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Exegesis Case Study

I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

Roger J. Humann

CONTEXT

However one chooses to outline I Corinthians, it is evident that chapters 7-16 basically revolve around the questions put to Paul by the congregation in Corinth.¹ In particular, chapters 11-14 focus on issues relating to the worship life of the church: women in the church, 11:2-16 (cf. 14:33-36); the Lord's Supper, 11:17-34; and the use of spiritual gifts, 12:1-14:40. Whether in 11:2-16 Paul is answering a specific question put to him by the church or simply directing himself to a particular irregularity of which he had become aware, we do not know. In any event, in this section the apostle interweaves two themes, one dealing with a basic or general principle, the other with its particular application in a given situation. Thus in vv. 3, 8-9, 11-12 he clarifies the essential relationship between man and woman on the basis of their special creation by God. In vv. 4-7, 10, 13-15 he relates the principle to the specific issue of head coverings when praying, or prophesying. Vv. 2 and 16 provide the framework for the discussion.

EXEGETICAL COMMENT

Verse 2

Paul begins this section on a positive note; he commends the Corinthian Christians. It has been suggested that Paul is here commenting on a statement that the

1. I Cor. 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1.

Corinthians had made in their previous letter to him: “we remember you in everything and maintain the traditions even as you have delivered them to us.”² A *παράδοσις* would be any instruction which Paul had delivered to the church on the authority of Christ.³ These “traditions” would have to do with matters of doctrine and practice, which, moreover, go together, the latter growing out of the former. Having noted favourably their general disposition to “retain faithfully” (*κατεχετε*) his “traditions,” the apostle turns to one piece of instruction that was apparently being ignored: in church meetings women should have their heads covered when they prayed or prophesied.

Verse 3

The *δέ* is adversative, as Paul proceeds to a point to which the previous eulogy does not apply. “But I want you to understand” — He turns to the new subject and indicates that it is of particular significance because of a basic fact they dare not forget: there is a hierarchy of relationships in the divine order.

The term *κεφαλη*, like the Hebrew word *r'osh* which it translates in the Septuagint, has a literal sense (referring to the anatomy) and a metaphorical one, “in the case of human beings, to denote superior rank . . . The divine influence on the world results in the series: God the *κεφαλη* of Christ, Christ the *κεφαλη* of man, man the *κεφαλη* of woman.”⁴ In his presentation Paul “sandwiches the disputed relation (that of man and woman) between undisputed ones to set it in a proper framework.”⁵

Christ is *η κεφαλη* (note the article) of ‘every man.’ Lenski notes that the omission of the article in the next two instances means that man is not the head of woman, nor is God the head of Christ in exactly the same sense. Each case is marked by a unique relation and no two correspond in all points. Paul’s *tertium comparationis* in the use of *κεφαλη* pertains to a head and a subject who acknowledges that head according to an arrangement made by God.⁶ The *παντος ανδρος* is emphatic,

2. Frederick F. Bruce, *I and II Corinthians in the New Century Bible* (London: Oliphants, 1978), p. 102.

3. I Cor. 11:23; 15:3; II Thess. 2:15; 3:6.

4. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 431. Bruce K. Waltke, “I Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 135 (January-March), 1978, p. 48: “Bedale has demonstrated that *kephale*, like the Hebrew word *r'osh* which it translated in the Septuagint, has two senses: a literal meaning referring to the anatomy, and a metaphorical sense of ‘priority’. In this latter usage two ideas are present: (1) a chronological priority including the notion of ‘source’ and ‘origin’, and (2) a resulting positional priority including the notion of ‘chief among’ or ‘head over’”; F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 249: “Head is used figuratively: it means a governing, ruling organ. Paul does not use the figure of the head and members, but distinguishes the head, from everything that is not the head.”

5. George W. Knight, *The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 33.

6. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), pp. 433-34.

every male of the human family is included. Christ's headship therefore is by way of creation. ⁷ "God is supreme in reference to the Messiah as having sent Him." ⁸ The specific nature of man's headship with respect to woman is explicated in v. 8 of our text.

Most modern versions are agreed in translating *ανηρ* and *γυνη* as 'man' and 'woman' uniformly throughout this pericope. ⁹ That this is correct is evident especially from vv. 11 and 12 where the relationship between the man and woman is not that of husband and wife, but of parent and child. This indicated rather clearly that the words are used throughout the passage in the more general sense of 'man' and 'woman.'

It ought also to be noted that the order of relationships taught in this verse does not automatically infer inferiority; to be subordinate in the divine economy does not mean to be inferior.

God's headship in relation to Christ can, and is, affirmed without threat to the essential dignity and deity of the second Person of the Trinity. "Just as Christ is not a second-class person or deity because the Father is His head, so the woman is not a second-class person or human being because man is her head." ¹⁰

The subordination is in the sphere of function or role, not being or essence. And, in the case of man and woman there will come a day when the distinction between the sexes will cease, but "that day does not belong to the terrestrial form of the kingdom of God (Luke 20:34-36)." ¹¹

Verse 4

Two difficulties confront us in this verse which also are crucial to the understanding of v. 5: 1) what sort of head covering does Paul envisage? and 2) what precise activity is denoted by 'praying' and 'prophesying'?

The difficult phrase, *κατα κεφαλης εχων*, is literally "having (something hanging) down from (his) the head." Traditionally this has been understood to refer to some kind of a head covering, e.g. a 'veil', or more correctly 'headcloth', for the text in the following verse speaks of an uncovered head (*κεφαλη*) not an uncovered face (*προσωπον*). According to this view what Paul has in mind is some sort of covering "which covers the whole head and in particular conceals all the hair." ¹²

Customs in the ancient world with regard to head coverings varied and it is diffi-

7. Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 8:6; John P. Meier, "On the Veiling of Hermeneutics (1 Cor. 11:2-16)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (April, 1978), p. 217, n. 11: "Paul speaks in v. 3 of every male in the context of creation, and not just of the Christian male in the context of redemption. Therefore he thinks of Christ in terms of *kephale* rather than *kyrics*."

8. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), p. 229; 1 Cor. 3:23; 15:24, 27-28; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 10:29

9. For example: NIV, Jerusalem, AAT, Berkley, NEB, NASV.

10. Knight, p. 33.

11. Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1977), p. 538.

12. Bruce, p. 104.

cult to point to any one practice as the pattern for the directives given by Paul. Hooker has observed, "According to Jewish custom a bride went bare-headed until her marriage, as a symbol of her freedom; when married, she wore a veil as a sign that she was under the authority of her husband."¹³ Furthermore, Jewish worship customs appear to be the opposite of what Paul advocates. "In Judaism men prayed with covered head [the *tallith* of the Talmud and modern Judaism], but women laid off the veil in the synagog."¹⁴ The evidence is that the Greek women were not veiled, either in daily life or when sacrificing.¹⁵ Generally speaking, the uncovered head was a sign of freedom, only slaves were covered.¹⁶ On the other hand, the Romans wore the *pilleus* (*pilos*), a cap fitting close to the head, at religious feasts and sacrifices. The wearing of the *pilleus* was a sign of freedom and therefore was worn by slaves after manumission. Thus the phrase *servos ad pilleum* meant "to summon the slaves to freedom."¹⁷

Assuming that Paul is talking about the veil or head cloth in this pericope, it appears that the general practice of Palestinian Judaism has been introduced by the apostle and others as a custom that is fitting within the context of Christian worship. Possibly the intermingling of cultures in Corinth had produced a controversy as to proper church decorum; it is to this that the apostle addresses himself.

An entirely different approach has been taken by a number of scholars. The issue has to do with the hair itself, not a head covering. Thus Isaksson takes the phrase *κατα κεφαλῆς ἐχων* to mean "having long hair hanging down,"¹⁸ and O'Connor notes that this is apparently the way in which John Chrysostom understood the words.¹⁹

Picking up on this, it has been suggested that if the issue at stake is hair style rather than some kind of head cloth the entire pericope can be consistently interpreted²⁰ (vv. 5,7,13-15). Long hair for a man was decidedly unmasculine and in the case of a Jewish priest was forbidden by the rabbis under penalty of death. The proper hair style for the woman, one which marked a proper relation to her husband or father, was to wear her hair pinned up in a "bun" (thus her head was "covered") rather than hanging loose. For a man, however, to pray or prophesy

13. Morna D. Hocker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of I Cor. xi.10," *New Testament Studies*, 10 (April, 1964):413.

14. Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church*, transl. by Albert G. Merckens (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), p. 36.

15. James Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women? A Consideration of I Cor. 11:2-16 and I Cor. 14: 33b-36," *Westminster Theological Journal*, 35 (Winter, 1973):194; Zerbst, pp. 36-7; however, Conzelmann is quoted as saying that "respectable Greek women wore a head covering in public"; Waltke, p. 50, "Rabbinic law finds biblical sanction for the covering of the hair by a married woman while mishnaic law regards bareheadedness on the part of a married woman as grounds for divorce. Bareheadedness in men was not considered unseemly, and head-coverings were used only when special dignity and respect were required."

16. Lenski, p. 435.

17. *Cassell's New Latin Dictionary*, 1960, p. 449.

18. Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple* (Lund: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1965), p. 166.

19. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Non-Pauline Character of I Corinthians 11:2-16," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976):621.

20. Hurley, p. 196.

with his hair done up as a woman's dishonours his head. On the other hand, for a woman to let her hair hang loose is to place upon herself the public sign of an accused adulteress, in which case let the accusation stand and let her have her hair cut off.

A slight variation of this interpretation is to understand "that the *length* of hair is the only subject considered in I Corinthians II, not its being covered with hat, veil or prayer shawl and not its being put up in a bun."²¹

On balance it seems better to understand that Paul is here referring to some type of actual headcloth or veil and we will work with that assumption. Yet in either case the point made is the same: there is a basic relationship which exists between man and woman, one rooted in God's order of creation. This relationship has practical implications for the worship life of the church.

The second important question presented by this verse has to do with the nature of the 'praying' and 'prophesying.' In the context of I Corinthians prophesying, along with praying are to be included among the 'spiritual gifts' bestowed upon the church. Most comprehensively *προφητεω* means "to proclaim the revelation, the message of God, imparted to the prophet."²² It can, but need not have, the special sense of foretelling the future. On occasion both praying and prophesying are associated with speaking in tongues.²³ Although prophecy and prayer are not identical, they belong closely together. In I Corinthians 14 the interrelation between them is apparent. "Probably the prayer, to which the congregation says Amen, is one of the tasks of the prophets."²⁴

The act of prophesying is not to be equated with the activities of teaching and preaching which are not conceived as charismatic activities. Knight notes that prophecy "is the result of God's Spirit acting in and through a person to produce a revelation and that this is intrinsically different from what the New Testament means by teaching and preaching."²⁵ It is also instructive to note that very early in the church's history these 'spiritual gifts' ceased to play any significant role. Cullmann distinguishes activities such as prophesying, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues, from the service of the Word, such as teaching and preaching and notes that "by the time of Justin we find that the free expressions of the Spirit . . . have disappeared."²⁶

Now, Paul writes that any man who engages in such praying or prophesying wearing a headcloth *καταισχυνει την κεφαλην αυτου* — dishonours or disgraces his head. Paul's use of *κεφαλη* in this context is probably an intentional *double entendre*. His 'Head' is Christ who would be dishonoured by the man publicly acting as a woman and thereby abdicating the role and headship with which he had been invested by Christ, his Creator. "However, when interpreting v. 4, one could also take note of

21. Stephen A. Reynolds, "Colloquium," *Westminster Theological Journal* 36 (1973-74): 90-91.

22. Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VI, p. 829.

23. "And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied," Acts 19:6; "For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful," I Cor. 14:14.

24. Friedrich, p. 853.

25. Knight, p. 46, n. 27.

26. Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 30.

the Roman custom according to which a liberated slave was obliged to wear a hat as a sign of his liberation by the court. The wearing of a hat, in that case was a sign of freedom from every lord. Accordingly, v. 4 would mean that a man with covered head denies his Lord and declared himself free from Christ.” ” By such activity the man would also, of course, bring dishonour on his own head, namely, himself.

It is doubtful that men were actually doing this (unless the Jewish *tallith* is in mind), but the conduct which would be improper to men is mentioned “in order to give point to the censure on women, who in this matter had been acting as men.” ”

Verse 5

The praying and prophesying spoken of in this verse must be understood to denote the same sort of activity as in the preceding one. The men and women were engaging in the same charismatic activities. And this need not surprise us. The Old Testament had its “prophetesses,” like Miriam (Ex. 15:20), Deborah (Jud. 4:4), and Huldah (II Kings 22:14). At the vestibule of the New Testament was Anna, a *προφητις* (Luke 2:36). Yet here only in the New Testament is the feminine noun used in a positive sense.” The activity is ascribed to the four daughters of Philip who are called *παρθενοι προφητεουσαι* (Acts 21:9). The granting of the gift to women seems to have been rare, also in Corinth since the ‘prophesying woman’ (*προφητεουσα*) is mentioned only in this verse, and not again in the epistle, not even in v. 13 where the ‘praying woman’ recurs. Rare or not, the activity was in literal fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy quoted by Peter in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:17). The ‘prophesying woman’ exemplifies the equality of women with men in the order of redemption, while Paul’s directive concerning the head covering asserts that the hierarchy of relationships in the order of creation is not abrogated, even for a woman with the gift of prophecy.

Most commentators understand that the praying and prophesying took place in the regular public gatherings of the church.²⁷ Yet this does not present any conflict with Paul’s later directive for women to ‘keep silent’ in the churches (I Cor. 14: 34-37) or not to ‘teach or exercise authority over a man’ (I Tim. 2:12). As Knight correctly observes, “the apostle regards praying and prophesying on the one hand and speaking which involves teaching . . . on the other hand as distinguishable and different activities. Praying publicly in the midst of others, does not imply or involve any authority or headship over others. Likewise prophesying, an activity in which the one prophesying is essentially a passive instrument through which God communicates, does not necessarily imply or involve authority or headship over others (compare, if we may be permitted a hopefully inoffensive note of humor, Balaam’s ass [Num. 22:22 cf.]”³¹

On the other hand, there is a strong possibility that Paul is here addressing him-

27. Zerbst, p. 39.

28. Robertson and Plummer, p. 229.

29. The only other occurrence of the word is in a negative sense. See Rev. 2:20.

30. For example, Bruce, who notes that it is church order, not private or domestic devotion, that is in view here, p. 104.

31. Knight, p. 46; Robertson and Plummer, p. 230, say, “Very possibly the women had urged that,

self to praying and prophesying wherever it might occur in a situation *outside* of a public gathering of the church. This pericope does not clearly state that the public worship of the church is in mind. Rather, it is *following* our text, at the point of v. 17 ff., that the apostle first specifically mentions the public coming together of the church (*ερχεσθε . . . συνερχομενων υμων εν εκκλησιαι*). And in chapter 14 it is the same sort of public church gathering for worship that is the context for his directive for women to keep silent (see v. 23 — “. . . the whole church assembles”; v. 26 — “When you come together”; v. 28 — “. . . in church”; v. 34 — “. . . keep silence in the churches”; v. 35 — “. . . to speak in church”).

Whether the praying and prophesying of this pericope took place *εν εκκλησιαι* or not, one fact is beyond dispute: both men and women always, and more particularly when engaged in religious activities, should respect the position or order ordained for them by God.

Whenever, therefore, a woman violates Paul's directive in this matter she dishonours 'her head' (*την κεφαλην αυτης*) namely, the man by denying her relationship to him by the order of creation. She is also, of course, bringing shame upon 'her head', herself, for she is then acting no differently than if she had a 'shaved head' (see next verse).

There is an attractive alternate suggestion with respect to the interpretation of this verse which has to do with our understanding of the dative, *απακαλυπτει τη κεφαλη* and the sense in which uncovering the head accompanies a woman's praying or prophesying. The argument has been ably set forth by Weeks.³²

Man cannot cover his head when he engages in the authoritative function of publicly praying and prophesying. For a woman to engage in these functions places her into the same position as the man; she would be exercising headship and thus forced to uncover her head. Thus an uncovering of her head accompanies her praying and prophesying. (Hence a comitative or instrumental dative.) Vv. 4 and 5

if the Spirit moved them to speak, they must speak; and how could they speak if their faces were veiled? In that extreme case, which perhaps would never occur, the Apostle says that they must speak veiled. They must not outrage propriety by coming to public worship unveiled because of the bare possibility that the Spirit may compel them to speak"; Godet, p. 595, holds, "While rejecting, as a rule, the speaking of women in churches, Paul yet meant to leave them a certain degree of liberty for the exceptional case in which the woman should feel herself constrained to give utterance to this extraordinary impulse of the Spirit . . . Paul does not seem to think that such cases could be frequent"; with respect to the 1 Timothy 2:12 passage, David Scaer has written, "Throughout the pastoral epistles the term 'teach' is used in the sense of receiving, preserving, and passing along the doctrine. Paul's prohibition specifically forbids women from assuming this office. Yes, the New Testament knows of Priscilla giving instruction to Apollos (Acts 18:26) and women prophetesses, but never does the NT ascribe to them the activity of teaching, *didaskein*. In fact, it forbids them to do it. The Timothy passage is recognized as a commentary on the prohibition in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36. Here the word *lalain* to talk, and not *didaskein* is used. The type of talking that is prohibited the women is not the mere use of the vocal cords. The Greek word for this is *lego* and not *lalain*. In the crucial passage in Matthew 28:18, Jesus officially speaks to them as the 'teacher' so Matthew uses the word *lalain*." *The Springfielder*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 2 (September, 1974), p. 132. The translation of the NEB also implies that the *lalain* of 1 Cor. 14:34-36 is something other than a charismatically inspired utterance, i.e., "women should not address the meeting."

32. Noel Weeks, "Of Silence and Head Covering," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (Fall, 1972): 21-27.

are not therefore strictly parallel and although there is similarity of thought there is a difference in structure because the point of each is different. V. 4 argues that a man may not pray or prophesy with covered head; v. 5 begins the argument that a woman may *not* engage in these activities.

The consequence is that if a woman seeks to take the man's place she must uncover her head and thus be in the position of being shorn. But she knows that to be shorn is a shame. This is in line with the observation from nature that women have been given long hair for a covering; men have not, and long hair is a shame to them. A woman should not do anything that would remove her natural glory. Therefore she must realize that praying or prophesying in an authoritative position is contrary to her created function and glory. This interpretation certainly brings chapter 11 into line with chapter 14 without any difficulty.

Verse 6

The point of this verse is simply that if a woman refuses to keep her head covered, let her be consistently masculine and cut her hair close. But this is, by general consent, disgraceful and ought to be incentive enough to cover her head. It is very doubtful that Paul here is thinking of the head of a woman who had undertaken a Nazirite vow.³³ If, on the other hand, he knew that pagan prophetesses in the Graeco-Roman world prophesied with uncovered and dishevelled heads, this would be a further argument in his eyes against a Christian woman doing so.³⁴

Verse 7

The logical particle *γὰρ* relates what follows to the preceding. We now see *why* Paul asserts that improper head covering disgraces one's 'head' in God's hierarchy or relationships. The language is that of Gen. 1:26 ff., but it is interpreted by Gen. 2:22. Man, by original constitution (*υπαρχων*), is God's *εικων και δοξα* while the woman is man's *δοξα*. Paul does not deny that woman also bears the image of God. On the contrary, he implies that she does by carefully avoiding complete parallelism in the following statement. Paul omits the term *εικων* here because it is the relation of woman to man, not of woman to God, that is under consideration.

This passage "is concerned with authority relations rather than ontological relations."³⁵ This is the significance of Paul's choice of the terms. Man, as he relates to creation and to woman, images the dominion of God. We note in Gen. 2 that Adam, who had already begun to exercise his dominion over the created world by naming the animals, further exercised his dominion by naming woman 'ishshah'

33. Isaksson's arguments for the existence of Nazirite prophetesses in the early church is forced.

34. Bruce, p. 105.

35. Hurley, p. 205.

for she was taken out of 'ish'.³⁶ Woman does not image God in her relation to man and therefore is not identified as the image of God in her relation to man.

The term *δόξα* which Paul uses of both man and woman contains the element of reflection. Man is God's glory because he reflects God's dominion in the role God has given him. Woman is man's glory as she stands in a proper relation to him and reflects the truth concerning her created role. In summary: "the role of image is an active one while that of glory is passive."³⁷

Verses 8, 9

Verses 8 and 9 parenthetically confirm the truth of the preceding expression, that woman is man's glory. Here the apostle cites the order of creation explicit in Gen. 2:18-25. The facts of creation abide and determine the relationship which is to exist between man and woman. Woman was created from (*ἐκ*) man and for his sake (*διὰ*). This establishes the divinely determined role relationship.

Verse 10

It is precisely for this reason (*διὰ τούτο*) — the order of creation — that the following obtains. *Ἐξουσία* is to be identified with the headcloth, a symbol of authority. But is it authority exercised or authority submitted to? The context would seem to indicate the latter: the headcloth is a sign of the man's authority over woman. However this is contrary to the normal usage of the term.³⁸ To have *ἐξουσία* on one's head is not to have a symbol of another's authority, but of one's own. Therefore we understand the headcloth to be a sign of the woman's authority. "As man in public worship manifests his authority by leaving his head unveiled, so woman manifests hers by wearing a veil."³⁹ It bespeaks the woman's own authority to pray and prophesy, but "only insofar as she willingly occupies the position assigned to her in creation."⁴⁰

The appeal to angels presents a number of interesting possibilities. One relates to the preceding *ἐξουσία* and observes that in I Cor. 6:3 (see also II Peter 2:4) the saints are described as those who will judge angels. A woman also has this authority (*ἐξουσία*). These angels, moreover, are generally regarded to be the custodians of the created order. The *ἐξουσία* which a woman has on her head is a symbol both of

36. Oscar Sommerfeld, "Submission to the Church Council, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada," February 9, 1977 (mimeo), p. 28.

37. Hurley, p. 206.

38. Robertson and Plummer, p. 232.

39. Bruce, p. 106.

40. Zerbst, pp. 38-9.

the authority which she shares as part of mankind over the angels and as a token that she is obedient to God's ordering of creation. For a woman not to wear the proper head covering would be a sign of insubordination in the sight of those she is to judge, "an unthinkable incongruity."⁴¹

The above, however, implies that the angels whom the saints will judge are evil angels. Yet in the New Testament wherever the term *οι αγγελοι* stands alone it always means good angels.⁴² This fact alone eliminates the suggestion that the headcloth was the women's means to protect themselves from the amorous glances of certain angels. And since the angels do not marry (Matt. 22:30), God's ministering spirits must have better things to do than lust after praying women. Furthermore, Strack-Billerbeck "prove conclusively that the angels would never have been thought of in contemporary Judaism as being subject to lust for a human female."⁴³

Another suggestion is that the phrase means "because the angels do." "Angels, in the presence of their direct and visible Superior, veil their faces."⁴⁴ The reference is to Isaiah 6:2 and, although this particular translation of the phrase is probably not correct, it brings us closer to a correct understanding. The angels were present in the temple while Isaiah worshipped and the New Testament makes clear that they are interested in the salvation of God's people (Luke 12:8, 9; 15:7, 10; I Cor. 4:9; I Peter 1:10-12). The point Paul makes, therefore, is that the good angels are present when God's people come together to pray and prophesy. If a woman thinks lightly of shocking men, she must remember that she will also be shocking the angels by any impropriety which reflects a disregard for God's order of creation.⁴⁵

Verse 11

The *πλην* draws attention to one vital fact that should not be overlooked: "Only let this not be overlooked." Nothing said so far dare detract from the interdependence of man and woman. There can be no separation between man and woman when both are members of Christ. *Εν Κυριωι* refers to Christ. The fact is that spiritual equality and role difference are compatible.⁴⁶

Verse 12

Each is dependent on the other; man is woman's initial cause (*εξ*), and she is his instrumental cause (*δια*). The reference is to the original creation and the subse-

41. Waltke, p. 54; see also Hurley, pp. 208-13.

42. See: I Cor. 13:1; Matt. 13:49; 25:31; Luke 16:22; Heb. 1:4, 5; etc.

43. William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *I Corinthians in The Anchor Bible* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), pp. 260-61.

44. Robertson and Plummer, pp. 233-34.

45. The appeal to angels as an argument for propriety in gatherings of the people of God is paralleled in the Qumran texts where they are said to be present, e.g., at meetings of the congregation (IQSa ii. ff.) and in the camp of the 'sons of light' (IQM vii. 6).

46. See I Pet. 3:1-7; note that the role difference outlined by Peter does not negate the fact that

quent natural process. “This all” (τα παντα) — regarding the two sexes — is by divine arrangement.⁴⁷ “The natural order makes woman not only man’s spouse, but also his mother; therewith all is said.”⁴⁸

Verse 13

This verse refocusses attention on the practical point at hand and calls upon the Corinthians to exercise their own good judgment (Κρινατε). The εν υμιν αυτοις is emphatic: in your own case. It has been suggested that the rhetorical question of this verse is a quotation or a paraphrase of a question posed by the Corinthians. “Paul, having discussed the question, lays the issue once more at the feet of his questioners.”⁴⁹

“Usually προσευχομαι has no case after it, but here τωι θεωι is added to emphasize the principle that when she is addressing God she ought not to be asserting her equality with men or trying to draw the attention of men.”⁵⁰ The question, then, has to do with the public propriety (πρεπον εστιν) of a woman praying uncovered. Is it fitting for a woman, who by virtue of creation is the glory of man, in a joint worship situation with men not to reflect this fundamental relationship by not wearing a headcloth?⁵¹

Verse 14, 15

The ουδε no doubt introduces a question expecting an affirmative answer: “Does not even . . .?” Thus the rhetorical question of this verse answers the question posed in the preceding verse. Obviously it is *not fitting* for a woman to pray with her head uncovered because this runs contrary to what φυσικς teaches.⁵²

How are we to understand the term φυσικς? It is a common term in Hellenism, but rare in the New Testament. Does φυσικς mean the created order with the emphasis on the *divine* aspect of it, ‘nature’ as God has formed nature? Or is it used

husband and wife are “joint heirs of the grace of life.” Compare also Gal. 3:28 with Eph. 5:22ff. and Col. 3:18-19.

47. Lenski, p. 447. “All things” (our versions) would have to be *panta* without the article.

48. Godet, p. 554.

49. Hurley, p. 214.

50. Robertson and Plummer, p. 234.

51. According to Aristotle (*Nic. Ethics*, iv. 2.2, (*to prepon de pros auton, kai en hoi kai peri ho*), what is “befitting” relates to the person himself, to the particular occasion, and to the object. With respect to this text Bruce writes: “Though the application of this principle may vary widely, the principle itself remains valid, especially where the public reputation of the believing community is likely to depend on such externalities,” p. 107.

52. “Instinctively they must feel the impropriety; and then external nature confirms the instinctive feeling,” say Robertson and Plummer, p. 235.

simply to refer to the general order of things which one derives by the observation of the patent physical facts⁵³ without any specific theological significance? Paul's use of *φύσις* in Rom. 1:26 is clearly in the first sense and may speak for that meaning here. On the other hand, Koster, in his discussion of the term, states that at this point Paul's use of the word is in keeping with the more customary usage of the time, it "simply represents the general order of nature and its only task is to remind us of what is seemly and becoming."⁵⁴

The point of Paul's argument is the same in either case. A man who "wears long hair like that of a woman" (*κομαι*) is denying his own masculinity (that which he is by nature) and thereby disgraces himself. Conversely, 'nature' manifestly intends woman to be covered; it is her long hair that gives her womanly distinction. Therefore, if nature itself provides woman a covering, it is highly proper that she follow the leading of nature and cover her head during acts of public worship. We ought to note in passing that although the preposition *αντι* frequently implies substitution, that is not its sense here.⁵⁵

Verse 16

With this verse the apostle concludes the subject of the head covering.⁵⁶ The *ημεις* is emphatic, "we, for our part," referring to Paul and his fellow apostles or his associates. The term *συνηθεια*, which is the key one in this verse, does not refer to being contentious or quarrelsome (*φιλονεικος*). It refers to that on which the whole passage has turned: women participating in certain public worship activities without a suitable head covering.

We must note carefully that he speaks of the head covering as a 'custom,' or

53. "At this period, civilized men, whether Jews, Greeks or Romans, wore their hair short," Ibid; "Hair and beard styles especially offer the Stoic diatribe significant examples of a fundamentally illegitimate violation of nature. A man who removes the hairs from his body is complaining against nature that he was born a man . . . If hairs are only an 'adjunct of nature' *tes phuseos* . . . *parerga*, they are also *sumbola theou* by which the nature of each proclaims from afar *aner eima* . . . *idou ta sumbola*," Koster, TDNT, IX, p. 263.

54. Koster, TDNT, IX, p. 272. He goes on to state: "The argument is a typical one in popular philosophy and is not specifically Stoic. The fact that nature bears witness to what is fitting in the matter of hair styles reminds us that in the diatribe the same question was a favourite illustration in discussing what is 'natural' . . . Hence the use of *abs. physis* here can perhaps be regarded as technical, but it is of no theological significance," pp. 272-3.

55. Hurley, who sees the whole pericope as dealing with appropriate hair styles, translates: "her hair is given her instead of (ANTI) a veil. A woman's hair is the divinely given sign of her role. It is enough; to it man need add no further covering," p. 215. The contrary, and generally accepted interpretation, is maintained by Waltke who notes that "such a meaning would render the rest of the argument, especially that in verses 5-6, nonsensical. Therefore, the proposition is used here nearer to its original meaning of 'over against.' Her long hair stands 'over against' and 'corresponds to' the covering desiderated for the public assembly," p. 55.

56. See 3:18; 8:2; 14:37 for similar conclusions. *Dokei* is used in the same sense in each instance to denote a vain pretense.

'habit' of the churches of God. Contrast this with chapter 14 where Paul speaks of women keeping silent in the churches and indicates that this is a command (*εντολη*) of the Lord (v.37).⁵⁷ Nonetheless the custom is important and to be maintained because the principle that it reflects is not transitory but will last as long as the present earthly economy. The attempt of certain Corinthian women to lay aside the headcloth was recognized by Paul as "an attack upon the structure of marriage and, as an attack in general upon the relations between man and woman as established in creation."⁵⁸

Waltke, in concluding his discussion of this pericope, states:

In the historical process of administering His church, however, God has been pleased with the completion of the canon of Scripture to withdraw the gift of prophecy. In the practice of the churches today the apostolic teaching has relevance directly only to prayer. In this writer's judgment, however, it would be well for Christian women to wear head coverings at church meetings as a symbol of an abiding theological truth.⁵⁹

Yet to urge the above in the context of North American society would, in most cases, mean the introduction of a custom that has fallen into disuse, not the maintenance of an old one. In any event the basic principle which Paul applied to the particular situation of the Corinthian congregation remains valid and normative for the church today.

CONCLUSIONS

"Unisex," the growing acceptability of homosexual lifestyle and "marriage," certain aspects of women's liberation, the breakdown of the traditional family unit, the ordination of women to the pastoral office, "new morality" — these point to a shocking and serious denial by large segments of society (and church) today of the essential relationship which exists — or ought to! — between man and woman by

57. "Moreover, this custom was not long maintained in the congregations, as indicated perhaps by the references in 1 Tim. 2 and 1 Peter 3 to the showy coiffure of woman, and as evidenced by the fact that the orants in the catacombs are only partially veiled and that Mary and other saints are occasionally depicted without veils. From this it is apparent that Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11 were not regarded by the first congregations as binding law. However, the congregations did express in other ways the principle which Paul had set forth through employment of the *kephale* concept," Zerbst, pp. 37-8. The following may also be interesting to note in this regard: "The Rabbis distinguish between 'the Law of Moses', ordinances found in or inferred from Scripture, and 'the Jewish Law', customs observed because of the special decency and piety required of Jews — for example, that a woman should not have her head uncovered." David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 215.

58. Zerbst, p. 40. Note also: "Throughout the section he appeals to *principles* . . . Everything depends upon what the wearing or not wearing implies . . . He does not use *dei* about the matter; there is no intrinsic necessity (v. 19); but he does use both *opheilei* (v. 7, 10) and *prepon estin* (v. 13); for there is both moral obligation and natural fitness." Robertson and Plummer, pp. 235-36.

59. Waltke, p. 57.

virtue of their creation by God. The principle enunciated by Paul, therefore, is one to which we need be particularly sensitive. It cries out for application.

Perhaps the practical questions which this text sets before the church today are these: 1) What are those "customs" which we "ought" to preserve and maintain in our church life as "fitting" precisely because they do reflect the hierarchy of relationships in the divine order? After all, it is still "with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven" that we laud and magnify God's glorious name! 2) To what extent ought a Christian be concerned that his or her outward deportment (dress, hair, lifestyle) not be a tacit (or blatant) denial of God's order of creation with respect to the divinely intended relationship between man and woman?

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