

Culture Revival in Igbo Land: the need to Discriminate between Christian Religion and African Culture (A textual Critique on Matthew 22:21's Civic implication)

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Abstract: Cultural revival as a contemporary global reawakening of indigenous people's way of life with its positive and negative effects, on Christianity in Africa, is a discussion which the African Christians must show interest in. The necessity hinges on the fact that a better understanding of this modern wave and demand will reduce conflict between Religions in Africa and Christianity. This opinion is informed by the fact that some in Africa, in the retaliatory quest for freedom had capitalized on this new trend to recuperate deadly and idolatrous practices, hitherto abandoned for good. Some hiding behind the same trend commit heinous crimes against humanity while on another hand good cultural values are less emphasized trivialized with reckless abandon people of other religions like Christianity to be precise. Some Christians to the extreme believe that everything African is demonized. This research applying critical analysis to related literature, Journals, oral interviews and Internet materials on Matthew 22:21 discovered a misapplication that encourages syncretism within African Christianity, lack of the capacity to decipher between culture and religions leading to compromise of faith; hence some difficulty to differentiate Christian religion and African-ness value. Consequently, this paper recommends (a) African Christians' consciousness and appreciation of what is good in African Religions and culture, (b) carefulness to discriminate between the peoples' moral virtues, religious beliefs, practices, and Christianity. This, if successfully achieved, will result in a harmonious relationship between the two religions precipitating from the proper contextualization of Matthew's civic implication.

Keywords: Cultural Revival, Discriminate, Christianity, Culture, Religion, and Critique on Matthew 22:21, Civic implication

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I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural revival as a global phenomenon received impetus from UNESCO global constitution on culture revival thus "signed in Nov. 16, 1945. The constitution, entered into force in 1946, calling for the promotion of international collaboration in education, science, and culture".¹ The term Cultural revival refers to the formation of group identity around a common culture, where a claim is forwarded that the aspects of culture with which the group identifies have been recovered after losses due to colonization, forced or voluntary relocation, oppression, or modernization. Cultural revival is predominantly associated with minority populations and frequently underwrites demands for rights, restitution, and political or legal recognition as an ethnic group. According to scholars, cultural revival is a tactic pursued—consciously or unconsciously—by minority communities to consolidate political identity and gain recognition through an appeal to foundationalist cultural logic—that is, the belief that "authentic" traditions are unchanging and ancient, unique to and defining of a given community, and properly transmitted only to members of that group through heredity and ancestry.²

The global renaissance cultural revival received impetus from the Middle age when mankind began the quest for "the recovering consciousness and the power of self-determination, recognizing the beauty of the outer world and of the body through art, liberating the reason in science and the conscience in religion, restoring culture to the intelligence, and establishing the principle of political freedom".³ The revival of African culture dates back to April 1966 when

Thousands of artists, musicians, performers and writers from across Africa and its Diaspora gathered in the Senegalese capital, Dakar, to take part in the First World Festival of Black and African Culture (Premier

Festival Mondial des arts nègres). The festival constituted a highly symbolic moment both in the era of decolonization and the push for civil rights for African Americans in the United States. In essence, the festival sought to perform an emerging pan-African culture, to give concrete cultural expression to the ties that would bind the African 'homeland' to black people in the diaspora.⁴

The Nigeria FESTAC 1977⁵ in Lagos the then capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria took dressing from the aforementioned UNESCO 1945 constitution,⁶ since then all manners of things gained inroad to Nigeria relating to the reawakening of African traditional religious worship and cultism. The worrisome part of this is the renewal of hostility between Christian religion and African culture.

This revival momentum gained acceleration in the Igbo land where Christian religion had conquered the African traditional religion. The same may be partially true of the western region where there is a larger mix up of Islam and Christianity. The northern part of Nigeria seems to enjoy relative compromise between culture and other religions as Islam is not too strict in trying to draw any line between her and the native way of life including their religion.

The worst of it is that some Christian religionists get confused with one of the texts of the Bible which demands obedience to civil rule relative to taxation to Caesar Matthew 22:21. Severally this civil issue had been misinterpreted leading to a religious lacuna that encourages double standard or syncretism among Biblical ignorant people. In the midst of this, misinterpretation; the Christian religionist looks the other way to enable him or her participate in idol worship, which would have been modified in language. Such Christian religionist is convinced that it does not matter what the original foundation of the art would have been. Further, they are asked to see this traditional worship from their comic entertainment perspective than escalate their rudimental origin.

In this ongoing confused ideology that encourages syncretism, this research looked into the need for discrimination between culture and religion, though; the former is inclusive of the later. To a large extent, however, attempt to discriminate between the two is a difficult task as there can never be a culture without a tincture of religious involvement or vice versa. This is true of Africa that is deeply religious on all fronts. However, this research had taken advantage of the thin line between the duos to attempt a separation religion between and culture to some extent.

It might be necessary to determine what Christian religion is from this onset to enable this research do justice to the set task of drawing the possible dividing line. This will, in turn, determine who is expected to do what and what not to do.

It is a pity to state here the obvious fact that up till now some of the people even at old age do not know the difference between church membership and 'New Birth'. One may not blame anybody as much as one blames the Theologians who may not have known it themselves, how much more teaching others. So one will continue to repeat oneself until Christ comes.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Discriminate

According to Merriam, the Latin word *discriminatus* meaning to distinguish between two things or more to discern, to mark or perceive the distinguishing or peculiar features of, distinguish differentiate, to distinguish by discerning or exposing differences, to distinguish from another like object, to make a distinction, to use good judgment, to make a difference in treatment, or favour one subject against the other and or to discriminate between individuals on merit of identity.⁷ Macmillan Dictionary further defined the same as the art of recognizing the difference between things or discriminate something from something.⁸ From the preceding definition, it is clear that a good understanding of subjects is based on sound judgement otherwise one may pull the tare and corn together without knowing it. This being applicable to the concurrent issue of Culture revival in Africa it is incumbent on the Christian believer to do a thorough study of what is meant by the word culture and or religion as their proper understanding will naturally set the dividing lines between the two. It is, however, not an easy task as the dividing line is very thin. Yet no matter how thin or thick it is a necessity for a good judgement and proper action in the midst of a hazy situation that can make or mar one's choice of lifestyle.

Christianity

The word Christian is derived the Greek word *christianos*, and from *Christos*. It means all of the following (a) one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ (b) disciple- a member of one of the Churches of Christ...a member of the Christian denomination having part in the union of the United Church of Christ concluded in 1961⁹ (c) one that is professing Christianity (d) "The word Christian can be summed up Biblically as someone who is a follower of Jesus Christ".¹⁰ or ethics extracted from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible with greater emphasis on the New Testament.

Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ approximately 2,000 years ago. It is one of the most influential religions in history. Although it began as a small sect of Judaism during the first century

in ancient Israel, the Christian religion has nearly 2 billion followers at the beginning of the 21st century and can be found in virtually every corner of the globe.¹¹

In a stricter sense, the Christian is one who had fulfilled the requirements of John 3:3-7

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is a spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.'

The above condition could be buttressed further to mean "regeneration" not just change of attitude. According to Titus 3:5-7

but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of deeds of ours in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which he poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

The Christian, therefore, is that person in whose life 2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" is made manifest.

This paper wishes to hit hard on this axiomatic point by crying aloud that the Christian is one that is "Born Again" (John 3: 3, 5). This is not merely a derivative title from Church activities, though; church activities are means by which the believer distinguishes himself or herself. Or acquisition by means of Church rituals even though by means of that one enters into physical covenant with Christ Jesus. Please, one may need stress this so that one will not be trivializing the injunction of the Master's great commission in Matthew 28:19ff. Every Christian must be baptized. Every Christian must partake in the Lord's Table as captured by all the gospel authors and the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:15-16: 11:23-26.

It is also imperative to mention that being a Christian demands church membership, so no one should think any less by this paper's approach to the definition of who a Christian is. But in all, it is not Church membership that qualifies one, though; it may lead one to become a Christian. However, the danger of familiarity may creep in where one starts with Church membership making it difficult for regeneration to be archived or prolonged.

Christianity is the religion derived from Jesus Christ, based on the Bible as sacred scripture, and professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal and African Independent Church bodies. It is the conformity to the Christian religion and the practice of Christianity. Christianity as a religion is a form of reformed Judaism. It rose from the rejection of the reform Jesus Christ brought into Judaism. Indeed it started in the temple, continued until after the death of Jesus Christ. It is indeed the allegiance to the Kingdom of Christ on earth. The attitude of those that belong to this kingdom is determined basically by the teachings of Christ in the New Testament. It has a cultural derivative from the Jews as reformed by Jesus Christ on its own seeking to conquer other cultures.

Culture

Culture is an umbrella word which encapsulates a number of institutional values within it. The word is derived from the Latin word "cultura", which literarily means "cultivation".¹² The term Culture is the total life pattern of a people group. This ranges from language, religion, table etiquette, the staple food, life philosophy, and mode of dressing, moral values and many more. In other words

It is the act of developing the intellectual and moral faculties especially by education, expert care and training, enlightenment and excellence of taste acquired by intellectual and aesthetic training, acquaintance with and taste in fine arts, humanities, and broad aspects of science as distinguished from vocational and technical skills, the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations, the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time (popular culture)¹³

Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in 1952 compiled a list of 164 definitions of "culture" in *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*. Time and space will not allow one a critical examination of the definitions... However, Culture metamorphoses can occur by enculturation or acculturation¹⁴ (sharing/transferring/imposing attitudes, values, goals, social principles and practices that characterize an institution, organization, or people group) as one mixes up with others.

In the twentieth century, "culture" became a central term that included anthropology, which involves all classes of human phenomena that are not purely results of human genetics. Specifically, the term "culture" in American anthropology has two meanings: (1) the evolved human capacity to classify and represent experiences

with symbols, and to act imaginatively and creatively; and (2) the distinct ways that people living in different parts of the world classified and represented their experiences, and acted creatively.¹⁵

What is uniquely characteristic about human societies is what required symbolic cognition, which consequently leads to the evolution of culture: "cooperative, mixed-sex social groups, with significant male care and provisioning of offspring, and relatively stable patterns of reproductive exclusion." This combination is relatively rare in other species because it is "highly susceptible to disintegration." Language and culture provide the glue that holds it together.¹⁶

According to Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)... culture is "enlightenment". "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity."¹⁷ He argues that this immaturity comes not from a lack of understanding, but from a lack of courage to think independently.

During the Romantic era, scholars in Germany, especially those concerned with nationalist movements—such as the nationalist struggle to create a "Germany" out of diverse principalities, and the nationalist struggles by ethnic minorities against the Austro-Hungarian Empire—developed a more inclusive notion of culture as "worldview." According to this school of thought, each ethnic group has a distinct worldview that is incommensurable with the worldviews of other groups. Although more inclusive than earlier views, this approach to culture still allowed for distinctions between "civilized" and "primitive" or "tribal" cultures.¹⁸ McGrew suggests a definition of culture that he finds scientifically useful for studying primate culture. He points out that scientists do not have access to the subjective thoughts or knowledge of non-human primates. Thus, if culture is defined in terms of knowledge, then scientists are severely limited in their attempts to study primate culture. McGrew suggests too that one views culture as a process. He lists six steps in the process:

*(1) A new pattern of behaviour is invented, or an existing one is modified, (2) The innovator transmits this pattern to another, (3) the form of the pattern is consistent within and across performers, perhaps even in terms of recognizable stylistic features (4) The one who acquires the pattern retains the ability to perform it long after having acquired it, (5) The pattern spreads across social units in a population. These social units may be families, clans, troops, or bands, and (6) The pattern endures across generations.*¹⁹

McGrew admits that all six criteria may be strict, given the difficulties in observing primate behaviour in the wild. But he also insists on the need to be as inclusive as possible, on the need for a definition of culture that "casts the net widely"²⁰

Culture is considered to be a group-specific behaviour that is acquired, at least in part, from social influences. Here, a group is considered to be the species-typical unit, whether it is a troop, lineage, subgroup, and so on. Prima facie evidence of culture comes from within-species but across-group variation in behaviour, as when a pattern is persistent in one community of chimpanzees but is absent from another, or when different communities perform different versions of the same pattern. The suggestion of culture in action is stronger when the difference between the groups cannot be explained solely by ecological factors.²¹

Nevertheless, the term "culture" applies to non-human animals only if we define culture as any or all learned behaviour. Within mainstream physical anthropology, scholars tend to think that a more restrictive definition is necessary.²² Many more scholars had made valuable contributions to culture than one can carry in this little contribution meant to stir one up in the study of African Culture and Religion in relationship to Christianity.

By definitive limitation, African culture would refer to those behavioural patterns peculiar to the geographically delineated entity called the continent of Africa.

and culture on religion. A good understanding of the culture of any people group will aid in no small measure to the comprehension of the people's religious values and expressions which revolve around their culture (- language, dance, sacrificial materials, place of worship and the object of worship.) The best way to study African Culture and religion that has no holy writ is, though, the pattern of life of the owners of any religion and their environmental factors.

Culture could be summarised to mean (a) The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations, (b) the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group, (c) the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time (d) a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization (e) a set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.²⁴ Culture is a multifaceted term is not easily definable. However, if it is taken to mean the way of thinking and behaviour shared by a substantial social grouping which gives them an identity in relation to others, then it is obvious that all persons participate in one culture or another.

III. FACTORS OF CONFLICT

Imposition (Religion and culture)

The fact that religion does not exist in isolation of culture is obvious. This, therefore, follows that the entry of any religion into any new cultural environment will be found with the temptation to impose its already accumulated culture from the environment of its origin on the host culture. The inability of the proponents of the new religion to recognize other existent cultural values, which may also have been all the time expressed even in their indigenous religion, creates friction. Where the host culture is prone to modification the new culture found in the new religion may tend to influence the host culture or have it displaced. On the other hand, a strong cultural value can resist the new arrival or conflict may ensue.

Misunderstanding of African culture by propagators of Early Christian Religion

The position of early propagators of the Christian religion in Africa is in default of the offence of sweeping condemnation of African culture. Many of them saw everything Africa primitive and obsolete hence they had no value for good African cultural heritage. The use of African musical instruments like drums, gongs, songs and so on that also provide music for African idol worships were a branded fetish, whereas William Booth's instruction, to Salvation Army on melodious band (1816)²⁵ from the world order, remains to cherish, modified and adopted in all churches even now. Other cases like 'Human Sacrifice' in African religion and culture, use of "oji" (Kola nuts), wine for covenant and use of dances in African worship were alike adjudged primitive. The Missionaries applied little or no effort in trying to understand, what led to what? Taking for instance; Human sacrifice which is a universal phenomenon in most religions, Judaism and Christianity inclusive, was not regarded as far as Africa was concerned. The missionaries were tempted to replace African culture with Western cultural practices and Christian Religious tenets without due explanation and sympathy for their lack of African originality.

Cultural Revival

The Cultural Revival is held in the context of the 2005 UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural values²⁶ This concept received popularity in Nigeria in the act of National Cultural Revival of 1977 tagged FESTAC 77 at the National Cultural Centre in Lagos; the then capital of the nation. Some had blamed the downturn of Nigerian economy on this frivolous squandermania. Some from the spiritual perspective argue that that was the handing over of a nation that had the fear of God as her foundation to all kinds of demonic clutches. Yet another school of thought saw in the festival; the reawakening of African cultural consciousness. And a means by which Africa had to reconstruct her past, reinterpret her present and to launch out to recover her lost cultural values and virtues. This last view seems to be the main aim of the festival, yet its adverse effect on the nation lingers on as dead negative religious beliefs and practices are resurrected and amalgamated with culture as if there is no dividing link between the two.

Textual Critique on Matthew 22:21

In course of this ongoing quest to revive the peoples' culture and at the point of conflict between Christian religion and Culture, by dubious or ignorant protagonists of culture revival reference is made to Matthew 22:21 "... They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's", this they do and would compel others to; without the recognition that this was not a proverb or hidden information but as though of a divine Authority for all to concur to. However, it is necessary for this research to re-examine the text and context as appeals are made to scholars to determine the proper exegesis of the text.

Barnes commenting on the above phrase, "Render, therefore", considered Caesar's image and name on the coin as a proof that the coin belonged to Caesar and so,

*It was proper, therefore, to give it back to him when he called for it. But while this was done, he took occasion to charge them also to give to God what he claimed. This may mean either or both (1) the annual tribute due to the temple-service, implying that paying tribute to Caesar did not free them from the obligation to do that; or (2) that they should give their hearts, lives, property, and influence, all to God, as his due.*²⁷

And in comparison with the same word "Render therefore" in Romans 13:7, "Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honour to whom honour is due" he further quipped that this phrase which is repeated variously in the Bible as in Matt. 22:21; Matt 17:25-27; 1Peter 2:13-17; Proverb 24:21. It is one of the most lovely and obvious of the duties of religion. Christianity is not designed to break in upon the proper order of society, but rather to establish and confirm that order. It does not rudely assail existing institutions; but it comes to put them on a proper footing, to diffuse a mild and pure influence overall, and to secure such an influence in all the relations of life as shall tend best to promote the happiness of man and the welfare of the community. "Is due". To whom it properly belongs by the law of the land, and according to the ordinance of God. It is represented here as a matter of debt, as something which is due to the ruler; a fair compensation to him for the service which he renders us by devoting his time and talents to advance our interests, and the welfare of the community. As taxes are a debt, a matter of strict and just obligation, they should be paid as conscientiously and as cheerfully as any other just debts, however, contracted.²⁸

Clark in his contribution aimed at the proper positioning of this text as against the inherent and expressed misinterpretation and misapplication of says the phrase is an extensive command. Be rigidly just; withhold neither from the king nor his ministers, nor his officers of justice and revenue nor from even the lowest of the community, what the laws of God and your country require you to pay. Tribute to whom tribute. φερον. This word probably means such taxes as were levied on persons and estates. Custom to whom custom is due. τελος This word probably means such duties as were laid upon goods, merchandise, on imports and exports; what we commonly call custom. On this place has quoted some good authorities for the above distinction and signification. Both the words occur in the following quotation from Strabo: αναγκη γαρ μειουσθαι τα τελη, φρων επιβαλλομενων (anagkē gar meioussthai ta telē, phrōnepiballomevwn). Therefore, Render therefore unto Caesar is a

*Conclusion...drawn from their (Inquirers) own premises. You acknowledge this to be Caesar's coin; this coin is current, in your land; the currency of this coin shows the country to be under the Roman government, and your acknowledgement that it is Caesar's proves you have submitted. Don't, therefore, be unjust; but render to Caesar the things which you acknowledge to be his; at the same time, be not impious, but render unto God the thing's which belong to God. This answer is full of consummate wisdom. It establishes the limits, regulates the rights, and distinguishes the jurisdiction of the two empires of heaven and earth. The image of princes stamped on their coin denotes that temporal things belong all to their government. The image of God stamped on the soul denotes that all its faculties and powers belong to the Highest God, and should be employed in his service. But while the earth is agitated and distracted with the question of political rights and wrongs, the reader will naturally ask, What does a man owe to Caesar? - to the civil government under which he lives? Our Lord has answered the question - That which IS Caesar's. But what is it that is Caesar's? 1. Honour. 2. Obedience. And 3. Tribute. The civil government under which a man lives, and by which he is protected, demands his honour and reverence.*²⁹

Civic implication

From the preceding comments and other scholarly conclusions, it is settled that this life episode remains indisputably a civic responsibility that has neither cultural nor religious connotation nor implication. Therefore, it is unscriptural to appeal to this text as a base to insist that Jesus Christ had permitted double standard hence one may have the privilege of being predisposed to the demands of demonic religio-cultural related issues and yet retain one's Christian faith.

Furthermore, the problem that ensues against the concept of a double standard with this textual misinterpretation and representation manifest the more when one considers, 1) what actually led to the statement made by Jesus Christ in Matt.22:21, as was necessitated by the entrapping subtleties of the Pharisees? Here the obvious attempt was to conflict Jesus Christ with Caesar – a clear ploy employed to default and to condemn Jesus Christ; 2) this was a life story. Therefore, it needs no other interpretation and representation as doing so will tantamount to reading meaning into the text, which is not permitted in biblical scholarship; 3) it was not a proverb so had no other hidden meaning more than its civic implication as contemporaneously discussed, and so trying to in-fix a none existent meaning is not allowed in Biblical scholarship; and or 4) that was Jesus insistence on the Christian's civic duty. Of course, that was both, the scenario, content and intent of Jesus Christ's answer, no more, no less. That is also what Apostle Paul reiterated in Romans chapter seven. On the

bases of the arguments, this research insists that any attempt to comply as means to induce the Christians into syncretism remains nullity. The phrase has no religious value than its civic responsibility.

Christianity and Culture

From the preceding perspective, the wrong interpretation and implementation of the phrase under review raise conflict between culture and the Church in Africa. There is no gainsaying, the fact that Christianity though nurtured in Palestine in its first century had been heavily influenced by Hebrew culture. Some of these cultural values are further compounded by Western influence. For this paper, it is the Western influence in Christianity that is more of African problem than the Hebrew cultural traits which, rather, to a large percentage agree with African culture.

It might be of necessity to mention again here that Culture as an umbrella word which encapsulates all manner of human values needs to be discriminated from religion to some extent. The former is wider than the later which its minute part is. This paper opines that the hub of difference between the two is in, 'which God/gods are real, and ought to be worshipped and what constitutes worship?' Otherwise, there is hardly any significant difference between the core Hebrew Culture, Christian Culture and that of the Igbo of Africa.

Finally, the position of this paper is clear that not all African Cultures are bad, rather most of them agree with Old Testament of the Bible which constitutes the base of Christian Culture. If one talks of marriage for instance polygamy is not peculiar to Africa as the Christian Patriarchs were polygamous, African hospitality is the same as that of the Jews who must receive strangers as their fathers were stranger (wondering Aramians). Communal life was the bedrock of Jewish relationship unlike the individualist life of the Westerner World where no one cares about the other. In Western culture one has to write letters and or make pre-contacts for a permission to visit a brother, but in Jewish culture one can go to his neighbour in the dead of the night to obtain favour (the unjust Judge), which is also an Africa philosophy of life of "Agbata obi onyebunwanneya" (one's neighbour is his/her brother or sister).

African Christians may just need to differentiate between religion and Culture to some extent to fit into both societies. The compromising of either of the two in favour of the other will bring serious identity crises. African Christian needs to always remember what it is and what African Traditional Religion is, after all the Bible itself says that the Leopard does not change its colour as Africa must not just forget her culture to imbibe all Western. The Africans must also guard against mixing her peculiar core cultural values with Christian cultural backgrounds as that will amount to embellishment. Hear the ruling concerning the Gentile world as a guide to one's approach to Culture.

Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting. Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:22-2)

The Bible through this ruling encourages the retaining of African cultural values within Christianity. But that cannot be said to permit syncretism with baseless and out of context appeals to clear Bible statements.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that;

1. Believers acknowledge the fact that there is a dividing line between Culture (total lifestyle) and Religion (Idol Worship or that of the true God),
2. Believers re-asses their individual clan and tribal cultures to determine to what extent they may need to be involved, and
3. Believers remove themselves from the resurrection of Idol worships going in different communities in the name of cultural revival more so when it involves luring with wrong quotation and misinterpretation of Matthew 22:21.

V. CONCLUSION

Permit a by way of conclusion hereby, to say again that one needs to distinguish between Religion and Culture to some extent relative to content, intent and relationship. Here Religion is the act of worship of God/gods. It is loosely separated from Culture. One may also need to acknowledge that the Christian believer's dilemma as it relates to culture emanates from the misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Matthew 22:21 to

lure unsuspecting Christians into idol worship. This played out in the case of the Church of Scotland mission that was influenced to use Ekpe-Cult methods to pass information and implement church decisions. The church did not discriminate properly between religion (idol worship) and culture in this circumstance. It had a ripple effect among Cross River/Igbo basin, Efiks and Ibibio Presbyterians as those who brought the Church or visited Efik and Ibibio area in/from our individual communities could not but do so too. People on this note gave names to one of the Churches as “Church makamaka” in Ohaozara area, “Church Omereali” in Afikpo and Edda areas. I do not know your area. This may not have been peculiar to this mainline church,

Festivals in Igbo land come after a period of hard work that ordinarily called for relaxation. To enforce this; the gods are involved, 1. to stop people trivializing the same, 2. to stop miscreants who may wish to exploit the solemn moment to perpetrate their nefarious enterprise while others would be at home for the festivals. And for the overall protection of the Society, the paraphernalia of the gods are employed in the Masquerades³⁰. These Masquerades are mere entertainment instruments, I agree, but can a Christian delight in this mixture of culture and Religion miss using give to Caesar that which is Caesars? Yet one needs to acknowledge that sacrifices are involved before these Masquerades come to play. So we must be careful. Anybody trying to reconstruct and reinterpret history must remember to separate himself from modern bias and influence of the modern society which is already faith-based influenced.

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