570.51 | ₦3,500.45 |
| Level 8 | ₦1,479,276 = | ₦ 123,273.00 | ₦ 28,447.61 | ₦4,052.81 |
| Level 9 | ₦1,641,226 = | ₦ 136,768.83 | ₦31,562.03 | ₦4,496.50 |
| Level 10 | ₦1,806,041 = | ₦150,503.41 | ₦34,731.55 | ₦4,948.05 |
| Level 11 | Not indicated | Not indicated | Not indicated | Not indicated |
| Level 12 | ₦2,007,152 | ₦167,262.66 | ₦38,599.07 | ₦5,499.04 |
| Level 13 | ₦2,182,637 | ₦181,886.41 | ₦41,973.78 | ₦5,979.82 |
| Level 14 | Not indicated | Not indicated | Not indicated | Not indicated |
| Level 15 | ₦2,358,936 | ₦196,578.00 | ₦45,364.15 | ₦6,462.83 |
| Level 16 | ₦3,611,689 | ₦300,974.08 | ₦69,455.55 | ₦9,895.03 |
| Level 17 | ₦6,918,560 | ₦576,546.66 | ₦133,049.23 | ₦18,954.95 |

From the figures above it becomes clear that many of the civil servants earn between ₦2,500. = and ₦3,500. = per day. This is figure for levels one to seven which constitute the greatest number in the work force. The middle working class which ranges from levels eight to thirteen earn between ₦4,000. = and ₦6,000. = daily. The higher working cadre placed on level 14-16, earn between ₦6,000. = and ₦10,000. = daily. The highest echelon which is only a very minute number of people, the permanent secretaries on level 17, earn about ₦19,000.00 daily.

With this knowledge one can understand why researchers and reporters lament the life of poverty bedeviling many Nigerians in general and South-Easterners in particular. In their submission Orji et.al (*Online* 2020) aver that, using per capita parameters, more than 60 percent of people in South East of Nigeria live below the \$1.25 per day poverty line limit. Ngwu (*Business Day* 2020) intimates that, information on poverty level released by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) shows that South Eastern States perform badly. It shows Ebonyi as the worst with about 80 percent of its citizens being poor. Enugu follows with 60 percent. Abia comes third with about 31 percent, Imo fourth with 29 percent and Anambra being the best of them, with 15 percent of her citizens being poor. He states that of about 50 million people in the South East, 21.5 million of them are unable to spend about ₦11,000 per person as monthly sustenance.

Lending its voice to the poverty evaluation analysis in Nigeria, Anker Living Income Reference Value (*Online* 2020), gives the South East an average range of 20-40 percent poverty rate. This poverty is multidimensional as reported by Ichedi (*National Bureau of Statistics Press Release* 2022). Thus it has devastating consequences in terms of food, health, security and active living (Okoroafor, Osita-Njoku and Okoro *Online* 2010:185). The irony of the situation is that in spite of the poverty rate, some towns in the South East are now being cited as having very high cost of living ratings. Thus Nnachi (*Punch E-Paper* 2025) calls the situation a paradox. He states: "The cost of basic necessities such as food, housing, and transportation has soared, putting immense pressure on a population that largely depends on subsistence farming and civil service jobs." Further insights drawn from people lamenting these harsh conditions are provided by Nnachi (Op. Cit. 2025) thus:

One of those bearing the brunt of the economic downturn is a 35-years-old civil

servant, Mrs . Liliana Agwu. Speaking with our correspondent in Abakaliki, Agwu painted a grim picture of daily life in Ebonyi Similarly, 40-year-old Banker, Mr. Onunogbu Chinedu, who resides in Abakaliki but hails from Abia State, described his experience living in Ebonyi as a bitter contradiction. 'Back in Abia, we used to think Abakaliki was where you could get cheap food, especially staples like yam and garri. But after living here for years, I can tell you that assumption is no longer valid. Prices are ridiculously high here,' he said With fuel, transportation, and food prices skyrocketing, and salaries remaining stagnant most workers in the state are experiencing diminished purchasing power The crises extend

to the academic sector. A lecturer at Ebonyi State University, Mrs. Maria Nkwede, shared her distress over economic climate. 'Everything in the market is expensive. Salaries have slightly increased but inflation has outpaced any benefit from that. I used to do more with \$10 than I can now. The value of money has practically vanished,' she said. 'People are mentally drained. We're living in survival mode, not thriving?'

What is reported above about Ebonyi State is equally valid for other South Eastern States, as well as the entire Nigeria. Oyedokun (*Business Day* 2025) sum his findings by asserting that many people in Nigeria ate living paycheck to paycheck, finding it hard to buy food, pay rent and transportation bills. Commenting on this prevailing situation, and buttressing earlier submissions, as to the reason for this high cost of living, Daily Times (n.d.) submits that the answer is the oil boom of the 1970s; that created economic expansion, population growth and private investment in luxurious amenities. This situation saw many departing for the cities and leaving food production to the aged people in the villages still farming with crude implements. Arising from the above stated, SEREDEC (n.d) posits that there is need for infrastructural development in the South East for its people to be able to realize their economic potentials. This could be part of the solutions but how can enough people invest in developmental projects when they lavish their hard earned meager resources in extravagant and customary burial ritual demands. Given this quagmire, the need arises for the Christian religion to improve on its education of the minds of people to see the need of curbing economic expenditure in the processes of burying the dead.

The Christian Religion And The Role It Could Play To Curb Customry Burial Ritual Economic Travails Of The South Eastern Nigeria People.

Religion is a word whose definition spans a broad base of scholarship. So many people define the term variously; Durkheim (*The Elementary ... Life* 1915:47) defined it thus : "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Iwe (*The Inseparable ... and Law* 2003:48) on his part states that religion is a spiritual journey which characteristically showcases: one, the craving for and acknowledgement of some power beyond the human realm, called God; two, the attestation of the limited abilities of man to satisfy his own needs; and three, man's design of tenets that guide his relational acts in life in order to give reasons why some major issues happen the way they do in life. Obi (*Online* 2012) intones that religion involves how people understand and view the being, form and respect attached to deity or deities as spiritual relationships in cosmic affairs and peoples' life. Esowe and Etta (*Port Harcourt Journal ... Studies* 2018:81, 82) aver that religion is "a concept of life that associates human behavioral patterns to perceptions understood as outcomes of the relationships that exist between the natural and the supernatural realms of existence." Summing up these views and definitions, McGivern (*Introduction to Sociology ... Edition* n.d) submits that religious practices cut across human engagements in feasts and festivals, God or gods, marriage and funeral services,

music and art, meditation or initiation, sacrifice or service, as well as other spheres of culture.

Christian religion could then be described as a religion practiced by Christians. The Disciples of Jesus Christ of Nazareth were first given the title “Christians” in Antioch as it is recorded in Acts of the Apostles 11:26. Disciple is translated from the Greek word *matheetes*, which also means a “learner” in addition to a “follower” and occurs 261 times in the New Testament (Mounce *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* 2003:104,401). The Greek *Christianos* translated as Christians in Acts 11:26 (Marshall *The Interlinear ... in Greek and English* 1976:517) is in the accusative case and plural in number (Moulton *The Analytical Greek ... Revised* 1978:439). A noun in the accusative case is the direct object of the verb in the sentence (Esowe *A Beginner’s New Testament Greek* 2021:25). The main verb in the passage of Acts 11:26 involving a plurality of actions is teaching. This means that the teachings of the disciples warranted their being called Christians, because, they taught like Christ Jesus. Thus Christianity is the religion whose beliefs, teachings, and practices are hinged on the life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Hick and Spencer *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 2025). In view of this fact, the Christian religion owes it a duty to educate the people of South Eastern Nigeria on the truth about the state of the dead. Following this will be what to do and what not to do concerning the dead to eliminate the economic sufferings people are either being inflicted with or inflicting upon themselves.

Education on the Christian Belief on the State of the Dead.

For any belief, teaching and practice to be truly Christian, it has to be Bible based. This is why Paul the apostle wrote: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). The Bible teaches that God formed man of dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life into man’s nostrils and thereafter man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7) not an immortal soul (Odom *Is Your Soul Immortal?* 1989:7). It was not a soul that God breathed into the lifeless body; instead, it was life-giving air. When man dies, Ecclesiastes 12:7 says “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.” When dust is removed from the Genesis account as well as the account of Ecclesiastes, what remains to be equated to, or compared, on both statements, becomes breath and spirit. It then becomes clear that the spirit in Ecclesiastes 12:7 is logically and ontologically the same thing as the breath of life in Genesis 2:7.

The Hebrew word in Genesis 2:7 translated as “living being” or “living soul” is *nephesh chayyah*. Jacob (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1974:617-621) states that *nephesh chayyah* describes man’s total nature, a complete human person. Corroborating the aforesaid, Porteous (*The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 1962:428), avers that the Old Testament in using the word *nephesh*, never intends to say the immortal soul, instead, it means to talk of the life principle, or the living being, or the self with the tendency of appetite and

emotion, and sometimes of volition. In Ecclesiastes 12:7, the Hebrew “*ruach*” is what is translated as spirit. It is used severally in the Old Testament and is translated variously as “spirit”, “wind” or “breath.” Strong (*Online* 2001:107), states that it is also translated as “a sensible exhalation” citing Ezekiel 37:14. Plumptre and Whitelaw (*The Pulpit Commentary* n.d:265) affirm that in Ezekiel 37:9, the prophet was commanded to prophesy unto the wind, or breath, or spirit, and direct it from the four winds to come into the slain, that they might live again.

The Greek word used in the New Testament for Soul is *psuche*. It occurs 103 times in 14 chapters, translated severally as life, breath and self (Mounce *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar* 2003:441). In his intimation, Jemison (*Christian Beliefs* 1959:138) states that whereas *psuche* is the New Testament equivalent of *nephesh*, *ruach* finds equivalence in *pneuma*. So the New Testament Greek word *pneuma* corresponds with the Old Testament Hebrew word *ruach*. Dana and Mantey (*A Manual Grammar ... New Testament* 1955:347) translate *pneuma* as “spirit,” “wind” and “breath”. In summing his analysis of the word *pneuma*, Jemison (Op. Cit. 1959:138) states that: “... in not one of the 385 time it appears does it indicate an entity that has been part of a human being and that lives on after his death, capable of separate conscious, intelligent existence.

The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (1991:254,255) examines the word *psuche* in Mathew 10:28 and intimates that it is also closely related to *leb* translated as “heart,” or “inner man” in the Old Testament. It submits that the idea is not laying emphasis on a part of the body that can be really distinguished as a separate entity. Rather it speaks of the inner state of the mind that could either lead to salvation or damnation, citing 1 Peter 1:9; 2:11, 25; 4:19 to buttress the point. It also avers that the context shows hell to be a place of torment for the complete person after there would have been a resurrection of the just and the unjust.

Another passage people get confused about when discussing the state of the dead is Luke 16:19-31. It deals with the issue of the rich man and Lazarus. Frew (*Barnes Notes on the New Testament* 1985:114,115) intimates that the word Lazarus is Hebrew, and is used in this passage to denote a person destitute of help. He further avers that the rich man is not a reference to any particular identifiable individual in real history as there is no evidence to that effect. He states that the narrative should be considered as a parable meant to teach of things that could happen in future. Exhuming the context of the story, he refers to the previous conversation Christ had with the Pharisees. This he does by showing that Jesus had taught about the danger of the love of money and the vanity of stockpiling wealth without regard to the scripture and its requirements from man.

A corroboration of the afore-stated is made by the Expositor’s Bible Commentary. It says that the Lucan context of the story is of primary significance. That the Pharisees, expressed belief in a future life and judgment, but, did not live their lives in alignment to their belief. They were enmeshed in wealth accumulation like the rich man in the parable. The resurrection of Jesus

would even not convince them to believe the scriptures. The implication of the story is that peoples' relationship to God and His word is sealed and determined here and now because after death, it cannot be changed. Furthermore, the commentary avers that a difficult anachronism would be introduced if the story is literally interpreted, to say that people are already in the torment of hell fire. This is owing to the fact that the event of Revelation 20:14 is yet to take place. This will only happen after God's universal judgment. Therefore it is best to interpret the story as a parable given its Lucan context and considering those elements that are plainly supported in other Bible passages. This view shows that the dead are still in their graves awaiting the second coming of Jesus Christ (1Cor. 15:51-58; 1Thess 4:13-18). At His coming (Matt 25:31-46), there shall be a separation of the righteous from the wicked prior to the rewarding of each one in accordance to their works.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Bible teaches of the unity of the elements that make up the human person. It is also evident that at death, because a separation of dust from the life principle takes place, there is a cessation of the existence of the human person in a conscious intelligent corporeal state. As Esowe (*Major Beliefs ... Igbo Society* 2015:199) states: "when death occurs, the person, the living being dies, thus the soul in the real ontological sense ceases to be." In view of this analysis; it would be beneficial if people would live their lives in positive conducts and in keeping to biblical standards throughout their endeavors of life. The determinant of where people will spend eternity is the relationship kept between man and God as well as between man and his fellow man in the here and now. Whatever happens after death has no effect on the destiny of the dead.

Highlighting Unanswered Questions in the Prevailing Traditional Customary Ritual Beliefs

Certain questions are glaringly obvious as one analyzes the customary beliefs that lead the Igbos and other Traditional Africans to perform the burial rituals they do. First, they believe that the dead are conscious in the spirit world but are yet to situate the spirit world, the one in which the dead consciously inhabit. In the Bible, Jesus Christ tells of a place He is going to prepare in heaven. He promises to come back in a future time to take those who believe to that place (John 14:1-3) Moses was shown patterns of things in heaven from mount Sinai (Exodus 25:9, 40). This is corroborated and expatiated upon in Hebrews 9:23 where Jesus' sacrifice is shown to be superior as a heavenly sanctuary act. In John 20:17 the Bible states "Jesus saith unto her, "Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my father, and your father; and to my God, and your God. Further insight is given by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 thus:

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught

up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Heaven is above, hence the terms ascending for going there and descending for coming from there. God the Creator says that the living know they shall die but the dead know nothing. The dead are inactive in physical activities like one who is asleep. So the question remains where is that abode of the dead-conscious Igbo (African)?

The second question is “why did the dead Egyptian Pharaohs not strike the Archaeologists who took away valuable things from their tombs?” The third question is why did the spirit of Nwaeruru Mbakwe not attack the robbers who dug up her coffin in the night and stole the gold buried together with her corpse in the grave? Asabor (*Independent Newspaper* 2023) affirms that the grave of the Second Republic Governor of Imo State Chief Sam Mbakwe’s wife Florence Nwaeruru Mbakwe was dug open and the robbers who did that carted away the gold placed in her coffin alongside her corpse. This happened in Avutu, Obowo, Imo State, Nigeria in early 1980s.

The fourth question will be unveiled after this narrative by Ikeji (*Online* 2019) and Igbekoyi (*Independent Newspaper* 2019). Ikeji reports of an attempt to steel the casket used to bury a late business mogul Olorogun Michael Ibru in Delta State, Nigeria. Corroborating the news above, Igbekoyi adds that the casket was worth over ₦50 million. Further intimation from Igbekoyi has it that thieves broke into the tomb and poured acid on the slab in an attempt to gain access to the gold casket. That this happened around 2.00 am in the night and it was an alarm raised by the workers at Ibru Clinic and Michael and Cecilia Ibru Foundation that saved the situation. The question here is, “who is correct between God and human tradition?” In other words, “why was it human beings and not the spirits of the dead that warded off the robbers?”

Christian Religious Answers To the Questions Raised Above

One of the key roles religion, especially the Christian religion should play to the fullest is to conscientize the society. Jaja (*Religion ... in Africa* 2015:116) asserts that in our various societies of today, organized religion needs to stand as the conscience and soul of the peoples’ culture. He states that such role should be “intransigently unyielding to the roaring waves of injustice and prejudice.” Furthermore, he states that if churches allow themselves to be suppressed, from properly enlightening the masses and leading them to stand on their proper footing, by mundane forces, then there is no justification for their existence. The people then become sheep without a shepherd. Thus this work will now proffer answers to the questions raised earlier in this section. These answers will serve as tools that the Christian religion needs to use in educating both its adherents and others in the society, on the state of the dead as well as on how not to waste available resources on inconsequential rituals of culture that do no one any good in the society.

The answer to question one: “where are the dead? “, is very technical. The dead are non-existent. This is because every human being is a composite creature of God consisting of dust and breath of life (Gen. 2:7). Death is an act that leads to lifelessness through the separation of the breath of life from the

dust (Eccl.12:7). However, due to the nature of the composite elements used by God to create man, dust which is tangible, and is called the remains, or the corpse of the dead, is usually laid in the grave. The breath which is air remains in the atmosphere which by implication is under God's control and beyond man's understanding. Furthermore, the remains decays with time as man's flesh which is dust dissolves back into the soil; the bones remain in the grave and wax to brittleness with time. In view of this, the dead cannot be identifiably existent anywhere until when God in His omnipotence chooses to bring them back to life. This the Bible assures us will happen at the return of Jesus Christ to this world.

Question two seeks to know why the dead Pharaohs of Egypt, whose coffins and graves were filled with gold, could not attack the robbers and Archaeologists who exhumed their tombs and took away those precious metals. The Bible which is the authoritative revealer of doctrines (Davidson *Ministry ... Pastors* 2003:6) states without mincing words that: "The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything ..." (Eccl. 9:5). Because the dead Pharaohs are non-existent, unconscious, inactive, they could not stop the robbers neither could they prevent the Archaeologists from taking the gold. There is no activity for the non-existent dead that is why the gold and other items still remained in the tombs. If the dead were active, they would have used some or all of those items for one thing or the other. So for the living, it was a waste of resources to have those valuable items buried in a tomb rather than use them for economic activities among them and for themselves.

The Avutu Obowo experience which raises the third question is an incident that happened right in Eastern Nigeria. It occurred while the husband of the deceased was a sitting Governor of Imo State, Nigeria. The Governor who believed in honoring the dead with such valuable item had control over the security apparatus of the State. The robbers tactfully beat the security guards' alertness and the dead could not stop them. It means that as in Egypt so in Eastern Nigeria. The truth about the state of the dead defies ethnic boundaries and holds sway everywhere on planet earth. Nwaeruru Mbakwe being dead possessed nothing and remains unconscious, inactive and non-existent ontologically. The incorrect belief system of the people led to the waste of valuables put into her coffin and subsequently carted away by robbers. Insightfully, a Traditional Ruler, Igwe Tony Ojukwu (Interview 2011)⁸ once averred: "*ozu adighi awa n'afa na elighi ya ofuma*" (meaning "a corpse does not explode for the sake of its not being buried well). This affirms the fact that the dead know nothing and can do nothing anymore.

As to who is saying the truth between God and man, which constitutes the fourth question about people rather than spirits dispersing robbers at the grave of Olorogun Michael Ibru, the event or incident speaks for itself. The robbers seemed to have initial success by beating security watch and gaining access to the grave-yard. They poured acid on the slab used to cover the tomb in an effort to dissolve the concrete slab. The spirit of the dead that is supposedly believed to be able to attack the living did nothing. It was when the living and actively conscious human beings working in the facilities within the environment noticed the awkward movements that they raised an alarm. The remains or corpse being

lifeless and the breath being formless and unintelligent could do nothing. Olorogun Michael Ibru, by the word of God, which is the infallible truth, is no longer ontologically existent, that is why that attempt seemingly happened.

The Way Out: Investment Rather Than Wrong Ritual Expenditure.

The fallacy of the living-dead is the brain-child of the devil. He said *ab-initio* to Eve, “Ye shall not surely die ... your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4, 5). Even when Adam and Eve have long died and no one has encountered their spirit, people still allow themselves to be told that the dead are living in a spirit world that no one can explain its location. The African worldview, that leads to burial rituals and rites, hinge on the belief in consciousness after death, which this work has tried to show to be inconsistent with biblical reality. Therefore the Christian religion should educate the people of South Eastern Nigeria to better invest the funds that are used to fulfill burial rituals in economic ventures that would help ameliorate their sufferings.

Writing on small scale businesses people can invest in; Temitope-Adesope (*Online* 2023) lists the following 10 ventures:

1. POS (Point of Sale) business with a startup cost of about ₦100,000.00 to ₦200,000.00;
2. Popcorn Production and sales with an initial capital requirement of ₦50,000.00 to ₦100,000.00;
3. Recharge Card sales with any available amount;
4. Fruit sales Business with initial capital of about ₦500,000.00;
5. Blogging with minimal startup costs for web hosting;
6. Freelance writing with startup equipments such as a computer, printer and internet access;
7. Mini Importation with variable startup cost of between ₦100,000.00 and ₦500,000.00;
8. Affiliate Marketing of people’s products through internet with low startup costs for basic wix website;
9. Car wash Business with initial capital of around ₦200,000.00
10. Real Estate Agency requiring initial training and broker fees with basic website hosting.

Contributing ideas on rural investment opportunities, Chaumont (*Online* 2024) cites Alvaro Lario President of the UN’s International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) thus:

Investing in small-scale farmers and rural entrepreneurs is the most effective way to unlock the immense potential of Africa’s agriculture and food system for all In Africa, food insecurity and climate change are damaging opportunities for millions of young people entering the job market. Developing thriving rural economies that provide good food and decent job has a stabilizing power In Africa, 20% of the population - or one in five - is undernourished or suffers from hunger, affecting a total of approximately 300 million people. Now is the time to invest at scale in Africa’s small – scale food producers – the backbone of Africa’s food security and development.

The statements above underscore what Esowe (*Advances in Multidisciplinary ... Journal* 2017) posits that while it is urgently necessary for the right Bible passages with the characters in them to be used (such as Boaz in the book of Ruth) in attracting young people to engage in agricultural farming, African governments, multi-national corporations and big private businesses should collaborate to provide resources that will make youths of the various communities willing to heed the call. The Christian religion in her sphere of influence should join in answering this clarion call. Adherents and other individuals in the society should be made to understand that the various sums of money being expended for customary burial rituals could be used to empower people. Thus rather than causing people to go borrowing and selling their properties for burials, they should avoid those rituals, trusting in God's word, and causing prosperity and progress in their families and communities through direct small-scale investments as have been enumerated above. Agricultural investments can be small poultry farms of either Birds or Cattle, crop farm of vegetables, grains, cereals, spices and fruits.

CONCLUSIONS

Customary burial ritual demands in South Eastern Nigeria has become an economic burden to several individuals, and families. Asabor (Op. Cit. 2023:2) sums up the situation of things by asserting that the customary burial practices of virtually all communities in the land create holes in the pockets of the bereaved. He highlights the expressed lamentation of Kelvin Onukanshi, a federal civil servant, who said: “I am still struggling to survive. In the midst of my struggle, I lost my father a few months ago As a high chief, I am required by tradition to officially announce the demise of my father to our kindred as well as the church, before commencing burial arrangements. Money is involved in all these. Where do I get it from, my meager salary, as most of my siblings are also struggling?”

These man-made customary rituals stem from the questionable belief, of consciousness after death. This belief makes the Igbos like most other Africans, to believe in the conscious existence of their ancestors in the spirit world. It further creates anxiety among the living who do not by nature understand what goes on in the spirit realm, but have been erroneously taught that the dead become more powerful in the invisible realm than none actually has located. These rituals which are believed to aid the journey of the deceased as well as to accord them certain status in the land of the living-dead, have become a source of economic travail to many in Igbo land.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth the founder and foundation of the Christian religion says: “come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mathew 11:28). Thus it behooves Christians to find ways of curbing these economic travails of the people resulting from biblically unfounded beliefs, teachings and practices. The Bible teaches that the dead know nothing (Eccl 9:5). The dead are asleep figuratively, they cannot act nor benefit from any act of the living. Educating the people to imbibe these truths about the state of the dead is what Christians should vigorously do in order to help the people have a change of their world view as well as their mindset. Further education on several investment options that will improve the economic condition of the people should be repeatedly carried out. This will help the people to use the funds that are spent in performing customary burial rituals that have no meaning for the living, for positive live changing ventures.

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Notes

1. Alala, Iheanacho M. is an Associate Professor of Church History and Biblical Studies at Clifford University, Owerinta, Abia State. He was interviewed on June 26, 2025.
2. Nwachukwu, Ijeoma E. is a Senior Lecturer in Mathematics at Clifford University, Owerinta, Abia State, Nigeria. She was involved in the burial activities of her father's remains four years ago in Ubakala, Umuahia South L.G.A. of Abia State. She was interviewed on July 7, 2025.

3. Nwachukwu, Maduabuchi I. is a Senior Lecturer in Literature in English at Clifford University, Owerrinta, Abia State, Nigeria. He was involved in his mother's corpse' burial arrangements two years ago at Lorji, Aboh Mbaise L.G.A. in Imo State. He was interviewed on July 7, 2025.
4. Nwasuka, Stanley is a Lecturer in Mathematics and Computer Science in Clifford University, Owerrinta, Abia State, Nigeria. He supervised the burial activities of his late father's remains in August 2024.
5. Agbo, Thomas is a trader and a Christian in Nsukka L.G.A. in Enugu State, Nigeria. He was interviewed about 10 years ago during a PhD field research.
6. Emmanuel, Agbo is a 70-year-old Farmer and a Traditional African Religionist in Obiagu, Edem Nru, Nsukka L.G.A. in Enugu State, Nigeria. He was interviewed about 10 years ago during a PhD field survey.
7. Nnaji, Isaac U. is a Metal Work Craftsman and a Christian in Obollo-Afor, Udenu L.G.A. of Enugu State, Nigeria. He was interviewed about 10 years ago during a PhD field work.
8. Ojukwu, Tony. He is the Igwe (Traditional Ruler) of Ogui Nike, in Enugu North L.G.A. of Enugu State, Nigeria. He was interviewed about 10 years ago during a PhD field survey.