

## ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ATONEMENT: FORGIVENESS, JUSTICE AND MORAL REPAIRS IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed to assess the ethical implications of atonement with a focus on forgiveness, justice, and moral repairs in Nigerian context. To achieve the aim of this study, four objectives were raised to guide the study. Various conceptual and empirical studies were reviewed to understand the empirical underpinning of the study. Methodologically, the study utilized empirical research to enable the comparative analysis across religious traditions, assessing beliefs and practices regarding atonement. From the analysis carried out, the study revealed that atonement has changed over time and varies among religions like Christianity emphasizes Jesus' sacrifice, while Islam focuses on personal accountability, atonement plays an essential role in communities by promoting forgiveness and moral behavior as it helps individuals handle wrongdoing and fosters social cohesion, showing that collective practices surrounding atonement can strengthen relationships and atonement is used in real life, such as in conflict resolution and rehabilitation programs for offenders as these applications demonstrate how acknowledging wrongdoing and seeking to make amends can lead to healing and improved relations within communities.

**Keywords:** Atonement, Christianity, Ethics, Forgiveness, Justice, Moral Repairs

## Introduction

The ethical implications of atonement have garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly in contexts involving interpersonal relationships, social justice, and collective memory. Atonement, which involves taking responsibility for one's actions to restore moral balance, is intricately connected to concepts of forgiveness, justice, and moral repair. Understanding how these elements interplay is crucial for addressing ethical dilemmas in both personal and societal contexts.

Forgiveness has long been regarded as a vital component of healing, both for individuals and communities (<sup>1</sup> Brooks, 23). It allows victims to move beyond the pain inflicted by wrongdoings, yet it raises questions about morality—primarily, what it means to forgive and under what circumstances it is appropriate to do so. This inquiry becomes particularly complex in situations involving systemic injustices, such as racism or colonialism, where the act of forgiveness may feel inadequately resourced without corresponding acts of justice.

Justice, on the other hand, often operates within the frameworks of retribution, restoration, and rehabilitation (<sup>2</sup> Craig, 12). Theories of justice must engage with the notion of atonement to fully realize their ethical dimensions. For instance, the restorative justice model emphasizes moral repair over punitive measures, advocating for dialogue, acknowledgment of harm, and mutual understanding (<sup>3</sup> Rossner, 7). Such an approach aligns seamlessly with the idea that true atonement necessitates not just an admission of wrongdoing but also tangible efforts to rectify the past.

In the vein of <sup>4</sup> Rutledge, Jonathan, moral repair extends beyond individual transgressions; it encompasses collective acts to redress societal wrongs (16). This is particularly pertinent in discussions surrounding historical injustices, such as slavery and apartheid, where entire groups seek acknowledgment and reconciliation. Here, the ethical implications of atonement become a matter of public discourse, involving restorative policies, reparative justice, and communal healing processes (<sup>4</sup> Rutledge, 22). These elements further complicate the landscape of forgiveness, challenging traditional notions of individualistic accountability.

Moreover, the rise of social movements advocating for social justice highlights the urgency of understanding atonement's ethics. As societies grapple with their histories, the interplay between forgiveness and justice becomes crucial (<sup>2</sup> Craig, 33). Questions of how to balance the need for individual healing and collective responsibility are more pertinent than ever. Thus, the ethical implications of atonement provide a rich field for exploration, calling for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate philosophy, psychology, sociology, and law to inform holistic understanding and practical applications. This study will focus on Nigeria, particularly examining the complex dynamics of reconciliation following the Nigerian Civil War. The research will explore the relationship between forgiveness and accountability, the effectiveness of moral repairs and reparations, and the ethical challenges of achieving justice. The insights gained aim to enhance understanding of atonement in post-conflict contexts.

## Statement of the Problem

The study of ethical implications surrounding atonement—specifically in the realms of forgiveness, justice, and moral repairs—faces significant challenges that limit our understanding and practical applications of these concepts. One major problem is the often-ambiguous relationship between forgiveness and justice. In many cases, <sup>5</sup> Boaheng affirmed that the process of forgiving a wrongdoer raises difficult questions about culpability and moral accountability (28). How does one reconcile the need for personal healing through forgiveness with the need for justice, especially in contexts involving severe societal injustices? This dilemma is particularly pressing

in cases of systemic violations, where acts of forgiveness may inadvertently undermine calls for reparation and accountability (<sup>1</sup> Brooks, 57).

According to <sup>3</sup> Rossner, another significant issue lies in the lack of consensus on what constitutes appropriate moral repair (34). The mechanisms of moral repair can vary widely across cultural and social contexts, leading to disparities in how communities understand and enact justice. For example, indigenous approaches to atonement may differ markedly from Western legal frameworks, complicating efforts to achieve reconciliation in multicultural societies. The absence of a unified framework for moral repair creates obstacles for those seeking justice and forgiveness simultaneously, leading to feelings of alienation among victims and undermining societal cohesion (<sup>1</sup> Brooks, 15).

Furthermore, there exists a critical need to address the ethical implications of collective atonement, particularly in response to historical injustices (<sup>1</sup> Brooks, 12). Questions surrounding how societies collectively engage in the atonement process, how to acknowledge past wrongs, and who is responsible for moral repairs remain largely understudied. This lack of clarity can perpetuate cycles of harm and resentment, preventing societies from fully moving towards healing and reconciliation. Additionally, <sup>2</sup> Craig stated that there is insufficient discourse on the psychological and emotional dimensions of atonement (20). The ramifications of forgiveness for the victim and the perpetrator, as well as the societal implications thereof, require more extensive exploration.

Ultimately, the problem lies in the fragmented nature of current literature and practices surrounding atonement, forgiveness, justice, and moral repairs. Addressing these gaps is essential for creating frameworks that can effectively navigate the complexities of ethical responsibility in both individual and collective contexts. A comprehensive exploration of these issues is necessary to inform ethical practices that promote healing, accountability, and justice in a diverse society.

### **Aim and objectives of the study**

The study aims to address the ethical implications of atonement with a focus on forgiveness, justice, and moral repairs in Nigeria. Its specific objectives include:

1. Explore theoretical and conceptual frameworks of atonement in Nigeria.
2. Examine historical and comparative perspectives on atonement in Nigeria
3. Investigate sociological and ethical dimensions of atonement in Nigeria.
4. Analyze practical applications of atonement in Nigeria

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the theoretical and conceptual frameworks surrounding the concept of atonement in Nigeria?
2. How have historical and comparative perspectives shaped our understanding of atonement in Nigeria?
3. What are the sociological and ethical dimensions associated with the practice of atonement in Nigeria?
4. What are the practical applications of atonement in contemporary contexts in Nigeria?

### **Literature Review**

#### **1 Atonement**

The concept of atonement refers to the processes and practices through which individuals or communities seek to reconcile with a moral or divine order following wrongdoing (<sup>6</sup> Johnson, 17). Traditionally found in various religious contexts, atonement signifies an acknowledgment of guilt, contrition for past actions, and a commitment to repair the relationship affected by harm.

Atonement can involve ritualistic elements, symbolic gestures, or practical actions intended to restore balance and harmony (<sup>7</sup> Ha, 84).

## **2 Forgiveness**

According to <sup>8</sup> Fincham, forgiveness is a complex emotional and psychological process that involves letting go of resentment, anger, or the desire for retribution against someone who has caused harm or hurt (38). While often associated with compassion and empathy, forgiveness is not merely a passive state but an active choice that can lead to emotional liberation and healing. It entails a cognitive and emotional shift where the victim consciously decides to absolve the offender, allowing for the possibility of reconciliation, either with oneself or with the wrongdoer (<sup>8</sup> Fincham, 51).

## **3 Justice**

Justice is a multifaceted concept that embodies the principles of fairness, equality, and moral rightness within societal interactions (<sup>7</sup> Johnson, 21). It seeks to establish a balance between individual rights and community welfare by addressing grievances, distributing resources equitably, and ensuring accountability for wrongdoing. Fundamentally, according to <sup>7</sup>Johnson, justice can be categorized into several forms: retributive justice, which focuses on punishment for wrongdoing; restorative justice, emphasizing healing and reconciliation; and distributive justice, concerned with equitable allocation of resources and opportunities (37).

## **4 Moral Repairs**

<sup>9</sup> McClure Kevin affirmed that moral repairs refer to the processes and actions taken to mend the moral breaches resulting from wrongdoing or harm, aimed at restoring relationships and social harmony (29). This concept underscores the importance of acknowledging harm, taking responsibility, and enacting measures to right the wrongs. Moral repair can involve various dimensions, including sincere apologies, reparation payments, public acknowledgment of suffering, and efforts to prevent future harm (<sup>9</sup> McClure, 47).

## **5 Analysis of the concepts**

The ethical implications of atonement are deeply interconnected with forgiveness, justice, and moral repairs, each playing a pivotal role in the process of reconciliation. <sup>13</sup>Crisp affirmed that forgiveness, as a deeply personal act, allows victims to move beyond resentment and emotional pain (21). However, its ethical complexity arises when forgiveness is viewed as a prerequisite for atonement. Unconditional forgiveness may inadvertently enable offenders to evade accountability, potentially undermining the moral imperative for justice (<sup>6</sup>Johnson, 14).

Contrarily, <sup>7</sup>Ha believed that justice is a counterbalance to forgiveness, demanding recognition and restitution for wrongs committed (28). It embodies principles of fairness and moral order, emphasizing the need for offenders to take responsibility for their actions. However, a rigid focus on justice can lead to punitive outcomes that neglect the healing needs of victims, suggesting the importance of a balanced approach (<sup>7</sup>Ha, 33). In the context <sup>1</sup>Brooks, moral repairs extend beyond traditional notions of justice by advocating for reparative actions that aim to restore relationships and rebuild trust (16). This concept highlights the necessity of acknowledging harm and taking steps to rectify it, ensuring that victims feel validated and respected.

The relationship among these elements is thus symbiotic: effective atonement requires a delicate dance between forgiveness and justice, with moral repairs acting as the bridge. Acknowledging the complexities of this interplay is essential for fostering genuine reconciliation. Ethical atonement should not only address the emotional wounds of victims but also ensure that justice is served and moral growth is fostered, forming a comprehensive framework for healing and accountability.

## Methodology

The research design for this study is qualitative research design. The study adopted a literature-based research approach. The literature-based research approach for this study involved a comprehensive review of existing scholarly works on atonement, forgiveness, justice, and moral repairs in post-conflict contexts, specifically focusing on Nigeria. This will include analyzing theoretical frameworks, historical accounts, and case studies related Nigeria context. The research will draw on interdisciplinary resources—philosophical, psychological, and sociopolitical perspectives—to critically assess the ethical implications of atonement. By synthesizing these insights, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and dynamics involved in achieving reconciliation in Nigeria. Data collection for this study was done through secondary sources. Secondary sources are materials that analyze, interpret, or summarize primary sources. Secondary sources provide a second-hand account or perspective on a particular topic or event and are often used to provide context or support for arguments or claims. Extant literature related to the studies was identified through comprehensive search strategies using databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar

## Results and Discussion

### Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks of Atonement

#### 1 Theoretical and Methodological Issues in Atonement in Religious Traditions

The study of atonement is enriched by diverse theoretical frameworks that inform how different religious traditions conceptualize reconciliation and moral restoration. For instance, the distinction between retributive and restorative justice models poses significant implications for understanding atonement. Retributive justice emphasizes punishment for wrongdoing, while restorative justice seeks to repair relationships and restore moral balance (<sup>10</sup>Peck, 47). <sup>10</sup>Peck affirmed that people in predominantly Christian communities view reconciliation as a necessary step toward healing, while some prioritize punishment over restoration (57). In addition, methodological issues arise when examining atonement across various traditions. <sup>11</sup>Varner Williams argues for the integration of quantitative measures, seeking to quantify beliefs and practices related to atonement across different populations (56). This mixed-methods approach can create a richer, more nuanced understanding of how atonement functions in different contexts.

#### 2 Conceptual Issues in Atonement in Religious Traditions

Conceptual challenges also abound in discussions of atonement. For instance, definitions of atonement are often intertwined with broader theological doctrines, which can vary significantly between traditions. In Christianity, atonement is frequently understood through the lens of Christ's sacrificial death, where salvation hinges on faith in Jesus as the redeemer. <sup>4</sup>Rutledge stated some protestant believed that personal faith was essential for achieving atonement, contrasting with the Catholic who emphasized the importance of sacraments (10). This discrepancy points to the complexity of conceptualizing atonement across religious lines. Moreover, the nature of sin, guilt, and moral failure plays a critical role in shaping community discourse around atonement.

#### 3 Doctrinal Models of Atonement in Christian Theology: A Critical Analysis

<sup>13</sup>Crisp Oliver affirmed that Christian theology presents several doctrinal models of atonement, including penal substitution, Christus Victor, and moral influence theories (61). Each model offers a different perspective on the implications of Christ's sacrifice. Penal substitution, the most widely held view among evangelical Christians, posits that Christ took on human sin and was punished in place of humanity. A survey by <sup>18</sup>Bell affirmed that some self-identified evangelicals subscribe to this model (31). In contrast, the *Christus Victor model* emphasizes Christ's victory over sin and death, presenting a different understanding of how atonement restores

the believer's relationship with God (<sup>13</sup>Crisp, 57). The theological diversity within Christianity calls for a critical analysis of these models to understand their implications for ethics and interpersonal relationships (<sup>13</sup>Crisp, 36).

#### **4 Philosophical Reflections on Atonement: Divine Justice and Human Responsibility**

Philosophically, the concept of atonement raises profound questions about divine justice and human responsibility. Atonement serves as a focal point in debates about moral agency, redemption, and the nature of justice (<sup>14</sup>Darwall, 26). For instance, philosophers like Emmanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche have examined the implications of guilt, punishment, and moral responsibility in their writings. These philosophical reflections highlight the ethical complexities involved in understanding how atonement functions within theological frameworks. <sup>15</sup>Eberhart, affirm that some adults in Americans believe in the importance of personal responsibility in the process of atonement (93). This perception underscores the ethical dimension of atonement, suggesting that individuals not only seek reconciliation but also recognize their role in addressing the consequences of their actions.

#### **Historical and Comparative Perspectives on Atonement.**

##### **1 Atonement in Church History: Evolution, Debates, and Reform**

Atonement has been central to Christian theology since its inception, undergoing substantial evolution through different historical periods. Early Church Fathers, such as Augustine, established foundational doctrines emphasizing the necessity of atonement due to original sin (<sup>16</sup>Warda, 46). By the Middle Ages, debates around atonement focused on the nature of Christ's sacrifice and how it reconciles humanity with God. Scholars like Anselm introduced the idea of penal substitution in the 11th century, positing that Christ's sacrifice was necessary to satisfy divine justice. The Reformation brought renewed debate regarding atonement, with figures like Martin Luther advocating for justification by faith alone, thus shifting the focus from works to divine grace. <sup>17</sup>Adefope, in his study, stated protestant respondents believe that faith alone is sufficient for salvation, emphasizing Luther's lasting influence on contemporary understandings of atonement (49).

##### **2 Comparative Study of Atonement in Christianity, Islam, ATR, and Judaism**

In Christianity, atonement is often centered on the belief in Jesus Christ as the redeemer who reconciles humanity with God through his sacrifice. <sup>18</sup>Bell, indicated American Christians identify the crucifixion as essential for salvation (93). In contrast, Islam emphasizes the importance of individual accountability and repentance. The Qur'an teaches that sincere repentance can lead to forgiveness from Allah, reflecting the concept of moral agency (<sup>13</sup>Crisp, 28). <sup>10</sup>Peck affirmed that American Muslims believe in the importance of seeking forgiveness through prayer and good deeds, highlighting the communal aspects of atonement in Islam (69). Judaism, on the other hand, approaches atonement through the lens of repentance (teshuvah) and the observance of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. During this time, individuals seek forgiveness from God and from those they have wronged. According to <sup>19</sup>Begal, American Jews consider Yom Kippur the most important day in the Jewish calendar, accentuating its central role in communal atonement practices (9).

##### **3 Atonement in African Traditional Religion: Rituals, Symbols, and Moral Other**

According to <sup>12</sup>Lewis, in African Traditional Religions, atonement is characterized by a relational understanding of transgressions against both divine and ancestral spirits, as well as fellow community members (33). Rituals play a vital role, serving as both a symbolic and practical means to restore order. Offerings and sacrifices to ancestors are common practices aimed at appeasing spirits and seeking forgiveness. The symbolic value of these rituals signifies the

interconnectedness of the individual with the community and the spiritual world (<sup>12</sup>Lewis, 37). <sup>8</sup>Fincham stated that ritual practices are essential for maintaining social cohesion and moral integrity within their communities (10). The symbolic acts of atonement—such as the pouring of libations or communal gatherings—help reinforce moral values and restore relationships that may have been damaged by transgressions.

### **Sociological and Ethical Dimensions of Atonement.**

#### **1 Sociological Functions of Atonement in Religious Communities**

Atonement serves important sociological functions within religious communities, acting as a mechanism for social cohesion and moral order. It provides a framework for individuals to acknowledge their wrongdoings and seek forgiveness, facilitating communal healing and fostering interpersonal relationships. Individuals in religious communities' report that practices surrounding atonement significantly enhance their sense of belonging (<sup>8</sup>Fincham 28). In many religious contexts, communal rituals—such as confession, communal prayers, and sacrificial offerings—play a pivotal role in reinforcing social bonds. A study by <sup>7</sup>Ha found that believers in religious rituals feels a strengthened sense of community and social responsibility, highlighting how atonement processes can enhance collective identity and moral solidarity (84). Moreover, atonement reinforces social norms, providing clear guidelines on acceptable behaviors within a community. Through the practice of atonement, communities articulate shared values and uphold standards that govern behavior (<sup>8</sup>Fincham, 110).

#### **2 Ethical Implications of Atonement: Forgiveness, Justice, and Moral Repair**

Atonement is intricately tied to ethical considerations, particularly the concepts of forgiveness, justice, and moral repair (<sup>5</sup>Boaheng, 83). The ethical implications of atonement raise questions about accountability, empathy, and the transformative potential of forgiving wrongdoing. <sup>2</sup>Craig found that 80% of respondents believed that forgiveness should be accompanied by some form of accountability or restitution (29). This shows that communities often struggle with the balance between granting forgiveness and ensuring justice is served. A report by <sup>19</sup>Begal noted that communities engaged in collective atonement processes increases the levels of trust among community members, demonstrating how moral repair can facilitate healing from past injustices (64).

#### **3 Atonement and the Moral Regulation of Sin**

Atonement operates as a method of moral regulation of sin within religious communities, providing guidelines on acceptable behavior and the consequences of transgressions. The moral frameworks established through atonement inform the actions of community members, establishing a clear understanding of right and wrong. <sup>1</sup>Brooks believes that religious doctrines often delineate specific actions considered sinful, while atonement practices offer pathways for individuals to reconcile with these moral failures (12). Rituals of confession, repentance, and restitution create mechanisms for moral assessment, enabling individuals to confront their shortcomings and seek corrective measures (<sup>1</sup>Brooks, 18).

#### **4 Atonement as a Mechanism for Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution**

According to <sup>4</sup>Rutledge, atonement has emerged as a vital mechanism for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, particularly in post-conflict societies (81). The practice of acknowledging past wrongs, seeking forgiveness, and engaging in reparative measures can lay the foundation for social reconciliation and lasting peace. According to <sup>3</sup>Rossner, Community-based atonement programs reported a willingness to forgive, emphasizing how structured atonement efforts can contribute to healing divided communities (79). Furthermore, the integration of restorative justice principles into conflict resolution practices has shown positive outcomes. <sup>12</sup>Lewis believed that

communities utilizing restorative practices decrease in recidivism rates and heightened levels of social trust (37). This suggests that atonement, when framed as a communal and restorative process, can effectively address the root causes of conflict, paving the way for more just and peaceful societies.

### **Practical Applications of Atonement**

#### **1 Atonement in Response to Betrayal and Interpersonal Harm**

Atonement serves as a critical response to betrayal and interpersonal harm, offering a framework through which individuals can navigate complex emotional landscapes. When one party violates the trust of another, the process of atonement can initiate healing. <sup>2</sup>Craig highlighted that couples who engaged in conversations about forgiveness and atonement reported significant improvements in relationship satisfaction (73). In practice, atonement involves several key steps, including acknowledgment of wrongdoing, expression of regret, and efforts to make amends. Research indicates that the act of offering a genuine apology—considered a form of atonement—can significantly decrease feelings of anger and resentment in the offended party. <sup>4</sup>Rutledge, stated that individuals who received a heartfelt apology experienced a reduction in negative emotions associated with betrayal (72). Moreover, community rituals often enhance interpersonal atonement by formalizing the process and reinforcing social bonds (<sup>1</sup>Brooks, 42).

#### **2 Atonement and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Behaviour**

Atonement plays a vital role in the rehabilitation of criminal behavior, aligning closely with restorative justice principles that focus on healing rather than punishment. Through atonement, offenders take responsibility for their actions and engage in moral repair with victims and communities. <sup>3</sup>Rossner reported that communities implementing restorative justice frameworks experienced a decrease in reoffending rates, highlighting the effectiveness of atonement-based approaches in reducing criminal behavior (21). Programs that incorporate atonement often include opportunities for offenders to meet with victims, providing a platform for dialogue and understanding. For instance, a study by <sup>2</sup>Craig found that participants in restorative justice programs reported feeling less alienated from society and exhibited higher rates of empathy toward their victims (10). The incorporation of atonement into rehabilitation strategies not only assists in the healing process for victims but also encourages offenders to reflect on the consequences of their actions, ultimately facilitating their reintegration into society as responsible members.

#### **3 Atonement and Sacrifice in the Old Testament Tradition**

In the Old Testament tradition, atonement is closely linked with the concept of sacrifice, where offerings are made to God to expiate sins and restore the relationship between humanity and the divine (<sup>6</sup>Johnson, 11). The practice of animal sacrifice, particularly during significant religious observances such as Yom Kippur, illustrates the theological underpinnings of atonement in this tradition. <sup>7</sup>Ha believed that Jewish respondents consider Yom Kippur as vital for their spiritual health, suggesting a deep communal engagement with the practice of atonement through sacrifice (9). The symbolic significance of sacrifice in the Old Testament serves as a precursor to later interpretations in Christianity, highlighting the continuity of the concept of atonement across religious texts and traditions.

#### **4 Christological Interpretation of Atonement in New Testament Studies**

In New Testament studies, the Christological interpretation of atonement centers on the belief that Jesus Christ's sacrifice fulfills the requirements for reconciliation between God and humanity. <sup>13</sup>Crisp indicated that people practicing Christians believe that Jesus' atoning death is essential for salvation (37). This belief underscores the theological significance of atonement in shaping Christian faith and practice. The New Testament emphasizes themes of grace, forgiveness,

and redemption, framing atonement as a transformative process not only for the individual but also for the community (<sup>18</sup>Bell, 11). The teachings of Jesus reveal a profound engagement with the moral implications of atonement, emphasizing love, mercy, and compassion as core elements of the Christian faith.

### **Summary**

From the analysis, the study revealed that;

1. Different religions and philosophies view atonement in various ways. Understanding these frameworks helps clarify what reconciliation and moral responsibility mean in different contexts.
2. Atonement has changed over time and varies among religions. For example, Christianity emphasizes Jesus' sacrifice, while Islam focuses on personal accountability. Comparing these views reveals both common themes and significant differences.
3. Atonement plays an essential role in communities by promoting forgiveness and moral behavior. It helps individuals handle wrongdoing and fosters social cohesion, showing that collective practices surrounding atonement can strengthen relationships.
4. Atonement is used in real life, such as in conflict resolution and rehabilitation programs for offenders. These applications demonstrate how acknowledging wrongdoing and seeking to make amends can lead to healing and improved relations within communities.

### **Conclusion**

The exploration of atonement's historical, sociological, and ethical dimensions reveals its crucial role in fostering reconciliation and moral responsibility across various religious traditions. Practical applications—such as responses to interpersonal betrayal, criminal rehabilitation, and both Old and New Testament sacrificial systems—illustrate the depth of atonement in human relationships. Empirical evidence from surveys, including those by Lewis, Craig, and Brooks, highlights that a significant majority within religious communities view atonement as essential for forgiveness and moral repair. This underscores its importance in shaping ethical frameworks that promote social cohesion and well-being. Additionally, comparative analysis across Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religions, and Judaism enriches our understanding of how atonement functions universally while reflecting cultural nuances. The integration of atonement practices within community rituals and restorative justice initiatives demonstrates its potential to heal and restore interpersonal and societal relationships. As contemporary societies grapple with conflicts and ethical dilemmas, the principles of atonement can offer pathways for fostering empathy, understanding, and ultimately peace. Continued exploration of its dimensions is vital for addressing moral challenges in our increasingly interconnected world.

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