

The Economic Culture of the Early Church: Implications for Poverty Eradication in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study explores the communal economic principles of the early Christian community as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles 2:44–45, 4:32–35 and their potential application in addressing poverty in Nigerian society. Scholars have thoroughly analysed the historical, theological, sociological, missional, and ecclesiological dimensions of these texts, but further exploration is needed into its contextual relevance in non-Western churches and its application to modern economic challenges. Addressing these gaps could enrich both biblical scholarship and practical theology. African inculturation theology, which reinterprets Christian doctrines through African cultural expressions to reflect indigenous spiritual experiences, served as the framework. Utilizing the documentation method for data collection, the study draws on both primary and secondary sources. The primary source comprises the Greek text of Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35, while secondary sources include published literature on poverty and its eradication in Nigerian contexts. The research employs the grammatico-historical approach to exegete the biblical texts, uncovering the theological and socio-economic foundations that underpinned the early Christian model of shared resources and mutual support. Additionally, the interpretive design is adopted to engage critically with data on poverty and eradication strategies in Nigeria. Through exegetical analysis, the study reveals that the early Christian economic culture—marked by voluntary sharing, communal ownership, and prioritization of need over personal accumulation—provides valuable ethical and practical insights for poverty alleviation. The findings suggest that a contextual adaptation of these principles could contribute meaningfully to grassroots strategies aimed at reducing poverty in Nigerian communities. Ultimately, the paper advocates for a rethinking of socio-economic frameworks within faith-based and policy-making circles, emphasizing community-oriented models rooted in justice, equity, and compassion. This study not only bridges biblical scholarship and social development but also highlights the enduring relevance of scriptural values in contemporary socio-economic discourse.

Keywords: Early Christian Economic Ethics, Poverty Eradication in Nigeria, African Inculturation Theology, Faith-Based Economic Models

Introduction

Poverty remains a persistent challenge in Nigerian society, affecting millions of individuals and undermining sustainable development efforts (World Bank, 2023). While various strategies—ranging from government initiatives to international aid programs—have been

implemented to tackle this socio-economic issue, progress remains inconsistent and often insufficient. Against this backdrop, faith-based approaches to economic justice have gained attention as potential alternatives or supplements to mainstream economic models. The Christian tradition, particularly its early expressions in the New Testament, offers a compelling paradigm of economic life rooted in communal values, mutual support, and voluntary sharing.

Acts 2:44–45 and Acts 4:32–35 are central to understanding the communal life of the early church and have generated rich scholarly debate on economic sharing, unity, ethics, and justice. Historically and theologically, scholars such as Johnson (1992), Bruce (1998), Marshall (1980), and Hombana (2023) argue that Luke presents an idealized model of early Christian community. Johnson (1992) emphasizes that this portrayal aligns with Jesus' teachings on possessions and community. Keener (2012) and Bauckham (2010) highlight Old Testament echoes, linking the practice of sharing to Deuteronomic and Jubilee principles that emphasize economic justice. Sociologically and economically, scholars like Witherington III (1998), Elliott (2007), Lindsley (2012), Jones (2015), and Ugochukwu, Kalu, and Uroko (2024) debate whether these texts depict early communism, voluntary communalism, or symbolic actions. Witherington (1998) views the sharing as voluntary, rooted in *koinonia*, while Elliott (2007) notes similarities with Greco-Roman collectivism. Scholars like Sider (2005), Hart (2009), and Williamson (2018) interpret the texts as critiques of wealth accumulation and calls for churches to reimagine economic justice today.

From a missional and ecclesiological lens, Wright (2010) and Gorman (2011) assert these passages define the church's missional identity – emphasizing not just economics, but witness and theological integrity. The concept of *koinonia* is viewed as a foundational model. Hellerman (2009) explores how collectivist values shaped early church life, contrasting it with modern individualism. Therefore, the Acts of the Apostles provides a unique insight into the socio-economic practices of the earliest Christian communities. Notably, Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 depict a culture of radical generosity and communal ownership, where believers “had all things in common” and distributed resources according to need. While these passages have been subject to extensive theological, historical, sociological, missional, and ecclesiological analysis, their contextual relevance to non-Western societies – especially those grappling with contemporary issues of poverty – remains underexplored. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the implications of the early Christian economic model for poverty eradication in Nigeria.

Adopting the grammatico-historical approach to exegesis and an interpretive design for socio-economic analysis, this study utilizes both the Greek text of Acts and literature on Nigerian poverty alleviation efforts. By situating biblical principles within the Nigerian context, the study aims to contribute meaningfully to both biblical scholarship and practical theology, offering ethical and actionable insights for contemporary poverty challenges. The grammatico-historical method suggests that fully grasping the meaning of Scripture involves examining its grammatical structure, sentence patterns, and the historical context in which it was written (Fee, 1983). Interpretive design combines storytelling, visual elements, and communication techniques to foster emotional and meaningful connections, encouraging curiosity and personal reflection rather than simply delivering factual information (Ham, 1992).

This study is grounded in African inculturation theology, which reinterprets Christian doctrines through African cultural expressions to reflect indigenous spiritual experiences (Shorter, 1977). It challenges Western theological dominance by embedding Christianity within African socio-cultural contexts (Ukpong, 1995). Inculturation, defined by Shorter (1988) as “the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture or cultures” (p. 11), involves a transformative engagement between the Gospel and local cultures, beyond superficial adaptation. Rooted in the Incarnation, it posits that just as Christ entered a specific culture, the Gospel should engage all cultures meaningfully. Bediako (1992) highlights the importance of expressing Christianity through local traditions and languages while upholding its universal

message. Despite its promise, inculturation faces critiques, especially around syncretism and the risk of reinforcing harmful cultural norms. Schreiter (1985) underscores the need for critical discernment. This framework informs a contextual reading of Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 in addressing poverty in Nigeria through communal Christian ethics (Tutu, 2004).

Understanding Poverty and Strategies for Eradication in Nigeria

Poverty in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is alarmingly high, currently affecting 63% of the population (United Nation Development Programme, 2022). This marks a stark contrast to the 15% poverty rate at independence in 1960. Despite advancements in knowledge and technology, poverty has deepened, remaining a persistent socio-economic challenge. It is multidimensional, encompassing more than income deprivation to include poor access to healthcare, education, clean water, and social inclusion (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). About 40% of Nigerians, or over 80 million people, live below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2023). Sophia (2023) observes that poverty remains a critical issue in Nigeria. Okadi, Agu, and Onu (2021, p. 53) also state that poverty and unemployment continue to be persistent issues in Nigerian economy, affecting 62.6% of the population. Ten northern states account for 70% of Nigeria's multidimensional poor (The Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs, 2020). Additionally, 51% of Nigerians—approximately 105 million people—live in extreme poverty (World Data Lab's Poverty Clock, 2020). The nature of poverty in Nigeria remains a paradox because economic growth has not reduced poverty (Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012; Dauda, 2017).

Poverty in Nigeria persists due to a combination of structural, social, and historical factors. Ajakaiye and Adeyeye (2001) and Olayemi (2012) point to unemployment, corruption, poor governance, and systemic inequality as core causes. These are further worsened by social issues such as disunity, insecurity, selfishness, and the excessive quest for material wealth at the expense of moral and spiritual values, which hinder national development and fair resource distribution. Corruption is particularly emphasized by Sodipo, Ikue, Enegesi, Yisa, and Ejinkonye (2023) as a central driver, undermining policy implementation and reinforcing socio-economic disparities. Taiwo and Agwu (2016), as cited by Okadi, Agu, and Onu (2021), highlight the impact of an ineffective education and training system, which produces graduates lacking the necessary skills for employment, thereby increasing joblessness. Furthermore, Sophia (2023) attributes the deepening poverty to the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced in 1985 during Babangida's military regime. Rather than alleviating poverty, SAP worsened living conditions, impoverished the population, and devalued the Naira. Collectively, these factors continue to obstruct sustainable development and long-term poverty alleviation in Nigeria.

Government efforts to eradicate poverty in Nigeria have been extensive, featuring various initiatives such as the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), the Social Investment Programmes (SIPs), and the more recent Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP) (Aliyu, 2003; Owasa, 2000). As noted by Oshewolo (2010), Taiwo and Agwu (2016), and Premium Times (2020), successive governments since independence have introduced a range of policies aimed at reducing poverty. These include the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), the Green Revolution Programme, the Directorate for Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), the Better Life Programme (BLP), the Family Support Programme (FSP), and the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), among others.

Despite the volume of these efforts, their long-term effectiveness has been limited. According to Aliyu (2003) and Owasa (2000), challenges such as inconsistent implementation, inadequate funding, and a lack of community involvement have hindered sustainable impact. In response, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based institutions have increasingly stepped in, providing direct assistance and skills training at the grassroots level. In this context, exploring alternative, community-centered models of poverty alleviation are both timely and necessary. The early Christian economic model—as reflected in Acts 2:44–45

and 4:32–35—offers one such framework. By emphasizing voluntary sharing, equity, and a collective sense of responsibility, this model aligns with sustainable development goals that prioritize inclusive growth and social justice. Applying such biblical principles to the Nigerian context may offer fresh insights into culturally resonant, ethically grounded strategies for reducing poverty and fostering communal resilience.

Context of Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35

The passages in Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 illustrate a voluntary, spirit-led communal lifestyle in the early Jerusalem church, where believers shared possessions to meet individual needs. This radical economic solidarity was not enforced by law but arose from spiritual unity and mutual purpose, creating a community where “no one claimed that any of their possessions was their own” (Acts 4:32). The historical and cultural context of these passages is rooted in the immediate post-Pentecost period, a time when the early Christian movement was still closely tied to Jewish religious and social structures. The believers’ communal lifestyle reflected both Jewish traditions of mutual support and the eschatological expectation that the Messiah’s return was imminent (Keener, 2012). As a result, the community prioritized spiritual values over material accumulation, embodying a form of economic fellowship that emphasized selflessness and equity.

Scholars have noted that the economic practices in these passages are best understood within the socio-religious context of Second Temple Judaism, where acts of charity, almsgiving, and communal responsibility were already esteemed values (Witherington, 1998). However, the early Christians took these principles further, demonstrating an unprecedented level of communal integration inspired by the Holy Spirit. Importantly, this communal arrangement was not sustained indefinitely throughout the broader early church. As the Christian movement expanded geographically and culturally, such practices evolved to reflect the diverse contexts of Gentile communities, where property ownership and household economies remained intact (Marshall, 1980). Nevertheless, the Jerusalem model remains a powerful example of the early church’s commitment to social justice, unity, and care for the marginalized.

Exegetical Analysis of Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35

Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 present some of the most vivid portrayals of the early Christian community’s economic and social practices. A grammatico-historical exegesis of these texts reveals a deliberate theological and communal ethic centered on *κοινωνία*—a term that connotes fellowship, sharing, and deep relational unity (Keener, 2012). In Acts 2:44–45, Luke describes how “all who believed were together and had all things in common,” and they “sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.” Similarly, Acts 4:32–35 highlights that “no one claimed that any of their possessions was their own,” and “there were no needy persons among them.” In Acts 2:44, πιστεύοντες (“believed”) and in Acts 4:32, πιστευσάντων (“believers”) are aorist active participles from πιστεύω, meaning “believe, have faith,” and signify coming to faith or becoming a Christian (Barth, 1990). The phrase ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ (“were together”) likely refers to unity in mind and doctrine rather than physical gathering, as the number of believers—over 3,000—made meeting in one place improbable (Clark, 2006). This reflects the early Christians’ spiritual and doctrinal unity.

Acts 2:44’s phrase καὶ εἶχον ἅπαντα κοινὰ (“and had all things in common”) highlights the unity within the early Christian community. The term κοινὰ, from κοινός, means “communal” in this context (Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, 1975, p. 110). Used in Acts 2:44 and 4:32, it refers to the “community of goods.” This reflects the shared lifestyle of Jesus and his disciples (Luke 8:3; John 12:4–6; 13:29). It was not a structured communism but a Spirit-inspired voluntary brotherhood (Acts 5:3; Untergassmair, 1990). Luke’s wording aligns with Hellenistic ideals and parallels biblical notions of shared faith and salvation (Titus 1:4; Jude 3). Similarly, Acts 4:32 portrays the early believers as being ἑν [a]καρδία καὶ [b]ψυχῇ μία (“one in heart and mind”), signifying a profound communal solidarity and unified purpose. This internal unity found tangible expression in their collective practice of sharing possessions, as individual ownership was relinquished in favour of holding all things in common.

Acts 2:45 and 4:34–35 highlight the selflessness and loving generosity within the early Christian community. The term κτήματα (“possessions”), an accusative plural neuter noun from κτήμα, denotes property or belongings, typically acquired through labour (Bauer, Arndt, & Gingrich, 1975, p. 114; Perschbacher, 1995, p. 249). Parsons and Culy (2008) suggest that this term may refer specifically to real estate, while “possessions” could encompass belongings more generally. Regardless of nuance, all types of possessions were voluntarily sold to address communal needs (Parsons and Culy, 2008, p. 47). Similarly, ὑπάρξεις (“goods”), an accusative feminine plural noun, refers to owned items or property. The verb ἐπιπράσκον (“sold”), the imperfect active third person plural of πωράσκω, in Acts 2:45 conveys the act of selling one’s possessions (Palzkill, 1990). However, this did not abolish private property; rather, believers retained ownership rights while choosing to sell κτήματα (possessions) and ὑπάρξεις (goods) and distributed (διεμέριζον—an indicative imperfect active third person plural verb of διαιμερίζω, meaning “distribute”) the proceeds “to all, as any had need” (Probst, 1990). This form of distribution reflected impartiality, as early Christians gave to anyone in need, regardless of social, ethnic, or religious background.

The use of the imperfect tense in the Greek verbs such as ἦσαν, ἐπιπράσκον, διεμέριζον in Acts 2:44–45 suggests ongoing and voluntary actions rather than a one-time occurrence (Marshall, 1980). This indicates a sustained lifestyle of generosity rather than a compulsory communalism. Moreover, the phrase καθότι ἄν τις χρεῖαν εἶχεν (“as any had need”) underscores that the redistribution of resources was not egalitarian in the sense of equal distribution, but equitable—based on the specific needs of individuals within the community (Bock, 2007). Bock (2007) underscores the importance of Acts 2:45 in portraying the unity and generosity that characterized the early Christian church. In contrast to the individualism and materialism of the surrounding Graeco-Roman culture, believers shared their possessions voluntarily to meet the needs of others, motivated by communal care (Bock, 2007; Hombana, 2023). This was not a complete divestment of property but a pattern of ongoing generosity. The use of imperfect tense verbs in Acts 2:44–45 supports this, indicating repeated actions (Lindsley, 2012). Scholars like Blomberg (1999), Sider (2005), and Stott (1994) note that this continuous practice also appears in Acts 4–5, reinforcing the early church’s sustained charitable spirit.

Guin (2012) explains that Acts 2:45 does not promote communism but reflects the early believers’ willingness to make significant sacrifices to care for those in need. Luke is not proposing a new economic system but echoing the ethical ideals of the Torah (Lev 19:10; 25:35–37; Deut 15:1–2), which emphasize caring for the poor and preventing lasting poverty. This principle is also central to the message of the Prophets, who envisioned the coming Kingdom as a time when the poor would be supported by those with resources (Isa 25:4–5; 29:18–19; 58:6–8; 61:1–3), reflecting divine justice and compassion. Acts 4:34 highlights the early Christian community’s unity and generosity, noting that “there were no needy persons among them” (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐνδεής τις ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς)—an indication of effective poverty alleviation. The word ἐνδεής is a nominative masculine singular adjective of no comparative or superlative form that means “poor, needy, or impoverished.” The Greek adverb οὐδὲ, which functions as a negative particle, is used to negate this term. This indicates that in the early Christian community, efforts were made to ensure that no one among them lived in poverty. The phrase “from time to time” implies that the selling of property and distribution of resources were not permanent or compulsory but occurred occasionally in response to specific needs (Blomberg, 1999, pp. 162, 165; Sider, 2005, pp. 78–79; Stott, 1994, pp. 83–84). When a need arose, individuals were led by the Spirit to sell property and donate the proceeds. The word ἔφερον (“brought”), an imperfect active 3rd person plural verb from φέρω, suggests a continual and voluntary act of bringing goods to the apostles (Wolter, 1990). This reflects a pattern of voluntary wealth redistribution in the early church.

Acts 4:35 emphasizes that the apostles were responsible for fair distribution of resources. The Greek word ἐτίθουν (“put”), from τίθημι, means “to place” and indicates that those who sold property laid the proceeds at the apostles’ feet, symbolizing their authority (Schramm, 1990). The word πόδας (“feet”), from πούς, reinforces this symbolic submission of resources to apostolic leadership, as seen in similar contexts (Matt 15:30; Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2). The Greek verb

διεδίδετο (“distributed”), from διαδίδωμι, is in the imperfect passive form, suggesting ongoing action and indicating that the apostles regularly distributed the funds “to anyone as he had need” (Bergmeier, 1990; Acts 4:35).

The early Christians recognized Jesus’ ownership of both themselves and their possessions (cf. Acts 4:32), leading them to sell property to meet others’ needs as they arose (Acts 4:34–35). This was not socialism or communism, but a radical prioritization of people over possessions (Keener, 1993, p. 330). Their faith was demonstrated through sacrificial generosity (Bock, 2007, p. 214). Acts 4:32–37 emphasizes unity, communal living, and voluntary redistribution to ensure no one lacked basic needs. Barnabas serves as a model of this generosity. The passage reflects how the early Christian community viewed their shared life as a visible expression of God’s grace and power (Bruce, 1990, p. 160).

Theologically, these texts reflect the early Christian understanding of stewardship, where material possessions were viewed not as personal property but as resources entrusted by God for the good of all (Gaventa, 2003). This radical reorientation of economic life was rooted in the community’s identity in Christ, shaped by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and a commitment to mutual care. In summary, the exegetical analysis affirms that the early Christian model, while culturally and historically specific, emphasizes timeless principles such as voluntary generosity, communal responsibility, and ethical stewardship. These principles hold profound implications for modern socio-economic contexts, especially in societies like Nigeria where poverty and wealth inequality persist despite abundant communal and religious resources.

Counterpoints to Contextual Application of Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 in Twenty-First-Century Nigeria

Although the communal practices described in Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 are frequently upheld as models of Christian unity and generosity, their direct application to the contemporary Nigerian context raises important theological and sociocultural concerns. The early church’s model of shared possessions and economic egalitarianism developed within a specific socio-political and religious context marked by a strong communal identity, eschatological expectation, and persecution (Keener, 2012). These formative elements contrast sharply with Nigeria’s pluralistic, economically stratified, and culturally diverse landscape. A primary critique lies in the tendency to idealize the early Christian model without accounting for significant historical and contextual discontinuities. The first-century Jerusalem church existed within a collectivist Jewish framework that supported communal living as an expression of covenantal faithfulness (Witherington, 2007). Conversely, Nigeria’s modern social fabric—shaped by urbanization, capitalism, individualism, and systemic corruption—poses substantial challenges to replicating such a model without nuanced adaptation (Gaiya, 2002).

Furthermore, scholars argue that the communal lifestyle presented in Acts was not intended as a universal prescription but rather as a description of a particular response to the needs of that early community (Marshall, 1980). As such, literal application in the Nigerian context risks unintended consequences, including resource mismanagement and dependency, which undermine the original intent of mutual care. Despite these concerns, the theological principles underpinning the Acts model—particularly generosity, solidarity, and social responsibility—remain relevant. Critics caution, however, against uncritical transplantation of early church structures into a radically different contemporary setting. A more constructive approach involves contextual theology that interprets and applies these principles in a way that engages meaningfully with Nigeria’s unique cultural and economic realities (Orobator, 2008).

Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 in Context of Poverty Eradication in Nigeria

The passages in Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 present a transformative economic vision that is deeply communal and focused on meeting the needs of all members. In these texts, the early Christian community is depicted as practicing a voluntary system of resource sharing and mutual care. This way of life is characterized by unity, selflessness, loving generosity, and the redistribution of wealth to ensure that no one within the community lacks what they need.

Importantly, this economic model was not based on compulsion or enforced collectivism, but on a profound spiritual and social solidarity rooted in love, compassion, and a redefined understanding of ownership (Witherington, 1998). The relevance of this model to contemporary Nigerian society lies in its potential to inspire new ethical paradigms for addressing poverty. Nigerian communities, which often emphasize communal values and extended family systems, may find resonance in the early church's approach to economic life. By prioritizing need over accumulation and promoting voluntary redistribution, this biblical framework challenges prevailing capitalist norms that contribute to inequality and exclusion (Bosch, 1991).

Acts 2:44 and 4:32 emphasize the importance of unity in the early Christian community as a means of addressing poverty. The unity described in these texts, where believers shared everything and were "one in heart and mind," reflects a deep sense of solidarity and collective responsibility. This model is highly relevant to poverty eradication in Nigeria, where inequality and disunity exacerbate economic hardship. If applied, principles of collective responsibility and resource sharing could encourage wealthier individuals to support the less fortunate, thereby reducing income inequality and addressing poverty's root causes. Additionally, policies and social programmes inspired by this communal approach could foster a culture of compassion and solidarity. Given the discrimination and marginalization caused by disunity, a focus on collective action could combat poverty, hunger, and unemployment while promoting fairness and equal opportunities for all Nigerians.

The biblical passages Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 emphasize the early Christian community's commitment to selflessness and communal living, where believers shared their possessions to ensure no one was in need. This principle of selflessness, if applied to Nigerian society, holds significant potential for addressing poverty. In a nation with vast economic disparities, the willingness of individuals and institutions to share resources—beyond charitable donations to include systemic support, ethical governance, and community-based initiatives—can foster greater equity. These scriptures advocate for a collective sense of responsibility and unity, which can inspire Nigerian communities, particularly faith-based organizations, to mobilize resources for sustainable poverty eradication. By prioritizing the needs of the less privileged and promoting wealth redistribution through voluntary sacrifice, Nigeria can move closer to achieving social justice and economic balance.

The account in Acts 4:35, where the apostles were entrusted with the distribution of resources to ensure that no one lived in poverty among them, offers a profound model for addressing poverty in Nigeria. This passage highlights the principles of accountability, equity, and community responsibility in resource management. If adopted, Nigerian society—especially its leaders, faith institutions, and public officials—can use this example to promote transparent and just distribution of national wealth and public resources. By prioritizing the needs of the marginalized and ensuring that resources reach the most vulnerable, as the apostles did, systemic poverty can be significantly reduced. Furthermore, this biblical approach encourages communal care over individual accumulation, challenging corruption and fostering a culture of generosity and social justice essential for national transformation.

Faith-based organizations in Nigeria, particularly churches, can serve as catalysts for such a transformation by modelling this form of economic fellowship. Through initiatives like shared economic ventures, cooperative societies, and needs-based giving, churches can promote a practical theology that integrates spirituality with social responsibility (Kärkkäinen, 2002). Furthermore, applying these principles at the grassroots level—especially within local congregations—could foster community resilience, reduce dependency on external aid, and promote inclusive development. While the historical context of Acts differs from modern Nigeria, the underlying values—compassion, justice, and mutual responsibility—are universally applicable. Integrating these biblical principles into poverty eradication strategies offers not just a spiritual mandate but also a culturally grounded and ethically robust approach to social transformation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to address poverty and promote social justice in contemporary Nigeria, drawing inspiration from the practices of the early Christian community as recorded in Acts:

The Nigerian church should take a leading role in promoting national conversations around unity, selflessness, loving generosity, and equitable resource sharing. By modelling the values exemplified by the early church, the church can be a transformative agent in tackling poverty.

Nigerian political and religious leaders are encouraged to emulate the apostles, who were entrusted with the fair and transparent distribution of communal resources. Such leadership is essential to ensuring equity and justice in Nigeria's economic systems.

Citizens of Nigeria should adopt the early Christians' radical lifestyle of unity, marked by a deep sense of shared purpose and collective identity. This approach can help eliminate favouritism, discrimination, and marginalisation in the nation's economy.

The wealthy in Nigeria are urged to imitate the early believers by willingly sharing their resources to support the needy. This practice of voluntary generosity would signal a powerful rejection of the prevailing individualistic and materialistic culture, fostering a more compassionate and inclusive society.

Conclusion

The economic practices of the early Church, as recorded in Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35, present a powerful paradigm for addressing poverty in contemporary Nigerian society. The ethos of shared resources, voluntary generosity, and communal support exemplified by the early believers challenges modern Christian communities and policymakers to reimagine economic justice through a theological lens. These passages offer a compelling vision of a faith-based approach to socioeconomic transformation—one grounded in unity, compassion, and sacrificial giving.

In a nation like Nigeria, where systemic poverty, corruption, and social inequality remain entrenched, the early Church's model serves not merely as an ideal but as a practical framework for poverty alleviation. By fostering a culture of collective responsibility and ethical stewardship, religious institutions can lead in reshaping societal values around wealth, redistribution, and human dignity. Additionally, this model emphasizes the importance of social cohesion and the role of faith communities in complementing governmental and non-governmental efforts to eradicate poverty.

Ultimately, the economic culture of the early Church challenges Nigerian Christians and faith leaders to move beyond passive religiosity toward active socio-economic engagement. In doing so, they can contribute meaningfully to the realization of a more equitable and compassionate society. As Longenecker (2010) rightly argues, the early Christian vision of economic mutuality, though not a rigid blueprint, offers enduring principles that can inform contemporary responses to poverty. Therefore, a contextual application of Acts 2 and 4 in Nigeria today calls for a revival of intentional communal living, generosity, and systemic reform inspired by biblical justice.

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