

The cleansing of the temple in John 2:13-22: A metaphor for de-dollarization of the Nigerian economy

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ABSTRACT: The symbolic action of Jesus in the Jerusalem Temple, as recorded in John 2:13-22 highlights the abusive practices that allowed the religious leaders to profit and become wealthy at the expense of the poor and oppressed. Additionally, it reveals the marginalisation of Gentiles, who were forced to worship amidst the distractions and commotion caused by commercial activities within the Temple. This inequality was the central issue addressed by Jesus. Against this backdrop, and anchored in the Christian principle of solidarity, this study employs the historical survey and exegetical methods to advocate for a renewed commitment to Christian discipleship and the common good. Specifically, the concept of solidarity, as demonstrated by God and Christ's identification with the poor, provides a theological foundation for confronting the "globalization of indifference" as well as the dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy. The actions of Jesus and the placement of this story within the Fourth Gospel are interpreted as a "call to action" against both physical and spiritual slums that, while prevalent in the first century, persist in contemporary society. Consequently, this study seeks to answer the question: How can the Temple event be utilized to address decades of dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy? This study recommends that both the Church and society must exercise power with justice, characterized by love.

Keywords: Christianity, de-dollarization, religion and politics, social action, solidarity.

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of John focuses on the spiritual aspects and the depth of Jesus' ministry more than any other Gospel. Confirming the depth of meaning found in this text, Duke (1985) in Goodwin (2014:11-12) argues brilliantly that the Gospel of John is so simple and "cordial on the surface, and yet so awesome in its depth that the student of John will not be true to the book he is studying if, at the end, the gospel does not remain strange, restless, and unfamiliar." It is within this awesome depth that one can understand the cleansing of the Temple as more than just what meets the eye. Throughout the Fourth Gospel, John employs a variety of meanings and complexities of language. In this vein, Brown (1988:18) reminds readers that "in the Fourth Gospel, the author frequently intends the reader to see several layers of meaning in the same narrative or the same metaphor."

Stevens (2020) contends that the artistic and literary

dimension of the Gospel of John has always provoked the fascination of the Christian Church and biblical scholars. The unique features of the Gospel have provided endless opportunities to explore Christological details. Significant themes run through the Gospel that are either absent or minimally present in the Synoptics. From the famous "I am" saying, to the motif of light or the Logos in the prologue, John contains many aspects that intrigue readers. The author draws attention to the innovative and theological creativity of John 1-2; especially, the ways John depicts Christ as the Divine Adamic Priest. The posits that Jesus as the Divine Adamic Priest is pictured as carrying out His duty to purify and cleanse the Temple of matters unbecoming the sanctity of the place of worship and communion with God.

Accordingly, the Johannine Jesus begins His ministry with three very important and spiritual actions: baptism

(1:19-28), the miracle at Cana (2:1-11), and the cleansing of the Temple (2:13-22). The latter appears in all four Gospels, but John places it at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This stands in contrast to the Synoptics (Mt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15; Lk. 19:45-47) which place it near the end of His ministry. Is John trying to make a prophetic, symbolic, and theological point? Alvarez (2013:1-91) succinctly states that John places the issue front and centre at the beginning of his Gospel by linking it directly to the cleansing of the Temple. Alvarez (2013:1) citing Sanders (2012) emphasizes the importance of the cleansing of the Temple by using it as the entry point for examining Jesus' life and considers Jesus' Temple act as "bedrock, a more secure, and less ambiguous piece of evidence from which He can move to more uncertain evidence." Implicit in the above position is that the Temple event is one of the "almost indisputable facts" of Jesus' life, a secure piece of evidence, a bedrock from which one can move to study less certain evidence. As enigmatic, mysterious, and symbolic as the Fourth Gospel is in many passages, its account of the Temple incident is the least puzzling among the four Gospels.

This view is buttressed by Alvarez (2013:65) when he said that "the interpretative lenses provided by Jesus' words, the disciples' recollection, and the narrator's comments combine to make clear what John wanted to communicate about the Temple incident." Goodwin (2014:1-2) sustains the fact of the above assumption when he notes:

John uses this story as the second of two contrasting parts. The first of these stories is the wedding at Cana which provides a sign of abundance and grace. The second is reminiscent of the acts of Israel's prophets who question the authority of the religious leaders. Having left the wedding at Cana, Jesus is no longer surrounded by His family and friends. Catapulted into the public arena instead He is now in Jerusalem and the Temple.

Implicit in these two stories is that they identify the two primary areas of Jesus' ministry and personality. Not only is He able to provide for those in need, He is also able to stand up to the authorities and challenge the status quo ante. Therefore, John 1-2 presents an interesting contrast: Jesus seems to enjoy Himself at a wedding at Cana versus His intense physical reaction to the public corruption in the Temple in Jerusalem. In essence, John uses this "story along with the wedding at Cana, as foundation evidence that Jesus was not only of divine nature, but also deeply concerned with the plight of the poor and the oppressed" (Goodwin, 2014:55). Furthermore, Goodwin (2014:83) concludes that John was "promoting love for one another through the promotion of equality and harmony among all people regardless of wealth, status, or nationality."

In this sense, John establishes the notion that marginalization is to be replaced by equality and love which is an essential element of Jesus' fullness, which He was poured out on humankind. Therefore, the Temple demonstration also belongs to the Fourth Evangelist's account of the signs performed by Jesus, where the physical norm is often restored in great measure before the spiritual implication of the miraculous is explained. Scrupulously, the purification of the Temple gave hope to the troubled Johannine community and it can inspire the contemporary Church with the same confidence. Again, John's placement of the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of his Gospel is a reflection of his conception of Jesus Christ.

On this score, Scholz (2009) in Martinez (2022:6) makes an intriguing observation. Each Gospel has its own "perspective on Jesus; Mark sees Jesus as the suffering Messiah, Mathew portrays Him as the new Moses, Luke presents Jesus as the universal Savior, and John speaks of Jesus as the Word made flesh." The author adds that John portrays Jesus as the "divine Word made flesh" and, this perspective sharpens the inner texture of many of his textual elaborations to assert his view of Jesus,

To substantiate this fact, Alvarez (2013:82) opines that In Mark, Jesus cleared the Temple as an eschatological prophet to signal the end of one age and the beginning of another. In Mathew, Jesus cleared the Temple as the Son of David to demonstrate the mercy which God desired and offered. In Luke, Jesus cleared the Temple as the Glory of God to fill it with His presence. In John, Jesus cleared the Temple as the Son of God to point to Himself as the fulfilment of the Temple. Similarly, Kim (2009:1-9) confirms that John explicitly refers to Jesus as the Messiah, and is very eager to make this assertion. The progression of the narrative, interwoven with the opening-closing components of John's Gospel provides strong support for the claim. In this context, we observed that the narrator feels compelled to explain the significance of the Temple, disrupting the flow and natural flow of the story by adding a 'side-note' at the end. However, this interruption serves as an effective tool in asserting his view of his explicitly divine messianic Jesus and making it more apparent to the reader (Kim, 2019:4).

The elaboration of the text in John further supports the idea of Christian prophetic rhetoric. John 2:18 describes a unique segment of the Johannine account and in this version, Jesus made an analogy of the Temple as His body, (vs.19). This analogy is more distinctly seen as a sign. The sign is noted as a future message which is later realized and understood by the disciples in verse 22 (Kim; 2009).

From the foregoing discussion, current scholarship has already said much about the placement of this event at the beginning of Jesus' ministry by John as opposed to the end of His ministry by the Synoptic. However, this discrepancy must not be dismissed. To further the quest, Chapple (2015:545-569) proposed that two such episodes took

place, one at the beginning and one at the end of Jesus' ministry. This was the dominant view until the modern era, and it still has the support of some scholars. Kim (2009:1-9) reconciled John 2:13-22 with Mark 11:15-19 focusing on the contrasting progressive as well as argumentative textures and patterns in the texts.

Alvarez (2013:1-91) integrated their respective presentations of the Temple demonstration in the wider context of each Gospel. This allowed him to see the nuances of the Temple event particular to each Gospel. Nonetheless, this study is not focusing directly on this element of debate. None of these empirical studies focused on the cleansing of the Temple as a metaphor for the de-dollarization of the Nigerian economy. This study seeks to fill that gap. Therefore, this study does not only address the existing gap but will rely heavily on John's placement of the incident as the vehicle to spotlight that all those institutions and power groups which contribute to the existence and maintenance of the physical and spiritual slams should be obviously and openly resisted.

Doing so provides the impetus for recognizing John's placement of the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of his Gospel in order to emphasize the need for justice, equity, and fairness; as well as strong institutions, and disciplined leadership. This study sees the actions of Jesus and the placement of the story within the Fourth Gospel as a "call to action" against the religious, political, and socio-economic abuses that while prevalent during the first century, have barely subsided among the faithful since. Therefore, it has never been more imperative than now to ask: how do we end decades of dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy as well as take steps towards strengthening the Nigerian economy? What are the causes and effects of dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy? What kind of debris and merchandise exist in the faithful relationship with God and His concern for others?

In light of the foregoing, this study will rely on the cleansing of the Temple to provide viable, formidable, and sustainable biblical principles that would help address the dollarization and distortions of the Nigerian economy and create our own "three days" to rebuild it. Accordingly, these biblical principles would provide "a new distinct road map, one which will be governed by the principle of fairness, equity, and advancement of economic opportunities" (Abubakar, 2019:8). Herein lies the uniqueness of this study. This study is invaluable to monetary policymakers, scholars, and Nigerians as it seeks to address the dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy.

Being novel, this study acts as a point of reference for future studies. This study is structured into seven cumulative sections. First, after the introduction, it explains dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy and the threat this poses to the nation. Thirdly, it reviews the elite theory as a theoretical framework of the study as well as the methodology. Fourthly, it highlights the public corruption and distortions of worship which necessitated

the cleansing. Next, it postulates that the cleansing of the Temple is a call to confront economic exploitation as well as "a fundamental and systemic assault through social and political structures on the common good and human dignity" (Salzman and Lawler, 2018:126). Finally, it concludes with a call to the Church as well as society, to use their power with justice characterized by love.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Since the 1980s, the United States (US) dollar has increasingly been usurping the legal role of the naira as a medium of exchange within Nigerian markets for foreign exchange, savings, and commodities. Olayungbo and Ajuwon (2015:241) capture this idea vividly in the following way

There is an economic law that explains why the US dollar and other convertible currencies of the West can thus encroach quite vicariously pervasively in the domestic turf of the naira in Nigeria. It is called the dollarization theorem. Dollarization in Nigeria is a situation which occurs when the residents use foreign currency (US dollar) alongside their own domestic currency.

Olorunfemi (2020:1) from a historical perspective establishes that

In 1967, the American dollar became Nigeria's primary foreign reserve currency, and it has been so till date. The dollarization of the international economy is one of the gains of America's soft power, as these countries, including Nigeria, directly 'subsidize' the American economy directly through seignorage and indirectly through the sterilization effect which enables it to run deficits without the need for corresponding monetary actions. Beyond the subsidy, there is the domination of the minds here by a foreign currency.

The above citation is long, but it is apt for the present research. The Nigerian mind has been so dollarized that there is an obsession with the currency even within quarters sectors whose livelihoods have little or no bearing to its connection to it. The point being strenuously affirmed is that the Nigerian mind has been so dollarized that some imagine the only benchmark for assessing the state of affairs in the nation is the exchange rate.

Olorunfemi (2020:1) scathingly denounces it as a "narrow, reductionist, and simplistic thinking many who do so are oblivious of the mechanics behind the exchange rate. Indeed, the dollarization of thought is largely elitist;

that appropriation of a narrow window-viewpoint as a reality for the people." Conversely, de-dollarization which is the objective of this study, involves reducing the US dollar's dominance in the global market by substituting it as the primary currency for various financial transactions, such as trading oil, or other commodities, foreign exchange reserves, and bilateral trade agreements (Pistilli, 2015). Positive examples of de-dollarization and inflation-targeting countries are Peru, Chile, and Israel. Israel is a successful example of dealing with inflation through effective de-dollarization. As Israel made an effort to lower interest rates, inflation targeting brought positive results, and eventually interest rates declined. To sweeten the deal, Israel used CPI indexation (Perelygin, 2024). Nigeria can replicate the same.

This exploration into dollarization reveals that the phenomenon is a generic term that can fall into different categories. It can be official or unofficial dollarization. Unofficial, informal or limited dollarization occurs when residents of a country hold a large share of their financial wealth in assets denominated in foreign currency, though the foreign currency lacks the legal tender privileges of the domestic currency. Unofficial dollarization is what obtains in Nigeria by virtue of Decree 17 of 1995 (Nwaogwugwu, 2024).

Conversely, official, formal, or full dollarization is "a complete monetary union with a foreign currency from which a country 'imports' a currency, by making the foreign currency full legal tender and reducing its own currency, if any, to a subsidiary role" (Udukobong and Babatunde, 2019:222). From this perspective, dollarization is a response to the decline in the value of the national currency and the depreciation of the exchange rate. To put it more concretely, the process of surrendering domestic currency and the operations of monetary policy to a more stable currency is referred to as dollarization. Current scholarship assumes that dollarization has been increasing in Nigeria, Liberia, the Philippines, Zimbabwe, and other emerging countries due to the volatility of the purchasing power of their domestic currency, hyperinflation, currency devaluation, and lack of trust in the local unit (Nwaogwugwu, 2024; Pinshi, 2020; Udukobong and Babatunde, 2019).

According to Pinshi (2020), the high degree of dollarization combined with low foreign exchange reserves obstructs the management of monetary policy. Dollarization impedes control of the money supply and severely hinders attempts at disinflation and price stability. Pinshi (2020) has identified four major risks involved in dollarization. They are summarized below.

1. **Liquidity risk.** Frictions on deposits in foreign currencies are certainly different from those on deposits in national currency.
2. **Solvency risk.** Strong exchange rate depreciation can affect the solvency of financial institutions and their clients.

3. **Monetary risk.** The constitution of international reserves obey a reason for prudence on the part of a central bank; in principle making it impossible to intervene in the forex market and therefore avoid currency crisis.
4. **Risk of ineffective pass-through of central bank.** Dollarization makes monetary mechanism inefficient.

From this perspective, the Central Bank of Nigeria needs to understand that dollarized economies do not have the same strength as non-dollarized counterparts.

Against this backdrop, the dollarization of the Nigerian economy is evident in the federal government gift of 100 USD to Nigerian returnees from the Russian-Ukraine conflict instead of naira for transportation and logistics. By that action, the Nigerian government abandoned its own national currency after years of hyperinflation had destroyed trust in the local unit. Why give the returnees US dollars in their own country where naira is the legal tender? Why promote the US dollar above the naira in Nigeria? What is more worrisome in this development is that dollarization is not official in Nigeria. Sadly, the US dollar has been increasingly used as a medium of exchange for goods and services, a unit of account, and a store of value within Nigerian markets. Notably, the Nigerian government and her functionaries, Central Bank of Nigeria officials, as well as top business managers spend US dollars in Nigeria unhindered. Nwaogwugwu (2024) asserts that some institutions charge tuition fees in dollars. Rents are fixed and collected in dollars in the highbrow areas of Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, Kano, and other cities in Nigeria.

Admittedly, the failing naira and rising prices are currently pushing the economy to a tailspin. This interpretation is established by the fact that dollarization is having an overarching effect on local economies. The manufacturing sector is struggling to cope with problems such as devalued currency, political corruption, bad governance, mismanagement and waste, fiscal indiscipline, and insecurity. A finding from Iyatse (2024) reveals that in January 2024, Shoprite closed its shop in Kano due to what it classified as a poor business environment. It is a sad reminder of how the dozens of multinational manufacturing companies such as Dunlop, Michelin, and most recently Procter and Gamble, GSK, Unilever, and their likes have exited the manufacturing sector or scaled down drastically, thus turning the country into a marketing outpost. Regrettably, the dollarization of the Nigerian economy has failed to provide democratic dividends to the citizens. The Nigerian economy is buffeted from all angles by acute revenue shortfall, frightening levels of insecurity, high inflation, unification of the naira value, and the unrestrained sabotage of oil production.

Consequently, the monumental policy failures of the government coupled with equally poor implementation, irresponsibility, and leadership rascality have orchestrated

the foreign exchange debacle such that in September 2024, \$1 oscillates between ₦1500 and ₦1600. Nigeria has not just become the capital of energy poverty in the world given its perennial fuel scarcity; Nigeria remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Between 1980 and 1986 when the neoliberal regime in Nigeria was inaugurated, the average poverty rate in the country was 37.3%. It stood at 65.5% in 2002. On the other hand, unemployment rose from 13.6% in 2002 to 21.1% in 2010 (Ashike, 2024; Umezurike, 2011). In 2020, seven million Nigerians fell into extreme poverty; while youth unemployment actually rose to 53.4 per cent and the misery index to 50.68%. In 2021, over 18,000 Nigerians sought asylum and about five hundred medical doctors moved to Saudi Arabia for greener pastures.

Apparently, the health sector brain drain is rising in Nigeria. Nigeria is a hunger alert hotspot according to FAO and WFP. For instance, in July 2022, the former Minister of Finance, Mrs Zainab Ahmed, announced that in the first quarter of 2022, Nigeria's total revenue stood at ₦1.6 trillion while debt servicing stood at ₦1.94 trillion, a difference of over ₦300 billion. Inflation was 28.20 per cent in November 2023, compared to 18.6 per cent in May 2022. Headline inflation slowed down to 32.2 per cent in August 2024 (Akintade, 2022; Alli, 2024; George; 2021; Iroanya, 2024). To underscore this, Afrexim Bank (2024) in Alli (2024:1) opines that "the debt service to revenue ratio has increased significantly from 33.8 per cent in 2017 to a projected 110.4 per cent in 2024, signalling potential difficulties in meeting debt service obligations relative to revenue generation." It was situations like these that necessitated the cleansing of the Temple by Jesus.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study adopted the elite theory as the umbrella for the discourse. The elite theory was developed by two Italian sociologists: Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1911) as well as Robert Michels (1846-1930) and Max Weber (1864-1920). The contemporary proponents are C. Wright Mills (1956), Geraint Parry (1969), and William (2006) (Haralambos and Holborn, 2008; Damele and Campos, 2022). Classic texts on elite theory include Pareto's *The Mind of Society* (1963), *Treatise on General Sociology*, Mosca's *The Ruling Class* (1939), and Michels' *Political Parties* (1915). Others are Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution* (1943), and Mills' *The Power Elite* (1956) (Damele and Campos, 2022; Haralambos and Holborn, 2008).

The core doctrine of elite theory stresses that the minority makes decisions that bind and affect the general public. The elite class typically comes from a certain social stratosphere characterized by their wealth, social connections, and access to power, education, media, and ties to influential institutions. Through all of these attributes, webs of powerful individuals can dictate the

policies that govern society, and shape social, economic, and political outcomes.

Ostensibly, these elites form a group of interlocking directorates which are networks of individuals that control a wide range of social and economic systems (Mahr, 2023). These institutions limit opportunities for most people, stifle innovation, and lead to Stagnation When power is concentrated on the hands of elites, the economy is structured to serve their interests. Trapping citizens in a cycle of poverty and corruption. In a nutshell, classical elite theory according to Burnham (1943) in Damele and Campos (2022) involves the following items:

1. The primary objective of every elite or ruling class is to preserve power and privilege.
2. The rule of the elite is based on force and fraud.
3. The social structure is sustained by a political formula that typically correlates with a generally accepted religion, ideology, and myth.
4. Every elite has two opposing tendencies:
 - a. An aristocratic tendency, by which the elite seeks to preserve its members' ruling position and prevent others from entering its ranks.
 - b. A democratic tendency by which new elements force their way into the elite from below or the ruling class opens ranks and absorbs new elements from below.
5. In the long run, the democratic tendency always prevails.
6. When the aristocratic tendency prevails, rapid shifts occur in the composition and structure of elites (for example, social revolution).

The above frame of reference depicts the situation in the first century as it is in Nigeria today. Applied to the objective of this study, depending on the context and contingent upon many self-serving variables, the Nigerian political elite has successfully and exceptionally achieved one thing: efficiency in mobilizing the mob against the mob to situate and sustain their entrenched well-entrenched, vested, and insatiable interests.

In this study, the elites refer to the middle-class citizens, who are mostly educated, gainfully employed and part of the governance and leadership structure of Nigeria in the Civil Service, Public Service, and Private Sectors. They are mostly employees or employers of labour such as professionals, traditional and religious leaders, businessmen and women, entrepreneurs, academics, and craftsmen. They have been in cahoots with the political class while pretending to be with the masses when it suits them as the religious leaders in the day of Jesus.

Furthermore, the elite constitute the powerhouse of governance in Nigeria, whether as members of the Executive, the Legislature, or the Judiciary. The trinity of hypocrisy by the Nigerian political elite are: religion,

ethnicity, and the clauses in the Nigerian constitution. This structure of criminality has "produced 133 million people living in poverty, 20 million out-of-schoolchildren, and made Nigeria surpass India in infant mortality. It is the structure that destroys us" (Obi 2022 in Olagunju, 2023:1). Astoundingly, but also tellingly, the Nigerian nation is like the biblical Temple. It has become a haven for bandits and a place of refuge for 'money changers' to hold court. For instance, members of Nigeria's rentier class, who profit from the inefficiencies of the ineffectual, half-hearted attempt to tame the forex regime, are still smiling to the bank because policymakers do not seem able to tame the wild forex cat (Sote, 2024).

A former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor, Muhammad Sanusi publicly acknowledged that members of Nigeria's rentier class could obtain forex at the official rate from the CBN, and sell at a higher black market rate. For Sote (2024), this is a convenient holdout which suits the appetite of Nigeria's rentier class, the domestic colonizers who run Nigeria's polity, government, and central banking system for their own purposes. The CBN like the Jerusalem Temple High Priest, is the trader and the regulator of forex so that the bureaucrats who run the CBN, the government, and their friends will be in a position to tweak the exchange rate to their own advantage. Seen in this light, the Temple cleansing narrative fits this study about breaking down and rebuilding a bad system. It is to quarantine the Nigerian economic policies with discipline and sacrifice. The Cleansing of the Temple is about men of privilege who had abducted the space of the Temple in Jerusalem and turned it into "a den of thieves" and "a house of trade"; and a "structure for sleaze and greed; and ill-gotten loots of the ruling class. Jesus saw it, but did not whine and leave. With a whip, He expelled the merchants and the money changers" (Olagunju; 2022:1). We need a reenactment of this rite in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The historical survey and exegetical methods were used in this study for the purpose of analyzing the state of dollarization of the Nigerian economy, evaluating the impact of and interplay with socio-economic performance. The method also enables the researcher to make proper inquiries that helps in ascertaining what transpired in the past to enable the researcher to have a holistic view of the contemporary context for inference drawing. The use of these methods helps the researcher to gather, arrange, synthesize, explore, exegete, and analyze the cleansing of the Temple as a metaphor for the de-dollarization of the Nigerian economy. Using secondary sources of data, this study offers pathways for creating an environment conducive to socio-economic prosperity and stability.

Accordingly, using the elite theory, this study emphatically teaches that by placing the Temple incident at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, John was attempting to

shed light on the structural problems of inequality, hyperinflation recurrent depreciation, financial volatility as well as oppression, extortion, deception, corruption, and abuse of power in the Temple. These historical and socio-economic problems that had been present in Jesus' day were still relevant to the situation of the Johannine community and remain relevant today. Ostensibly, a paradigm shift now is a must. This study stresses that the systemic abuse that prevented the poor and the Gentiles from being able to worship at such an important feast as the Passover is "an economy of exclusion", stunting the lives of the poor for lack of opportunities (Christian, 2014).

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE: PUBLIC CORRUPTION AND DISTORTIONS OF WORSHIP

The Fourth Evangelist presents Jesus' ministry revolving around six Jewish Temple festivals as follows:

1. First Passover (2:13-3:21)
2. Unnamed Feast (5:1-47)
3. Second Passover in Galilee (6:4-71).
4. Feast of Tabernacles (7:2-10:21)
5. Feast of Dedication (10:22-39)
6. Third Passover (11:55-19:42).

The interest of this study is in the first section. Hamblin (2011 p.4) notes that the basic pattern in most of these sections is:

Feast-miracle-discourse. . . . But many scholars see a relationship between the meaning of a Temple festival in first-century Judaism and the theme of Jesus' related discourse. An understanding of the theological and symbolic meaning of the Temple festival thus creates the thematic background for understanding Jesus' teaching.

The above citation leads to the central importance of the Temple in first century Jewish life. Alvarez (2013), Godwin (2014), Hamblin (2011), as well as Olagunju (2023), posit that the Temple was the centre of the spiritual, legal, cultural, economic, judicial, and political life of first-century Jews. In purely practical terms, the Temple was a place of sacrifices and offerings, where priests representing all of Israel would offer Yahweh a complex series of blood sacrifices and offerings of bread, wine, fruit, and incense. The precise nature and timing of these offerings were spelt out in some detail in the Old Testament (Ex. 20:8-11; 23:10-16; Lev. 16; 23:6-44; Esth. 9:18-32). Also, the Temple was a site of pilgrimage, prayer, and study for all Jews as this account shows (Jn. 2:13 cf. Deut. 16:16; Lk. 2:41-49).

Most importantly, the Temple was seen as the place

Where God could manifest Himself to His people, and where all Israel could come before Yahweh on the Day of Atonement to repent of their sins and renew their covenant with Yahweh (Lev. 16; Num. 29:7-11). Hamlin (2011:5) has mooted the idea and we share in his insight that

Two Greek words in the New Testament are generally translated simply as 'Temple' *hieros* and *naos*. The term *hieros* referred to the entire Temple Plaza, with all its courtyards and colonnades, which is essentially the same area as the modern Muslim *Haram al-sharif* (Noble Sanctuary). The term *naos* referred specifically to the central sanctuary building which only the High Priest could enter, and would be more or less the area of the modern Dome of the Rock. . . . When discussing the Temple, I will translate *naos* as 'sanctuary' and *hieros* as 'Temple'.

Specifically, *hieros* "Temple" here denotes the court of the Gentiles, that space set aside for worshippers of God who were not Jewish; the lowest, or outer enclosure of the sanctuary (Goodwin; 2014). It was where the animals and the money-changers were located, thereby promoting distraction, uncleanness, and low ethical standards, as well as oppression and marginalization of the poor and Gentile worshippers. Apart from the separation that existed between the Jewish and Gentile worshippers, the animal traders and the money-changers, were taking up valuable space within the Temple complex that could have been better utilized for purposes of worship.

Given the foregoing, it becomes clearer that "the Gentile worshippers were being marginalized, as their worship space was being used to house animals, stalls, feed supplies and other essentials necessary for maintaining animals worthy of Temple sacrifice" (Goodwin; 2014:35). Significantly, the Gentiles were not able to pray or meditate in peace or worship due to the noises and distractions that surrounded them within the Temple. Therefore, instead of a place for meditative reflection and worship, the court of the Gentiles had become a marketplace that was interested more in making money than being a centre of prayer. Notably, Israel derailed and fell into ditches of both legalism and lawlessness. They confused ritual with worship and mistook ritual for a relationship. In this vein, Goodwin (2014:41) citing Hendricks (Jr.) (2006) opines that "despite its veneer of holiness and religiosity, beneath its proclamations of justice and concern, the Temple did not treat the people and their needs as holy." Instead of a place of worship, its activities and the priests who administered them had become inextricably intertwined with the systematic appropriation of the goods and resources of the 'least of these' while hiding behind what Jeremiah calls these deceptive words: "This is the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord" (Jer. 7:4 NRSV).

It is noteworthy that Jesus, like the prophet Jeremiah, challenged what Jews thought would save them. The point being emphasized is that while these abuses of power and exploitation of the peasantry as well as the marginalization and advantage of the oppression of the Gentiles may have been acceptable among the Jews as a way to distance themselves; it was not acceptable to Jesus. Nor was it permissible to John in the light of his new commandment in 13:34 "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (NIV). In the same manner, White (2011:1) affirms that

Not only were the money-changers robbing the people but also history records that excessive prices were being charged by those who were selling animals used in Temple sacrifice. . . . Even many high priests during the first century seemed to have given up their love of God for the love of money. Most notably, the High Priest whom Jesus was brought before, Annas along with his five sons who succeeded him to that position. The Temple sacrifice during their reigns can best be summed up by the words: 'The marketplace of the family of Annas'.

Implicitly, at the core of the Temple incident was money and its corruptive influences. Hartjes (2022) in Olagunju (2023:1) argues brilliantly that "the Temple cleansing cannot be divorced from the Temple as a bank." Criminals used "the temple's outer court to change impure foreign money to Temple coins for purchasing sacrificial animals."

Olagunju (2023:1) proceeds to give a scholarly insight into the political and economic significance of the Jewish Temple thus:

In the time of Jesus, the Temple amassed great wealth because of the half-shekel temple tax assessed on each male. Historical evidence supports the fact that large amounts of money were stored in the Temple. The Temple then was able to make loans on behalf of the wealthy elite to the poor. If the poor were not able to pay their loans, they would lose their land. The Temple was therefore, at the very heart of the system of economic exploitation made possible by investing the Temple and its leaders with the powers and rewards of a collaborating aristocracy.

As evidence of this role of Temple funds, Krier (2011) in Olagunju (2022:1) notes that "it was no accident that one of the first acts of the Jewish Revolt in 66 B. C. was the burning of the debt records in the archives in Jerusalem." Impliedly, the elite were turning the Temple into a den of robbers through overpricing, over-taxation, and theft from

the worshippers in the Temple courts. The clear surmise is that Jesus viewed a marketplace on Temple grounds as a clear violation of God's will as noted by Jesus' response in verse 16.

In His action, we see how Jesus "confronts" the people through physical demonstration and verbal accusations. For instance, in John 2:15 and Mark 11:15-16, we see Jesus depicted as being "authorized by God to confront large groups of people with actions that communicated God's will for their present time" (Robbins, 2009:221). Assertions do not always have to come by word of mouth but can be equally effective in demonstrations as well. By "making a whip", "pouring out coins," "overturning tables" as seen in John 2:14-15, and "driving out those who were selling and those who were buying" in the Temple as cited in Mark 11:15, we see Jesus physically displaying His discontent and frustration with the lack of responsibility maintained at the Temple. In addition to physical demonstrations, Jesus verbally "confronts" the people by directly accusing them of their negative actions and thinking. In this regard, Robbins (2009:222) notes with delight that this too is "a common characteristic of Christian prophetic rhetoric by accusing people of not doing what they have been told to do or doing something they know they should not do."

This is even more revealing when considering the social impact of Jesus' actions within the Temple on the teeming crowd at the court of the Gentiles, the religious leaders, and the Roman soldiers who were tasked with keeping order and preventing insurrection or rebellious uprising during the feast (see vs. 18 cf. Goodwin; 2014). The foregoing raises a fundamental question: did the Temple need to be purified and cleansed of matters unbefitting the sanctity of the place of worship and communion with God? Goodwin (2014), Hamblin (2011), Kim (2009), Olagunju (2022) as well as Stevens (2020) affirm that Jesus was not alone in His belief that the Temple had become corrupted and needed purification and reformation. Indeed, the need for the purification of the Temple was a fundamental theme throughout Israelite history stretching back to the great prophets and the reforms of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah in the Old Testament (2 Chron. 29-31; 34-35; 2 Kings 22-23). According to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the corruption of the Temple in the early sixth century was so profound that

The presence/glory of YHWH had departed from the Temple (Ezek. 11:23; 44:4), leaving it desecralized and ripe for destruction by the Babylonians. Jesus and many other first century Jews viewed the problem of the corruption of the Temple in precisely the same way; as a fundamental threat to the existence of Israel (Hamblin, 2011:6).

Accordingly, for the Jews, there was no more dramatic place to stage a definitive demonstration for reformation than the Temple.

Rowland (2007) elaborates by saying that the reform intended is that

Of social reform and the recognition of equality among, not just the Gentiles and Jews, but all those seeking to worship the One True God. Behaviors such as those taking place in the court of the Gentiles was contrary to display of love spoken of in 13:1, 'Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end (NRSV) (Goodwin, 2014:35).

Implicitly, unacceptable behaviours that had become commonplace among the Jews, such as abuses of power, and exploitation of the poor and the Gentiles by using their worship space as a marketplace, must be reformed. Love would take the place of legalism. Therefore, the cleansing incident provides motivations for social justice as well as how the Kingdom of God movement serves as a catalyst for the development of a Christian ethic. Goodwin (2014:42) scathingly denouncing the corruption of the Temple makes an apt submission that as the problems associated with a broken patron-client system and the negative attitude toward Gentiles are added, it becomes obvious that

There is indeed a problem with the cultural model that religious leadership was promoting. Broken beyond repair, the only alternative was to start over. Due to the oppressive nature of the Romans and the unwillingness of the Jewish leaders to upset the status quo, the only way to initiate this new model of equality and social justice was to make a very public statement that, while potentially veiled as a hidden transcript, would have been easily recognized by the majority populace.

In essence, the Johannine Jesus, challenges His disciples then and now, to do the same. The point being strenuously affirmed is that God is not indifferent. We find the moral imperative in Scripture, the Social Principles of the Church, and "in the virtue of solidarity, to make God's and Jesus' identification with the least our example, and to confront the globalization of indifference" (Salzman and Lawler; 2018:146). This opens the door to the call for solidarity, a renewed commitment to Christian discipleship, and the common good.

CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE: A CALL TO ACTION

In this study, Jesus' Temple demonstration is grounded in the biblical identification of God and God's Christ with the poor and the Christian moral imperative to confront evil

and oppression. In the words of Pope Francis (2016), "God is not indifferent." Implicitly, God's awareness of, attention to, and concern for humankind, especially for the poor and marginalized, provides a moral imperative for Christians to move beyond blindness and indifference to imitate God's Christ in deed and word; and to "Go and do likewise" (Lk. 10:37 NIV cf. Ex. 2:22-25; Ps. 107:5-7; 10-14; Mk. 4:37-38; 5:7-9). In strong agreement, Goodwin (2014:40) points out that "in Jesus, God is present, pouring out His fullness on humanity in its perplexity." This love is to be displayed through Jesus' disciples, and ultimately all the faithful are disciples of Jesus. Love is not manifested by taking advantage of others. Rather, it is displayed through providing equal space for all and in the case of the Temple event, for space for worship. The act of loving one another transcends barriers and provides opportunities for the renewal of relationships and unity among the faithful. The basis for Christian solidarity and the selfless love that it requires is the theological truth that each person is "the living image of God" (see Gen. 1:26-27; Salzman and Lawler, 2018:132). This imperative is grounded in theological anthropology that affirms God's and God's Christ's identification with the poor and the weak.

Salzman and Lawler (2018:131) citing Pope John Paul (1987) offer the most impressive and breathtaking description of solidarity as a Christian virtue thus:

Solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue . . . it is possible to identify many points of contact between solidarity and charity, which is the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples (cf. Jn. 13: 35). In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbour is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbour must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren.

The above citation is long, but it is very apt for the present study. In particular, solidarity as the identification of God and Christ with the poor serves as a theological foundation for the Social Principles of the Church and for confronting the globalization of indifference as well as the dollarization and distortions of the Nigerian economy. The point being made is that the biblical God is a God of actions who speaks and acts efficaciously, a God whose word is also happening, a God who is never indifferent. Every confession

of belief in God is rooted in historical happenings like the cleansing of the Temple (vs. 22). On the basis of this, the Johannine Christ is one with God and one with mankind. Therefore, He is the Savior of the world (Lk. 2:11). This study would now flesh out four implications of the call for solidarity, a renewed commitment to Christian discipleship, the common good, and the de-dollarization of the Nigerian economy.

Faith in Christ

The starting point to reverse dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy is faith in Jesus Christ. In Kierkegaardian tones, Pope Francis (2013) in Sorondo (2015:2) notes with uncanny insight that:

Faith in Jesus Christ is not a joke; it is something very serious. It is a scandal that God came to be one of us. It is a scandal: the scandal of the Cross. The Cross continues to provoke scandal. But it is the one sure path, the path of the Cross, the path of Jesus, the path of the incarnation of Jesus. Please do not water down your faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is whole and entire, not something that you water down. It is faith in Jesus. It is faith in the Son of God made man, who loved me and who died for me. So then; make yourselves heard; take care of the two ends of the population, the elderly and the young; do not allow yourselves to be excluded and do not allow the elderly to be excluded (Sorondo, 2015:2).

Implicated in the above citation is that the solution to dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy lies in practising faith and charity, which is more difficult. Most profoundly, Christianity has no essence but is a practice to perform in "existence." "We have to become Christ's contemporaries by actively participating in His grace and in the love of His Spirit" (Sorondo, 2015:2). This practical Christianity is what it means to proclaim Him: Lord Jesus Christ.

Put more concretely, when the faithful knows who they are Christ (1:12; 6:35; 68-69; 8:12; 10:27-30), they become motivated to live and worship differently. Wilson (2002:45) completes the point with this, "keeping that identity before us helps us live up to our high calling and forego the lesser satisfactions of the world. Anything we can do to foster and refresh that identity, then, is worth considering. Accordingly, the faithful is called upon to promote behaviour that exemplifies kingdom ethics, including care for the oppressed and marginalized. Likewise, the Temple event should highlight corrupt practices which promote the country's economic crisis and stifle the Nigerian economy in a way that is contrary to the

kingdom of God. Equally, the faithful should draw connections between the realities of economic inequalities and the death of the poor on one hand and the idolatry of money on the other as well as the disastrous logic of the market economy on the other. Loland (2021:308) elaborates on this viewpoint:

Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "Thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. . . The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex. 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy, lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalance and, above all, their lack for human beings.

Ostensibly, the modern market economy has become absolutized in a way that effectively kills in the form of social exclusion, stunting the lives of the poor for lack of opportunities. This explains why many who do go to Church expecting their personal miracles feel a sense of abandonment. As they see others dancing to the front, they feel a sense of diminished self-worth. Outside the Church, the pains of poverty give them a diminished sense of dignity as they struggle to make ends meet (Adeleye, 2011 in Iroanya, 2016).

This is the plight of the poor people in the streets of Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, Kampala, Luanda, Dar es sa laam, Nairobi, Monrovia or Addis Ababa where the headquarters of the African Union stand in majestic splendour. From this perspective, this study notes that in cleansing the Temple, Jesus is working to catalyze consciousness. This symbolic action of Jesus sends the warning note that worship and service should not be regarded as a means of material gain. This argues against "the tendency found in many quarters today to exploit and loot public wealth for one's own benefit or to spend it for wrong ends. Such a commercial attitude should be cleansed as Jesus cleansed the Temple" (Kanagaraj, 2022: 36). Faith in Christ challenges the faithful to "leave the nest that contains us" and burst the "soap bubbles" of our own self-concern; the vanity of these isolating bubbles, the deceptive fantasy that creates the illusions of innocence and separateness. These myopic soap bubbles sow "terrible anxiety" and "take away peace" because peace in the biblical tradition is not the absence of conflict, but "shalom: balance, and wholeness in the fullness of right-relationship with God and our neighbour" (Mescher, 2016:1).

To further emphasize the point, the Temple event not only invites personal examination, but also serves as a metaphor for shared global responsibility for the poor,

highlighting people "who bend down to help and those who look way and hurry off"; and that "social and political inertia is turning many parts of our world into a desolate byway" (Heyers, 2020:3). Heyers (2020) contends that the Church must avoid the many ways she is tempted like the Priest and Levite "to pass at a safe distance (Luke 10:31-32), retreat inwards, ignore others, or remain indifferent to their plight. Stated more generally, faith in Christ fosters a "culture of encounter", as well as willingness to enter into the ditch and draw near the man who was beaten, robbed, and left for dead on the road to Jericho in Luke 10:25-37" (Mescher, 2016:2).

Exercise of power with justice

The second action against religious, political, and socio-economic distortions that stunt the lives of the poor is the exercise of power with justice. As Paul Ricoeur memorably said, "we stand with the poor if we fight this poverty, which more often exposes human injustice. We are not with those politicians who love the poor so much that they multiply them" (Sorondo, 2015:4). In this study, power is indicative of might, strength, and the ability to control and exercise influence. Nonetheless, is the power positive as in the case of Jesus cleansing the Temple and challenging the legitimacy of earthly structures? Or is it the opposite; a process that leads to self-empowerment, exploitation, and oppression? This exercise of power could be through economic, political, societal, and military structures and policies which govern the life and development of a nation. It could be religious and cultural systems, mass media, laws, government policies, and people in powerful positions who serve to reinforce the complexes that perpetuate poverty. These systems and earthly institutions provide underlying dimensions in the victimization of the poor and the power accruing activity of the systems (Christian, 2014; Iroanya, 2016).

Albeit implicitly, personal and structural injustice threatens peace and causes conflict, shock, and war, while war itself fosters more injustice. Expressing the consequences posed by this on the Nigerian Church, Iroanya (2016:186) remarks that "the time is ripe for the Church to rediscover its total mandate. She should deal with the sins within systems, structures, and nations which produce hunger, economic discrimination, and human exploitation." To further the argument, the poverty that oppresses an important part of contemporary Nigeria must be fought vigorously. Here the Church should open a serious chapter about the aim of the economy and the failure of the many economic theories and ideologies that do not put the human person, justice, and the common good at the centre. Consequently, since God is supremely in control as the Almighty Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:8), and all power on earth is derived, this should affect its human and political use. At least, the cleansing of the Temple challenges "the Church as well as society to use

its power with justice" (Smalley; 1994:179). It needs to be reiterated that Jesus the reformer, is a strong figure of power, and indeed justice. Salvation, glory, and power belong to Him, but His judgments are also described as "true and just" (Rev.19:1-2). Smalley (1994:179) explains this as follows,

God speaks with truth and judgment, but His Word is a word of humility and accessibility, having love as its motivation and salvation as its purpose. The Fourth Gospel express this thought distinctively by saying that the Word tabernacled among us in flesh, full of grace as well as truth (John 1:14).

This point is sufficiently significant to emphasize if only because it is often neglected. If God's power is manifested as mercy, then political authority, however and wherever it is exercised, should always be characterized by love, as much as by justice. Only love overcomes fear and injustice. The faithful therefore should fear less in confronting evil vigorously and love more with respect and justice. This supports the view that in place of oppression, Jesus promoted a renewed kingdom open and available.

To all who would accept it; a life of open healing and shared eating, of radical itinerary and fundamental egalitarianism; of human contact without discrimination, and divine contact without hierarchy. That was how God would run the world if God not Caesar, sat on its imperial throne (Goodwin; 2014:65).

Applying this principle, Boff (1988) in Godwin (2014:65) states that "God does not side with the mighty, who have the law at their disposal on and utilize it to their own advantage. God sides with those violated in their dignity and their justice" (Goodwin; 2014:65). This is significant given that Jesus preached the Gospel in response to the injustices He witnessed.

In this context, the faithful are called upon to aim to be like Jesus, who reacted to abuses of power, exploitation of the poor, and marginalization of the Gentiles by preaching the Good News which eventually reached our day. The Kingdom of God movement has come to us to act once more as a timely antidote to dollarization and distortions of the Nigerian economy. Likewise, the Temple action should help the faithful become engaged in overcoming breakdown, oppression, and injustice with fraternity, solidarity, and mercy. The remark of Pope Francis is quite apt that we quote him in *ex tenso* here:

Today the Lord calls each of you to walk with Him in your city. He invites you to become His missionary disciple so that you can become part of that great whisper that wants to keep echoing in the different corners of our lives (Andina, 2018:1).

This position coheres with Heyers (2020:3) who states that confronting walls "in the heart" as well as "on the land" remains "an urgent task for the Church *ad intra*, as well as *ad extra*." This is of paramount importance for this study because exploitative economic structures and distortions of the Nigerian economy have contributed to migration patterns, hyperinflation, poor infrastructure, unemployment, borrowing for self-gratification, contraction of economic opportunities, and a reduction in created wealth. This requires the faithful to take the plight of the poor to heart and identify "pathways and means to provide them with the protection that they need for a dignified condition".

Mobilization for peaceful agitations and demand for accountability

Nigerians should mobilize for peaceful agitation and demand accountability from their uncaring public officeholders. Labour unions, student unions, organized private sectors, non-governmental organizations, and religious, traditional, and professional bodies should join these protests. The success of the #ENDSARS Protest organized by the Nigerian youths in October 2020 and the #EndBad Governance protest in August 2024 motivates this endeavour. In the same vein, the weighty allegations of maladministration and financial malfeasance levelled against the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Tanko Muhammad by fourteen other justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria which led to his resignation "on health grounds" is a step in the right direction. In light of the Temple demonstration, this research shares the insight of the Punch Editorial Board of July 4, 2022, that:

The raging crisis presents an opportunity to initiate and support probes and undertake reforms of the all-important Third Estate of the Realm within the law. In this, the sanctity and independence of the judiciary should not be compromised. . . The anti-graft agencies should swing into action and investigate the financial ill-doing allegations. . . Olukayode Ariwoola must avoid the customary elite conspiracy of sweeping the issues under the carpet to carry on business as usual. He should initiate an internal probe and an audit to unravel the truth. . . This will go a long way to unearth problems in the judiciary and serve as deterrence.

To sustain the foregoing requires a collaborative effort among governments, international organizations, research and development centres, NGOs, FBOs, and creative industries. The media should strengthen the hands of the Church in the untiring efforts of holding the government to account.

The media should do so in a sustained, empirical, and

transparent manner. We cannot deepen democracy or expect good governance if we give up on the important task of subjecting power wielders to scrutiny. The words of Dazang (2022:1) are unmistakable; "as Thomas Paine (1737-1809, US patriot and political philosopher) once argued, 'those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it.'" Again, Thomas Paine (1777) in Dazang (2022:1) told his compatriots that we fight not to enslave, but to "set a country free, and to make room upon the earth for honest men to live. In such a case, we are right, and we leave to you the despairing reflection of being the tool of a miserable tyrant" (Dazang, 2022:1).

Nonetheless, change demands a great deal of courage because there will be persecution. The Temple demonstration guarantees it (vs.18). Also, Jesus guarantees it (Mt.24:9-13). Against this background, the faithful need to work to reinvigorate social action and strengthen coordination to respond to current and future dollarization and distortions of the Nigerian economy.

Strategic advocacy and mass sensitization

The fourth principle is public sensitization, enlightenment, and advocacy for good governance. Strategic advocacy and mass sensitization will break down at least two false views dominating the reductive market ethos with its desensitizing effects. First, it will break the culture of indifference and silence (Abdul, 2020). When we see something and say something, the perpetrators can be identified and punished with the law. Two, it will break down the culture of complicity. According to Pope Francis, "indifference and silence lead to complicity whenever we stand by as people are dying of suffocation, starvation, violence, and shipwreck. Whether large or small in scale, these are always tragedies, even when a single human life is lost" (Mescher, 2016:1). Thus, citizenship education and public enlightenment like the Temple event, would serve as proclamation, demand, and warning not to privatize profits and socialize nothing. Strategic advocacy and public enlightenment are significant given that the cleansing of the Temple is more distinctly seen as a sign and message which is later realized and understood by the disciples in verse 22.

That implication is also true for the contemporary Church. Through significant improvement in literacy levels, citizens are educated about dollarization and distortions in the economy as well as "reductive anthropologies that make individuals either consumers or bystanders; strengthening more powerful regions and diminishing weaker ones" (Heyers, 2020:1). More so, it will expose abusive practices allowed and even supported by the plutocrats that are destroying the lives and well-being of the people. Fundamentally, it will be a bold statement against the oppressive forces that dominate the gates of fashion, politics, entertainment, education, religion, and

the economy as well as the political elite who have all but sold out their people in search of prosperity via their patron-client system. Stated more generally, strategic advocacy and public enlightenment will underline the leadership deficit bedeviling Nigeria which the average person is as guilty as the ruling elite in his conspiracy of silence or outright collaboration.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study relied heavily on John's placement of the purification of the Temple in Jerusalem to spotlight that exploitative economic structures and trade practices such as dollarization and distortions of the Nigerian economy have contributed to hyperinflation, rising unemployment, poor education, borrowing for self-gratification, contraction of economic opportunities, and a reduction in created wealth. This is why all those institutions and power groups that contribute to the existence and maintenance of the physical and spiritual slums must be obviously and openly cleansed as the Temple in Jerusalem. In this regard, this research provides viable biblical traditions that would help to quarantine the dollarization and distortions in the Nigerian economy as well as create our own "three days" to rebuild it. It conceives the Temple event as the kingdom of God movement, where Jesus "epitomized in action" the message: 'the reign of God is at hand!; and the demand 'repent!' So as to bring the "imminence of God's reign abruptly and forcefully to the attention of all"(Chapple, 2015:558).

Therefore, the faithful and the Nigerian nation like the Temple in Jerusalem is in need of the purification of debris and merchandise that exist in his relationship with God and his concern for others. Anchored on the Christian principles of solidarity, it called for a renewed commitment to Christian discipleship such as mercy, justice, equality, hard work, disciplined leadership, and advancement of economic opportunities. This call arises from the recognition of the seriousness of the role the Church is designed to play in God's eternal salvific program. Against this backdrop of Jesus' action in the Temple, this study reinforces the call for the faithful to rally behind the poor and oppressed, the rejected and abused, the disposable and the crucified Christ, taking a stand against the conditions that promote exploitation and act contrary to the love of Christ and the kingdom of God.

In line with the objectives of the study, the following viable and actionable recommendations were identified.

1. The study recommends that the Church should boldly articulate practical and peaceful methods of solving social issues in the country such as corruption, ethnicity, unemployment, greed, religious extremism, and in fact, all the socio-political and economic ties that have bedevilled the Nigerian society. This implies using her power management to assume and further

her prophetic ministry as she takes on the centre stage of the socio-political life of the nation as the voice of prophetic descent as expressed by Jesus in the cleansing of the Temple.

2. As a corollary, the Church should address the vital issues of social justice, human rights and dignity, and care of the elderly, the needy, and the environment for society cannot be healthy without social justice. Society as well will not be just unless social justice is embedded in its core values.
3. To overcome structural injustice in Nigeria, the Church should require the government to review the policies and procedures of large institutions as well as appeal to the hearts and minds of individuals within them. It will take changes in institutions - governmental and private to overcome injustices such as inequality, unemployment, discrimination, and disparities in the salaries and wages of workers.
4. To be truly prophetic, evangelical, and catechetical, the Church should include the dynamics of social transformation in her theological training. This implies education in social analysis, education in fundamental human rights, education for justice and peace, education in the techniques of mass conscientization and social mobilization, and education in the methods of empowering the poor, the weak, and the oppressed.
5. The government should take decisive actions to reduce the cost of governance and replace its reactive knee-jerk approach to policy-making with a more thoughtful, inclusive, and consultative process particularly when it comes to major socio-economic, religious, political, and environmental policies.
6. Finally, the poverty that oppresses an important part of contemporary Nigeria must be fought vigorously. Here, the Church should open a serious chapter about the aim of the economy and the failure of the many economic theories and ideologies that do not put the human person, justice, and the common good at the centre.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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