

## T H E C O V E R I N G

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians he discusses many matters about which they had questions, as well as other matters about which they needed to be informed. Christianity not being limited in time or to society, his writings are equally applicable to us today.

In the eleventh chapter Paul writes of authority and submission, designating in order God, Christ, man, and woman. He does not elaborate in this chapter on the submission of Christ to God, but he does so in detail regarding Christ, man, and woman. This chain of submission is symbolized by the absence of a covering between man and Christ and by the presence of a covering between woman and man.

### Symbolism is Frequently Used in Scripture

Baptism - example of flood, with water as symbol (I Pet. 3:21).

Baptism - example of burial, with water as symbol (Rom. 6:3).

Lord's Supper - body and blood, with bread and fruit of vine as symbols (I Cor. 11).

Subjection - covering, with hair as the symbol (1 Cor 11).

Subjection is not expressed without proper hair covering any more than obedience is expressed without proper baptism or Scriptural communion without bread and fruit of the vine.

### Much Misunderstanding Centers Around Verse 6

"For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

An analysis according to my own understanding is here given:

"But if the woman be not covered  
[with the veil God intended, her hair],  
let her also [even] be shorn:  
[it is the same as if she were shorn]  
but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven  
[and it surely is a shame]  
then let her  
[resign herself to]  
be covered  
[with the veil God intended and provided]."

that the word "also" in verse 6 suggests a covering in addition to the hair.

This word is KAI in the Greek and is defined by Strong (2532) as: "and, also, even, so, then, too, etc." Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon defines this word as used in 1 Cor 11:6 as,

"It marks something added to what has already been said, or that of which something already said holds good; accordingly it takes on the nature of an adverb...In this use it generally throws an emphasis upon the word which immediately follows it...1. used simply, a. *also, likewise*" (page 316d).

According to Thayer, therefore, emphasis is placed by use of the word also upon "shorn" as in agreement with and being equal to "not covered." The idea of a covering in addition to the hair is something not at all implied in this verse but rather an idea which has been improperly inserted through human tradition.

But rather than Greek (which, as English, is often mishandled to sustain a biased view, or commentaries which often have the same effect) the Bible is its own best interpreter. Allowing the Scriptures to define the meaning and intent in this matter, let us note:

Verse 4, "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head,"

is self-explained in verse 14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?"

Verse 5, "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"

is self-explained in verse 15, "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

This approach results in a simple, self-explanatory understanding.

#### The Phrase "a Covering"

In referring to "a covering" Paul neither stated nor implied that the hair was one of two coverings. To so understand would be to again improperly insert a human tradition. The hair in all four verses is the covering under consideration.

Some see in this phrase, however, the implication of a second covering (as they also see in regard to verse 6). The article "a" in this verse is not used to denote number. Consider similar usage in other passages:

"There was given me 'a' thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7). Paul did not imply that this was the only thorn with which he was concerned, but neither did he imply that this was only one of more.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him 'a' name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). This certainly does not indicate that Jesus was given one name of at least two, as would be the required understanding if the reasoning of our friends is applied. Certainly other names and titles apply to Jesus, but this wording is intended to glorify and show the superiority of Jesus, not to emphasize the number of names which could be used.

In fact, the two Greek texts quoted below render the translation of this verse in direct contradiction to arguments made by our friends regarding the "a" in verse 15. They show that the hair is "instead of" rather than in addition to an artificial covering (veil).

"A woman but if should adorn the hair, a glory to her because the beautiful [kome] instead of [anti] a veil [peribolation] has been given to her" (15).

*The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*, Jay P. Green, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MS, 1976/1984.

"A woman but if have long hair [komao]; glory to her it is; for the long hair [kome] instead of a covering [peribolaion, veil] is given to her" (15).

*The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament*, George Ricker Berry, Wilcox and Follett, Chicago, 1956.

The fact that akatakiluptos (uncovered) in verse 5 and katakalupto covered) in verse 6 are different from peribolation (veil) in verse 15 presents no problem at all. This is simply similar to someone in English referring in one sentence to his house, in another sentence to his dwelling, and in another to his home. They may all refer to the same structure. These three Greek words simply refer to a veil or covering and show that the sister's long hair is the veil under consideration. Any Greek lexicon will show that the meaning of these three words refer to covering or veil and do not refer to different or more than one covering.

that the woman's covering is something she is to wear at all times, for she is to pray and teach wherever and whenever the opportunity arises (Priscilla in Acts 18:26, Phillip's virgin daughters in Acts 21:9, Timothy's grandmother and mother in 2 Timothy 1:5, and the aged women in Titus 2:4). Paul instructs the Christian sister to remain silent in the assembly (1 Cor 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15), thus his comments regarding the covering would be meaningless if they applied just to the assembly, for in the assembly she would not be leading prayer or teaching anyway.

What is under consideration, then, is that which the Christian woman has as a natural veil and with which at all times she displays her beautiful role of submission.

#### Covering May Consist of Several Materials

##### Water

"Ship was COVERED with the waves" (Mt 8:24, Strong 2572).

##### Behavior

"For there is nothing COVERED which shall not be revealed"  
Mt 10:26, Strong 2572).

##### Vessel

"No man, when he have lighted a candle, COVERETH it with a vessel" (Lk 18:16, Strong 2572).

##### Hills

"Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, COVER us" (Lk 23:30, Strong 2572).

##### Cloth

Moses VAILED his face (2 Cor. 3:13, Strong 2571).  
Literal covering over Moses' face (Ex 34:29-35)

##### Misunderstanding

Reading of the Old Testament (2 Cor. 3:14-16, Strong 2571).  
Old Testament unveiled in Christ (v. 14)  
Vail was "upon their HEART" (v. 15)  
Reference to "open face" or unveiled (2 Cor. 3:18).

##### Conversion

"Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall HIDE a multitude

#### Charity

"For charity shall COVER the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8, Strong 2572).

#### Hair

"But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a COVERING" (1 Cor 11:15). The Greek text renders "a covering" as "instead of a veil."

### There Has Been Some Question

regarding our sisters who put their hair in a ball usually at the back of their heads. It has been suggested that their head is not covered. In view of the foregoing passages, however, let it be acknowledged that a covering does not always indicate a complete physical surrounding - it often denotes a submission. If this were not so, then even a veil of olden times would not have complied, for it did not always COMPLETELY cover the ENTIRE head. Note the wording of Genesis 38:15, "When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face" and Exodus 34:33, "Moses...put a veil upon his face."

The covering under consideration in Paul's letter served as a symbol of the woman's subjection. The complete, physical covering of the woman's own head was not the object of Paul's instruction. Her long hair rolled in a ball well serves that purpose even though it does not completely hide the sister's features. Bread and fruit of the vine, although not the actual flesh and blood of Jesus, beautifully serve as symbols. So with the symbolism of our being "buried with Him by baptism into death" (Romans 6:4). We symbolically touch the blood of Christ in baptism. The ball certainly displays long hair and the intended symbol of submission, for otherwise there would not have been enough hair to arrange it in a ball.

### VERSE-BY-VERSE EXAMINATION OF I CORINTHIANS 11:3-16

- 3 Schedule of authority
  - Head of man - Christ
  - Head of woman - Man
  - Head of Christ - God
  
- 4 Two heads under consideration
  - Spiritual Head - Christ

Man with covered physical head dishonours his spiritual Head.

"Praying or prophesying" could be either in or apart from the assembly. Prophesying may be rendered teaching, the distinction being made as to whether the teaching is through inspiration or through words of those who wrote by inspiration.

5 Two heads under consideration

Spiritual head - man

Physical head - covering

Woman with uncovered physical head dishonours man - reflects even as though she were shaven.

This is because she has cast off the symbol of her subjection. The word "shaven" denotes that the hair is the symbol under consideration.

"Prayeth or prophesieth" refers to anywhere the woman might happen to be, but it must be understood that the Christian woman would not be speaking in the assembly (I Cor. 14:34-35). She would, however, be praying there in silence. To place necessity of an artificial veil upon our sisters is to make void the purpose and significance of that which God provided for her naturally.

6 If a woman be not properly covered with the hair which serves that purpose, the consequence is as great as though she were shorn. As such is admittedly shameful, then the Godly woman should be covered with the veil God has provided; her hair.

To shear the hair of a Christian woman is to remove the intended covering (the symbol of subjection).

To remove immersion is to remove the intended symbol of burial with Christ (Romans 6:3-5).

Detailed comments regarding "also" were made in earlier paragraphs.

7 Significance of the covering.

Man not to be covered - he is the glory of God.

Woman to be covered - she is the glory of man.

8-9 Reason for differences concerning covering - man is head of woman.

God's intended covering is a symbol of this fact.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). 7

1 Timothy 2:11-15

10 "Because of the angels."

Let it be established that we have angels serving in our interest.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt 18:10).

"But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstools? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1:13-14).

Of Peter, "Then said they, It is his angel" (Acts 12:15).

Consider the fact that we can bring displeasure to the Holy Spirit when we are disobedient.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

As with the Holy Spirit, to disregard these instructions would be to disregard and bring grief to the angels who minister to us.

"For this reason the woman ought to be modest and cover her head as a mark of respect to the angels" (Peshitta Version).

11-12 Indicates importance and respective roles of both man and woman.

13 Positive statement in form of a question. This approach has the effect of answering in the affirmative, "It is not proper that a woman pray to God uncovered."

Verses 14 and 15 explain the conclusion reached in this question.

14-15 Contrast in length of hair.  
Long hair is shameful for man.

Long hair is glory for woman.

8

Hair is the covering which has been under consideration in preceding verses.

How long must hair be?

How old must one be to reach the age of accountability? (Mark 16:15-16).

How much must one give in order to "give as he hath been prospered?" (I Cor. 16:2).

Distinction is between long and short hair.

"Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (verse 14)

Consider references:

Numbers 6:5 )

Judges 13:5 ) Contrast with nature of men's hair

I Samuel 1:11 )

"But they had hair as the hair of women" (Rev 9:8).

Evidences nature of women's hair.

Consider also evident situation regarding hair growth:

Hair grows on the face of man, not on woman.

Likely true of head hair length.

Refer to earlier comments regarding use of article "a" and Greek words akatakiluptos, katakalupto, and peribolation.

16 It would be both unreasonable and contrary to Biblical purpose and understanding to say, as some do, that Paul used the previous fifteen verses to simply write concerning a subject which really did not matter anyway. Verse 1 exhorts God's people to follow him, while in verse 2 he further exhorts his readers to "keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." Paul's comments, therefore, are not meaningless but most meaningful! He was simply saying that the churches of God had no other custom than that which he was advancing.

"If anyone wants to be contentious about this., we have no other practice - nor do the churches of God" (NIV).

"If someone wants to argue about it, we don't have a



different custom, neither do the congregations of God" (The Simple English Bible).

9

"If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (Revised Standard Version).

#### But Other Sobering Considerations

Verse 15 beautifully states, "If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her."

Laying aside previously inherited understanding, seriously consider this thought: If a woman's long hair is a glory, then to wear an additional veil would be to cover that which God intended to be a glory. You would be defeating God purpose! Long hair is that distinctive symbol which designates the God-pleasing woman from a man. Wearing an artificial veil simply destroys that lovely symbol provided and intended by God.

In Acts 15:28 brethren wrote from Jerusalem to those at Antioch, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things..." In Revelation 2:24 John was told to write these words, "I will put upon you none other burden." We should not and we do not wish to avoid any burden which might be imposed by humble obedience to the Lord's will. In the matter of our sisters being encouraged to wear a veil in addition to long hair, however, it appears to me that they are being asked to bear an unnecessary burden not intended by Paul. To purposely cover that which God intended to be the natural symbol of subjection appears to me to act contrary to God's provision and to assume an unintended burden.