



THE INFLUENCE OF LAND ON IGBO SOCIAL-RELIGIOUS COSMOLOGY: A PATHWAY TO UNDERSTANDING CREATION, SIN, AND CHRISTOLOGICAL ATONEMENT

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Abstract

*The Influence of Land on Igbo Socio-Religious Cosmology: A Pathway to Understanding Creation, Sin, and Christological Atonement. In Igbo cosmology, land (Ala) is not merely a physical resource but an ontological foundation that governs the legal, social, and religious fabric of life of Ndigbo. This study is done with a view to show the indispensability of biblical creation doctrine to understanding the cosmos, the laws that govern it, and the genesis of cultural identity. A panacea that provides the most effective improvements by sharpening the logical flow between the Divinity, land, and humanity. The focus here is on establishing a clear "problem-solution" gap that hinders the flow. This research has become necessary because it would help show the inflection point at which land seems to become the basis for human social constructs rather than the Creator-centred. Evidence has shown that land concept in Igbo society has shaped the intrinsic link between a community's environment and its belief systems, directly governing the fabric of its legal, social, and cultural existence. Without a dedicated framework to analyze these "land-centric" cosmologies, our understanding of how creation, origin, and social order are constructed remains fragmented. To achieve this, the study employs a dual-layered methodology. It integrates **qualitative research methods**—specifically thematic and structural analysis of cultural narratives—with a **theological methodology**. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a systematic examination of core concepts such as cosmology, creation, and atonement, treating them as both metaphysical claims and social realities anchored in the physical landscape. This study explores the intrinsic link between land and Igbo identity, examining how indigenous understandings of creation are rooted in the earth. However, the reliance on oral tradition creates epistemological gaps and a lack of a universalizing framework compared with the revelatory, scriptural accounts found in the Mosaic tradition. This research identifies these shortcomings as a catalyst for developing a clearly defined theological framework that bridges Igbo cosmology with Judeo-Christian concepts of creation, sin, and atonement. By positioning Christ as the ultimate locus of identity and reconciliation. The research further proposes a shift from a land-centered soteriology to a Christocentric one, asserting that Jesus Christ encapsulates the spiritual and communal functions traditionally attributed to the land.*

Keywords: "shortcomings" and "gaps", "epistemological gaps", "ontological foundation," *Theological Solution (Christology)*. "land-centred soteriology" "Christocentric", *Nso Ala*.



Introduction

In Igbo socio-religious cosmology, land (Ala) is far more than a physical resource; it serves as the ontological foundation governing the legal, social, and spiritual fabric of existence for the Ndigbo. This essay explores the profound influence of land on the Igbo worldview, positioning it as a pathway to understanding the broader concepts of creation, sin, and Christological atonement. While traditional Igbo identity is intrinsically anchored in the physical landscape, a reliance on oral tradition often results in epistemological gaps when compared to the universalizing, revelatory frameworks of the Mosaic tradition. By employing an interdisciplinary methodology that integrates qualitative cultural analysis with systematic theology, this study identifies a critical "problem-solution" gap: the tendency for human social constructs to become land-centered rather than Creator-centered. Ultimately, the following discussion seeks to bridge these indigenous narratives with Judeo-Christian concepts, proposing a transformative shift from a land-bound soteriology to a Christocentric framework that establishes Jesus Christ as the ultimate locus of communal identity and spiritual reconciliation.

Creation of Land and Humanity

Our sources for the definition of origins, either from a biblical creational account or human genealogical inheritance perspective, affirm that origin is the beginning of a thing or source of a thing at a given place, in a given time, and must be mediated by an uncaused cause. According to the first law of thermodynamics, something cannot exist without being created from existing energy. The law states that energy cannot be created ...comparatively, it could also mean that creation cannot become if someone does not mediate it. Who could be that someone? Or could there be anything such as an uncaused cause? 'that which moves without being moved') or prime mover (Latin: *primum movens*) is a concept advanced by Aristotle as a primary cause (or first uncaused cause) or ... If you do not have a first cause, then there cannot be any intermediate causes nor a last. So, there must be an uncaused first cause, which we call God (<https://www2.oberlin.edu/~mwa/llace>). This uncaused cause introduced himself to Moses, saying "I am the God of your father- the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the of Jacob, (Exd 3:6) and verse 14, he said to Moses I AM WHO I AM, "say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you". The same God later appeared to Moses, the second time saying "I am Yahweh- 'the Lord, I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El-Shaddai- 'God Almighty'- but I did not reveal my name, Yahweh, to them. (Exo. 6:2,3). So, this an uncaused cause, who introduced himself as I AM WHO I AM OR YAHWEH must have the power and ability to **create out of nothing since he was not created but was able to create out of nothing *ex nihilo* (*ex nihilo*: A Latin word meaning creating out of nothing)**. This qualification can only be identified or associated with a divine being. Since the inception of the history of the creation of the cosmos, there is no God who has shown credibility to create out of nothing except the biblical God, whose account or record of creation is yet to be disproved or contradicted. The first three words of the Torah are *B'reshit bara Elohim*, which is often translated as "In the beginning, God created heavens and earth. The next sentence says the earth was without form, and darkness was over the face of deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.¹ Then God said, "Let there be light and was light." However, this paper is going through the stages of creation. Rather, it would mainly focus on land and human beings, which define the lecture's theme, its supposed motive, and its intended purpose. On this note, we can now look at the biblical account of creation land and humankind:

¹ Well, first refer to verse 1. God created the heavens and the earth _ex-nihilo. This creation first has the basic two forms of matter: solid and liquid - soil and water. The Spirit, from which is the air, was God himself. It is from these two that all other things are made. The two serve as a frame or skeleton without adding flesh upon it. So, the water in verse two is a follow-up to the water in verse 1. It is not preexisting. It was created in verse 1. In verse 3 and beyond, God begun to put flesh to the frame (skeleton)



9] Then God said, “Let the waters beneath the sky flow together into one place, so dry ground may appear.” And that is what happened. 10] God called the dry ground “land” and the waters “seas.” And God saw that it was good. 11] Then God said, “Let the land sprout with vegetation—every sort of seed-bearing plant and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.” And that is what happened. 12] The land produced vegetation—all sorts of seed-bearing plants and trees with seed-bearing fruit. Their seeds produced plants and trees of the same kind. And God saw that it was good (Gen 1:9-12).

Just as God instructed land to produce, and it did. So, going by this divine instruction as revealed in Genesis 1:9-12, land became a container or a bowl that houses everything that humankind needs to survive as far as creation is concerned. Also, looking at the progressive history of God and his creation, one would come to know that land has been designed to respond to human attitude either positively or negatively, depending on the kind of attitude displayed on it at any given time by a moral agent. The way land has been designed and programmed to function, it is only moral agents that can affect land either positively or negatively. Good ethical behavior and godly acts on any land by any moral agent, who doubles as trustee and occupier, activates a healthy, productive economy and keeps cosmic harmony in a functional stability Leviticus 26:3-13. Conversely, wrong conduct and detestable acts birth immoral conduct and wrong actions that result in unproductivity, violence, hostility, and cosmic disorderliness Leviticus 26:14-28 and Ezek. 36:13-14. Therefore, it suffices to say that land is eternally programmed to function and to be sustained by universal creative laws (Hebrews 1:3)² Land is the only inanimate object that can respond to morally motivated acts and has spiritual and physical dimensions. It responds anthropomorphically to human actions and when instructed by the divine (Ezek. 36:13-14).

On the physical dimensional aspect of land, it demands that those who inherit it should consciously and deliberately focus on its manageability and responsibility that are attached to it and be aware that land is not given without accountability. So, those who manage God’s land should understand that spiritual and moral laws govern the land. Therefore, how is land managed by those who inherit it, and are they aware of the rules governing its management? How do these rules affect both the manager and the land? Can harmony instituted by the Creator, which binds the Creator to the land and human managers, be distorted or fractured? So, in the case where its managers have fractured it, could there be any possible consequences? There are consequences because the law of harmony demands that whoever breaches the law that binds creation with the Creator faces death penalty and ultimate expulsion from the land. Can possible consequences of breaches be avoidable? Yes, as long as the laws of harmony are not violated, landowners will enjoy the good of the land as long as they live on the Creator’s land.? But when distorted or breached, what could be done or steps to be taken to restore harmony? The tension resulting from the breach demands normalization of the effect of the infraction law and order instituted at creation. Normalization has become expedient because of the tension that has affected the string (s) that bind the three bodies together visa-a-vis God, land, and humanity. But can God be bound? The answer is no because he is distinct from his creation and not an extension of his creation.

² New Living Translation, Bible Commentary, Foot Note: Stating the earth is sustained by the power of his command. Literally means his powerful word). God’s word is the powerful dynamic force that created and governed the world (Heb 11:6-7), p2083.



Just as we had earlier observed of the three Hebrew words that opened the Torah, *B'reshit bara Elohim*, translated as “*In the beginning, God created heavens and earth*. This demonstrated that the power of God’s words brought creation out of nothing- *ex nihilo*, which was the same process he used to bring land into existence (the Hebrew word for land is *adamah*). Land is designed as a natural habitat for humans. It is a place for them to enjoy the comfort of creation and improve creation, a natural altar where the divine comes to meet and fellowship with the mortals. Humans, by virtue of being created in the image and likeness of God, have their primary duty to ensure that equilibrium is maintained in creation order because they are the only earthly creatures with moral attributes whose conduct actions can corrupt and defile creation if they so choose. But peradventure, if the land is defiled because of human choice, it will undoubtedly result in various degrees of catastrophes because the land is governed and controlled by God’s theistic universal physical and moral laws. The understanding that human conduct and actions affect the land either negatively or positively determines how land will respond in the same way as instituted by God. Based on what we have gathered from the introduction, evidence shows it is only human beings who can defile the land that results in dysfunction of land equilibrium, catastrophe that has both physical and spiritual dimensions. This is possible because human beings are the only creation of God that possess moral attributes and whose conduct and actions when negatively exercised on the land results in defiling the land. Then who God, is he knowable and he has he ever revealed himself to humanity. Similarly, who is man from a generic perspective, why is man entrusted with God’s the earth care and God’s reason for entrusting man with whole creation to manage, guard, protect, defend, and improve (Gen 2:15).

Who Is God and How Can God Be Known?

God’s Character, Nature and Acts

The Biblical God is a Triune God, and being a Triune God, became the basis of developing doctrinal concept of the Trinity. God who is One God exists eternally in three distinct persons and has revealed Himself in history as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit.

God’s special name in the Old Testament (OT) is Yahweh. The name Yahweh comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to be”, “He who is” or “I AM.” God told Moses that His name means “I AM WHO I AM” (Exo. 3:14) and in verse 15 of chapter three, God further reaffirmed how He should be known and called for all generations. God said to Moses “Say this to the people of Israel: Yahweh, the God of your ancestors – The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you:

“This is my eternal name,

My name to remember for all generations.”

Looking at God’s name Yahweh, meaning “to be” or “He who is” or “I am” suggests that it is only God who can define all things or everything.

God, by his nature, is a relational Being, he relates with humanity as Saviour, King, Shepherd, Friend, Warrior, Husband, and many other roles. God reveals himself by what He does; History shows that He divided the Red Sea, people witness how He collapsed the wall of Jericho, moved as a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night, parted the Jordan River and so many other things.

Man Created in the Image of God and Likeness of Eternally Intelligent Being, Second in Creation and Revelation

The seeming unwillingness to inquire into how humans have come to exhibit extraordinary intelligence and knowledge above other created beings is an area that has long been begging for attention. Kelvin Vanhoozer, one of the world's leading theologians whose work has been a reference point, opines that “The Human creature comes second to God, both in the order of being (namely,



Creation) and in the order of knowledge (namely, Revelation)” (Vanhoozer, 1973). We are going to come back to this later. Secondly, human failure to see and comprehend the nexus of God’s intimate relationship with humanity, which is another factor, has also contributed to or led to the humiliating fall of Man (Generic) to Satan’s deceptive knowledge (counterfeit knowledge) against God’s divine knowledge, resulting in the entrance of sin into God’s creation. The Fall, however, is not without its attendant consequences.

The combination of all the above factors has become the genesis of social ills, rooted in human spiritual alienation from God. Of these two attendant consequences, God’s perfect creation became marred by the entrance of sin. Sin, no doubt, has brought about defect and corruption into the body of creation and the severance of God’s relationship with Man, whom God has created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). Therefore, what are those social ills, and how can they be identified and defined?

Social ills are the negative aspects of society that have been engulfed by morally defective human conduct and actions that affect society and the individuals through whom society has come to experience harmful human disposition, wickedness, pain, and condemnation. The negative aspects of human social ills have both physical and spiritual dimensions. Some of the physical negative dimensions include social inequality, discrimination, idolatry, drug abuse or substance abuse, lack of access to quality education, medical and healthcare provision, homelessness, unemployment, environmental degradation, poverty, attitudinal-related malaise, which covers homosexuality, gay, practice lesbianism, murder, armed-robbery, organizational crimes, banditry, herdsman’s menace, terrorism, suffering, and other life-threatening vices. While the spiritual dimension is the alienation of Man’s relationship with God, the alienation of the human spirits from God brought the tainting of the human conscience and fracturing of the soul and body. The soul is the gate between the physical and spiritual worlds, so fracturing it through wrong human knowledge ultimately corrupts the human system and inhibits its ability to hear from God. It plays a very sensitive role because it coordinates both physical and spiritual activities. So, its fracturing invariably corrupts its three compartments: the mind, volition, and emotion. Who then is responsible, and to whom shall an account be rendered?

At this juncture of human demise and the collapse of the relationship between God, humanity, and creation, the author will focus on the remote and possible cause of the collapse and the way out. So, having seen the devastating and unbearable consequences and the effects of sin since its entrance into God’s perfect and good and very good creation. Then the question is: who would be held responsible for the entrance of sin into God’s creation? The entrance of social ills into human society? Who caused the fracturing and corruption of the human body, soul, and spirit, and ultimately, who caused this severance of the relationship between God, humans, and creation?

The second phase of our questions is: Did God fail to provide the man he created in his image and likeness with the intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding he needs to live and guide himself in his created world? Did God create man to live by chance without knowing what would guide him in responding to earthly challenges? We shall begin by responding to these questions, but we shall begin by looking at the first two of the latter questions. Going by the preceding questions and the circumstances that generated them, we realize and believe that if we succeed in providing answers to the latter questions, we invariably provide answers to all the questions that preceded them.

For the latter questions to receive comprehension answers, we would raise another rhetorical question, which is drawn from the Bible, which was raised by God’s angels:



“What are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them. You made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority” (NLT Psalms 8:4-6). In King James' version of the same chapter, verse 4 says, “What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man that thou visitest him.” (Psalms 8:4).

Why would the angels query God for giving so much attention to human beings and allowing humans to have dominion, control, and authority over his creation? In responding to these angelic questions, we would first look at the Hebrew interpretation, which is a little lower than that of the angels, and then Vanhoozer's definition of Man and his order in Creation.

From the Hebrew perspective, to be made a little lower than the angels could mean to be made like God (i.e., Man), which means Man (generic) was made a little lower than Elohim. The New Living Translation explains what the text connotes in the Hebrew language: “Yet you made him (i.e., Man) a little lower than Elohim. Humans bear God's image. The Lord has endowed humans with dignity and charged them to rule (Gen. 1:26-27) (New Living Translation footnote, 2008). This explanation presupposes that Man, who was made in the image of God, was made by an eternally intelligent Being who created a mortal intelligent being endowed with dignity and having a certain identity (Peterson, 2016a). abilities and knowledge above all the created. No being created or imagined is more knowledgeable of God and His creation than human beings. Vanhoozer captures the understanding of humanity in this manner: “humanity comes second both in the order of being (namely creation) and in the order of knowledge (namely revelation).” The human capacity to rule over creation and other beings can be understood in the context of what happened in Genesis 4:7. Here is the summary of what God told Cain: “You do not only have mastery over creation, but also you can rule over temptation, which is Satan-initiated. If Cain can rule over evil temptation, Cain can also stand and rule over the devil's wiles. Cain can do all this because he was of the seed made in God's image and his likeness.

Still in the same vein of seeing Man made in the image and likeness, this time not in the order of created being or knowledge through revelation, but through identity. Ryan S. Peterson, in his work “The Imago Dei as Human Identity,” gave reasons why humans share a common identity and why humanity has its identity drawn from God. In the area of God's creation, he opines: “For humanity to share in God's dominion over the earth in a creaturely way is paradigmatic for understanding the further ways in which humanity is meant to pattern its being-in-the-world after God's economic action” (Peterson, 2016b) Peterson holds that Man was created to serve in the capacity of God because Man is an act in the archetypal of God and created to share and act in the class of God. Looking at Peterson's treatise on Imago Dei thematically, God would not have created a being not of his class in a finite capacity to manage, advance, improve, or add value, or continue with the act of creation in Genesis 2:19, which saw Adam naming the animals that came forth to him to name them. Naming what Adam never saw before and did not know how the animals came into existence, if God had not revealed what those animals were.

God obviously would have run into an unavoidable risk of destroying his creation to a being he would have been unable to reveal himself to, or a being whose intelligence quotient is either zero or impaired, such as these creatures.

- ❖ Imbecile: An imbecile is stupid in reasoning. Extremely stupid and medically certified unfit, and with a low intelligence quotient.



- ❖ Idiot: An idiot is a person who is considered foolish in every one of his/her acts. An idiot is a person with an obviously low intelligence.
- ❖ Cretin: A Dictionary source defines a cretin as a person whose mental and physical development has been impaired by a deficiency of thyroid hormone in fetal or early life.
- ❖ Robot: A robot is a mechanically programmed machine that does not have a rational capacity of its own, and neither does it have the ability to differentiate what is morally good or morally evil....

Since God is an eternal moral, intelligent, and personal Being who, in his eternal wisdom, would not have entrusted his creation to either a robot, an imbecile, an idiot, or a cretin to manage. He would definitely choose or prefer a morally intelligent, knowledgeable, reasonable, and rationally-minded being, whom he must have created in the class of his person. A being with these attributes is the most qualified to be his representative. Therefore, God chose a representative of himself who has the capacity and ability to bear his authority, speak for him, and act on his own behalf. A moral being of this nature is the one created in the image of God, sealed with his glory, and shared communicatively with him. Any being without the aforementioned nature and character would obviously bring creation into a precipice of destruction if the role of managing or entrusting his creation is given to such a being who is not made in the image and likeness of God. God's choice of man as his regent and caretaker who shared his communicable attributes may have stirred the angels not only to query God's choice but also to testify of the honor and glory he has lavished on humanity, who seemed not to understand what God has shared with them. The understanding of who a man is can only come at the point of realization, just as was the case of the prodigal son, a parable in Luke 15:17: "When he finally came to his sense, he said to himself: At home (Just as Christ will remind us of what God did in the beginning, Matt. 19:8) even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and I am here dying of hunger." Human beings cannot come to the full realization of who they are until the circumstances of life stir their reasoning power; this should not have happened if humanity had not fallen into sin. Circumstances of nature can only be noticed when humans are confronted by needs or quest for better understanding or desire to improve, control, manage, or take dominion of the world they find themselves in. Therefore, this could be one of the reasons why human beings have the ability to reason, which differentiates them from other classes of mammals.

The Unexplainable Choice of Humans as Carriers of God's Image and Likeness and as God's Representatives, Ambassadors, Regents

The quest to know or the reason to know the rationale behind God's choice of creating humans not only in his image and likeness but also in his choice of entrusting his creation care to a mortal being rather than a spiritual being is one of the tasks this paper is going to unravel. Spiritual beings have been seeking answers to settle these long-standing spiritual issues (Psalm 8:4-6). Angels, supposedly, are spirit beings by nature who, by the hierarchical order of nature, came before the creation of human beings. However, there is no biblical record to affirm the time of their creation, but the book of Isaiah 14:12-14 alludes to an event that must have taken place before the creation of Adam and Eve.³ Verse

³ It appeared in the King James Version of the Bible in Isaiah and before that in the Vulgate (The late-4th-century-Latin Translation of the Bible), not as the name of a devil but as the Latin word *lucifer* "uncapitalized" meaning the "morning star", "the planet Venus", or, as an adjective "light-bringing"). If angels are believed to have been created before the creation of humanity, then the order of seniority should have been observed. Hence, they queried God again saying: "You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet. In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present, we do not see everything subject to them."



7 of Hebrews chapter 2 is a repeat of Psalm 8:4-6, but in Hebrews 2:8, we heard the angels asking how God has given all things you have created, perhaps including the angels under the authority of mortal beings. And even these beings are yet to realize the unexplainable power, authority, and dominion that they have over creation, of which they are ignorant. The angelic beings are yet to give up their demand or cease asking for an explanation on why humans should be given such a preference, who are very ignorant of the power and authority they have at their disposal. Yet, if one should evaluate their state, the answer is despicable and pitiful. This text also enables us to see one of the great attributes of his incommunicable attributes – His unchanging character. He has chosen Man in eternity, and with his eternal wisdom and knowledge, he knew who Man is, and no amount of persuasion from any quarter or human failure would cause him to change his preference for Man to another being. Hence, Jesus was sent because of Man. The "Image of God" is the divine "diplomatic credential" that authorizes humanity to function as **Ambassadors** (representing Heaven's interests), **Representatives** (reflecting Heaven's character), and **Regents** (executing Heaven's authority) over all the Earth.

Humans as God's Ambassadors

Humans are God's appointed ambassadors for Christ (2 Cor 5:20 "God is making his appeal through us, we speak for Christ when we plead....") is a sacred, full-time calling, not merely a title. This text describes believers as Christ's ambassadors and, in light of making his appeal through us, suggests that Christians are not merely messengers, but authorized representatives of Heaven, entrusted with the task of inviting a broken world back into a right relationship with God. An ambassador is an authorized representative of a foreign authority in a foreign land. Christians as ambassadors for Christ represent the Heavenly Kingdom while living on Earth. They are not only God's mouthpiece but as ambassadors they are saddled with the responsibilities of improving creation by adding value to it and ensuring that security of the earth is maintained to its maximum (Gen 2:15b). Some key benefits for heavenly ambassadorial appointment include divine security, supernatural provision, spiritual immunity from the enemy's destruction, and the authority to represent Heaven's interests on earth. They are empowered to bring heaven's culture to earth. These distinct gifts from God to man can be seen through the lens of biblical history.

Benefits Attached to a God's Ambassador

Divine Authority & Power: Access to Jesus' authority for ministry, such as healing the sick and casting out demons.

Diplomatic Immunity & Protection: A state of being "untouchable" or "invulnerable or unassailable" by the enemy, guarded by God. Just as envoys operating in a foreign land. Their embassies represent the seats of the presidents of their home countries. Being God's envoy on earth makes the values of our credentials uninterpretable to any being that inhabits the earth. These are so because they are coded in heavenly language and cannot be understood except one is God's image carrier.

Divine Provision & Prosperity: God ensures their needs are met, and they are not "beggarly," as God sustains His ambassadors.

A New Identity: Transformation from a citizen of the world to a representative of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Surety of Hope: Exemption from the wrath (Tribulation) that will come upon the earth, providing peace.

Spiritual Significance of God's Earthly Ambassador



The Ministry of Reconciliation: Their primary role is reconciling people to God through the Gospel message.

Incarnational Representation: They embody Christ, reflecting His character and values in a world that opposes Him.

A Living Epistle: They are designed to be a living testament of Heaven on earth.

Agents of Light: Their role is to spread the kingdom of God by influencing their environment to follow heavenly principles.

Intercessors: They stand in the gap, petitioning for the world while representing God's interests (<https://www.eastwest.org>).

Right and Authority over Physical Creation

This is an enforcement of God's earlier declaration in Genesis 1:28, that has these iconic commands empowers humanity with heavenly constitutional authority to exercise over things created by God: Have dominion, rule over it, and subdue it. But humanity in its lust, greed, and disobedience, lost all these rights, nevertheless, by the providence of divine mercy, they were all restored to humanity through the name of Jesus Christ.

Legitimacy to Use Jesus' Name: They have the legal right to use the "royal ring" (name of Jesus) to command circumstances.

Dominion Over Nature: Similar to Adam, they possess stewardship over creation, allowing them to bring order out of chaos.

Authority to Arrest and Not Be Arrested: They have spiritual authority to bind (arrest) evil spirits and hinder the works of darkness.

Commanding Resources: They operate with authority to speak blessings and make declarations that are upheld by Heaven.

Human Being as God's Representative

Being God's representative on earth, commonly understood as a believer and steward, involves acting as an ambassador for Christ, carrying divine influence, and exercising spiritual dominion. Benefits include carrying God's presence, supernatural empowerment, divine protection, and the authority to effect change through prayer and righteous living. Humans enjoy delegated authority, which would not only be enjoyed in the contemporary world but also in the world after judgment; hence, they are destined to judge angels (1 Cor 6:3) and are crowned with glory and honor to rule over creation, a mandate that implies a higher, representative status than angels. Being God's representative (an ambassador or steward) grants divine protection, authority to decree, and access to supernatural empowerment, essentially acting as God's "acting God" on earth. Benefits include constant companionship, provision, divine wisdom, and the ability to influence circumstances by reflecting God's character.

Benefits Attached to God's Representative: Are classified into two categories, the spiritual and the physical

Spiritual Significance of God's Representative

Ambassadors of Reconciliation: They represent God's kingdom on earth, reflecting His love, grace, and truth.

Image Bearers: They reflect God's image and likeness, serving as His hands, heart, and voice in a needy world.



Stewardship of Creation: They are mandated to care for God's creation and manage it according to divine wisdom.

Spiritual Stamina: They are called to maintain high standards of purity and righteousness, standing for the truth.

Authority Over Spirits: They have the authority to cast out evil spirits and reverse negative situations.

Divine Presence and Influence: Such individuals carry God's presence, making them highly influential in their spheres, similar to Joseph in Egypt.

Access to Supernatural Resources: They are empowered with spiritual stamina to overcome satanic and occultic oppositions.

Divine Protection and Guidance: God provides counselors and escape routes from temptations, guiding them along the right path.

Reign in Life: By receiving the abundance of grace, they reign in life through Jesus Christ.

Supernatural Gifts: They are endowed with gifts including prophecy, healing, wisdom, and discernment.

A Carrier of Presence: A visible representative carries the weight and "smell" of God's presence, which alters environments.

A Mouthpiece for Reconciliation: They act as ambassadors, articulating the King's message rather than their own, to reconcile humanity.

A Mirror of Glory: They radiate God's glory through their lifestyle of holiness.

An Agent of Influence: They possess the authority to influence culture by upholding divine standards.

Rights and Authority Over Physical Creation

Delegated Dominion: God has given human representatives dominion over the earth, including subduing it.

Authority Over Nature: As co-creators and representatives, they can influence the physical world through prayer, authorized by God to "bind" and "loose" on earth.

Authority Over the Enemy: They hold authority to overcome the devil and his forces, treading on serpents and scorpions.

Decreeing Changes: As kings and priests, their words carry power to make decrees and declare the fulfillment of God's plans, cutting down strongholds.

Divine Protection & Immunity: A representative enjoys God's protection in the day of adversity and immunity from destruction.

Access to Supernatural Power & Results: They are empowered to produce results beyond human effort, such as healing and prophetic insight.

Authority to Decree (Legislative Power): They can issue decrees to change circumstances, whatever they align with God's word, and the decree is established.

Constant Presence & Guidance: They have God's constant companionship and direction in life's decisions.

Provision and Prosperity: They receive "productive prosperity," aimed at fulfilling kingdom purposes.

Stewardship/Dominion: They are entrusted with managing physical creation in accordance with God's will.

Power Over the Elements: They can command situations and circumstances to align with heaven's agenda.

The effectiveness of this authority varies based on one's spiritual maturity, faith, and obedience to God. The benefits, as mentioned earlier, are classified into two categories: the spiritual and the physical. Every human being created in the image and likeness of God has the right to access these two categories of benefits, except those who are either ignorant of the benefits associated with the



knowledge of being created in God's image or those who have chosen to live a life of sinfulness that denies access to the benefits willed to those created in the image of God.

Human Beings as God's Regents

To be God's regent (often called a vice-regent or steward) means to act as a representative of the Supreme King, exercising His authority, implementing His will, and managing His creation on Earth. Humans were created in God's image for this regal role, delegated to rule over creation in a manner that reflects God's loving and wise character. Based on the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2, human beings are established as God's regents (or vice-regents) through their unique status as bearers of the divine image, tasked with stewardship over creation. They act not as autonomous rulers, but as representatives of the divine King, tasked with managing the earth according to His character. Humans, as God's regents, are saddled with the responsibility to align earth with the realities of heaven, acting as agents of God's redemptive rule. Therefore, being God's regents, believers are to colonize the world with Kingdom values, impacting society, culture, and relationships with righteousness, peace, and joy. Critically studying the three words that inform the identity of a human being as conceived and perfected by God, one would notice that the roles and functions overlap each other, and should be looked upon as repetition, rather than their commonness appearing to bring out the nuances that connect the very man God created. Each tends to bring out the relevance, value, and significance of man in God's eternal plan.

Significance of Humans as God's Regents

This delegation of authority is crucial to the biblical understanding of human existence and responsibility:

Human Dignity and Worth: Because humans represent God, every person possesses intrinsic value, dignity, and sanctity of life. This is why murder is prohibited (Gen 9:6)—it is an attack on the image of God.

Responsible Stewardship: Humans must care for the environment and its resources, as they are managing another's property. This stewardship is meant to bring order and ensure that creation flourishes.

Reflection of Divine Character: Humans are called to reflect God's care and love to the world. Their rule should be one of "loving nurture" rather than "arbitrary despotism".

Purposeful Existence: The role provides a central, universal purpose to human life: to glorify God by managing His creation in a way that aligns with His character.

Partnering with God: God shares His authority with humanity, inviting them to participate in the ongoing, orderly care of the world, making them partners in His work rather than merely subjects.

Factors Qualifying Human Beings as God's Regents

The Genesis narratives highlight several substantive factors that distinguish humans and qualify them for this role:

Creation in the Imago Dei (Image of God): Humans are uniquely created in God's image and likeness, serving as His personal representatives on earth. This "image" denotes both a relational kinship (sons and daughters) and a kingship (stewardship).

The Creation Mandate (Dominion): Humans are explicitly commanded to "subdue" and "rule" over the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28). This dominion is not for exploitation but is a mandate for careful management (stewardship) of God's estate.

Unique Creation Mechanism: While animals are created "after their kinds," humans are formed with special care, breathed into by God with the "breath of life" (Genesis 2:7), highlighting an intimate connection to the Creator.



Male and Female Complementarity: Both men and women are created in God's image, together reflecting the divine nature. They are jointly authorized to fill the earth and rule over it, emphasizing corporate, communal stewardship.

The Vocation of Cultivation and Preservation: In Genesis 2:15, humans are placed in the Garden of Eden to "till" (work) and "keep" (preserve) it. This establishes stewardship as a task of cultivating potential and protecting creation.

Delegated Authority/Naming: Adam's naming of the animals demonstrates authority and intellectual capability over other creatures, confirming his role as responsible management.

Spiritual Authority: Through Christ, regents have authority to overcome fear, operate in spiritual warfare, and release Kingdom influence, enforcing God's dominion over situations.

Accountability: The authority is not absolute; it is subject to the King, requiring humans to answer for how they have managed the created order.

Definition of Land

This paper is not only about land as a creation of God, but also about how land has been conceived, owned, inherited, and used by religious groups around us today. Different ethnic nationalities, or other human groups globally, have prompted discourses on land. What is land? In response to this question concerning land, how it is understood by different ethnic nationalities, or who owns land or who first occupies a space called land, makes room for a preamble that would enable us to see how the people of the world have conceived land, shared land or made a demand on land. To a Jewish mind, land is a gift from Yahweh. It is not only a gift from Yahweh, but it binds Israel in new ways to the giver (Josh: 23:14-16). Land by the context of these scriptures, means the following: 1) land is made on promise and fulfilled 2) the promise to bring disaster on the good land if disobedience to the laws governing the promise on how to live on God's land is broken 3) the historical land to Israel is tied to a covenant relationship, which is predicated on worship and service to God and forfeiture of the good land, if Israel turns to other gods.

Looking at land from an ethnic perspective, Israel sees land as a place where Yahweh meets with the mortal because land is Yahweh's earthly altar and home for the living. No wonder, in Israel's National Anthem, a stanza reads: "As long as deep in the heart, The soul of a Jew yearns, and forward to the East, To Zion, an eye looks, Our hope will not be lost, The hope of two thousand years, To be a free nation in our land, The land of Zion and Jerusalem". According to Walter Brueggemann, "A land is different when it is given in speaking and received in listening. It is not just an object to be taken and occupied. It is rather a party to a relationship. Because the land is the means of Yahweh's word becoming full and powerful for Israel, it is presented as a life-giving embodiment of his word" (Brueggeman, 1977).

Land is not without responsibility. It is a place with history. To the Jewish mind, land is a place of memory; a place where Israel must come to terms with the Lord in fellowship, and a symbol of God's covenant with Israel. To an African mind, the land is a gift to be kept, inherited, observed, considered sacred, and must be kept pure because the ancestors live there, while to the Western mind, the land must be explored, investigated, and improved upon. For Aboriginal Australians, the land is sacred, filled with ancestral dreams that determine kinship, sacred sites, and ceremony. All species of life, including humans, are bound to the land. Land does not belong to people; people belong to land (Habel, 1993).

To the Igbos, land is just as it is with Jews; playing a dominant role in Igbo understanding and interpretation of the cosmos. Land, to them, is the pillar upon which the Igbo worldview is defined. To the Igbos, land is the lens through which the Igbo worldview defines holiness, human conduct,



and the basis for measuring socio-regio-cultural dirt. In a broader sense, land is also the foundation and the standard for measuring and regulating Igbo morality, ethics, attitudes, behaviors, social practices, law, and order. To them, land is where the divine *Chukwu Okike* comes to meet the mortals in fellowship. Land is not just a piece of the earth's crust; it is much more than looking at the first layer of the earth's surface. Land is a gift from God and the foundation for social constructs. No ethnic group can exist without land. Land is what defines the citizenship of any group of people. It provides the basis for defining the identity of a people, and customizes language. Land points people to their inheritance and their Creator, and also serves as security, strength, and wealth of a people. Land is not only held on trust for children yet unborn, but also provides the basis for who we are as persons and accountability to the Creator. Land has never been given without responsibilities. This implies that land is not given free of charge or without people. Therefore:

- Land defines one's citizenship; it is land that grants one the right to declare that "I am a citizen of this nation", which has a defined geographical location. It is one's land that gives a person a voice and the power to exercise his/her franchise as a citizen of a place. Land is one of the units that constitute human identity. One fundamental principle of a mortal being is to have a land where obedience, conduct, and actions can be measured. The implication is that, when one is landless, it is as good as saying that one is voiceless. To be voiceless is to be one without identity, an identifiable place in history, and an ancestor. Therefore, it is vital to know that land has a measure of responsibility attached to it and also consequences for failure to live by the conditions that govern its management.
- Land creates a responsibility to landowners who should know that they are to maintain/manage it because it is on trust.
- Landowners must have the ability to control and ensure effective security of their lands (Gen 2:15).

Land owners must realize that land points them to their history on how they came to settle where their ancestors had lived and bequeathed the land to them. Bequeathed ancestral land is where the people's ancestors are indigenous or autochthonous to a land. It then becomes the foundation of the people's history and the basis of defining the genealogical family tree on a given land (Num 27:1). It is certain that without land, there is no history, no genealogical concept or the concept of inheritance. Thus, land defines ethnicity, tribe, and nation. Land not only defines territorial claims but also stirs up territorial consciousness in ethnic, tribal, and national groups. Kolawole Ogundowole writes that, "The characteristic behavior of any living animal includes territorial claim. Territoriality is very crucial to the continuous survival of any living organism" (Ogundowole, 2014a). Therefore, no sensible tribe in its right mind, after having known the value of land and the consequences of being landless, can afford to risk its land on frivolous excuses because losing land means losing one's identity, history, socio-cultural values, and sense of understanding ownership. The daughters of Zelophehad were conscious of what defines them as Israelites, and the right of a family made an appeal that was resolved by God, who instituted all the principles that govern how human beings should live on his land and why ancestral lands must be accounted for. It was their demand for ancestral land that helped to establish the **PATRILINEAL CONCEPT** in Jewish history, which also has become the basis for native Africans in tracing their right to land, using a patrilineal concept. Patrilineal concept from the biblical text, as cited, simply means tracing descent through the father's line, which points one to a system where one's kinship begins, one's entitlement to property, and a continuum of people's ancestry descent. It suffices to say at this point that the emergence and understanding of land in human history have remained and will continue to be the centre of human existence until its expiration day comes. Its existence can only be determined and numbered by its Creator, who decides when and how to bring it to an end. Desmond Alexander and Brian Rosner



state that land is a good gift of God, given as an inheritance to Israel as an expression of their filial relationship to Yahweh. It is pre-eminently a locus for a relationship with God. It is a gift of God's grace, given unconditionally to him as part of the fulfilment of the patriarchal promise. As stated earlier, the fulfilment of those promises demands a response from Israel, and the enjoyment of life with Yahweh in the land requires obedience (Alexander et al., 2000). Surprisingly, the church seems to maintain the posture of just passing through, rather than seeing the land as a place to be held. The patrilineal concept not only connects people to land, but also connects people through a male lineage, which explains where the family may have started, where they migrated from, and where they settled. The point must always be where no other human being has ever lived, and other languages are not spoken, except the language of the settlers. A migration of this type results in what anthropology defines as people being autochthonous to land.

- Land creates a memory of the past and sustains the promise of the future, which the writer of the Psalmist echoed in (Psalms 137:1), while Eric Donaldson reverberated the deep memory that land creates in the life of those who live in it in one of his hit songs, "LAND OF MY BIRTH". This very song captures the sweet memory of his country, Jamaica, located in the Caribbean.
- Landowners should know that without ceding their portion of land, the birth of a new nation will never be achieved. The United Nations' Declaration of June 2007 passed a resolution that recognizes the rights of the indigenous people. The Declaration upholds that "Indigenous peoples have the rights to maintain and develop their political, economic and social systems or institutions, to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence and development, and to engage freely in all their traditional and other economic activities." This means that indigenous rights are sacrosanct and inalienable. These rights are natural and not conferred. Ogundowole writes that, "There are rights and there are rights. There are natural rights, and there are other rights that are conferred. The principle of natural rights supersedes all other rights" (Ogundowole, 2014b). Therefore, because of natural rights, indigenous people reserve the right to cede their land and not to.

The Igbos and Land

Having done with the basic concepts of land in human history, which encapsulate political rights, inheritance rights, legal rights, rights to freedom to choose their leaders and their own constitution, and rights to practice their beliefs and develop their cultural and social guidance. These prepositions that are attached to land become the lens through which one would use to examine and explore the Igbo beliefs as a microcosmic unit of a larger human society. The relationship between human action and the environment is reciprocal; whether conduct is positive or negative, the land responds in kind, reflecting a divine order established by God. Preliminary biblical evidence suggests that humans alone possess the agency to defile the land. Such defilement disrupts the "land equilibrium," triggering catastrophic consequences that span both physical and spiritual dimensions. In the Igbo worldview, this intersection is best understood through the concepts of **Alu** (abomination) and **Nso Ala** (taboos against the earth goddess). These concepts provide an essential epistemological window into the Igbo understanding of sin, the moral sanctity of the earth, and the necessary rites of atonement required to restore cosmic balance.



Key Concepts Defined

Term	Contextual Meaning
Land Equilibrium	The state of harmony between human activity and the natural/spiritual environment.
Alu	Acts considered "abominations" that pollute the moral and physical fabric of the community.
Nso Ala	Prohibitions or sacred laws of the Earth (Ala) that, if broken, require spiritual cleansing.
Epistemological Window	A framework or "way of knowing" that allows us to study a specific cultural philosophy.

It is in furtherance of acknowledging God's sovereignty, providence, and purity in traditional Igbo society that stirred up the consciousness of upholding sound ethical and moral values that resonate with the attendant laws in Igbo *Omenani* that govern moral purity among the ancient Igbo. The ancient Igbo ensured that morality was a standard in the people's communal life. No wonder G.T. Basden, a British ethnographer, writes of his Igbo experience on the issue of morality; according to him, certain delinquencies like murder, theft, and adultery, are considered heinous crimes and deemed contrary to the will of God, and punishment will surely follow (Basden, 1991a). As observed by Basden, the traditional ancient Igbos understand just as it is Judaism or even in the contemporary Jewish society that to murder or spill to the blood of the innocent ones on the land or to commit other immorally or detestable acts do not only defiles the land but also makes the land vulnerable to all kinds of wickedness and unaccommodating to both God and humanity. The Igbos have the knowledge that for them to worship a holy God, Chukwu Okike, in their land, one must remove any obstacle that stands in the way. Such as murder, kidnapping, and other immoral acts or uncleanness that inhibit proper worship. And where it happens, atonement is inevitable. However, contrary to this kind of knowledge, what we are currently experiencing as a people in Igbo land, looking at the enormity of crimes and senseless killings, is anathema. The question we should ask ourselves is, where did we get this knowledge of disregard for the sanctity of life and sacredness of blood, or where have we gone? Why is the spilling of the blood of the innocent ones no longer a desecration of life and the land? Why is blood not considered a sacred element in contemporary Igbo society, just as it was in Jewish traditional religion and cultural practices? Blood in both Judaism and traditional Igbo society is designated as the instrument of atonement. Blood is the symbol of life given by God and is reserved as God's portion of each animal offering. Blood represents life, and the blood of the offering represents the life of the worshiper. God had designated the victim's blood, representing the life of the victim, as the means of atonement (Lev 17:11). Therefore, for anyone to spill blood on God's land not only desecrates the land but also attracts God's judgment on the land also to the people. Hence, God warned: In Numbers "This will ensure that the land where you live will not be polluted, for murder pollutes the land. And no sacrifice except the execution of the murderer can purify the land from murder". And

"You must not defile the land where you live, for I live there myself. I am the Lord, who lives among the people of Israel." (Num 35: 33-34)

Blood in traditional society is one element that defines a people's genealogical roots, family clan, and community. It cements not only communal bondage but also becomes the basis for defining *Umanna*-ship and inheritance in both traditional and contemporary Igbo society. Uzodinma Nwala gives a



graphic but historical Igbo concept of blood, and reasons why spilling blood on the land in Igbo society is an outrageous act and cannot and will not become a norm. He writes:

Obara-Blood: This is an important concept that is very central to the Igbo idea of a man's personality as well as to the personality of a family or community. Blood, in Igbo conception, is also regarded as that which sustains life by nourishing it; 'the spilling of which not only causes dissolution to the flesh but deprives it of the ancestral line' and is also defilement of the land and the Earth goddess, (Ala). It is thus held very sacred. The unlawful shedding of blood is a defilement to the sacred earth, but when split in a righteous cause, it is a sacrament and a purification.'

Blood explains the element of heredity as it is believed to be the carrier of hereditary traits. It is that which carries and sustains a man's lifeline (on earth) as well as transmits his qualities (physical and moral) to his offspring. Thus, if a child is a living image of his father both in physical appearance and moral character, he becomes the pride of the father who refers to such a child proudly as '*Obaram*'-my blood. He proudly tells his friends '*obu obaram*'-he is my blood.

There is one thing that all kinsmen share in common, and that is the blood of their ancestors. Each person claims to be a replica of their father's or ancestor's personality. Thus, it is the blood that binds kinsmen together and defines their common descent and ancestry. This is the ontological basis of all kinship relations and the great spirit of brotherhood and solidarity that pervades all communal activities.

Community in Igbo conception is the same as 'people of one blood,' irrespective of geographical location. Hence, the community is called "*Umunaa*-Brethren (or kinsmen).

The community itself has its being or existence defined by this common blood. The life of a member of the community is interwoven with the lives of others through the common blood that they share and through the web of economic and social interdependence that practically exists in the community.

Blood is also that which carries and sustains one's lifeline (on earth), as well as transmits one's qualities (physical and moral) to one's offspring. Hence, any child who is a living image of his father and such a child is often proudly referred to as '*obaram*'-my blood; '*obu obaram*'-he/she is my blood. This is part of the genetics theory among the Igbo. There is, therefore, one thing which all kinsmen share in common and which binds them together, and that is the common blood they share by virtue of a common descent and ancestry (Nwala, 1985).

From Nwala's descriptive analysis of the blood concept and other views held by Igbo scholars on blood, it is evident that the similarities between the Jews and the Igbos of southeast Nigeria are so striking that one can hardly fault their common origin. Therefore, blood provides a common basis for establishing their common origins, just as this paper has pointed out in their common theological and socio-cultural philosophy on land. Still on the blood concept, the author also considers the work of Ignatius Nnnemeka Onwuatgwu, with a view to driving home the seriousness and consequences of spilling on the ground in Igbo society, as it would help in understanding the Igbo concept of blood. Onwuatgwu lends his voice to the Igbo consciousness of dealing with blood and its centrality in the ontological understanding of life. He writes, "The anthropocentric nature of the Igbo worldview is one where life is considered sacred and greatly valued. Owing to the value and sacredness of life, the Igbo worldview holds that life must be presented, respected, protected, and treated with dignity" (Esomonu, 2023a). In the Igbo worldview, the sacredness of life is evidenced in the sacredness of blood. The Igbo value of life is not limited to when one has snuffed life out of another, nor to the measure of life; the value of life extends to the sacredness of blood. Accordingly,



it is considered abominable for one to cause his blood to flow intentionally or intentionally cause the blood of another person to flow on malicious intent will be bound to face similar or grave consequences (Esomonu, 2023b). Having interjected the explanation of Basden's view on Igbo morality with the Igbo blood concept, we can now revert to Basden's view on Igbo morality.

Basden went on to emphasize why acts that do not complement the nature of God in Igbo land are not only ungodly but also shameful, which weigh much more on the offender than on their relations. He then writes, "actual fear of retribution is not sufficiently strong to check wrongdoing ... To be found out by his fellow men is regarded as far more shameful than offending God. In this, he is not different from the rest of mankind (Basden, 1991b)." Basden was not the only ethnographer fascinated by how land or *ala* has helped shape and define the Igbo concept of morality. In one of his books, C.K. Meek, a leading British ethnographer, writes, "Ala deprives evil men of their lives, and her priests are the guardians of public morality." At the same time, M.M. Green observes that "Most heinous crimes are called *Nso-Ani* or *Alu* (land taboos). Of a person who commits such a crime it is said "*Omeru nso Ala*" or "*omeruru Ala* (he has defiled the land) (Green, 1991). Olaudah Equiano, who lived before these European missionaries and ethnographers, an indigenous Ika Ibo born in the year 1745 in a community called Essaka, also learned his voice on Igbo consciousness concerning morality as much as he could remember before he was kidnapped at the age of 11 and sold into slavery (Equiano, 1837a). Equiano, in his memoir, used Igbo religious and cultural practice and heritage to tie the Igbo to the biblical Jews in the areas of morality, purity, and circumcision. He writes, "This necessary habit of decency was with us a part of religion, and therefore we had many purifications and washings; indeed, almost as many, and used on the same occasions, if my recollection does not fail me, as the Jews. Those who touched the dead at any time were obliged to wash and purify themselves before they could enter a dwelling place. Every woman, too, at certain times was forbidden to come into a dwelling-house or touch any person or thing we eat" (Equiano, 1837c). What Olaudah was trying to explain here was women's menstrual circle, a practice that saw women maintaining a culture of isolation because the period in which they found themselves demanded purity, as was the case in traditional Jewish society. However, his memoir captured a demeaning forbidden practice that the Igbo society outrightly placed as an abominable act against the land and the people. Such crimes were adultery, kidnapping, and related dehumanizing practices. Practices of this nature were cited by the early missionaries and British ethnographers who visited the Igbo land in the middle of the nineteenth century. Olaudah further observes in the area of morality, "I remember a man was brought before my father and the other judges for kidnapping a boy; He was condemned to make recompense by a man or woman slave. Adultery, however, was sometimes punished with slavery or death" (Equiano, 1837b). These are heinous crimes in Igbo traditional society and cannot go without capital punishment because such crimes not only defile the land and the people but also have severe consequences on the harmonious state of the society. Hence, society cannot condone such a thing. There is no doubt that the aggregations of all these crimes in Igbo society gave birth to phrases such as:

Ya mere ndi Igbo ji aso nso ala. N'ih na ha matara maobu na mmuo ha na-agwa ha na e nwere iwu megidere agwa ojoo ndia n'elu ala. Nghota di otu a, mere ha ji asi na mmadu e kwesighi ime ihe ruru aru n'elu ala mmadu bi n'ime ya. Ha n'akpu alu ma oburu na madu mere ihe ruru aru n'elu ala.

Ndigbo matara na o bu Chukwu kere eluigwe na ala, ya mere ha ji akpo ya Chukwu Okike

Ndigbo nwere nghota di omimi banyere Ala di ka ndi Juu (Umụ Izirelu) si wee new, nke mere ha ji aso nso Ala (asoro Ala nso). Echiche Ndigbo nwere banyere Ala, mere ha ji



asị na Anị na-eri mmadu ma o buru na-omume mmadu akwughị otọ. Ha na-asikwa. Anị tigbukwa gị, mgbe mmadu na-azọ ihe abughị nke ya.

N'ihì na Ndigbo matara na o buru na e meruo Ala, na ihe di ike na-emegide ndi nọ n'elu Ala ahụ. Ma onye meruru ya ma onye emeghi ihe o bula. O na-emetuta onye o bula, nke a ihe n'okwu Ndigbo na-ekwu asị otu aka rụta mmanụ o zuo oha onụ. O bụ nke a mere na mgbe o bula Ala malitere iri mmadu n'Ala Igbo, o na-egosi na ndi bi n'ala ahụ emetoola ya. Nke a mere Ndigbo ji asị na Ala na-achụ obi oso.

O bụ nghota nwere banyere Ala mere ha ji asị " Anachebem (let the land protect me) Anadubem (let the land lead me) Anagoorom (let the land speak for me) Aniegbonam (let the land not accuse me) Anaebue (land enlargement), Anachetanum (land remember me), Anaegbunam (land do not kill me).

Kedu ihe mere Ndigbo oge gboo ji enye Ala ugwu na nsopuru ma hapu Chukwu, ebe ha maara na o bụ Ya kere eligwe na ala? Kedu ebe mmiri si baa n'opi ugbojiri.

The Divine Nature of Land

It suffices to know from what we have done so far that land is not merely a commodity or a physical surface; it is a fundamental unit of divine creation. As such, it is governed by the same universal physical and moral laws that moderate the functioning of the entire created order. Just as gravity governs the physical movement of bodies, moral equilibrium governs the spiritual health of the earth. Because land serves as the foundational basis for all human constructs, it acts as a unique "window" or thin place where the spiritual and physical worlds converge, allowing humanity to witness the interplay between the seen and the unseen. Because land provides everything that every living creature on earth depends on to survive, and habitat makes land an indispensable element. Humans are intrinsically tied to the land for their very existence. We cannot survive without its resources, nor will we ever find a surrogate or a celestial equivalent as perfectly suited for human life as the earth beneath our feet. This total dependence creates a sacred bond; however, this bond is fragile. When human conduct violates the moral laws governing the earth, the harmony of the entire ecosystem is disrupted. An infraction against the land is not a private matter but a tear in the fabric of the universal order. Therefore, whenever an infraction occurs on land, which has always been due to human conduct and actions because humans are the only agents that can commit an infraction, resulting in unimaginable consequences.

The Consequences of Infraction

If these violations—moral atrocities or "evil acts"—are not addressed through atonement, the resulting discord leads to catastrophic consequences. These repercussions are rarely isolated; they ripple outward to affect both the individual perpetrator and the collective community. The land itself, once defiled, reflects this spiritual decay back onto its inhabitants in the form of misfortune, social strife, or environmental instability. Because the land is a moral being in its own right, it requires a formal return to its original state of purity. Hence, Ikpu – alu in Igbo traditional society. To remedy these spiritual and physical disruptions, a specific mechanism of restoration is required: the **Ikpu Alu** concept. This is a deliberate and rigorous process of "cleansing the land" following an atrocity. It serves as a bridge between the offended spiritual realm and the physical community, seeking to purge the stain of evil through ritual and atonement. By engaging in Ikpu Alu, the community acknowledges its transgression and actively works to restore the harmony necessary for continued survival and prosperity on the land.

The Concept of Ikpu-Alu and Land Purification

Ikpu-alu is initiated the moment a breach occurs against the sanctity of the land. Within Igbo society, this common practice serves as a vital ritual for land cleansing. The term literally translates to



"dragging the evil (*alu*) out of the land," reflecting the belief that abominable acts contaminate the physical and spiritual soil upon which a community resides. The exercise of **Ikpu-alu** is considered expedient because the consequences of neglect are far-reaching. Failure to perform this cleansing means the evil committed will plague not only the life of the offender but also the community where the act occurred. It disrupts the purity of the land and severs the vital fellowship between the people and God.

Comparative Theology: Igbo Omenani and Jewish Tradition

The same gravity applied to *alu* in **Igbo Omenani** is mirrored in the traditional Jewish approach to crime. In both societies, crimes that defile the person of God, the purity of the land, and human sanctity are graded as abominations. Sexual perversion, murder, kidnapping, and theft are not merely social infractions; they are spiritual stains that must be purged to restore order. In Jewish religious practice, the concept of the "purge" serves the same function as **Ikpu-alu**. Terms such as cleanse, purify, rid, and make clean are used interchangeably in both contexts. In both the Jewish and Igbo worldviews, to purge is to legally wipe out an offense through atonement, suitable sacrifices, or specific corrective actions.

Biblical Mandates for Atonement

The Holy Bible maintains a rigorous record of actions regarded as evil and explains why they must be atoned for. These ungodly actions are considered transgressions against God, nature, and humanity. Scripture outlines specific instances where such crimes demand a purge to maintain communal holiness, as seen in passages such as:

- a. **Exodus 29:36** (Atonement for the altar)
- b. **Leviticus 14:49** (Cleansing of houses)
- c. **Deuteronomy 13:5; 17:7; 19:13; 21:9** (Purging evil from the midst of Israel)
- d. **Judges 20:13** (The necessity of removing wickedness from the nation)

Furthermore, God detests the erection of idol altars on the land. Such acts violate His divine right of ownership over the earth, which He has designated as His earthly altar. Raising surrogate gods is an act of transgression equal to the moral evils that require purging. When God approaches His earthly altar—the place intended for meeting mortals—and finds Himself replaced by idols, it provides the basis for His judgment.

Divine Ownership and Human Stewardship

It offends the Creator to see surrogate gods, imagined by human minds and carved by human hands, standing as go-betweens for a humanity created in His own image. These acts are outlawed by **Chukwu Okike** (the Creator God) because they violate creational decrees. The invitation of these idols represents a fundamental disobedience to the law and order of creation, categorized as *alu* in the sight of God.

Divine decree establishes that land belongs to God alone; human beings are merely His tenants (**Leviticus 25:23**). At the inception of human life, God charged Adam—and subsequently his descendants—with specific boundaries (**Genesis 2:16-17**). Adam's primary responsibilities were to work, maintain, improve, guard, and inculcate a transformative culture by loving and tending the land entrusted to him (**Genesis 2:15**).



The Theology of "Tend" and "Keep"

Genesis 2:15 provides the theological platform for examining land management and ordinances. The text explicitly uses the words "tend" and "keep," which carry deep Hebrew meanings. The word for "tend" is *Avad*, which translates not just to "work," but also to "service" and "**worship**."

This linguistic connection reveals that working the land is a form of religious service. Ancient Israel, much like the Igbo people, viewed the land as the intersection where Yahweh meets with mortals. However, while both cultures share this profound theological foundation, the full depth of this understanding is often not fully observed or realized within the traditional frameworks of **Omenani** or **Odinani**.

The Concept of Moral Reciprocity in Igbo Cosmology

In Igbo traditional society, there is an intrinsic understanding that human conduct is inextricably linked to the vitality of the land. The Igbo person recognizes that the earth is not merely a physical platform but a sensitive spiritual entity that responds to human action. Good conduct fosters a "favourable and productive" response from the soil, while moral or ritual violations—known as *Alu* (abominations)—pollute the environment and invite communal calamity. While this cause-and-effect relationship is deeply felt, it often lacks a systematic theological explanation regarding *why* the land possesses this responsive agency.

The Mechanism of Purge: *Ikpu-Alu*

Because the land is perceived as defiled by evil actions, the traditional response is the rite of *Ikpu-Alu* (cleansing of the abomination). The Igbos are acutely aware that a breach in the moral order demands an immediate ritual atonement to "purge" the land and avert the "obvious consequences" of divine or ecological wrath. However, this raises a critical theological question: to whom is this atonement truly directed? When the elements of sacrifice are offered, who is the offended party being appeased—is it God (*Chukwu*), the personified Land (*Ala*), or the Ancestors (*Ndi Ichie*)? Understanding the source of the law is essential to understanding the destination of the sacrifice.

Biblical Foundations: God, Land, and Lifestyle

To provide a clearer theological framework, we must first examine the biblical definition of "lifestyle"—the consistent pattern of human conduct—and how it interacts with the earth. In the Scriptures, land is not an independent deity but a creation of God, governed by laws He instituted for its sustenance. By looking at the tripartite relationship between **God, His people (Israel), and the Land**, we see a scriptural precedent: the land vomits out those who defile it and flourishes for those who walk in obedience. This establishes that the "responsiveness" of the land is actually a manifestation of God's sovereign moral law woven into creation.

From Temporal Ritual to the "Eternal Purge"

The traditional rite of *Ikpu-Alu* is inherently cyclical; it must be repeated with every new offense, leaving the community in a perpetual state of ritual anxiety. The theological shift proposed here identifies the blood of Jesus as the ultimate replacement for the elements used in traditional cleansing.

The Theological Pivot: While traditional rites address the symptoms of defilement, the sacrifice of Christ serves as the "**Eternal Purge**."

Unlike the repetitive blood of animals, the blood of Christ cleanses three distinct dimensions simultaneously:

1. **The Conscience:** It frees the individual offender from the guilt of the act.
2. **The Community:** It wipes the social record of the offense.



3. **The Land:** It restores the sanctity of the environment once and for all.

Through this "Eternal Purge," the Igbo person is no longer a fearful "Tenant" trying to appease an unpredictable earth, but a **redeemed steward** of God's creation, standing on land that has been permanently reconciled through the Cross. While traditional *Ikpu-Alu* must be repeated for every new offense, the theological argument here is that Christ's sacrifice serves as the "Eternal Purge." It cleanses the conscience of the offender, the record of the community, and the sanctity of the land once and for all, transforming the "Tenant" from a fearful servant into a redeemed steward.

In conclusion and for avoidance of ambiguity, in light of ritualistic package as provided in the Igbo traditional *Ikpu-alu* concept, who then takes the elements of atonement, is God, or the land, or the ancestors, who among these three is offended when it is committed? The blood that was used in the ritual of cleansing and atonement in *Ikpu – alu* can now be replaced with the blood of Jesus. The theological shift from traditional rites (like **Ikpu-alu**) to the sacrifice of Christ changes not just the "substance" of the sacrifice, but the very direction of the transaction. To understand who is offended and who receives atonement, we have to look at how the ritual's target shifts in a Christian context.

1. Who is Offended?

In the traditional worldview of *Ikpu-alu*, an offense is often seen as a breach of **Omenala** (custom/law) that disturbs a delicate ecosystem of power.

- a. **The Ancestors:** Offended because the act dishonors the lineage and the moral path they set.
- b. **The Land (Ala):** Offended because the act "pollutes" the physical and spiritual soil that sustains the living.
- c. **God (Chukwu):** Often viewed as the remote, ultimate source of justice, though the immediate "friction" is felt by the Land and Ancestors.

The Christian Pivot: In Christian theology, while the Land and Community feel the *consequences* of sin, the **primary offense** is against **God**. Because God is the Creator of both the Land and the Ancestors, a sin is a rebellion against His holiness. Therefore, God is the "Aggrieved Party" who must be reconciled.

2. Who "Takes" the Elements of Atonement?

This is the most significant departure from traditional ritual mechanics.

Entity	Traditional Role (Ikpu-alu)	Christian Role (The Pivot)
The Land	Receives the blood to "cool" its anger and absorb the pollution.	Beneficiary. The Land is <i>cleansed</i> , but it does not "demand" the blood of Christ; God offers it to heal the Land.
The Ancestors	Invoked to witness and accept the sacrifice to restore communal peace.	Subordinated. In Christ, the "Eternal Ancestor," the need to appease individual spirits is replaced by the peace of the Holy Spirit.
God	The ultimate but often distant overseer of the rite.	The Recipient and The Provider. God is the one whose justice is satisfied by the blood of Christ.

3. The "Direction" of the Blood

In traditional rites, humans offer something (animal blood) **upward** to appease the Land or spirits. It is a human-initiated attempt to fix a spiritual break.



In the "Eternal Purge" of Christ:

- **God is the Initiator:** He provides the sacrifice Himself.
- **The Blood flows Downward:** It is not humans giving blood to God to "pay Him off"; it is God pouring out His life to **wash** the Conscience, the Community, and the Land.

Summary: The Replacement

When you replace the ritual blood of *Ikpu-alu* with the blood of Jesus, the "recipient" of the atonement is **God's Justice**.

Because God is satisfied once and for all, the Land no longer has the "right" to be angry, the Ancestors no longer have a "claim" of dishonor to hold against the living, and the Conscience is cleared because the debt is marked "Paid in Full." The Land and Community are not the *takers* of the sacrifice; they are the **beneficiaries** of the cleansing it provides.

How does this "once and for all" aspect of the sacrifice change the way a community views its daily relationship with the Land?

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