

**The abuses that infuriated Jesus:**

a) The merchants selling animals and the money changers had converted the Court of the Gentiles into a noisy market making it impossible for the Gentiles to worship Yahweh.

i) The merchants sold the animals and birds for sacrifice at unjust and exorbitant prices (18 to 20 times the regular price outside the Temple). ii) The animal-inspectors, bribed by the merchants, disqualified even the healthy animals brought by poor shepherds and farmers for sacrifice. This was an unjust extortion at the expense of poor and humble pilgrims, who were practically blackmailed into buying animals and birds from the Temple booths. Jesus considered this a glaring social injustice aggravated by the fact that it was perpetrated in the name of religion.

b) The Temple authorities, by sharing the profit made by the merchants and moneychangers, converted it into a "hideout of thieves" (Mark 11:17; Luke 19:45). Roman coins, bearing the images of pagan gods and the emperor for whom godhead was claimed, were forbidden as offering in the Temple. The moneychangers, who exchanged the Temple coin (Galilean shekel) with Roman coins, demanded 1/6 of the value of the coin as their commission, even from the poor people who had to pay one and a half days of their daily wage as their annual Temple tax.

What especially enraged Jesus was not that a fee was being charged, but that the amount being charged to the poor was exorbitant and, hence, unjust. **What was happening was a great social injustice done in the name of religion.** In fact, the moneychangers were street-level representatives of a corrupt Temple banking system which had become an instrument of injustice, fleecing the poor to benefit the powerful. By chasing the moneychangers and merchants from the Temple, Jesus was questioning the validity of the entire sacrificial system itself -- of Israel's ability to atone for its sins, be forgiven and stand in right relationship with God.

"Jesus' symbolic attack on the Temple would (in His culture) have had a meaning not unlike that of the terrorists who flew planes into the World Trade Centre—symbolically attacking a building that was widely seen as the "nerve center" of an entire network of political, economic and religious power.

In addition to its key religious functions, the Temple had also taken on political and economic roles in Judaea. Apparently, its Treasury was used by many wealthy Jewish people as the 'central bank of Jerusalem,' where they stored their wealth, considering it safe from theft or pillaging." (Dr. Murray Watson).

### **The Ten Commandments Indicator:**

On 3rd February 1959, 10,000 meters above the Atlantic, Captain Lynch took a last look at the flight panel of the Boeing 707. The co-pilot was studying a map. Captain Lynch decided to stretch his legs, thinking that the worst was over. Shortly after leaving Paris they had run into a 120-kph headwind. But by now they had climbed above the storm. The captain made his way down the aisle. Just then the Captain felt the right-wing tip and he was thrown against the seats on the right-hand side. At the same moment all the lights in the plane went out. Next, he found himself lying on the floor. But then he realized it was the ceiling he was on. The Boeing was on its back. He began to make his way back to the cockpit.

The co-pilot had been knocked unconscious. He came to again and he and the captain managed to bring the Boeing to the horizontal. A few more seconds and the plane would have crashed.

The whole incident lasted four minutes. What caused it? While the co-pilot was studying the map, he did not notice the blue light on the indicator panel warning that the automatic pilot had stopped working. God has given us an indicator panel to guide us through life. That indicator panel is the Commandments. The Commandments are a gift from God to help us enjoy life by not getting lost along the way. *(Author Unknown; quoted by Fr. Botelho).*

### **Living the Law:**

Several years ago, a preacher from out-of-state accepted a call to a Church in Boston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had occasion to ride the bus from his house to the downtown area. When he sat down, he discovered that the bus driver had mistakenly given him a quarter too much in change. As he considered what to do, he thought to himself, "You'd better give the quarter back. It would be wrong to keep it." Then he thought, "Oh, forget it, it's only a quarter. Who would worry about this little amount? Anyway, the bus company gets too much fare; they will never miss it. Accept it as a 'gift from God' and keep quiet." When his stop came, he paused momentarily at the door, and then handed the quarter to the driver and said, "Here, you gave me too much change."

The driver with a smile, replied, "Aren't you the new preacher in town?" "Yes," he replied. "Well, I have been thinking a lot lately about going somewhere to worship. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. I'll see you at Church next Sunday." When the preacher stepped off the bus, he literally grabbed the nearest light pole, held on and said, "Oh God I almost sold your Son for a quarter." Our lives are the only Bible some people will ever read! As someone has said, "We need Christians to make Christians." *(J. Valladares in Your Words Are Spirit and They Are Life; quoted by Fr. Botelho).*