

Dear Pastors and Brethren in Christ,

I wish to go over the teaching of 1 Corinthians 11 on the head covering for women, and its importance in the Church. In modern western Christianity, it is the norm for women to appear in the churches without a veil on their head. However, it was not until the mid-20th century that the bulk of Christians started allowing their women to worship uncovered, a time period also characterized by a distrust in the Bible, a growing feminist rebellion, and a flood of immodesty, lewdness, and divorce in the culture. I find it hard to believe that any Christian would think that the churches became enlightened regarding the headcovering in the mid-20th century, as they floated along with the cultural movement of women uncovering their heads. I am convinced, and so should you be, that what was going on was not an enlightenment in this period, but a turning away from the Light, which is the light of God.

You can find collections of artwork, and later photography, throughout 2,000 years of Christian history, that show the Christian woman with her head covered, either in church or at other times. That documents what was the norm for pre-20th century Christians starting from the earliest era. Do you think it is good for Bible-believing churches to float along with a Western culture that dismisses the covering, or even hates it as a symbol of biblical patriarchy? Does not every church need to be rooted in Scripture, and willing to learn from its fathers and its history? Is the Christian headcovering a result of 2,000 years of ignorant saints who lacked in understanding?

The respect for the woman's head covering is found in an ordinary reading of the text of 1 Corinthians 11. The rejection of it, at least that which comes from Christians, is argued largely by the ambiguities present in this passage, and by a gross and obvious misreading of verse 15. Allow the normal reading to speak and it teaches what the early Church, and later saints and theologians also taught, including men who knew Greek extremely well – that a woman ought to cover her head during worship in church. Over time, this naturally intertwines with the teaching of modesty, as headcoverings are also an expression of modesty, so it has become a tradition for many to wear it all the time, and not merely in church. It applies the New Testament teachings of modesty, even if it is not commanded to be worn all the time. At the minimum, we saw Christian women covered in church for nearly all of history.

Paul teaches that it is a dishonor to a woman to pray or prophesy with her head uncovered, just as it is a dishonor for a man to do so covered. He then instructs that the woman be covered, unless she desires to do something so shameful as to have her hair shorn off. He later goes on to teach that she “ought to” have a symbol of authority on her head (although interestingly “symbol” is not part of the Greek text). He then emphasizes that even nature gives us the same teaching he is giving as an apostle – by showing that it is shameful for a man to have long hair, but it is a glory for a woman. Nature agrees with God's Word.

If we left it at the ordinary instructions, there really is no doubt that this passage is teaching what the Greek-speaking early fathers of Christianity took it to mean – a woman should cover her head, at least during prayer and worship. Attempts to deny this teaching require ignoring what is plain in the words themselves, and going elsewhere for an answer. The most common religious

objection is that Paul's only talking about hair length. After all, in verse 15 he says nature gives long hair to a woman as a "covering"; therefore, hair is the covering he speaks of. . . Yet this is transparently wrong. The text does not say – I am only speaking of the covering of hair. The text does not say – a woman "ought to" have long hair when she prays. It simply makes a comparison with God's law and nature, and shows that God's law that a woman should be covered is **AFFIRMED** by nature, in that nature has also given her something around her head.

It is clearly a **COMPARISON** to the covering in nature, as the statement begins, "Does not even nature itself teach . . . " The language shows he is going from speaking of the covering to comparing it to something in nature which affirms its goodness.

It would seem very strange for Paul to wait until verse 15 anyway, to make clear what he was speaking about, and not simply begin the teaching about hair, if that were the subject matter. Who would define what they talk about at the very end of a dialogue about it? We learn the subject in the beginning, which is headship represented in the covering. When that subject is brought up, no mention of hair exists, even though he mentions covering multiple times. It is quite oddball to expect someone to leave the subject ambiguous until the end of his point.

Also, ask your self if the average reader, taking in the words, "a man ought not to cover his head," would actually think hair was the subject. Of course not. He would think you didn't want him wearing a hat or something.

Not only that, but as you probably know, the Greek word for "covering" in verse 15 is a **DIFFERENT** word than the Greek words uses earlier in the passage. When Paul speaks of being covered or uncovered regarding the man or woman, he uses *katakalypto* or *akatakalyptos*. This word can be found in the Septuagint and ancient Greek literature used in a way indicating an actual covering of the head. When he speaks of the woman's hair being a covering from nature, he uses the Greek word *paribolaion*. This has a similar meaning, but tends to indicate something which wraps around. It is often used in reference to fine cloth or tunics in the Bible. It is related to a word that has to do with wrapping or surrounding. If these are two different Greek words, why claim that they are interchangeable? Why assume that the latter redefines the former?

Moreover, to claim that the covering Paul speaks of is not an article of clothing, but is actually hair, fails if we apply it broadly and use it toward men. If men should pray uncovered, and a covering is really hair, then men just need to get a razor out every time they need to pray. They'd have to chop off their hair to be truly uncovered. But this makes no sense. Likewise, it makes no sense to believe Paul's words apply to nothing but a woman's long hair. A comparison is made to her hair, but that's not the subject he speaks of. He speaks of a religious headcovering, worn on the head. That is what Christian women wore from the earliest documented era in Christian history.

Wouldn't it strike you as odd, brother, if men sat down in the sanctuary with hats on and worshipped that way? It should be equally odd, and disrespectful, for women to come into the sanctuary uncovered and worship that way. This passage presents truths that apply to both male **AND** female, and one cannot pay attention to one, and ignore the other.

It is also impossible to grieve the abandonment of male headship in marriage, and in the church, and not also grieve the abandonment of the woman's covering. The woman's covering represents that authority, that power the man has. This is explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 11. He, as a representative of Christ, is also picturing Christ's authority. That disrespect towards the man that comes from tossing out the headcovering is ALSO a disrespect towards Christ. Removing this symbol of man's authority, as I mentioned earlier, came along with bold, open rebellion by women, and in society in general. It came along with disrespect for modesty, a biblical doctrine which is interrelated with the covering. I believe this one piece of cloth has great practical effect on our lives, brethren. It effects our walk in Christ in a good way, and that is understandable since God teaches the covering. It is a blessing to us all. When we lose it, we don't just lose a "symbol" of authority, but we lose authority itself. It blesses the brethren for our women to wear it, for it to be taught in the churches, for its meaning to be understood.

We often hear that Paul is merely speaking of culture, so we can't treat it as God's teaching which requires our obedience. We can accept or reject this teaching as culture. This is false. And imagine if we applied that kind of "cultural" logic elsewhere, and what damage it would do. Paul never says the covering is mere culture, and that it is value neutral. He simply teaches it as an apostle just like he teaches other things. The idea it is only culture has to be inserted in there. Not only that, but Paul emphasizes from the start that these are traditions that come from an apostle, and praises them for keeping other traditions. Paul places their source in apostolic teaching, and NOT in culture. (vs 2) He then connects the covering to biblical teaching and the divine order – God above Christ, Christ above man, man above woman. (vs. 3) That is divine truth, and not culture. It is divine truth clearly taught elsewhere in Holy Scripture. Moreover, you can go to artistic representations of the culture at that time, and you will see various religious depictions of pagan women worshipping not covered, but uncovered, as well as depictions of men worshipping covered. That means it's impossible to claim that women at that time culturally all needed to be covered.

Some will also argue that a woman does not need to cover because Paul tells them to be "shorn" if they cannot be covered. (vs. 6) However, Paul is pointing out that if she were not covered, she would need to do something as shameful as shearing her hair off. He is not teaching them it's good to go about bald. He's emphasizing the shamefulness of it. Imagine how odd it would read if Paul was only speaking of hair as a covering. The passage would be saying, if she does not have long hair let her have short hair, but if she does not have short hair, let it be long. Where is the sense in that? In fact, I think Christians throw this objection out simply to object to a teaching they don't like. That's because their response is not to have their women either be covered or bald, but simply to ignore the headcovering entirely -- and then proceed with whatever kind of hair they desire. It's a false objection because they ignore what Paul actually says. They just don't like the idea of wearing a piece of cloth that represents man's authority.

I also have to add that countless women will testify that wearing modest garb, and wearing plainly religious garb, makes much unwanted attention from men disappear. This is true for Christian women who begin to wear long dresses and cover their heads, and it is true for women who become Muslim and start wearing loose clothing and a head wrap. Men seem to

immediately recognize the less sensual character of the women, and her religious dedication. She subsequently receives less approaches by men who desire her body, or wish to harass her. I even know a man – one who is standing for his marriage since his wife left him – who found himself in a similar situation. He had two women at work who were pursuing him. When he began to wear an Amish hat – although he is not Amish – their unwanted attention disappeared. They seemed to recognize intuitively the religious significance, and the holiness he had dedicated himself to. The same is true of women who wear the headcovering, along with modest apparel. The soul immediately recognizes the difference between the spirit and the flesh. It immediately sees that authority on her head. She is freer to live as a godly woman, and has less harassment and less temptation. That is the protection of the man around her, and the protection of God.

Here are a couple of short, and longer videos on the topic of covering in Church:

Is Head Covering Long Hair? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqzYQR2olF4>

The Videos at Head Covering Movement: <https://www.youtube.com/c/covermovement/videos>

Study of Head Covering (including cloth vs. hair):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HA42_uoEnCc

More Depth on the Head Covering: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2_hJaLvisk

Art and Photographs of head coverings throughout the centuries (it really seemed to disappear mid-20th century, which seems predictable considering the social climate):

<https://www.scrollpublishing.com/store/head-covering-history.html>

Please reconsider this doctrine all the way from the start. The head covering is power for the Church.

Blessings,

Brother Tom

You can find my marriage book Get Married and Save the World right here:

https://www.xulonpress.com/bookstore/bookdetail.php?PB_ISBN=9781545659052&HC_ISBN=

I've been working for holiness and reform in the Church at: <https://www.holinessofthebride.com/>

See videos of most of my material here:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCc7KZc_yBQQhv7u02HQnPzw/videos

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