RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SOCIAL-POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE: A FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Righteousness by God's standard has corresponding effects on socio-political and sustainable development in every sphere of human society, including the ancient Israelites and Nigerians. The call for righteousness and socio-political transformation in the prophetic literature expresses the inseparable knitting of life; religious, economic, social, and political arena as championed by the prophets could be related to the Sinaitic covenant. Some scholars have portrayed the prophets' mainly function as God's spokesperson, advisors, and revolutionists, upholders of theocracy and maintainers of the law, with themes of salvation, judgment and future hope. However, attention is yet to be made on seeing these prophets as agents of righteousness, social and political transformation which serves as foundation for sustainable development. The message of the ancient prophets could speak to the Nigerian socio-political context, with same expected effects and outcome. Therefore, this study conceptualizes the prophets; the divine conscience of the Israelite societies call for a transformation that would encompass the socio-political domain of the nation and restore God's standard for right actions and its implications for sustainable development. This study adopts a historical and analytical method with a sociological approach using the framework of structural strain theory, which insists that deviation from socially acceptable norms could cause crises in all spheres of life. As it was in Israel, so it is for Nigeria. For the prophets, the 'brotherhood' consciousness of the society has become so stratified by the erosion of righteousness, chatting paths for exploitation and oppression in all ramifications of life and human activities. The study findings show that when righteousness and socio-political transformation is experienced in Nigeria, the nation's economic situation will develop sustainably. Citizens will gain access to an adequate livelihood, productive and economic security will be for all and sundry, and meaningful development will take place in the nation. Hence, the call for transformation, that will engender true sustainable development and prosperity.

Keywords: *Righteousness, Social, Political Transformation, Prophetic Literature, Sustainable Development*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The call to righteous living and socio-political transformation is a reflection of God's character. The prophets expressly carried out their functions in a period of major crises in every phase of Israel's life.[1] In a time when leaders ought to have reflected in their character the ability to wield power in such a way to please God and bless his people, there was complete deviation from God's standard for cordial societal living in all spheres of life. This failure of the leadership and citizenry to live up to God's standards had ripple effects on the nation's religious, social and political life. The structure strain theory propagates that, a dissonance between the socially approved way to acquire prominence and actualize goals will always give rise to strain; a gulf between means and goals.[2] In light of this, society has affirmed ways to achieving goals, yet people adopt ways to the contrary, whilst other sections of the community totally rebel against socially approved norms, hence, engaging in lawlessness.[3] The Israelite society as that of Nigeria was quite aware of the *modus operandi* for attaining one's aim in life such as hard work, honesty, sincerity, integrity, love, patience and due process as socially and culturally certified, yet chose to live otherwise.

Nigeria in this study, though an actual country could also serve as a metaphor for the Global South countries, where "the commonality of the fate of mankind is mostly clearly manifested in its general global problems."[4] Issues of righteousness, socio-political challenges faced in Nigeria resonate in other third world countries in diverse ways. Humans are economic beings who will persistently engage in ventures that will improve their worth[5] though, in most cases, inappropriate ways. Therefore, they create a structural strain which engenders exploitation of the poor abuse of power and corruption.

This structural strain constitute the basis for the prophets' call to righteousness that corresponds to God's ideals expressed in tangible form in day to day living of the people of Israel.[6] In this regard, the Sinaitic covenant is self-expressive as the laid down basis for Israel's relationship with God, which places demands on Israel as vassals to God's sovereignty, and a furtherance of God's grace and care over Israel.[7] By implication, God's righteous demands as preached by the prophets were not arbitrary; they hinge on the tenets of the Sinaitic Agreement as an approved means for socio-political progress and sustainable development. If the tenets of God's righteous, demands are inculcated in the fabrics of Nigerian socio-political context, this study claims will bring the same result of virtue, honesty, integrity, and love among the citizenry.

The acceptance and practice of Yahweh's socio-political, religious and economic standards for Israel demands virtue, honesty, integrity, love, hard work, process and loyalty. These cut across the entire phase of the national existence; from the pomp to the peasant and from the wealthy to the poor, from the powerful to the weak, from the land-owners to the sojourners.[8] The all-inclusive demands of the covenant code places responsibility and welfare of the citizenry in the collective systemic perspective: oneness under Yahweh, irrespective of each person's social standing. This ideology must be put to practice in everyday life of the Israelite society and its absence will surely cause a strain in societal cohesiveness and cordiality.

However, Walther Houston thoroughly captured the spirit of the ancient Israel practices. He said, "The relationship of classes within a society is not a fact that admits a simple cause and effect

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1. Hasse Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 11.
2. Kathy Stolley, *The Basis of Sociology*. (London: Greenwood Press, 2005), 114.
3. Stolley, *The Basis of Sociology*, 114.
4. Nika Chitadze, *World Politics and Challenges for International Security* (Georgia: International Black University, 2002), 68.
5. Lemel Odeh, Analysis of Global North and South Economies, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 42, no.10 (2010):338.
6. Jonathan Ziest, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Engaging*. (Cambridge: university Press 1972), 30.
7. Elmer Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 77.
8. Christopher Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for God's People* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 97.

explanation. It is an aspect of an entire social system, embracing economics, politics, and culture, all in constant flux."[9] The impact of living in a strained socio-political society was a huge burden for the prophets who witnessed the oppression of diverse magnitude meted to the poor and the weak.

The Yahweh-given way of living enshrined in the covenant encapsulated a new status for Israel as it characterized godliness. This new moral, social, economic identity and relationship are what God has always wanted for his people as a means to progress and sustainable development; not only for Israel but for all nations including Nigeria.[10] Therefore, this paper will focus on the religious, social, and political issues which necessitated transformation and indicators of transformation as demanded by the prophets. Lastly, this study will find expression in the Nigerian socio-political context for sustainable development.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

A study of this nature will necessitate clarifying specific operational terms which are presented below.

2.1 Righteousness

This term reminds biblical scholars of the depth of semantic understanding embedded in the Hebrew language study. What the Septuagint termed as righteousness, the Latin Vulgate translated as justice, implying "legal relationship of humans is transferred to God in an absolute sense as the Lawgiver and with perfection of justice and righteousness"[11] By deduction, humankinds in their relational characteristics must exhibit uprightness, justice as conforming to God's standards, hence God is interested in human relationships. Righteousness is a "steadfast action to following an established path or course of action, it is conformity to standard"[12]

Furthermore, righteousness serves as a couplet used primarily with its cognate justice; hence, justice and righteousness are often interchangeably used in scriptures. The complexities surrounding these words require brief insight. According to Christopher Wright, righteousness connotes that which is "straight, something fixed and fully what it should be, hence a norm-something by which other things are measured, a standard, that which is supposed to be done (Lev. 19:36; Dut.25:15), that which is as it ought to be done."[13] To put in perspective, righteousness presupposes a laid down standard which is normative, and a yardstick for action and appraisal of behavior. Righteousness could be a legal declaration or an ethical standard. In certain respects, the forensic nature of righteousness is expressed as a "declaration to be in the right, not guilty, innocent; these assertions appear in judicial scenes in both human and divine spheres. The wicked are neither acquitted by man (Isa. 5: 23) nor by God (Exo. 23: 7)."[14]

In the arena of human dispositions and interactions, conformity to an already known standard entails the rightness or wrongness of an action as it affects societal behavioral structure. Therefore, such knowledge of what is right and wrong placed demand and expectation on the nation of Israel.[15] The legal understanding of righteousness implies both a vertical and horizontal outlook which does not entail perfect ethical uprightness of the people. Instead, it is living and following the tenets of the covenant.

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9. Joel Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 25.

10. John Walton, *Old Testament Theology for Christians: from Ancient context to Enduring Belief* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2017), 108.

11. William E. Vine Merril F.U, William W.R, "Righteousness," in *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Hebrew Words* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1940), 325.

12. Jeff Benner, *New Testament Greek to Hebrew Dictionary* (Texas: Virtualbookworm Publishing, 2007), 46.

13. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for God's People,* 255.

14. Jonathan Ziester, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Engaging* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2004), 19.

15. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for God's People,* 256.

At this juncture, the religious and socio-political grounds for coexistence intersect indivisibly and the upholding of the covenant code with its legal requirements towards God and fellow humans connects.[16] Where the ancient Israelite society became so class-segregated, exploitation found its course in the society, righteousness disappeared, giving rise to oppression and suppression.[17] The covenant code is the fulcrum that creates a platform for the application of the demands for godliness in all contexts; religious, social, or political.[18] Therefore, the nation of Israel with all their socio-political structure cannot feign ignorance on what is demanded of them for societal coexistence and development.

2.2 Socio-Political Transformation

Transformation, in the general sense, means a change in form, a gradual movement that happens in every mode of life. Merkel, Kollmorgen, and Wagner posited that transformation is "a change of form, nature, shape, character, style or properties; a decisive change orientated towards positive change."[19]These scholars have taken a positive perspective on the word transformation as an "action towards positive change." Hence, transformation is transitive in nature, a movement from one form to another. In the socio-political arena, what is termed transformation may be seen as a revolution, "a change in government that affects the political and social structure of the society."[20] However, in this study, transformation as the focus entails a complete system change in an entire national structure whereby both the leadership and the led consciously and committedly initiate a process or an attitude of progressive change towards God and humanity in the religious, social and political life of a people.

In addition, transformation permeates every sector of human existence; mental, ideological, attitudinal, living standards, cultural, economic, and legal organizations.[21] In a structure where the principles of virtue are lost, the call for transformation ensues. Virtue necessitates rightness in people's way of living and how they are governed, which brings integrity, honesty, fairness, and equity to the socio-political experience of a nation.[22] The wantonness of virtue compels the call for transformation.

Furthermore, socio-political transformation follows a model that creates awareness of the prevailing crises and calls for transformation. For example, in ancient Israel, where poor farmers worked merely to survive in a subsistent occupation, exchange of their produce in commerce should have reflected in the corresponding consideration for the well-being of the poor. However, the contrary was the case, hence, even exchange value was exploited.[23] In the above case, structural strain is inevitable in a society where social security and political structure have strained, thus, people do not live, but merely exist.

The political leadership has the potency to affect positive changes as it possesses the capacity to affect what is needed.[24] Therefore, transformation presupposes a necessity for change and in the course of Israel's religious and socio-political environment, this change must start from the heart.

2.3 Prophetic Literature

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16. Ziester, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Engaging*, 26.

17. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament*. 52.

18. Joel, .B. Green and Lapsley, J. E, *The Old Testament and Ethics: A Book-By-Book Survey* (Grand Rapids: Becker Academic, 2017), 66.

19. Markel W. Kollmorgen, R. Wagner, H. J, *The Handbook of Political, Social and Economic Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6.

20 . Berch Berberoglu, *The Palgrave Handbook of Social Movements, Revolutions and social Transformation* (Gewerbestrasse: Palgrave McMillan, 2019), 74.

21. Markel, W. Kollmorgen, R. Wagner, H. J, *The Handbook of Political, Social and Economic Transformation,* 7.

22. Christian Berker, *Business Ethics: Methods and Application* (Oxford: Routledge, 2019), 35.

23. Elizabeth J. Roemer, *General Theory of Exploitation and Class* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 29.

24. J. Zaaiman, *Power and Influence: Assessing the Conceptual Relationship.* KOERS Bulletin for Christian Scholarship 1, no.85 (2020):4.

The prophetic ministry as found in the book of the Pentateuch and the Former prophets prioritized the actions of prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, and Nathan, to mention but a few, whose accounts were probably structured and shaped by the Deuteronomic writers. These prophets were termed non-writing prophets. At the same time, their counterparts in the 8th-4th century BC were called writing prophets.[25] The prophetic literature is a complex collection and composition of diverse pronouncements, situations, and concerns. These documents exposed the knowledge that the prophets were alive in their time, although with religious proclivity, yet for the sake of authentication, it was necessary to inscribe their works. The compilations underwent countless periods of redaction by editors whose focus was the chronological arrangement of these materials. Furthermore, the material content of this corpus called for a meticulous study in terms of oracles, visions, poetry, biographical narratives, and autobiographical narratives through the progression of recording, preserving and disseminating the literature.[26]

It should be noted that these prophets had the inspiration to write based on the seriousness they attached to God's word because of human laxity and complacency (Amos 3:8; Jer. 20:9), substantiation of the integrity of the prophecy to justify the prophet's word (Hab. 2:2-4). They were involved in speaking, writing and dictating. Sometimes the period of oral and inscription differ; however, the final form as presented remains a credible resource of the prophets' utterances and functions.[27]

2.4 Sustainable Development

Development is a desirable occurrence in any nation. It is usually the desire of the citizenry of any nation to yearn for tangible development, and this is because development has to do with the improvement in the well-being of populace.[28] Sustainable development is defined as balancing of human needs with the protection of the lives and properties of the citizen so that these needs can be met not only in the present but also in the indefinite future.[29] It should enable people to realize their full potential, building self-confidence, dignity and fulfillment. Sustainable development liberates people from the ills of want, ignorance, deprivation, exploitation and it should correct existing imbalances and injustices in the society.[30] This implies that sustainable development is an enduring, significant, non-terminal improvement in the quality of life, standard of living and life opportunities of the people. DuBose stresses that no citizen of any nation can count on any central or federal government to meet all their needs. However, in societies where strain is cast on the existing socio-political structure, such societies are marked with corruption and social vices. Where the rights of the citizens are not guaranteed, and where lives and properties of the citizens are not secure, development with the efficient delivery of services by the government to the citizen becomes difficult, unless there is righteousness, social and political transformation of the leaders and followers.[31] This statement encapsulates the Nigerian socio-political context.

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25. Polski.L. Redditi, "History of Prophecy," in *Dictionary of Old Testament Prophets: A Compendium of Contemporary Scholarship*, eds., Mark J. Boda, Gordon J. and McConville (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 592.
26. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 32.
27. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 34.
28. Tunde Babawale, "Culture, Politics and Sustainable Development: Lessons for Nigeria," in *Contemporary Issues in Sustainable Development: Lessons for, and Challenges to Nigeria*, ed. L. Popoola et al. University of Ibadan 1, (2008):24.
29. F. Adewole, "Reproductive Health and Sustainable Development: The Missing MDG," in *Contemporary Issues in Sustainable Development: Lessons for, and Challenges to Nigeria.* ed. L. Popoola et al. University of Ibadan, 1, (2008):4.
30. Kabiru Dabiru and Nasiru Modibbo, "Effective Leadership and Sustainable Development in Nigeria: An Assessment of United Nation Sustainable Development Goals in North East Nigeria,'' *Zamfara Journal of Politics and Development,* 2, (2020):2.
31. Francis, DuBose. *Urban Poverty as World Challenge: As an Urban World Churches Face the Future.* ed. Larry L.R. and Kirk H. (New York: Broadman Press, 1984), 69.

3.0 MINISTRY OF LITERARY PROPHETS

The main challenge that gave rise to the prophetic movement was Israel's menace to her existence by turning her back on the tenets of the covenant, authentic worship, practical and ethical morality, the oppression of the poor and needy, denial of social justice and absence of righteousness.[32] In addition, the prophetic ministry was all encompassing as it encapsulated all citizens and not gender-sensitive in its role. It served to transform the ancient Israelite society religiously, socially, and politically. The prophets were often tagged the enemies of the royalties who did not reckon with them and mostly despised them.[33] There was an aura of mystery that surrounded the prophets. They were somber and fearsome, with words of power and substance as "someone who mediates the presence, words, and actions of a God."[34] The prophets never deviated from their divine mandate. They declared "thus says the Lord" through diverse speech patterns; utterers of lamentation for justice, dirge, parables, and woes, via legal methods of threat, accusations and verdicts. They were identified as "the people to whom the Spirit of the Lord is directed and whose mouth the divine word became a plain prophetic message."[35] The prophets were not limited by profession for example, and included agriculturists, scribes, priests and sheep breeders. Also, they were not limited by space, as they operated in the market place, temple and city gates.

The Prophets spoke under the utterances given to them and from "their views reality, places, traditions and circle of experiences."[36] This study will further highlight the efforts of some of the Pre-exilic and Postexilic prophets who spoke against the worsening societal, religious and political situations that necessitated the call for transformation.

4.0 NECESSITY FOR TRANSFORMATION

The God of Israel has demanded from his people who mirror His relationship with them and among themselves. This section explains the decay prevalent in Israel's community.

4.1 Religious Situation

The cultus represented decay. Hence, the prophets denounced Israel's negligence of the religious foundation of their nationhood. Baalism and its fertility cult practices served as a spiritual danger to Israel's monotheism which was "the Mosaic understanding of the sovereignty of the Lord and His demands for exclusive worship."[37] In this light, prophet Isaiah accused the priest of undermining the Lordship of God (40:12-32). The prophets denounced false shepherds who preached favorably when paid and never consulted God (Jer. 23). Malachi kicked against nominalism and fake religiosity devoid of practical and genuine love for God and His sanctuary worship (Mal. 3:8-10).[38] As God's seed and choice, He expected life of religious faithfulness and repentance (Zeph. 3:7), the prophets decried the "Canaanization" of Israel's worship system filled with infidelity and priestly unrighteous activities (Hos. 4:4-10).[39]

4.2 Political Situation:

Political might was seen as man's right; hence, human confidence became the basis for using political power. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea denounced making political decisions without consulting God's

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32. Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, 63.
33. Mark Hamilton, *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*. (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2018), 272.
34. John Goldingay, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Exploring Text, Approaches and Issues* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2015), 191.
35. Moses Aberbach, "Prophets and Prophecy in Targum of Jonathan to the prophets in God's Word for our World," *The theological and Cultural studies in Honour of Simon John De Vries*, Vol.11 (London: T&T Clark, 2004): 84.
36. Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, 137.
37. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 23.
38. Redditi, "History of Prophecy," 529.
39. Paul Capan, *"Is God a Moral Monster? Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2011), 37.

word, will, or His laws. The kings were entertained with wickedness and idolatry which was an abrasion of the covenant code. (Hosea 7:3; 8:4) Amos, Hosea, and Micah regularly denounced the monarchy.[40] The rate of poor leadership was a constant contention and face-off between Isaiah, Ahaz (7:3-17), and Hezekiah (36-39). Amos confronted the conspiracy of Amaziah (7:10) and Hosea condemned the monarchy's dispositions as illegal (8:4).[41] In the face of monarchy's indifferent attitude to the suffering of the people and the negligence of the Covenant practice, they were constantly criticized by the prophets who made calls for transformation.

4.3 Social Situation

In the perspective of prophet Micah, the ancient Israelite society neglected the practice of social security for the poor and the needy as enshrined in the Book of the Law. Also, Amos and Isaiah reiterated the same concern. Both denounced the exploitative tendencies and acts of discrimination in favor of the rich against the poor. In addition, the rich sold the poor and needy as collateral for loan payments, trampling on the poor and ensuring economic discrimination to the disadvantage of the poor. The rich crushed the needy to amass more wealth and became indolent due to the hard labor of the poor, who received miserable wages amidst terrible labor circumstances. There was submersion of the lower class, as the legal system was manipulated in favour of the rich (Jer. 2:1; 5:10-15; Isa.5:8; Amos 2:6; 5:11-12; Mic.2:1-3).[42]

Furthermore, the creation of a wealthy state was followed by an interest in classism and exploitation of the poor. Also, the marketplace was not left out due to false measures. This is because the rich oppressed the poor. Wealth classification and economic stratifications led to strained social distinction. This produced suppression, oppression, exploitation, and injustice: "the fatal consequence of poverty was to be without defense."[43] Therefore, Israel required a transformation hinged on practical livability of what is religiously professed, which works in the affairs of men and commands significance in human existence which promotes practical, tangible and positive societal effects on the citizenry and experienced in real humanhood.[44]

5.0 TRANSFORMATION INDICATORS

Israel's history serves as a reminder of God's abhorrence of oppression and suppression. The people must adhere to the prophets' call for extensive transformation comprising of such aspects as social transformation, political transformation and religious transformation as presented below.

5.1 Social Transformation

Social transformation required that social justice for Israel should not be prompted by laws of nature nor ordinances, but rather the stipulations of the Sinaitic covenant. Hence, Israel should be joyous in keeping God's precepts, defending the path of the poor, needy, and widows (Exo. 22:27).[45] This entails practical moral change filled with righteousness, peace, and holiness; a practice of social security, not ceremonial religiosity. Such change should give meaning to the message, "here is rest, give rest to the weary" (Isa. 28:12a). This implies that "Hardening of one's heart or shutting up of one's hand against a poor brother is a sin."[46] Furthermore, the sincere practice of Jubilee in restoring privileges, dignity,

40. Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, 130.
41. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 22.
42. Stuart Douglas, *Hosea-Jonah* (London: Word Publishing, 1989), 69.
43. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 25.
44. Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics 2nd edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Encyclopedia, 2013), 94.
45. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1968), 49.
46. Walter Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), 159.

and rights of the poor is an expression of man's character and relationship with God because wealth must be seen from God's perspective.[47]

5.2 Political Transformation
Political transformation refers to political power that would enforce the dictates of the Covenant code as a necessity and a catalyst for transformation. Israel must restore their national and political loyalty to Yahweh. The political might must practically dispense right and just legislation in fairness to all citizens and turn societal decay to loyalty to God, care for the poor, and security for all.[48] In addition, it refers to the political protection of human rights coupled with the right use of power to effect positive change. The leadership must exhibit proper stewardship of power in providing a structure which displays equity, irrespective of one's affiliation and status (Exo. 19:5).[49]

5.3 Religious Transformation
The messages of Haggai, Zephaniah, and Malachi involved a call to religious transformation tilted more towards calling Israel to righteousness which is ethical by renewing worship proper to her relationship with Yahweh and the entire community. This call is exemplified by returning to God in repentance, and right attitude towards marital covenant, spousal loyalty, generosity to God and fellow humans, and raising godly children (Mal. 1-3).[50] Israel must practice worship that edifies and expresses practical manifestation of the knowledge of Yahweh such that "traditional Hebrew morality and moral integrity must be a daily practice."[51] It means that "to accept virtue is to reject vice" (Micah 6:8).[52] Hence, practical expression of Covenant loyalty marks a reflection of God's love and faithfulness to Israel because "love is the divine attribute of God that produces a correspondent effect in humans."[53]

6.0 THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT
The Nigerian context is fraught with religious, political, and social turmoil. What the prophets denounced in ancient Israel is prevalent in Nigeria. Hence, similar messages of righteousness and social and political transformation must be preached to Nigerians. To uphold righteousness, the prophets admonished that one must walk righteously and speak what is right. The individual should be one "who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil" (Isa. 33:15). However, the prevailing situation runs contrary in accordance with Jer. 22:17: "But your eyes and your heart are set only on dishonest gain, on shedding innocent blood and on oppression and extortion."

The Nigerian economic and political spheres have witnessed majority of her citizens plunged into poverty due to implementation of wrong policies, insecurity and corruption. People are determined to achieve their goals without going through due process, which is considered too long and time-wasting.[54] Consequently, the clamor is that Nigeria is on the brink of disintegration with inherent tribalism, nepotism, herdsmen attacks, Islamic war lords, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), and

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47. M. Weatherly, *The Ten Commandment in modern perspective* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 121.
48. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 25.
49. Weatherly, *The Ten Commandment in modern perspective*, 117.
50. Redditi, "History of Prophecy", 639.
51. Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics,* 100.
52. Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics,* 100.
53. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corporation, 1962), 113.
54. S. Onimajesin, "Corruption in Nigeria Implications, Complications and Control". Ilorin: *Journal of Sociology* 2, no.2 (2013):197.

the Pan Yoruba Consultative Forum (ODUA, who derived their name from one of the Yoruba deities Oduduwa) agitations.

6.1 Insight into Nigeria's Socio-Political Context
This section addresses some of the causes of political instability in Nigeria.

6.1.1 Socio-Political Bitterness
The Nigeria situation is rife with politics of negative portrayal of perceived socio-political enemies. Such negative publicity is characterized by a campaign of calumny, negative description of opponents, gross assassination, and bedevilling of opposition parties.[55] It has become unheard of in Nigerian politics for political opponents to commend and compliment the efforts of their opponents. This socio-political bitterness has eaten so deep into the fabric of Nigerian society and politics that Anyanwu postulated, "Nigeria has been finding it difficult to establish and maintain a stable political culture and orderly political procedure."[56] When bitterness is the other of the day rules and regulation are thrown to the bin.

6.1.2 Corruption and Cost of Governance
Many Nigerians have seemingly concluded that corruption is a Nigerian. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index ranked Nigeria as 38th most corrupt nation of the world[57] "with degenerative effects of national values, institution of governance and the rule of law."[58] There is no day in Nigeria that issues bordering on corruption are not mentioned ranging from embezzling and laundering of national funds. The outlook of political officials' flamboyance and life of affluence lived by political officers in Nigeria has created an atmosphere of socio-political chaos with the sole aim of being rich. A report credited to Nigeria by Aljazeera media outlet stated that "the high cost of governance is caused by the running of bogus ministries, departments, and agencies that perform overlapping functions, wasteful spending by Government officials."[59] It is common to hear on daily basis the inflation of contracts and commissioning of invisible projects by politicians in Nigeria in order to amass illicit wealth. By this, vile people go into politics with such mental attitude of straining the socio-political structure of the nation and by illegitimate means want to wrestle power, thereby creating instability. Omololu Fagbabebo asserted, "Nigerian states are a victim of high-level corruption, bad governance, socio-political instability and a cyclical legitimacy crisis. Consequently, national development is retarded and the political environment uncertain."[60]

6.1.3 Insecurity
One could easily deduce from the happenings in the socio-political sphere in Nigeria that insecurity as engendered by socio-political restiveness has come to stay. The constant recruiting of assassins and kidnappers by politicians for their selfish purposes during and after electioneering is appalling. These miscreants are armed with different arms geared towards killing and maiming of perceived opponents. Worst still, after assuming office these politicians do not fulfill promises made to these lawless groups,

55. Msughter Aodndover "State of Politics in Nigeria" *DailyTrust* April 11, 2018.
56. K. Anyanwu. "The Bases of Political Instability in Nigeria" *Journal of Black Studies* 13, no.1(September 11, 1982):114.
57. Freedman, Onuoha Christian Ichite, Temilola George "Challenges facing Buhari" *Daily Trust Nigeria, September 21st 2015* https://www.studies.aljazeera.net/en/profile (assessed October 1, 2023).
58. Benn Ernest, "politics: A Contested Concept" (citied in Rodman 1946), https//www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/politics#mw-head, (June, 2017) assessed 3/10/2018.
59. Freedman Milton, "politics: A Contested Concept" https//www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/politics#mw-head, (June2017) assessed October 3, 2018.
60. OpenStax College, *Introduction to sociology*. (Texas: Rice University.2013), 123.

who in turn take advantage of the arms in their custody to unleash mayhem on the society, form terrorist groups and causes diverse kinds of socio-political chaos. Many of these leaders see socio-political means as the only ladder to achieving their self-centered aggrandizements "a country where polities has taken the lead in everyday engagement, the struggle for power becomes a ladder among citizenry."[61] This is attested to by the high number of political aspirants longing to climb the ladder to immediate monetary fame at the expense of Nigerian populace.

6.1.4 Abuse of Family Structure
The situation where leaders will do anything to ensure that their family members succeed them in office is worrisome. This socio-political context enshrines polities of impunity and hatred in the social fabric of the nation owing to the rest of the people feeling marginalized and thereby vowing to destabilize all societal structure. Aondover posited, "where one family hunts another; politics of one step forward and three steps backwards; a political drama of selfish government…a retrogressive and reckless driven politics; a demonstrate politics without democratic culture and internal politics."[62]

6.1.5 Ethnic Crisis
The recent agitations from different socio-political spectra on the lopsided nature of ethnic biases as expressed in appointments into leadership offices is a recipe for incessant unrest and bickering among the marginalized tribal groups of Nigeria. Such marginalized groups cry for equity and fairness when not heeded to, leading to constant disagreement in areas of common socio-political interest. Furthermore, the prevalent nature of ethnic crises in Nigeria has led to incessant killing of even people on national service: "the nation of Nigeria witnessed the killing of Corp members in the Northern Parts of Nigeria in 2011 due to their ethnicity."[63]

7.0 FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT
The basic tenets for sustainable development in Nigeria are Godliness and these are as follows.

7.1 Sustainable Godly Moral Foundation
The Nigerian situation is not different from Israel's situation when they turned away from the message of the prophets. The experience of transformation in the religious and social–political affairs of the nation can be restored when moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, integrity are regained.[64] God's word reveals the righteousness of God as the powerful weapons for the renewal of Nigeria more than any human philosophies, and it can make a difference in people's lives in the midst of the morally corrupt vices in the society and create a change in attitude needed for sustainable development in Nigeria.

7.2 Sustainable Godly Social Foundation
The declaration of God's word will lead to godly character building (2Chron. 7:14). Ayantayo posited that the essence of these virtues lies in the fact that there is time for everything. This truth must be inculcated into our lifestyle in society.[65]

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61. OpenStax College, *Introduction to sociology*, 123.

62. Barr Roberts. *Ethics and Corruption* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 150.

63. Paul Wadell, "Sharing peace: Discipline and Trust" *in The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 324.

64. Ilami, Ozegbe, "Gospel as a Means of Curbing Social Vices in Nigeria." *Ogbomosho Journal of Theology.* Ogbomosho 25, (2020):76.

65. Jacob Ayantayo, *Fundamentals of Religious Ethics* (Ibadan: God's Time Publishing, 2009), 2.

When development is sustained in Nigeria, it will bring about the social and infrastructural progress, which has to do with all social, cultural and health development including shelter within neighborhoods provided with piped water, drainage, transport, health care, education, child development and protection of lives and properties.

7.3 Sustainable Godly Socio-Political Foundation

The socio-political arena of Nigeria is marked with lots of vices ranging from the choice of leader, money politics, vote buying, ballot snatching, vote rigging, election fraud, failed promises and in most cases societal unrest. Election processes are without transparency due to the influence of godfathers and money.[66]

Sustainable development consists of balancing of human needs with the protection of the lives and properties of the citizen so that these needs can be met not only in the present but also in the indefinite future.[67] For sustainable development to be achieved good governance is necessary in the socio-political context of Nigeria.

7.4 Sustainable Godly Economic Foundation

A sustainable godly economic foundation is inevitable in a society that has experienced socio-political transformation. Nigeria is an endowed nation with both human and mineral resources. However, corruption is a feature of the nation's social, political and even religious life with disastrous consequences leading to an increase in poverty by making a few individuals richer and many poorer.[68]

Barram notes that the message of the prophets also concerns economic justice, accountability and stability. When the people return to God, they experience economic booming and economic stability where the stock market of the nation would take shape and everyone benefits from the nation's economy.[69]

By implication, when righteousness and socio-political transformation is experienced in Nigeria, the nation's economic situation will develop sustainably, citizens will gain access to an adequate livelihood or productive assets, economic security will take place in the nation, the national resources will become evenly distributed, the unemployed, ill, and the disabled will be able to secure a livelihood, and national debts will drastically reduce. This is why raising living standards and improving education, health and equality of opportunity are among the essential components of economic development.[70] Achieving economic development implies a more equitable distribution of income within the nation.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for such study to make recommendations for practical implementation of the findings. First, moral transparency on the part of the government is a necessity. The government must ensure in all respects adherence to the rule of law, which highlights freedom of speech, equal dignity for all citizens, good governance, prosperity and protection for all. In addition, the Government must try to stamp out corrupt practices, laundering of national funds and looting of the country's treasury. It should

66. Stephen Ayankeye, Odeleye Olutoye, "The Church as Moral Agent in Securing A Prosperous, United and Developed Africa," *Journal of the West African Association of Theological Institution.* Accra 1, (2017):3.
67. Isaac Adewole, "Reproductive Health and Sustainable Development: The Missing MDG," in *Contemporary Issues in Sustainable Development: Lessons for, and Challenges to Nigeria,* ed. Popoola L, et al. University of Ibadan 1, (2008):32.
68. Bola, Udegbe. *Gender, Power and Political Leadership in Nigeria* (Ikorodu: Centre for Social Science Research and Development, 2003), 34.
69. Michael Barram,"*What The Prophet Amos Had To Say About Economic Justice*," in Missional Economics (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 35.
70. Tunde Babawale, Odukoya, A. "Continuity and Change in Urban Politics and Governance in Nigeria," *Ibadan Journal of the Social Sciences* 3, (2005):28.

build infrastructure and an economic, socio-political environment for transformation and sustenance of development.

Secondly, individual citizens should adhere to what makes for peaceful co-existence and commit to ensuring socio-political transformation. This begins with each person pledging to uphold peace and unity, love, godliness and fairness in dealing with fellow citizens. Personal transformation promotes nation transformation; therefore, each citizen must eschew corruption and refuse to be used as tool for any form of vice.

Thirdly, the prophetic voice of the church must be strong and unbiased. The church should continue to perform her role as the voice and conscience for righteousness and socio-political transformation. The church must not compromise her stand on tasking leaders to demonstrate equitable and just governance. She is the vanguard for transformation and must do all within her strength to build a socio-politically transformed nation for sustainable development.

Furthermore, the society must stand for right attitude and shun corruption. The society at all levels must imbibe the culture of uprightness, justice and transparent living. This should start from homes, schools, market places to religious centers. The quest for a transformed socio-political structure will ensure good governance and collectively denounce social and political vices. The society must reward hard work, diligence and transparency openly and equally condemn corrupt practices and its perpetrators. This will ensure sustainable development.

Lastly, the curriculum of theological institutions must be relevant to socio-political issues. Theological institutions need to reappraise their curriculum to ensure it is relevant not only to issues of doctrines and ecclesiology, but speaks to address issues about good governance, socio-political transformation and societal development. To actualize the above, courses should be inculcated in the curriculum which will equip the students of theology on how to effectively handle and play leading roles towards socio-political transformation and sustainable development.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Righteousness, social and political transformation was the cry of Israelite prophets who witnessed travesty in all facets of Israel's life; from the kings to the peasants, from the priest to the worshippers, from the land-owners to the poor subsistent farmers, from the prophets to the enquirers. The whole nation was invaded by unrighteousness. This happened because of the strained socio-political structure as a result of the transgression of the Sinaitic Covenant. This created a dissonance as societal laid down roles were trampled because of selfish gains. In the face of impending national doom, the prophets called for a transformation of the heart and attitude devoted to obedience to the covenant stipulations, defense of the poor and needy, justice and social security for all, as the means to sustainable development. In the same vein, the issue of the human heart and attitude is universal in achieving sustainable development even at the global front. Therefore, Nigeria as a nation which could also serve as metaphor for the Global South or Third World nations must imbibe the same virtue from the political leadership to the least citizen in order to experience sustainable development in all spheres of the society: economically, socially, and politically. The structure laid down for proper governance and acquisition of the good things of life must be in consonance with the provisions of the constitution as known and practiced, rather than the strain in socio-political structure that has led to corruption in its diverse forms and shades. Therefore, this paper joins voices with those of the Prophets in ancient Israel, citizens of Nigeria; the Third world or the Global South to clamor for righteousness and socio-political transformation as the bedrock for sustainable development.

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