The Role of the Church towards a Sustainable Transition and Resource Control in Rivers State, Nigeria: A Post Joshua Israel’s Example

By

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Abstract

Joshua’s emergence as the leader of the Israelites came after a long period of mentorship under the leadership of Moses. Joshua was the closest person to Moses during the Exodus and the period of wandering in the wilderness. He was the commander of the Israelite army under Moses and was aptly referred to as “Moses’ aid”. Because of his loyalty and dedication to the vision of Moses, it was not a surprise that the mantle of leadership fell on him. This was a smooth and deliberate transition. Joshua accepted the assignment and immediately addressed himself to the task of bringing to completion the work Moses his predecessor started. That is, settling the Israelites in Canaan, the Promised Land. A task he successfully accomplished without initiating any new agenda for himself. Soon after the death of Joshua, things began to fall apart in the nation of Israel. This paper identifies a lacuna occasioned by the inability of Joshua to handover leadership to a successor. ‘Every man did that which was right in his own eyes’ ( Judges 21:25 KJV). The Nigerian situation over the years paints a similar picture; though the nation has witnessed transitions from one democratic dispensation to another. The Rivers State Example replicates the post Joshua Israel. Successive governments do not build on the visions of predecessors. This has led to loss of viable sources of income for the state, abandonment of projects and programmes, unemployment and political war. This paper employs the multidimensional approach and recommends that the church should encourage successive governments to build on the visions and programmes of predecessors.
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Introduction
Nigeria is one country that has experienced unhindered transition from one civilian administration to another since 1999. Yet finds it difficult to consolidate on the democratic structure so acquired. Thereby making it difficult for citizens to enjoy the dividends of the hard earned democracy. This disturbing situation is not unconnected with the turbulent, nepotistic and haphazard transition that is noticed in almost all the states, especially Rivers State. This is why it is so important to understand what kind of challenges the country faces and what needs to be done to make its democratic structures responsive to consolidation. This paper is an attempt to explore the challenges Rivers State faces as result of the inability of a Governor to produce a successor that builds on the vision and structures of his predecessor. Nevertheless the effort to describe the nature of democratic transition in Rivers State as in the case of Israel after Joshua in this context involves historical and critical (multidimensional) approach. Adopting the qualitative research design using information mainly from secondary data. However from either side of the argument, it is certain that there are challenges, which hampers consolidation of the transition process. Several scholars have contributed towards understanding the trends as well as the impact of Nigeria’s transition to democracy, loss of revenue and resource control since 1999.

Rivers State in History
The circumference called Rivers State, today, as postulated by Chukwudi (2017) was the epicenter of the Oil Rivers Protectorate that existed from 1885 to 1893, when it became part of the Niger Coast Protectorate. In 1900, the region was merged with the chartered territories of the Royal Niger Company to form the colony of Southern Nigeria. Following that merger, minority crusaders and activists, given their difficult terrain, openly
expressed many fears of palpable marginalization, neglect and oppression. This led to the signing of several protection treaties between various indigenous communities and the British government, pledging to accord priority to the protection of the interests and development needs of the minorities. But those treaties were never implemented to the letter, due mainly to lack of political will and commitment to do the needful. Thus, those fears of neglect, deprivation and oppression remained unattended to for four decades.

Consequently, accordingly, between 1941 and 1952, agitation for the creation of Rivers province began with the formation of the Ijaw Rivers People’s League (IRPL). About a decade later in 1953, the Council of Rivers Chiefs (CORC) was floated as a replacement for the league. That same year, another platform, the Calabar Ogoja Rivers (COR) State Movement was born. The CORC was later renamed in 1954 as Rivers Chiefs and Peoples’ Congress (RCPC), and in 1956, the organisation transformed to the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference (RCPC). Until 1958, hopes of an independent state to drive and actualize their dreams resonated with the people, but lingered consistently in the minds of its purveyors. As a means of dousing tension created by the century-long neglect and marginalisation of the people, and the fierce quest for self-determination and resource control woven around the rebellion, the administration of Gen Yakubu Gowon, on May 27, 1967, issued Decree No. 14, announcing the creation of Rivers State. Even after the creation of the state, the complaints about political marginalisation, environmental degradation and economic pauperisation have remained.

Of course, the story of Rivers State is reminiscent of the complex paradox called Nigeria. Its struggle for identity, justice, equity and self-determination is simply the melting pot of the agitation of the minorities in Nigeria’s South for economic and political freedom. Carved out of the South Eastern Region, exactly 52 years ago, Rivers State, also referred to as
The ‘Treasure Base of the Nation’, is located in the now South-South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria. It has a total landmass of approximately 11,077 square kilometres or 4,276.9 square miles, and ranks 26 in size, out of the 36 states of the federation. By 2007, it ranked second in Gross Domestic Products (PPP) only to Lagos at $21.07billion, with a per capita of $3,965. Rivers State, with capital in Port Harcourt, is one of the 36 states of Nigeria, and has been allocated 23 local government areas, politically. It derives its name from the many rivers that border its territory. Rivers State is home to a variety of ethnic clans, including Abua, Andoni, Ekpeye, Engenni, Etche, Ibani, Ikwerre, Kalabari, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Okrika and Ogoni. Its inland part consists of tropical rainforest while towards the coast features many mangrove swamps typical of the Niger Delta environment.

In terms of economic equation in Nigeria, Rivers State has one of the largest economies in Nigeria, and is the epicenter of the huge hydrocarbon resources in the Niger Delta. Thus, virtually all the international oil and gas companies as well as indigenous ones have their operational bases or administrative offices in the state. The state has two major refineries, a world-class petrochemical facility, two fertiliser plants, two major seaports, two airports, and various industrial estates spread across the state, particularly in the state capital.

**Democratic Transition**

Essentially Nigeria’s transition can be viewed as the spread of democracy from Europe and America to Africa and Nigeria in particular; a way of transferring power from the military to civilians; an instrument for bringing about social, political and economic improvements. However to begin with meaning of democratic transition, the “notion implies a passage from non-democratic to a democratic situation.” It is in other words democratization, which leads to a more open, more participatory less authoritarian society. It refers to the “transformation process from a non-democratic regime to a procedural democracy to a substantive democracy, either as the first
government in a newly independent country or by replacing authoritarian in an older one” (Yusuf and Yuguda: 2017).

While some of the literature discusses the influence of external dynamics in facilitating transitions, several scholarly works on democratic transitions focuses on the internal dynamics that have made these transitions possible. Both discussions have been concerned with how and why democratic transition happened, some are also concerned about the consolidation of democratic structures after the transition. While some countries have made transition to democracy and hold regular interval elections, they have been unable to consolidate the effective democratic governance. “Whereas most studies of democratization have focused on Latin America and southern Europe and latterly on Eastern Europe, Africa has received less attention” (Bratton and Walle, 2004).

Following the global spread of democracy around the world, scholars and institutions for democratic assistance have described how different countries make transitions from authoritarian regimes to democratic regimes. They explained how each transition manifest under specific conditions. While others contributed to the understanding of democratic transition and democratic consolidation, some others distinguished democratic government and democratic regime. However while in a generalizing term democratization in Latin America is a reaction to social disintegration, in African context it is attributed to reincarnation of diffusion of modernization (Ibeanu 2007).

The essential attributes of democratic transition included “at the formal level; the establishment of constitutional rule and operation of multi-party system”. At the profound level it “involves socio-political transformation that allows freely elected political rulers and majority of the civil population to impose their supremacy over the ruling civilian ethno-regional cabals”. This is more or less development of internal democratic values, which must
ensure effective citizenship participation. In other words democratic transition “is about operation and institutionalization of democratic principles, values, structures and processes leading to a fully sustainable democratic form of governance” (Linz and Stephan, 1996)

However in the case of Nigeria, Kumar (2005) examines the “transition to civil rule is being dubbed as yet another “pseudo-transition”, that is the incumbent elite responding to pressures for democratization” via promulgation of a number of reforms and even new constitution. He noted the current “transition from military to civilian rule is increasingly viewed as a “patched” one”, just like in the second republic (1979-1983), it is therefore not a process to yield social, political and economic improvements. Meanwhile, Nigerians live the period of ferment, anxiety and uncertainties. It has been observed that the country has been in perpetual transition since its amalgamation for British colonial purposes in 1914. The dynamics of colonial era was characterized with nationalists struggle for participation in the running of state, this trend still is prevalent in the states of the country. Transition has remained turbulent in many states since the May 29 1999 handover in Nigeria as some new governors engage in serious battle with their predecessors over alleged frauds, indecent debts, and sundry political differences. This has been traced to how turbulent the democratic transition process in Nigeria is.

**Transition in Rivers State: 1967-2019**

**Military Transition**

Since creation, Rivers State has had 10 military governors. The first was Navy Commander Alfred Diele-Spiff, who administered the state from May 28, 1967 to July 1975. He was followed by Maj-Gen Zamani Lekwot who administered the state for three years from July 1975 to July 1978. Navy Commander Suleiman Saidu was appointed to take over from Lekwot from July 1978. His administration lasted up to October 1, 1979. Police Commissioner Fidelis Oyakhilome was appointed military governor after
the Coup d’état of December 1983. Fidelis Oyakhilome served as military governor from January 1984 to 26 August 1986. Col Anthony Ukpo who took over the affairs of the state from 26th August 1986 to July 1988 succeeded him. Group Captain Ernest Adeleye was the next to be appointed. He served from July 1988 to August 30, 1990. Col Godwin Abbe’s tenure was to follow next. He served from September 3, 1990 to January 1992. Col Dauda Komo’s appointment lasted from December 9, 1993 to August 22, 1996 when Col Musa Shehu was appointed to succeed him. Col Dauda Komo’s lasted from August 22, 1996 to August 1998. Group Captain Sam Ewang, was to be the last military personnel to govern the state. He administered the state from August 1998 to May 29, 1999 when handed over governance of the state to a democratically elected governor, Dr. Peter Odili.

Civilian/Democratic Transition
This paper observes that six civilian governors have governed the state since its creation in 1967. They are presented in the order following. Senator Melford Okiolo who was elected on the platform of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), he governed the state from October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1983. The next was Chief Rufus Ada-George. He was elected on the political platform of the National Republican Convention (NRC). His administration lasted from January 1992 to November 1993. After the military interruption of 1993 that ended the government of Ada George, Dr. Peter Odili who was elected governor on the platform of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP). He was subsequently sworn in on May 29, 1999, when he took over the governance of the state. He served for eight years from May 1999 to May 29, 2007. As noted earlier, transition in Nigeria has remained turbulent in many states since the May 29 1999 handover. This has been the case in Rivers State as since 2007 when then President Olusegun Obasanjo put a spanner in the works of Chibuike Amaechi’s governorship plan with his novel K-Leg saga, thereby denying him the opportunity of contesting the election of that year as a governorship candidate on the platform of People’s
Precious Dikewoha (2018) had noted that Celestine Omehia became the beneficiary of Obasanjo’s ‘K-Leg’ saga, as he was given the governorship ticket of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) as a contestant for the 2007 election. It was a successful and smooth transition from Odili to Omehia as May 29, 2007 Omehia was sworn in as Governor of Rivers State. This administration was terminated on October 26, 2007.

Accordingly, the Obasanjo’s novel K-Leg saga did not go down well with Amaechi who reportedly escaped to Ghana, to regroup for a greater fight ahead of him. A fight that ended with the Supreme Court declaring him on October 26, 2007 governor and was immediately sworn in and served to May 29, 2015. It should be noted that from the day Amaechi was sworn in as governor, Rivers State never remained the same again. The state was now divided between Amaechi and Odili/Omehia. They have never agreed on any issue no matter how beneficial it would be for the state. The situation still prevails and has affected the transition process in the state.

The last transition in Rivers State from former Governor Rotimi Amaechi of All Progressives Congress (APC) to Governor Nyesom Wike of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) is probably the most turbulent in Nigeria. The face-off between the two politicians and their supporters was so turbulent that many feared it might resort to uncontrollable bloody clashes. At the end of the election, Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced Wike the winner. That was not the end of the face-off. Even before he was sworn-in, Wike swore to probe Amaechi, while the latter headed to court to challenge the election and the result, describing them as a sham. Wike had followed up by confiscating some of the vehicles and other properties used by top officials in Amaechi’s government. The drama remains most intriguing. It is on record that Amaechi did not constitute the traditional transition team that would have ushered in the new administration. This situation made impossible for the new governor...
to be properly briefed on the programmes of his predecessor. The resultant effect is that the new governor had to jettison all the programmes of his predecessor and initiated his new agenda.

**Transition in Israel: Moses to Joshua**

Deuteronomy (34: 1–4) is very clear that Joshua, Moses’ successor confronted a different institutional governance problem as compared to that of Moses. Whereas under Moses’ leadership the key purpose of institutional governance had been to organize the exodus journey through uncertain territory, under Joshua’s leadership the new purpose was to conquer the Promised Land, distribute land among the Israelite tribes, and establish governance rules for the newly formed state. With the change of ruler from Moses to Joshua, the expectation of more democratic governance almost immediately arose. Moses had belonged to the House of Levi, which Jacob had condemned because of their violent tendencies. This condemnation carried significant institutional overtones (Genesis 49: 6). Moses then indeed showed a peace-destroying approach in his negotiations with Egypt but also when Moses ruled the exodus journey in a rather autocratic, opportunistic manner, which favored his tribe, the Levites. A democratic structure had existed at the beginning of the exodus journey when Moses still discussed with the elders and first-borns of all tribes problems of institutional governance (Exodus 4: 27–31). Then, tribal community and an ‘assembly-like’ state governance structure prevailed. However, Moses disposed of this approach, and he is subsequently accused of favoritism and nepotism (Numbers 16: 3, 9–10, 15). Some interpreters of the Bible overlook this opportunistic stance of the Levites. Others have noted, although without entering into institutional economic analysis, that Moses’ institutional position ‘included practically every other office within Israel.’ Even in these stories, the Israelites and how they were organized did not match a categorization of foraging people, or what Briend (2000) calls a primitive, community oriented hunter-gatherer band. Moses’ autocratic approach to legislative, executive and jurisdictional governance
disadvantaged the other tribes of Israel. A considerable ‘distance’ existed between the rulers- Moses and the Levites and those who were governed- the other tribes of Israel. Regarding such ‘distances’ in civil rights, Buchanan argues that either the enforcement of the status quo has to be bolstered or that a basic constitutional agreement among group members has to be renegotiated in order to reduce an existing distance to acceptable limits for all, thus altering the understanding of the legitimizing community. Purely on transaction cost grounds, one could advance the hypothesis that for the efficient organization of foraging of large groups in hostile territories, Moses’ ‘dictatorial’ approach had certain benefits.

In contrast to Moses’ Levite origins, Joshua belonged to the House of Joseph and Ephraim, which Jacob had highly blessed (Genesis 48: 14; Genesis 49: 22–6), as Jacob had announced that their descendants would become a group of nations (Genesis 48: 19). With these genealogies in mind, a different approach to involving community and to setting up state governance could be expected under Joshua. There was an indication in this respect early on that the continued protection of the Levites’ domination after the exodus journey would not be its favored route for institutional governance. Also, on cost grounds, the institutional domination of the Levites and the implied protection of the status quo could be considered to be an economically inefficient solution for a settled society, with issues arising such as the distribution of land, the securing of property rights in land, or the defense of land. God’s approach to institutional involvement also seemed to change. God urged Moses to approve of Joshua as his successor because Joshua was ‘… a man in whom is the spirit’ (Numbers 27: 18) – by inheritance the spirit of Joseph, it is necessary to add that Jacob’s blessing of Joseph reflects Joseph’s highly successful approach to institutional governance, in which he had resolved interaction dilemmas between Egypt and Israel (Wagner-Tsukamoto: 2012).
State Formation under Joshua

Wagner-Tsukamoto (2012) notes that, after the exodus journey, the most crucial issue for the Israelites was to regain their claimed homeland. Joshua’s approach to acquiring land was more typical of the House of Levi rather than that of the House of Joseph. No cooperation concept with other tribes and nations is visible, with very rare exceptions. What Buchanan (1977) calls the ‘natural distribution state’ or the ‘Hobbesian jungle’ fully emerges at this stage. As Buchanan describes, natural distribution states are unstable because of the constant attack and defense attempts that characterize such states as well as the costly investments parties have to allocate to attack and defense in order to retain what they claim as their property.

Joshua, in complete contrast to Moses’ approach, began to involve all Israelite tribes in constitutional rearrangements that concerned the setting up of new state organization structures. As noted, Buchanan is quite outspoken here on grounds of attack-defense costs and on practical grounds, stating that a renegotiation of the basic constitutional contract is the only solution. The ‘assembly’ was reintroduced as a governance mechanism, being comprised of ‘elders, leaders, judges, and officials’ of all the Israelite tribes (Joshua 8: 33, 9: 14–15, 20: 4, 23: 1–2, 24: 1). In this respect, a basic state structure of the ‘protective state’ at a constitutional level was the object of agreement amongst the ones who were to be governed.

By introducing the assembly, Joshua succeeded not only in involving all the tribes of Israel in institutional governance but also in preventing the status quo from lapsing back into destructive anarchy. Civil war is a real threat, as Buchanan warns, when changes to institutional governance are made. Such changes became unavoidable once the Israelites reached the Promised Land with questions of territorial distributions arising, coupled with issues of how to acquire land from and defend land against other nations. In effect, it was the assembly, operating at least as a quasi-
democratic forum, which re-asserted its monopoly on constitutional contracting, including the use of ‘violence’ through the ‘protective state.’ Such constitutional contractual agreement to maintaining and changing the status quo is essential.

So it can be seen, in the Book of Joshua, the institutional governance of the Israelites began to be legitimized, once again, rather than the kind of autocratic, possibly even dictatorial ‘slave contract’ or ‘state banditry’ that can be attributed to institutional governance under Moses. Despite this, the assembly still suffered under significant governance deficits. A ‘twelve-tribe league’ emerged under Joshua’s reign rather than an integrated, smoothly functioning nation. The irony was the ‘loss of a unified leadership’ and the ‘tragedy of the nation’ as predicted by Jacob, that a descendant of Joseph and Ephraim would forge a ‘group of nations’ from the Israelites (Genesis 48: 19) rather than a unified nation. Being more specific, Joshua failed to set up integrative mechanisms for drawing together and running the Israelite community as one state. The existing governance structures invited ‘anarchy’ and self-interested maneuvering among the Israelite tribes. The kinds of property that had been safeguarded through the ‘twelve-tribe league’ were something like ‘tribal independence’, ‘tribal democracy’ and ‘tribal security’, loosely adjudicated by the assembly, but not ‘national security’, ‘national democracy’ and ‘national independence.’ The national was under threat continually from warring adjacent nations and those nations whom the Israelites had evicted from the Promised Land. Civil war amongst the Israelites was another possibility especially since national security national democracy and national independence had not been secured.

Clearly, the tribes had a common interest to cooperate regarding the shared provision of the defense of territory or the maintaining of democracy, since this allowed not only Israel as a collective group but also individual tribes to reduce costs for setting up institutional structures to provide these goods.
However, for these two goods (i.e. national defense; maintaining of independence) conflicting interests already existed. For example, from the point of view of individual tribes, it made good economic sense to opt out, on grounds of self-interest, from defense tasks once it became apparent that the attack of an external or internal aggressor was not aimed at their own territory. Regarding ‘national independence’, problems of self-interested maneuvering could be expected to be even more divisive.

The problem regarding the maintaining of independence, however, was more acute since it cut at the very heart of basic rights for maintaining tribal identity versus national identity. But the major problem was the vacuum created by Joshua’s inability to produce a successor. This vacuum threw Israel into a chaotic and less privileged political, military and economic situation. As noted earlier, under Joshua, the problems surrounding national defense, national independence and national democracy had remained. The only coordination mechanism for common defense tasks that could possibly be said to have existed under Joshua was the assembly. Calling upon the assembly, however, was a rather time consuming, costly endeavor and it still invited strategic maneuvering among the Israelite tribes regarding as to who would cooperate with whom when it came to defense tasks. The idea of the community reflected a collection of twelve loosely connected independent groups, who put their own interests first. Regarding the maintaining of democracy, problems of institutional governance showed similar features as compared to the defense problem. The surrounding nations had it very easy depriving them access to their wealth and resources. There was no standing army as was commanded by Joshua under Moses’ leadership to be called out in times of external threats.

Transition and Resource Control in Rivers State
The Rivers State example replicates the post Joshua Israel. Successive governments do not build on the visions of predecessors. The administration of Amaechi did away with the programmes he inherited
from Omehia while Wike did not continue with the vision of Amaechi. Political analysts like Precious Dikewoha (2017) recalled that the administration of Odili witnessed a dramatic transformation in terms of elitist projects, Amaechi received encomiums from the Rivers people for his foresight in the provision of infrastructural development in the state. Roads were expanded; several health centers built, model schools, student scholarship.

However, the disagreement of Amaechi with Wike and other PDP chieftains over the governorship of the state has led to loss of viable sources of income such as, the Banana Farm, Songhai Farm, Timariv, Health Centers, abandonment of projects like the Monorail, model schools and programmes like Overseas Scholarship Scheme, Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency (RSSDA). This loss is as a result of no continuity in government in the state. This has led to many persons being thrown back into the unemployment market due the closure of the various programmes or facilities where they previously worked. This situation can only be averted if there is a sustainable transition in the state where the outgoing governor works with a transition team for a cordial handover of power.

The Role of the Church in Sustainable Transition for Resource Control

This paper sees “the church” as both the individual believer and the institutional entity; hence both individuals and the corporate body have a part to play in the political realm. For anyone who has thoroughly studied Church history and the 30 years wars (1618-1648) that ended with the signing of the Westphalian Treaty of 1648, he will agree that mixing religion and politics is something that should be avoided because of its polarizing effect. In Nigeria’s post-colonial history, we have seen much of this. It is because of the polarizing effect of mixing religion and politics that the bastions of democracy like the United States and United Kingdom, to mention a few, took seriously the idea of separating the Church and state in their bid to forge a durable political order. This has greatly helped in
stabilizing those societies. The Church has a code of principles, which according to Agostoni (1997) regulate the relations between the Church and politics and between the church and the state. These principles have continually been renewed and updated to make it respond adequately to various developments. Igauda (2008) posited that wherever religion and politics are in organic relationship one of them would influence the other in line with its own ideology. Though some form of relationship between religion and politics cannot be ruled out, the danger become mortal when the relationship is organic instead of co-operation. The role of the church, then as an independent empire and critic over what transpires in the political arena is indispensable. Leaving politics to politician alone may spell doom for the freedom and right of the people. According to Agostoni (1997), cooperation is equally necessitated by the fact that both church and state are designed to work for the common good of the society. Most of the teachings of Christianity are directed towards humans in their various relationships, especially within the society. One of the arguments advanced for the cooperation between the church and state towards enthroning good national leaders, according to Kukah (2007:2-3), is because people look up to religious leaders during times of political uncertainty. During Nigeria dark days under military rule, many Nigerian looked up to their religious leaders for message of hope. People come to the church for direction because it is easily accessible. It is easier to get the blessing of a high-ranking clergy than to get to support of a prominent politician. Some churches readily welcome politicians seeking votes to their congregation as a way of boosting their public image. With this closeness, according to him, churches stand a vantage position to make meaningful contribution to the electoral process especially by speaking out when it discovers that the fundamental rights of the masses are likely to be hijacked by greedy politician through political harangue that are sordidly carried out during campaigns.
Besides creating awareness, which may not be effective in society plagued by poverty, illiteracy, it has been argued that the church has a mandate to condemn social injustice. According to Kukah, (1999) the task of fighting injustice, whether religious, cultural, or social, is the duty of every element in the society. Unfortunately, illiberal democracies like Nigeria’s where political entrepreneurs lavishly spend illicitly acquired wealth in Churches by turning them to arenas of political campaign during election have not learn any lesson from the innovative idea of separating the Church and state. Sadly too, clerics who are driven by pecuniary benefit as against spreading the gospel tend to encourage these political entrepreneurs. Incidentally, this partly accounts for the country’s challenge in its elusive effort to establish a viable political society.

This paper’s understanding of separating the Church from the state does not imply that the Church should not have any role to play in politics. Not at all! The Church has every reason to be part of the political process, especially in climes where authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes have held sway. However, the role of the Church is meant to be limited to specific issues like civic education and speaking against corrupt and repressive regimes, most of which are found in the developing world like Nigeria.

So, what is the role of the church in politics, firstly, the church needs to recognize that it does have a role. This point because many Christians struggle with the church’s involvement in socio-political-economic issues. Yet Scripture and history clearly support the church’s place in these concerns. Daniel becomes a leader in Babylon, Amos and other prophets spoke into political and social matters in Israel, Judah and the surrounding nations. Both John the Baptist and Jesus refer to the political concerns of their day. In both the Old and New Testament God’s representatives spoke out against abuse of political power and sought just use of power. This surely, is what being "salt and light" means.
Secondly, this paper is convinced that the key role the church plays in politics is through its prophetic ministry. "Prophetic" here means speaking into policy, structure, or issues in the name of God and Christ, or on behalf of humanity in general or of a community in particular. Jim Harris (2003) observes that, Anglican bishops David Russell and Desmond Tutu were classical examples of this, following, the prophetic pattern in the Old Testament. This is different from the "prophetic word" that is current - different in emphasis, not better or worse. The church has a set of moral norms and it has illustrations in Scripture and in history of how these norms have been used. The prophetic role is seen in the application of relevant moral norms to the political concerns of the day. Hence the church needs to continue engaging with government on justice, corruption, leadership, economic debt, housing, education, health care, safety and security, policy, and whatever else is morally important.

Further, the church needs to be saying "yes" as well as "no" to political parties' promises and policies. By "no" it means to clearly oppose wrong transition process, corruption, or anything else deemed unedifying and not benefiting society. "Yes" supports commitments to fulfilling promises made and making real efforts to curb crime, to making education truly a prime target for development, to making health care accessible and significant - not second-rate.

**Conclusion/Recommendations**
In this paper, the precarious situations in Israel after the death of Joshua has been likened to the Rivers State’s experience for its inability to have a sustainable transition. The church has equally been seeing to have a role to play in ensuring that political parties conduct themselves in a manner that would not throw the state into chaos before, during and after every election. This paper therefore recommends that the church should not take the back seat in any political transition in Rivers State. Furthermore, the church should encourage outgoing governors to have a good rapport with
whoever would succeed him in order to create room for continuity. This would in turn create an opportunity for resource control and sustainable development.

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