

Cultural and Spiritual Implications of Head Covering Among the Igbo Christians of Southeastern Nigeria

Gaius Anonaba Umahi

ABSTRACT - The issue of head covering as penned by Paul has never ceased to confront and challenge scholars and lay-people alike, especially concerning its application in the 21st Century. This paper endeavored to trace the history of the Igbo people, noting especially their cultural and religious inclinations. It explored the cultural and theological bases of head covering as understood in Igboland and the challenges the Christians have had to encounter as a result of the expectations from conservative Christians and even non-Christians. The cultural basis for head covering suggested that Igbo women who cover their heads do so because of the cultural expectations. At the same time, others within the same culture contend that women cover their heads on theological basis, namely, the injunction of Paul in 1Cor 11.2-16. This paper therefore argues that the theological reasoning is more compelling as a basis for head covering in Igboland. This, however, does not imply that one should make the lives of women miserable due to their non-conformity since the principle motif towers above the practice.

Keywords: culture, head covering, Igboland, Africa, Seventh-day Adventists, implications, principle, practice.

Manuscript received Oct, 2, 2011; revised Jan. 19, 2012; accepted Feb. 20, 2012.

Gaius Anonaba Umahi (essygate@yahoo.com) is with Religious Studies Department, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria.

I. Introduction

The injunction of Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 about head covering has generated much discussion among educated and uneducated members of the various Christian faiths – especially in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in most of Africa. Actually, if some of the principles articulated by scholars (Akpa, 2011, pp. 117-124) were faithfully followed by the modern reader, the level of acrimony and theological wars in the churches would be radically reduced. Especially fascinating is the principle which advises readers not to be dogmatic over Paul's writings (p.125). Although this work is situated in Nigeria especially among the Igbo of South-East, some of the arguments and conclusions are germane to the life of other Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventists in Africa and beyond. Interestingly, the majority of Seventh-day Adventists in Nigeria are Igbo people and their religious fervor is well attested to by other Christians in the country. With this background, it is understandable why the injunction of Paul has raised much controversy in most of the churches in Igboland – Adventists and others. This paper, however, focuses on the cultural and spiritual implications of the injunction to the Christians and non-Christians in Igboland. The historical and participant observation methods of inquiry are utilized in this study.

In this pericope, 1 Cor 11:2-16, Paul proposes, among other things, that a man should not cover his head while praying or prophesying and that a woman should not uncover her head while doing the same. This injunction seems to evoke a worship situation in the church at Corinth. Generally, the passage can be outlined as follows: Pauline commendation (vs. 2), consideration of the headship structure and the meaning of κεφαλή (vs.3), reasons for the injunction and what the covering is (vv. 4-9), the hermeneutical challenge of ἐξουσία and τοὺς ἀγγέλους, (vs. 10), a re-evaluation of the headship structure (vv. 11,12), a re-consideration of the covering argument (vv. 13-15) and Pauline commendation (v.16). Because of the focus and volume of this paper, all the aspects outlined above will not be dealt with. We shall however deal with what the covering is from the biblical point of view and juxtapose that with the cultural understanding of the Igbo people.

Concerning what the covering is, there is division among scholars. For some, the covering is something apart from the κομή (the long hair). Akpa (2011, p. 126) in his textual study of verse 15 correctly posits that the variant κάλυμμα (veil) was a later addition by the

church fathers. So, while the reading, ἐξουσίαν (authority), is attested to by reliable manuscripts as early as A.D. 200 (such as P⁴⁶, **8**, A, B, C, D, as well as notable Church Fathers), the reading, κάλυμμα, is attested to in later manuscripts such as *vg*, *cop*, *arm*, as well as Church Fathers such as Origen, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Jerome, and Augustine (Umahi, 2010, p. 100). However, although “several of the earliest manuscripts are the most reliable – a position constantly affirmed by the Alands” (Comfort, 1992, p.40), it is equally true that “an ‘early’ manuscript is not always the most trustworthy (Comfort, 2005, p.103).

Among the Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria, there are some perceived strong cultural and religious expectations that require women to cover their heads for all public programs, especially in worship. Part of the rationale for this expectation is the injunction in the pericope under focus. *These expectations have of recent assumed some complex dimensions as questions are raised by some men and women on the appropriateness of continuing with such long standing expectations, whether cultural or biblical. These questions may have been raised given the contemporary gender drives and biblical re-interpretations in some circles.*

These voices emerge from both cultural and religious circles. Those who argue from the cultural perspective posit that the Igbo culture actually expects women to cover their heads *as a sign of marital responsibility and fidelity and not authority as suggested in the text (vs. 10) and some scholars like Akpa (2011, p. 126). On the other hand, those on the religious side, like Hobson (1996, p. 35), opine that women should cover their heads because of spiritual or religious obligations. Yet, another group, represented by Ice (1987, p.88), argues that in an age of freedom, the cultural and religious barriers should be dismantled completely. In the midst of this seeming controversy between continuity and discontinuity, this paper evaluates the merits or otherwise of the various arguments by drawing some cultural and spiritual implications for the contemporary Igbo society.*

II. Brief History of Igbo People

The Igbo people are among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. Their several unique features include, but are not limited to, their historical origin and their general enterprising and resilient spirit. Historically, Ogbalu (p. 5), a notable Igbo writer and a custodian of

Igbo history and culture, posits that “it is not certain from when, where, and how the Ibos [sic] came to occupy their present place of abode.” Nwankwo (1992, p. 35) agrees with Ogbalu and situates the Igbo history within the movements and migrations of people following the confusion of tongues (see Gen. 11:7-9) but quickly avers: “but when and how the Igbo migrated and settled in the Southeastern part of what is known today as Nigeria is a mere.”

In his effort to explain this supposed “conjecture” about Igbo origin, Afigbo (1981, p. 2) gave one possible reason. He asserted:

Of all African ethnic nationalities of about their (Igbo) numerical size and general dynamism, the Igbo are the least studied, the people we know the least about the main landmarks in their cultural evolution.

He has offered some reasons for this state of Igbo history. Firstly, the Igbo did not have any literary culture till the imposition of European rule. Secondly, their land lay outside the areas traversed by the early Arab or European travelers until over a century ago. Thirdly, the Igbo did not have a centralized system of government like that of Benin or Oyo, whose central governments had helped in preserving and transmitting their oral traditions. The phrase, *Igbo enwe eze*, (the Igbo has no king) seems to buttress the lack of a central kingship system in Igboland. Lastly, and on account of the factors mentioned above, it suggests that scholars have not deemed it necessary to “tackle the problem of reconstructing the Igbo past.” To Igbokwe (1995, p. 2), “the historical problem of the Igboman since the inception of Nigeria has been how to convince his fellow Nigerians that he is part and parcel of the political entity called Nigeria.”

Generally, there are some theories about the origin of the Igbo people. The first is the Jewish root theory. According to Afigbo (1981, p. 6), quoting from G.T. Basden, there are many similarities between the Jewish nation and the Igbo people. These similarities, according to him, include deep religiosity, practice of circumcision and mummification. Their sentence structures seem to have some connections, too. Before Basden, an Igbo ex-slave, Olaudah Equiano, based on his ethnographic and cultural studies, supports the Jewish origin of the Igbo people (Afigbo, 1981, p.6). Some Igbo scholars in recent times have also argued “that their ancestors were Jews and that the words Uburu (the name of a number of Igbo towns) and Igbo are corruptions of the word Hebrew.” To this proposition, Igbokwe (1995,

p. 2) opines that “Igbos [sic] may not have any genealogical relationship with the Jewish race as such but they have historical semblances with them.”

Another theory links their origin to the Egyptians. Afigbo (1981, p. 6) cited M.D.W. Jeffreys as one authority behind this theory. He wrote extensively on ethnography and ethno-history of the Igbo. His impression stems from the dual division in Igbo social structure, which corresponds with the Upper and Lower divisions of Egypt. He also sees a link between the *ichi* facial marks of the northern Igbo (Nsukka, Onitsha, and Enugu areas) and other features of the Igbo traditional religion as having originated in or been impacted by Egypt.

Finally, there is the indigenous theory. Ogbalu (p.5) writes that

The significant thing is that a majority of Ibos {sic} themselves believe that they were indigenous to the area they now occupy and did not migrate from any other part of the world. They believe God (*Chineke*) created and planted them where they are now and that they have no other ancestral link with any other people outside their frontiers.

Corroborating this possibility or assumption, Afigbo (1981, p. 7) posits that “most in fact claim that their ancestors either came out of the ground (*si n`ala pute*) or fell down from heaven.’ Given these conflicting reports Afigbo (1981, p. 7) has called for “the re-interpretation of whatever material we have on the past of the Igbo people.” By this, he seems to be calling all scholars of Igbo extraction to come together and etch out an acceptable and dependable history of the Igbo people, especially concerning their origin which is presently conjectured.

A. Igbo Culture

The Igbo people are replete with a rich culture. Some of them include *iri ji* (new yam festival), *iru mgbede* (fattening of female), *iche oji* (presentation of colanut), *iti nmanwu* (masquerade) *ichi ozo* (taking of title), *ilu nwanyi* (marriage), and *igbotu nma* (retirement), among others. Unfortunately, a careful analysis of Igbo cultural life (in its diverse presentations) reveals a marked decline. Ilogu (1974, p. 201), trying to account for this observed that:

Decay in the Ibo moral code started when Christianity was

preached directly against some Ibo beliefs like the spirit world of the Ibo and the earth goddess (*ala*) and her sanctity around which a good deal in that moral code was built.

This apparent drop in the preservation and showcasing of Igbo cultural life may be blamed on the external “pressure” on the Igbo people. These “pressures,” in simple terms, may be observed in the fact that many Igbo people are living in three worlds of competing norms. The first is the old traditional way, which is no longer together and effective as it used to be but yet will not be allowed to die completely. A good example is the New Yam Festival celebration. Prior to this time, no one could harvest yam from his farm till the festival was done. The other world refers to some Christian values, like the prohibition of polygamy, which are not very clear to the people but yet demand total allegiance. Lastly, there is what Ilogu (p. 200) called “the utilitarian modernistic demands of technological secularization and its own culture.” According to him, “this technological culture is not clearly defined and yet it remains very attractive.” The Internet, for example, now provides services for match-making men and women. Generally, the sweeping wind of secularization is now bent on destroying the remnant of Igbo cultural life.

B. Religious Life

A cursory observation immediately reveals that the Igbo people are deeply and incurably religious. They believe in one Supreme Being called *Chukwu* (*Chi ukwu*) – a big God that is distinct from smaller ones. This Being is also called *Chineke* (the God who creates). This God lives on high (*obi n`elu*), which is not necessarily equivalent, as Ogbalu (p. 45) contends, to the biblical heaven “because the Ibos (sic) have no conception of the biblical heaven.” The small gods as compared to *Chukwu*, are not idols. Instead, “they are Chi, the personal god of a man or woman.” These personal gods, like *Chukwu*, cannot be represented in any form or shape as it is with idols. There are also idols (*arusi*) which have to be placated by their devotees. All of these nonetheless, point to the deep religious life of the Igbo people.

III. Cultural Basis of Head Covering in Igbo Culture

Culture has been defined as “a society’s shared and socially transmitted ideas, values, and perceptions, which are used to make sense of experience and generate behavior” (Haviland et al, 2006, p.348). It reflects the values, beliefs and attitudes which are commonly learned and shared. Using the participant- observation technique, it is arguable that most women in Igboland still cover their heads with a scarf or shawl. Those women who cover their heads in Igboland base their practice on the demands of culture. This practice is seen in the market places, farms and other social gatherings like marriages, funerals and chieftaincy title taking. From this aspect, it seems that head covering is perceived to be a part of Igbo culture. One of the reasons for this postulation is the fact that even women who are not Christians often cover their heads when attending any of the programs mentioned above. The deep-seatedness of this culture is further established when it is observed that most of these women even ‘cover their heads at home.’

According to the interviews conducted, there is an emerging group of Igbo people who believe whole-heartedly that the injunction for head covering is indigenous to the Igbo. Long before Christianity appeared in the horizon, such people contend, Igbo women had started covering their heads for traditional and social reasons and occasions. Most of those interviewed believe that it is the cultural institution which gave birth to the veiling practice for women. For instance, interviewees, such as Michael Onweremadu, Theresa Ugwoje, and Nwannediya Okereke, among others, suggest that the practice of head covering in Igboland stems from a pre-Christian period. One of the interviewees inferred that head covering was such a serious matter, that if any part of the head were exposed, the one concerned was to be penalized. While this postulation appears to be deep seated in the mind of most of the interviewees and also enjoys a wide acceptance, the contrary opinion is equally compelling.

While some people are strongly opinionated about this position, it is yet to be determined, historically, when this ‘traditional practice’ actually began. For instance, it is believed that the advent of Christianity in Igboland dates around the 1840s. According to Amadiume (1987, p. 119), quoting Elizabeth Isichei, “Christianity first reached Igboland through the Delta States. The first contact with Christian missionaries was in 1841 in Aboh.” This is supported by Falk (1997, p. 340) who inferred that “the preparation for the

introduction of Christianity into Nigeria took place from 1841, with the first Niger expedition, to 1885, when Britain proclaimed the protectorate.” However, as far I know through this research, there is no date attached to the genesis of this presumed cultural practice of head covering prior to the advent of Christianity.

Really, this position is very tempting because a lot of non-Christian women still cover their heads today. This is often pointed to as proof for the existence of the practice before Christianity’s entrance. Could it be that these people were strong in preserving their culture of head covering – not willing to let go – or could it be that the influence of the Christian religion (which also seems to have demanded head covering) has been so widespread and engaging that many people bought into the practice and it subsequently morphed into a ‘culture’? The latter seems to be the case as we shall find out shortly.

IV. Theological Basis of Head covering

Another set of people who argue for head covering in Igbo land, especially for the women, base it on the supposed injunction of Paul in 1Cor 11:2-16. Part of this injunction says that “every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered dishonoureth his head but every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven (vs.4,5 KJV). Those who differ from the proponents of head covering as the product of indigenous culture of the Igbo people opine that it was the Christian religion that gave rise to the “culture” of head covering today in Igboland.

One of those interviewed on this issue, Ngwu Nwanjoku Añasi, over 90 years old, gave a compelling, comprehensive and convincing history of the evolution of head covering in her town, Uburu. During an interview with her, she asserted that prior to the coming of Christianity, women in this town not only went about with uncovered heads but a majority went about their legitimate duties half naked. Those of them who were involved in the salt business went to the salt lake with little or no covering. The action of these women should be understood as circumstantial and not deliberate.

However, with the passage of time and through the effort of one of the earliest educated indigenes, the late Engineer Aja Eze, the practice of going to the salt lake half naked was outlawed. These things

happened approximately between the 1900s and 1920s. This practice was going on irrespective of the fact that the missionaries established the Presbyterian Joint Hospital as early as 1912, one of the foremost hospitals in eastern Nigeria. We also should note that the hospital naturally 'gave birth' to one of the Christian denominations, the Presbyterian Church, in those early years. With the presence of the missionaries, the hospital on one hand and the church in the other, the local and indigenous women still went about with what they had. This scenario completely rules out the possibility that head covering was indigenous to the Igbo people.

Apart from the testimony of Ngwu Nwanjoku Añasi, there are other interviewees (like Uwadiogwu Elijah, Henry Maduka, Anna Igbojionu and Odochi Agu) who believe that the practice of head covering actually originated with the advent of Christianity. To such people, with the overwhelming acceptance of the Christian faith (which involved the majority with the passage of time), and the deep commitment and show of spiritual fervor by these Christians, it soon became a common practice overtime. This can be illustrated by the Igbo proverb which says that *aru nọ otu afo ya agho omenala*. This literally means that when an evil practice lasts for one year, it morphs into a culture. In this case, the many years which transpired since the introduction of Christianity thus gave rise to this cultural practice.

While the discussion on which institution originated head covering in the Igbo milieu – culture or Christianity – goes on, one seminal question needs to be answered. Since it is known that before the advent of Christianity in the 1840s in Igboland many of the people – men and women – went about with only beads and loincloths and, in some places, out right naked, where did the women get the cloth, scarf or shawl to cover their heads? While some argue that the same loincloths for covering the waist served this purpose, it is hard to believe in the face of want and poverty. It seems that the practice then was to protect the waist region while every other part was left open, including the breasts. This question is further intensified when it is known that modern clothing came much later from the White man. Hitherto, the best forms of clothing in vogue were animal skins and leaves sewn together, the former being the exclusive preserve of the rich (which actually covered the waist regions only).

While this Pauline text of 1 Corinthians is highly controversial even in Christian circles, and while this article is not tailored to deal with all the contextual convolutions in the pericope, I believe that the expectation for women to cover their heads in Igboland could not

really be as a result of an original culture but an ‘adopted culture.’ From the perspective of the Igbo, this ‘adopted culture’ later witnessed a plethora of interpretations and applications. Having fairly dealt with the issue of priority, I will now delve into the major theological issues which Paul addressed in the text. Generally, an intentional reading of the passage shows that the issues of headship, differentiation of the sexes, and decorous behavior before God stand out among other factors which Paul may have had in mind.

V. Theological Implications of the Practice

The first theological implication of head covering for the Igbo Christian is that he or she should accept that the headship structure as penned by Paul is of God and thus eternal. Thus, while Christ is the head of the man, man is the head of the woman, at least functionally, and, of course, God is the head of Christ. In a graphic manner:

| | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| Christ | <i>heads</i> | man |
| Man | <i>heads</i> | woman |
| God | <i>heads</i> | Christ |

It is important, therefore, for Igbo women to recognize their husbands as heads (functionally) and accord them the inherent honor due them. Other females (who are unmarried) are also to acknowledge the same to other males. In fact, within Igbo culture, it is known that when *oji* (kolanut) is presented and broken, every male has to take a piece before any female takes. In God’s order, the woman is also expected to cooperate with man’s leadership. Although Akpa (2011, p. 126) has opined that “the Corinthian women had problem with gender distinction at sacred assemblies” and James Dunn (2003, p. 1338) suggested that the woman’s head that will be shamed arises “out of the failure to maintain the distinctions – of status, gender, ethnicity, and so on – around which a society organizes its common life,” the issues of headship and decorum cannot be ruled out in the pericope (Guthrie and Motyer, 1970, p. 1066; Nichol 1980, p. 754). While some believe that the covering is a sign of that acceptance, I believe that other attitudes can show it. For example, the way a woman dresses, behaves and comports herself in the home and elsewhere can easily indicate this acceptance.

We need to emphasize that this headship or leadership role of the male does not suggest nor support the subordination and subjugation of females. While he is still, arguably, ‘the first among equals,’ she must still be respected. Igenoza (2003, p.62) used the right registers when he opined that “neither is subservient to the other nor is one superior to the other for both are in the image of God.” Thus, those males who still repudiate, bully, and subjugate females should have a rethink and reflect on the painful remarks of Nwagwu (2002). She observes that notwithstanding the many seminars and workshops which discuss the issue of discrimination against women “yet the derogatory condition of women enslavement continues and even increases in cultural settings, church circles, family structures, offices, political arena and economic spheres (p. 66).”

The other theological implication suggests that the Igbo Christian should not be concerned with the actual practice of head covering but with the principle. The interviews and observations show that there is discernible variation from one Christian Church to the other. Even the African Religionists varied in their understanding. In the face of such conflicting understandings, the principle motif will serve a better purpose for the contemporary Igbo Christians. Such a principle approach will reduce the present conflict generated by a disposition of enforcing the actual covering.

VI. Socio-cultural Implication

Yamsat (2004, p. 26) has observed that while in some places, including ancient Corinth, the mindset of some of the women was to show their rejection for male domination and thus cast off their covering to show freedom and equality, it is different in Nigeria, especially, and Africa in general. To him, “the lack of covering in some churches is more for attraction than a mark of equality with their male counterparts.” Further, he asserts, “By keeping their expensive hairdo exposed, they have the feeling of being up to date and attractive (p.26).” A. Oepke, quoted by Okoko (2004, pp.19, 20), also affirms that the veil “was worn partly as an adornment and partly on such occasion as match-making and marriage.” In simple terms, the basic reason for covering or not covering the head for most Christian women today is not in obedience of the Pauline injunction but to enhance their status and show that “they also belong.”

Therefore, the cultural implication of head covering to the Igbo Christian will be first and foremost to recognize that culture in and of itself, is not bad. Ng (2005, p. 57) has noted that “while the church cannot give Christian content to every African custom, we believe that the church throughout Africa has a very rich contribution to make to the world church.” But it is doubtful, he continues, to argue that “the Bible is not a standard on culture...” but just “a testimony to revelations regarding the character of God.” Again, we need to take notice of Richard Niebuhr’s submission as quoted by Blanco (1994, p.108): “Christ against culture, Christ in culture, and Christ above culture. This indicates that not all cultures are useful to the Christian. It further implies that the Igbo Christian should not attack any culture that is not against any biblical principle. In fact, according to Kraft (2005, p. 35), “it we are to witness effectively to human beings, we have to take into account the culture in which these human beings live.” In this respect, Arthur L. White asserts that his mother, E.G. White, wrote in the *Review and Herald* of 1905 that the workers of the church should follow the customs of the people where they work, if there is no compromise with principle. By extension, it means that if indeed the practice of head covering is really a cultural thing (whether introduced by Christianity or otherwise) there will be no reason to quarrel with it except where its implementation negates other Christian values, like love. And that is the case with its present enforcement.

The other cultural implication is the fact that customs are not static. As Moreau (2006, p.267) asserted, “Like individuals, cultures are not static. They are dynamic and always changing.” Goldstein (2007, p.90) put it beautifully when he stated that “times change, cultures change, attitudes change, and people change.... But God Himself, and His purposes for us, remain the same.”

Another cultural implication is that Igbo Christians (who possibly practice head covering as a cultural requirement) must not expect other Christians elsewhere to follow their practice or judge them for non-practice. And even if they expect others to do the same and such Christians refuse, they should not be labeled, denigrated and maligned as unserious Christians who are bent on removing all the vestiges of purity and righteousness in Christendom. O’Donovan (2000, p.268) submitted that “there is no suggestion in the Bible that God considers any culture group superior to all other culture groups.” Such parochial views tend to increase the restlessness and discomfort of the people who expect others to act and behave according to their

own supposed cultural inclinations and regulations. This does not suggest that there are no Christian lifestyles, according to Pipim (1993, p.129) that are “supra-cultural within our modern context of cultural diversity.” That is, some cultures cut across the Christian spectrum, whether in Africa, Asia or America.

Generally, it seems that based on contextual and syntactical considerations, there is a high probability that the women in Corinth understood the covering that Paul spoke about to be something apart from the hair. Some internal evidences that support this is the fact that Paul employed a jussive imperative there, “let her be shorn” if she is not covered. Evidently, if the long hair served as a ‘covering,’ there will be no need for the command. Again, there would be lots of confusion over the ‘length’ of the hair that would qualify as “long hair” especially when some men also have ‘natural long hairs.’ Further, if the covering of the man is not the hair, then hardly can it be for the woman. Beyond this, the women in Corinth must have understood the shameful implications of being shorn. It seems to me therefore that the covering that Paul was dealing with is something that should cover the hair, which is the glory of the woman (v.15). Moreover, even if long hair is the covering and ‘glory’ for the woman, is it not proper that only the glory of God should be the focus and attention in such spiritual convocations?

VII. Conclusion

The study on head covering showed a wide range of implications: first for the Igbo people in general and for the Igbo Christians in particular. The implications were theological and socio-cultural. The theological implication is twofold. The first suggested that the Igbo Christian woman should continue to respect and honor her husband (if married) and if not married, still accord the same respect to the men as heads or leaders in the home or church structure.

The other aspect demonstrated that the goal should be to pursue the principle behind head covering in our contemporary society. Although the interviewees and scholars were divided on the issue, it was also discovered that the reasons for believing the principle motif were more compelling and convincing. As a result, it was suggested that the principle behind the head covering is more important for the contemporary Igbo Christian.

Two issues came to the fore concerning the socio-cultural implication. The first talked about the social usage of head covering for important weddings, rallies, or some esteemed church services. In this regard, it was discovered that the *gele* (big scarf) has assumed a different dimension. It not only endows them with a kind of status (depending on the cost of the scarf) but can also block people from seeing what is ahead or behind.

The other side is the cultural. It emphasized that if head covering was originally an Igbo culture or a church practice which morphed into a kind of culture, it should be respected. However, the argument suggested that Igbo Christians should not really take the practice as an original culture but as one that developed as a result of the Christian practice. It implied that Igbo people should not be very rigid on the practice with the ‘cultural eye and mindset.’ It was also instructive to note that no culture is static. In that sense, it is futile for the head covering protagonists and antagonists alike to be flexing muscles and dissipating energy over the issue every time. In the words of Akpa (2011, p. 126), “one should not insist, with every amount of certainty on what Paul actually meant in his epistles to the point of drawing blood.” This is especially so since it is neither a salvation issue nor a permanent practice.

References

- Afigbo, A.E. (1981). *Ropes of Sand: Studies in Igbo History*. Nsukka: University Press.
- Akpa, M.O. (2011). “Contextualizing Paul’s Writings in Ministry: Proposed Guiding Principles” in *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission & Ministry*. South Korea: Mission and society Research Institute.
- Amadiume, I. (1987). *Male daughters, Female husbands – Gender and Sex in an African Society*. London: Zed Books.
- Comfort, P. W. (1999). *The Quest for the Original Text of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: BakerBook House Company.
- _____. (2005). *Encountering the Manuscripts*. Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Falk, P. (1997). *The Growth of the Church in Africa*. Jos: African Christian Textbooks.

- Goldstein, Clifford, G, ed. (2007). *Thy Word is a Lamp unto my Feet: the Bible for Today*.
- Guthrie, D and Motyer, J.A editors. (1970). *New Bible Commentary*. England: Intervarsity Press.
- Haviland, W.A et al. (2006). *Anthropology: The Human Challenge*. Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.
- Hobson, P. (1996). *Head covering and Lady Pastor-Teachers*. Sydney, Australia: Crows Nest.
- Ice, M.L. (1987). *Clergy Women and their Worldviews*. London: Praeger Publishers.
- Igbokwe, J. (1995). *Igbos: Twenty –Five Years after Biafra*. Lagos: Advert Communications.
- Igenzoa, A.O. (2003). *Polygamy and the African Churches*. Ibadan: Oluben Printers.
- Ilogu, E. (1974). *Christianity and Igbo Culture*. Enugu: NOK Publishers.
- Koranteng-Pipim, S. (1993). *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, vol. 4(1).
- Kraft, C.H. (2005). *Anthropology for Christian Witness*. Mryknoll, New York:Orbis.
- Maberly, C. (2005). Contextualization in the Context of Mainstream ‘Rock’ Music Listeners. *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*.
- Moreau, S.C et al. (2006). *Introducing World Missions*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.
- Ng, G.A. (2005). Connected to Culture, Conformed to Christ: Exploring Alternate Forms of worship. *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*.
- Nichol, F. D. (1980). *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 9. Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald.
- Nwagwu, M.G. Religious Practices and Moral Behaviour in West Africa. *Religion, Morality and West African Society*. Accra: Wesley Printing Press.
- Nwankwo, E. (1992). Dissolution of Plural Marriage: A Case Study of Divorce as a means of Regularizing Plural Marriage before baptism. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.
- O’Donovan, W. (2000). *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*. Carlise, UK: The Paternoster Press.
- Ogbalu, F.C. *Igbo Institutions and Customs* (n.d).

- Okoko, B. (2004). Appraisal of Veiling of Women at Worship in the Contemporary Church. A Long Essay Submitted to the Religious Studies Department, Babcock University, Ilishan Remo, Ogun State.
- Umahi, G.A. (2010). *Head Covering in Selected Churches in Igboland, Nigeria*. Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Muller GmbH & Co. KG.
- Yamsat, P. (2004). *An Exposition of First Corinthians for Today*. Kaduna: Baraka Press.