

Introduction

When this paper was being conceived, Nigeria had closed her land borders to all imports and exports for about three months⁸⁴, it was only relaxed by the current political administration. Sometimes ago also, a social media report announced that one of the southwestern states in Nigeria is considering the economic value of re-cycling waste materials so as to engage youths' joblessness and kick-start wealth creation through recycling wastes in the state.⁸⁵ All these are attempts to reinvigorate Nigeria economy that has been on the downside for decades. It is not new in Nigeria landscape however that agricultural seasons witness abundant produces despite the nations' economic woes. For instance, from the point of farm harvests to consumption tables at homes, occurrence of food surpluses are not new.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, the culture of managing agricultural surpluses in its seasons by the government and citizens cannot be said to be in place. These abundant increases could have brought about the expected economic welfare for the citizens and buffer against harsh economic situations. Alas it has never been translated so, except for the rich! Could it not be said then that, poverty and economic woes in Nigeria is both leadership and self-inflicted?

The main thesis of this paper is the need for national leadership to optimally harness Nigeria's agricultural surpluses for

⁸⁴Timileyin Omilana <https://t.guardian.ng/news/customs-bans/all-import-export-of-14th-October-2019>, accessed 1st November, 2019. (Nigeria had earlier in August 2019 banned importation of rice into the country through her western border before it eventually placed a ban on all goods, be it import and export through the land borders).

⁸⁵Bolanle Gbadamosi, "Waste Recycling Will Set Most Youths on Wealth Path – Oyo Commissioner" in <https://oyostate.gov.ng/waste-recycling-will-set-most-youths-on-wealth-path-oyo-commissioner/> of September 13, 2019.

⁸⁶Samson O. Dada citing www.ecology.com/2013/01/23/changing-food-waste-culture of January 23, 2013 in "The Economic and Ecological Implications of John 6:11-13 for Church and Civil Leadership in Recession Times" *Journal of African Society for the Study of Sociology and Ethics of Religions* (JASSOSER) Vol. 5&6, June and Dec. 2019: 135-152.

economic sustainability and in quest for economic recovery in 21st century. This was the innocuous role that biblical Joseph played where he found himself and by dint of grace saved his own people. He by sacred wisdom; his economic, conservatory and purpose-driven relief approach stemmed disastrous famine that would have consumed Egypt and other nations. Regrettably, in this 21st century, Nigerian leaders lack cohesive consistent policies to safe-keep her seasonal enormous agricultural endowments. In the country, household and sometimes large harvested agricultural products hardly receive adequate safe-keeping attention but are quickly disposed of by the farmers, or sometimes taken up by the rich for off-season resale or it is wasted away.

The Nigerian roadsides and farm-site experience heaps of abundant wastes in agricultural harvest dumps in and out of harvest seasons. Yet Nigerian citizens wallow in poverty in the midst of plenty! A thoughtful reading of Genesis 41:46-49 has revealed that with purpose-driven visionary leadership, appropriate management and re-distribution of resources, a 'famine-scourged nation', like Nigeria would overcome economic disaster. Even though historically, Nigeria has spent about four (4) decades in economic quagmire, she can yet come out of the situation strongly. This paper asserts then that Nigeria will come out of her economic downturn if and when appropriate steps are taken by the leadership and citizens to purposively explore her abundant agricultural surpluses judiciously.

Adopted Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is centered on J. Patrick Dobel's view of Christian stewardship of earth resources. In it, Dobel propounded the sovereignty of God over the earth's available resources.⁸⁷ By interpretation, all initiative and

⁸⁷J. Patrick Dobel, "Stewards of the Earth's Resources: A Christian Response to Ecology" accessed from <https://www.religion-online.org/article> accessed on September 14, 2019.

creativity by human effort at exploring earth's available resources must be carried out with sacred sense of stewardship and in conformity with the divine will. Dobel asserted that man has the obligation not to use available earth resources with impunity. Accordingly, there must be a conscious replacement of such. The scholar pronounced that there is a "necessity to improve our heritage" and improve the existing initiative and creative forms. Above all, man is obligated to refrain from improper exploitation, misuse and mismanagement of [these] resources [agricultural products inclusive]; they should be administered with sacred humility.⁸⁸ The UNO has equally considered acts like food excesses and wastes as a threat not only to economic life but to man's existence on earth. It is noted that food waste and excesses can trigger ecological crises.⁸⁹

It may be said then, that the views appropriated by Dobel captures the state of impunity that Nigeria's agricultural food harvests and left-over are. More importantly, the UNO report is far dangerous to toy with. This writer is of the view that Nigerian leaders in 21st century must purposively draw out steps (like Joseph did) for accelerated recovery of the nation's damaged economy by paying attention to effective management of farm harvests and food products and to avoid ecological crises that may arise from dumps of excess food and agricultural wastes. Relatedly and for the church, Anozie in 2013 had noted two biblical frameworks in John 10:10 and Mark 1:15 as pivot for church fundamental and functional societal role in holistic forms. The church, he noted cannot be a withdrawn community⁹⁰ [*siddon luk*], in the midst of mismanaged Nigerian economy and claim piety. Moreover, the church is not only directly impacted by the mismanaged state

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹www.ecology.com/2013/01/23/changing-food-waste-culture of January 23, 2013. It was a United Nations Environmental Program effort at reducing the food waste culture. Accessed 18/6/2016.

⁹⁰Anozie Emeka, "Christian Church: A Catalyst for Economic Development in Nigeria" *African Research Review*, Vol. 7(4), Serial No. 31, September, 2013:274.

of economic affair but is party to the societal dented image. Hence, the church has a sacred call to better the lot of the society.

In the like manner Ajani, coming from a missiological perspective of the church noted that the “missions” mandate of the church is pluralistic and comprehensive – the church, he posited has societal responsibility and must work out “cost-effective activities” to win men to Christ.⁹¹ Sequel to this therefore, this writer wishes to submit that the church must take seriously her role in advocating for correct management of the economy and be participants at policy formulations where and when necessary. The church should not be ambivalent at becoming partakers at bettering the society at every available opportunity through her well-informed and adequately judged view. The Church should raise disciplined and sacredly nurtured members that will carry out functional roles at managing the Nigerian economy as services to God.

Having said these then, the paper proceeds to giving its conceptual view of economy; briefly discuss the Nigerian nation economically in this 21st century and proceed to present an exegetical study of Genesis 41:46-49. It shall then draw the significance of the passage for recovery of Nigeria economy in the 21st century and make suggestions.

Definition of Key Words

Economy

The word, ‘economy’ has its root in the 15th century Latin word ‘*oconomia*’ and its Greek version ‘*oikonomia*’, means to ‘manage a household’. The word ‘*oikos*...’ mean ‘house’ and ‘*nemein*’ meaning ‘manage’.⁹² Hence, it connotes the effective

⁹¹Ezekiel Ajani, “Missiological Approaches Economic Recession in Nigeria: A Case Study of Selected Baptist Churches in Ogbomoso” in *Nigerian Journal of Christian Studies*, Vol. 2, Number 1, October 2018:126, 132.

⁹²Microsoft Encarta Dictionary, 2009.

management of household resources for the betterment of the occupants. It could be further described with words like thrift, prudence, budget and bargain. In the context of the article therefore, it construe adequate management of Nigerian agricultural products (food) and elimination of wastes to the barest minimum for sustainability of Nigerian society for the purpose of economic recovery in the 21st century.

A View of Nigeria Economy in 21st Century

The Nigerian economy in 21st century could be described as comatose and non-performing. By National Bureau of Statistics report, the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stood at 3.10% in 2022 and agriculture recorded a lesser performance in view of the flood that ravaged parts of the federation.⁹³ In 2023 the GDP was 2.74%, and agricultural sector recorded 2.10% by the fourth quarter of 2023 compared to 2.05% it recorded same period in 2022.⁹⁴ Thus, Nigerian economy and particularly the agricultural sector continued to witness recession, which demand urgent actions by the national leadership and citizenry. In memory also, the last three or four decades has not seen Nigeria better economically, but then Nigeria agricultural sector has continued to thrive with abundant produces that are not fully optimized.

Among other causes of Nigeria's economic stagnation, Adekunle Dada had earlier noted wastage as one of the key problems. According to him, the Nigerian government has continued to waste unquantifiable some of funds yearly on sponsorship of citizens for religious pilgrimage. A report in 2017 noted that Nigeria spent 130.5 billion naira on sponsorship of pilgrimage to Hajj.⁹⁵ In 2023 to 2024 it has gone up to billions of dollars, to sponsor what?!!! What a colossal waste of nation's fiscal

⁹³<https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241288#>.

⁹⁴<https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241460>

⁹⁵ Adekunle, O. Dada, p. 373 citing G. Adeoye & J. Alagbe "Despite Recession, States, others spend over 130.5bn on Hajj", *Saturday Punch* (September, 2, 2017), 7.

resources? What has national and state government to do with sponsorship of religious tours and pilgrimage to warrant such volume of Nigerian fiscal resources? Of what economic value would this be to national growth, except for surrogates and to “subvert potential radicals”⁹⁶ Compared to this colossal waste of funds, the agricultural sector that will tackle ‘famine’ and sustain the masses have not been so much funded by every levels of government. What a massive waste and drainpipe on Nigeria economy? When will we Nigeria leaders and citizen wrestle themselves out of sheer deceits and waste of nation’s resources?

Contemporary State of Food Increases Management in Akinyele Ward 6, Local Government Council area, Ibadan

Earlier than the above, in a research conducted between 2016/2017 at Akinyele town of Akinyele Local Government Council area of Ibadan metropolis by this writer⁹⁷ humongous waste and dump of leftovers in agricultural products and other material wastes fill the community. Akinyele town is the main entrance to the metropolis and host major market from northern part of the country. The market is noted for availability of potatoes, tomatoes, onions, vegetables, and melons; there is market for farm animals, cattle and others. Several wastes of these products are dumped on road-medians, thrown at overfilled and spilling over roadside dumps while stench of animal wastes and urine fill the air every moment. It needed to be seen how livestock and other food products for human consumption are managed and handled at the height of harvest seasons.

⁹⁶ Dada, citing H. O. Awoniyi, *Government Subsidy of Christian Pilgrimage is a Bribe* (Ibadan: Centre for Applied Religion and Education), 9.

⁹⁷Samson O. Dada, “A Quest for Environmental Sustainability in Ward 6, Akinyele Local Government, Akinyele Ibadan in the Context of Psalm 24:1-6”. *Unpublished (MA) dissertation*, at Abeokuta: Crowther Graduate Theological Seminary in affiliation with Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo.

In dues seasons, there are hardly no time when excess, wasted and rotting food and fruit products (like Mango, Oranges, Maize, Cassava and yam tubers), are not found dumped away along this national highway. It is a display of profligacy and eye-sore! The irritable culture in display on major highway negates God's abundant provisions. The situation showed that Nigeria leaders and the citizenry have carefree culture to the management of food and agricultural productions. Basically, the decrepit situation indicated that Nigerian leaders owe the society a lot in sustainable management of agricultural yields. It is more worrisome when the government that is to put policies in place that should be embraced by the citizens has not realized the need to adequately harness her abundant agricultural resources for optimum preservation against 'possible drought' and for fiscal reserves.

Introduction to the Book of Genesis

The Book of Genesis has been the framework and foundation for all Christian religious insight and livelihood. Basically however, it has served as the basis for Jewish practices worldwide. The book titled *bereshit*, meaning "In beginning" in the Hebrew Bible and first in the Pentateuch section has also enjoyed the traditional acknowledgement of its authorship to Moses among other scholastic and postmodern views. The dating is approximated to about 1450-1410BC in company of other books in the Pentateuch, but then the fact remains that the accounts may not have been a one-time documented volume. The work could be divided into two major sections; the first section (Chapters 1 – 11) contains paradigms for all that man exists and stood for in creation;⁹⁸ while the second section (chapters 12-50) began the historical journey and relationship of Abraham with YHWH by whom the nation of Israel emerged. The section stands out as the commencement of covenantal

⁹⁸Mark Water, *Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*, (Tennessee, Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2004), p.698.

relationship with the divine leading to blessedness as promised in Chapter 12:3.

Gen. 41:46-49 (Text Translation)⁹⁹

verse 46: - *And Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service (in front on/) before Pharaoh king of Egypt and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.*

verse 47: - *the earth brought forth during the seven years of plenty abundantly (by handfuls).*

verse 48: - *and he (Joseph) gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt and stored up food in the cities food of the fields of the city which around it he stored up in the midst of it.*

verse 49: - *and Joseph stored up grain like the sand of the sea in great abundance until he ceased to measure for it could not be measured.*

Gen. 41:46-49 (Smooth Rendition)

verse 46: - *Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh King of Egypt. Joseph left the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.*

verse 47: - *In the next seven years, the land brought forth full handfuls.*

verse 48: - *Joseph gathered up all the abundant production of the seven years in Egypt and stored it up in the cities. He ensured that produce from the surrounding area is stored up in the city nearby it.*

⁹⁹John Joseph Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*. Col. 1, Genesis – Joshua. Michigan, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 49516, 1989, p. 190.

verse 49: - *And Joseph stored up large quantities of grains, as the sand of the sea; it was so much that it could no longer be measured.*

Exegetical Analysis of Genesis 41:46-49¹⁰⁰

Genesis 41:46. three phrases are of key importance here.

- “Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service. . .” - this implies that the young man was fully matured for the assignment he is commissioned to do. He is also commissioned to service under a particular king;
- “. . . left the presence of Pharaoh. . .” is an indication of the earnestness with which Joseph took his commission. Joseph wasted no time, nor hesitated at seeing the assignment as a function to be squarely addressed. Since by virtue of his experiences he has acquired competencies over a long period of time¹⁰¹ in his short life, he was up-and-doing and went straight into the task.
- “. . . went through all the land of Egypt.” Joseph began to make an immediate survey of his assignment. His trips were to make an on-site survey and to begin strategic planning on what may be necessary. He will have to visit all quarters of the land, secure site locations and plan size of storehouses necessary for the job and work towards human

¹⁰⁰*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary*, Electronic Database. 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc.

¹⁰¹ Bob Stallman, “Joseph’s Successful management of the Food Crises (Genesis 41:46-57; 47:13-26)” in *Theology of Work Project 2013* accessed from <https://www.theology-of-work.org/> on 14th September, 2018.

administrative machineries for the impending boom and years of drought.

Genesis 41:47 - “. . . the land brought.”

- This is an expression of how rich and bountiful the harvests were in the hands of the harvesters. It is also an expression of possible comparison with earlier years of harvests.
- Genesis 41:48 – the phrase “. . . gathered up all the abundant production”
- According to Jamieson and Brown, the phrase “. . . gathered up all the abundant production” is in direct reference to the portion required in Gen 41:34. It could also be seen as an expression of the prompt action taken by Joseph at not allowing wastes to be. To sustain her citizens for the period of famine coming up and not to allow waste, Joseph was ardent at gathering up the harvest abundances and caring for it appropriately against the impending crisis. Joseph equally was strategic at storing away the land produced near the land it was harvested. This may be in order that the citizens may be responsible for Pharaoh’s instruction, taking the stock records and management of the storehouses.
- Genesis 41:49 – Account for the quantity of deposited grains were properly taken to the extent that the records could no longer be kept. This shows an extra-ordinary fruitfulness and provision from YHWH. For Joseph, it is an attitude of accounting shrewdness and integrity learnt over the years and as impacted upon by YHWH. Joseph’s transference of this must have become the lives of all store-station officers. Joseph was prudent and showed integrity at maintaining adequate records of the abundant years.

The Implication of Genesis 41:46-49 for Nigeria Economic Recovery in 21st Century

All nations of the earth, including Nigeria will at one point or another face daunting threats, (food, economic or ecological crisis). Nigerians must admit, prepare and be ready to face this fact always;

Nigeria is adequately and abundantly blessed with human, material, and natural resources to rescue her from economic savagery and for a sustainable future;

Nigeria leadership has to commit themselves to allowing godly-minded people to drive the affairs of this nation. This will surely bring about the changes that is needful and for sustainable economy:

Yahweh has put in all nations, those with his Spirit, who can be of inexpressible value to salvage the nation from her current crisis of economic imbalance.

Excellent administrative skills and strategic plans imbued by Yahweh Spirit are crucial to rescue a downturned economy like that of Nigeria.

Yahweh is awaiting the emergence of those who have his Spirit to do that which is needful in rescuing his people from their 'drought';

Government need counsels and consultations from tested and trusted religious leaders to proffer solutions to Nigeria's economic woes;

Appointed godly minded persons must conduct strategic surveys, take decisive actions and be sincere at rescuing Nigeria from her economic woes;

Nigerian government must put necessary structures in place to aid the commissioned peoples for the fulfilment of their assignments;

Nigerian citizens will have to tolerate temporary pains to accommodate changes and adjustments as those 'rescuers' carry out their Yahweh ordained functions;

The Federal Government of Nigeria should liberalize the national reward and earning system and make agriculture attractive to younger ones by providing them with sufficient incentives for their professions.

Conclusion, Suggestions and Recommendations

The study has advocated that her food surpluses' diligent management is sufficient to rescue Nigeria from the economic crisis. Nigeria has often experienced regular surpluses in farming seasons but the leaders and citizens have been wasteful at the remnants. The current economic downturn has been seen as 'drought season' that were ill-prepared for. Had the nation adequately manage her harvest surpluses, Nigeria will have no threat of 'droughts'. The leadership and citizens of the nation must see the need for conserving surpluses (food and others) agricultural harvests. This, it is believed will not only sustain the nation at 'droughts' but conserve the nation's foreign exchange for other developmental projects. In the light of above position, it is hereby suggested and recommended: -

That all Christians must rise up to the task of nation building and particularly for economic recovery. The betterment of this nation is for all citizens as we have no other nation;

That Christians cannot fold their hands at rescuing of Nigeria economically. There are no biblical bases for non-participation in nation building at all levels and in any sector. Christians must actively be involved in the management of Nigeria resources;

That Governance is a commission and calling that must be responded to by tested and trusted Christians who shall

discharge their functions as serving Yahweh and not self. Christians must rise up to this task;

That contemporary Nigerian leaders (civil and religious) must be sincere to admit that we have been reckless in the management of abundant natural and food (agricultural) resources of the nation;

That Nigeria nation must make optimally managed agriculture a major backbone to revitalize contemporary economic situation;

That strategic plans and actions for rescue of the nation must be taken. The national leaders must give latitude for this to come to pass;

That it is the appropriate management of our agricultural resources that will put food on the tables of every Nigerian. The 21st century Nigerian nation should stop depending on Oil as her major economic earner;

That structures must be put in place by the government for proper education of citizens at seasons and off-seasons for dutiful responsibilities in managing food/harvest surpluses;

That everyone in this conference must return home and work out ways to stop food excesses and wastages. Buy what you need and can consume at a time if you do not have means of preserving them for future use.

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