

synagogue during apostolic times involved any head-covering. Indeed, the reverse would seem to be the case.

CONCLUSIONS.

In v.16, Paul makes clear that our attitude to headgear is not a matter of personal feeling or personal option: "But if any man seem to be contentious," he says, "we have NO such custom, neither the churches of God."

We should take warning from the rapid way that the church of Corinth which ignored this teaching degenerated into open abuse of the Lord's Supper, as we learn from the latter part of this same chapter!

RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER READING:

Timothy Nelson, The Head Covering, Ambassador Publications.

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Covering of the Head during Public Worship

by **Rev. John Macleod**

Retired Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. ²Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. ³But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. ⁵But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. ⁶For 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. ⁷For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. ⁸For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. ⁹Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. ¹⁰For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. ¹²For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. ¹³Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? ¹⁴Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? ¹⁵But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. ¹⁶But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." (1 Corinthians 11:1-16)

PAUL, it seems, had taught the Corinthians that in meetings of the church, women should have their heads veiled during public worship. But this instruction was being ignored. What difference did it make in the sight of God (it was probably asked) whether they attended public worship with or without veils? Paul answers this question by appealing to the order of creation and the subordination principle inherent in it.

We shall consider:

- 1) The Subordination Principle in the order of creation.
- 2) How this Subordination Principle is to be honoured during public worship.
- 3) Objections that are often raised to the teaching of this chapter.

1) THE SUBORDINATION PRINCIPLE IN THE ORDER OF CREATION.

In v.3, Paul tells us that there is this hierarchical order:

God – Christ – Man – Woman.

“But I would have you know,” he says, “that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

A. The Father and the Son are both divine persons, equal in power and glory, but when, as Mediator, the Son takes human nature into unity with His divine person, He becomes subservient to the will of the Father. Then, He delights to do the Father’s will (Psa. 40:8) and He speaks of the Father as being greater than He (John 14:28).

B. Christ is the head (i.e. the governor) of man. He is the head of course of woman too, but with this difference; whereas man has no other head but Christ, woman is subject to the headship of both man and Christ.

C. Man is the head of the woman: “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (vv.8,9).

Both man and woman are made in the image of God in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, but only man bears the image of God as ruler (v.7) – Adam alone was invested with dominion over the whole earth. Woman is in this respect the subordinate of man. She is not designed to reflect the glory of God as ruler but rather to be the glory of man (v.7).

Note carefully however that the Bible nowhere states that woman is inferior to man. We might as well say that the Son is not equal to the Father. They are mutually dependent (vv.11,12) and in Christ they are one.

2) HOW THE SUBORDINATION PRINCIPLE IS TO BE HONoured IN PUBLIC WORSHIP.

“The man must not cover his head. The glory of God shines forth in him in consequence of the authority with which he is invested. If he covers his head, he lets himself down from that pre-eminence which God has assigned to him so as to be in subjection. Thus the honour of Christ is infringed upon...” (Calvin). “For as the man honours his head by showing his liberty, so the woman by showing her subjection. Hence, on the other hand, if the woman uncovers her head, she shakes off subjection, involving contempt of her husband” (Calvin).

The woman then ought to cover her head with a veil – i.e. a cover other than the natural covering of her hair – to show that she submits to the authority of the man.

3) OBJECTIONS RAISED TO THIS TEACHING, AND ANSWERS TO THEM.

A. “A woman’s hair is a sufficient covering of the head.”

From v.15, many argue that a woman’s hair is covering enough since nature provides no other for her. But this is specious reasoning. The context here is that Paul is appealing (v.14) to the teaching of nature itself to show that a woman’s head ought to be covered in public worship. And what he is in effect saying is that the fact that a woman’s hair grows quite long by nature, much longer than a man’s even if he never cuts it, is nature’s own indication that she and not

the man is to have her head covered before God in public worship. If the woman’s own hair were to be regarded as a sufficient covering, then the logical follow-up to that would be that a man’s head ought to be shorn.

B. “The instructions given here do not apply to public worship.”

Verses 4 and 5, “Every man praying or prophesying”....”every woman that prayeth or prophesieth” make it quite clear that he is referring to public worship. Note that Paul is not necessarily condoning the practice of female vocal participation in public prayer meetings. In 1 Cor. 14:34, he makes quite clear that he opposes this practice.

C. “The veiling of the head was a temporary fashion” (i.e. during public worship).

This is a dangerous assumption to make which might well be applied in principle to other matters to the peril of true doctrine (e.g. if one was to say that the teaching about hell was similarly time-bound). Verse 10 makes it clear that this is a teaching for every age; one reason given there for the head-veiling is “because of the angels” – that is, because the woman is in the presence not only of men, but of angels; and the angels are the guardians of the created order in every age.

Certainly Moses veiled his face when he entered into the presence of God in the mount. Notice – a veiling of the face, not of the head – and even this veiling of the face is no longer necessary for believers in the New Testament because the way into the most holy place has now been opened. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). The priests serving in the Old Testament temple wore mitres on their heads – but this was within the framework of the ceremonial law and was typical of the glory of Christ. In modern Jewish synagogue worship, the wearing of the tallith or scarf is necessary during morning prayers, and this modern tallith does involve head-covering, but this has no Biblical warrant, and there is no evidence that the wearing of the tallith in the