

1. CORINTHIANS 11:2-16 CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN WORSHIP

One of the most important texts in the NT regarding women in early Christianity is 1 Cor 11:2-16. Here, Paul speaks positively of women in the Corinthian church praying and prophesying, but asks them to respect contemporary customs of appearance while doing so. Paul's discussion of reasons for this admonition raises several problems of interpretation.¹ Major questions include 1) whether a public or private assembly is in mind, 2) what is meant by "headship," and 3) why wearing the veil and having long hair is important for women.

1. *Public or Private Assembly?*

Much current discussion concerns the relationship between 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 1 Cor 14:34-36. In 11:2-16 Paul approves of women praying and prophesying. However, in 14:34-36, Paul appears to forbid women to speak in corporate worship. Does this mean that Paul contradicts himself?

Two views exist regarding the relationship of 1 Cor 11:2-16 to 14:34-36. 1) Since women pray and prophesy in 11:2-16 with Paul's approval, but are forbidden to speak in corporate worship in 14:34-36, some conclude that chap. 11 must refer to worship in a private setting. 2) Alternatively, if the section 11:2-14:40 treats problems in Corinthian worship, then women in 11:2-16 pray and prophesy in the public worship with Paul's approval, but are asked not to disregard widely-accepted cultural norms when doing so.

¹See Mark Black, "1 Cor 11:2-16—A Re-investigation," *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 1.191-218.

That 11:2-16 refers to a private setting is a commonly-held view, but rarely defended with thoughtful argument. In Restoration thought, Lipscomb² maintains that a private setting is in view, but provides no argument, other than to mention that in the NT there are no examples of women speaking or leading prayer publicly. Ferguson³ also views 11:2-16 as a private setting and suggests that Paul transitions to matters of public worship in v. 17. He posits without argument, "Praying and prophesying could be in a group or in 'public,' but not in an assembly of the church."

However, the view that 11:2-16 refers to a private setting is certainly not the principal view in Restoration thought. The more common view is that 11:2-16 refers to the public assembly. After careful exegesis of the text, McGarvey⁴ concludes firmly that, "Paul is here discussing how men and women should be attired when they take a leading part in public worship." McGarvey argues 14:34-36 to be "the regular, formal meeting of the church" (143). He specifies that "the customs of the age made it a shameful thing for a woman to speak in public," but that the prophecy in Acts 2:17, "your sons and daughters shall prophesy," demands viewing 11:5 as an exception to the cultural norm. He continues,

The powers of woman have become so developed, and her privileges so extended in gospel lands, that it is no longer shameful for her to speak in public. . . . The Christian conscience has therefore interpreted Paul's rule rightly when it applies it generally, but admits of exceptions, . . . those women who have a marked ability, either for exhortation or instruction, are permitted to speak in the churches.

²David Lipscomb, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1935): 2.163, who provides no arguments for the view.

³Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996): 342.

⁴J. W. McGarvey, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1916): 113

Most Restoration writers, e.g., DeHoff⁵ and Coffman,⁶ understand 11:2-16 to refer to public worship. Certainly in the academic world, most scholars agree that 11:2-16 refers to women praying and prophesying in the public assembly. In fact, Fee⁷ does more than most commentators when he includes, but dismisses, the private-setting view with merely a brief footnote.

Three reasons may be given as to why it is unlikely that 11:2-16 refers to a private setting.⁸ 1) It is difficult to understand why Paul would make such a strong appeal for a wife to wear a head-covering in the presence of her husband in a private setting. 2) The argument that Paul approves a practice in 11, only to place restrictions on it a few chapters later has never convinced many. 3) 1 Cor 10:31-11:1 forms the conclusion of the section which began in 8:1, all of which treats eating (in a domestic setting) meat offered to idols.⁹ This means that 11:2-16 forms the first part of the unit 11-14, which treats problems in Corinthian worship. In fact, the two matters of praying and prophesying in 11:2-16 are precisely the two matters which present so many problems in the worship at Corinth and which are in focus in chaps 12-14.

⁵George W. DeHoff, *Sermons on First Corinthians* (Murfreesboro, TN: Christian Press, 1947): 99, who notes, "There is no verse in the Bible which teaches that women must teach God's word in private. The 'in private' is added by false teachers."

⁶Burton Coffman, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Austin, TX: Firm Foundation, 1977): 165, notes, "This writer admires and respects the immortal Lipscomb," but also detects in Lipscomb "a basic misunderstanding of this difficult passage."

⁷Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987): 505, n. 54.

⁸See further Carroll Osburn, "1 Cor 11:2-16—Public or Private?" *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*, 2.307-16.

⁹Wendell Willis, *Idol Meat in Corinth* (SBLDS 68; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985): 223-63.

Mitchell¹⁰ correctly sees 11:2-14:40 as a section in which Paul urges unity instead of factionalism. From the very first hint of it in 1:10-17, Paul addresses factionalism as a basic problem in 1 Cor. It is not surprising that such factionalism would surface when persons assemble for worship who have little genuine concern for other Christians. Throughout 11:2-14:40, Paul continues to stress unity with the appeals to "building" and "body" imagery which he had used earlier in 1 Cor. Paul is not merely concerned with women in the church, but with the larger problem of proper and orderly conduct of Christian worship. The purpose of 11-14, then, is to persuade the Corinthians to be united rather than divided when they worship. As we look at Paul's arguments, we must remember that Paul is attempting to persuade women of ancient Corinth to wear head-coverings, not women of today. Consequently, his arguments may have made good sense to ancient readers, but may appear to be somewhat strained to modern readers.

2. What is meant by "headship"?

First, Paul states in v. 3, "I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God" [NIV]. Two points in the second pair are worthy of note: 1) "the" in front of "woman" is actually "a" in Greek, and 2) the Greek words "woman" and "man" also mean "wife" and "husband." Context determines which meaning is intended. So, v. 3 raises two important questions: 1) what is meant by "headship", and 2) are we dealing with male/ female relationships or husband/wife?

Now, turn to v. 2 in your Bible. It is important to observe that Paul begins by noting "tradition" [v. 2 RSV; Greek *paradosis*]¹¹ and concludes with reference to

¹⁰Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

¹¹KJV reads curiously, "ordinances," and NIV incorrectly reads, "teachings," giving the impression of Christian doctrine. The principal

“traditional practice; custom” in v. 16 [Gr. *synetheian*]. This indicates that the matter of women praying and prophesying in 11:2-16 reflects the customary practice of churches in Paul’s day regarding women in congregational worship.¹²

In this connection, v. 3 addresses the relationships of men/husbands, women/wives, Christ, and God. This verse is often taken to imply a hierarchical “order of creation”—God, Christ, man, woman.¹³ In this view, woman is to be in subjection to man just as Christ is in subjection to God.

However, this so-called “order of creation” argument has been challenged. Paul’s argument hinges on a “word-play” with the Greek word “head” [*kephale*]. Also, the Mickelsens,¹⁴ have claimed that “head” [Gr. *kephale*] in the NT never designates a leader or anyone with authority. Instead, “head” in the NT is taken to mean “source” or “beginning.” This would mean that men/husbands are the “source” of women/wives, but have no “authority” over them. They take 11:3 to mean that while Christ does have authority over the church, that authority is not actually in focus here. What is in focus, they say, is the unity of Christ and the church. Taking this view, Fee¹⁵ states,

term for “teachings” in Greek is *didache*, whereas *paradosis* is the term for “tradition.”

¹²Among others, Peter Cotterell and Max Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1989): 316.

¹³Against John Reuf, *Paul’s First Letter to Corinth* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977): 108, who says, “Paul establishes here an order of precedence: God, Christ, man, woman,” although he then comments, “What he seems to be mainly concerned with, however, is the difference in the outward appearance of men and women in the worshipping group.”

¹⁴Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, “What does *kephale* mean in the New Testament?” *Women, Authority & the Bible*, 97-117. See also Bilezikian, “A Critical Examination of Wayne Grudem’s Treatment of *Kephale* in Ancient Greek Texts,” *Beyond Sex Roles*, 215-52; and Catherine Kroeger, “The Classical Concept of Head as ‘Source,’” *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home*, 267-83.

¹⁵Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 503-04.

Paul’s concern is not hierarchical (who has authority over whom), but relational (the unique relationships that are predicated on one’s being the source of the other’s existence). Indeed, he says nothing about the man’s authority; his concern is with the woman being man’s *glory*, the one without whom he is not complete (vv. 7c-9).

While Fee is incorrect in viewing “head” as “source,” he has observed correctly that “head” here is relational, not hierarchical. So, what about this “source” argument?

The Greek word *kephale* [head] occurs in 11:2-16 nine times, four times referring to a physical “head,” and five times with a metaphorical meaning. As Cotterell and Turner¹⁶ observe, there are only two possible meanings for these five uses: the word means either “source” or it means “head.” Since linguistic usage does not support *kephale* meaning “source,” the meaning in 11:3 is “head.” Since relationship is the focus of the text, we need to understand clearly what Paul had in mind when he wrote that “man is head of woman.”

It is important to ask whether Paul has men/women in mind, or husbands/wives. As mentioned earlier, the same word is used in Greek [*gyne*] for both wife and woman, and the same word [*aner*] is used for both husband and man. While one might turn to 14:34-36 and observe that husband/wife is in focus in that text, it is important to look first within the immediate context of 11:2-16 for the intended meaning of these terms. Here Paul makes repeated reference to the creation narrative in Genesis, where “woman” was created for “man.” This indicates that while it might not be wrong to read 11:3 with reference to husband/wife, Paul’s reference in this text is probably to male/female relationships.¹⁷

¹⁶Cotterell & Turner, *Linguistics & Biblical Interpretation*, 317.

¹⁷Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (rev. ed.; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1985): 149-50.

Long ago, J. W. McGarvey and P. Y. Pendleton¹⁸ noted perceptively that this text does not actually present the “order of creation,” i.e., God, Christ, man, woman. They state,

We would expect him to begin with God and descend by the regular steps, thus: God, Christ, man, woman. But the order is thus: Christ, man, man, woman, God, Christ. Subtle distinctions are to be made with caution, but it is not improbable that Paul’s order in this case is determined by the delicate nature of the subject which he handles. Dominion is fruitful of tyranny, and so it is well, before giving man dominion, to remind him that he also is a servant. . . . the arrangement makes the headship of the man over the woman parallel to the headship of God over Christ, and suggests that there should be between husband and wife a unity of will and purpose similar to that which exists between the Father and the Son. . . . All Christian husbands and wives should mutually remember this parallel.

The actual order in the text is man—Christ, woman—man, Christ—God. Hierarchalists want to read this text only to conclude that in a hierarchical way, man is over woman. That, however, is not Paul’s point—and is to *miss* Paul’s point. The point is rather to be found in the three doublets which are used in v. 3 to make clear the proper relationship between males and females. The following illustrations of the relation of man to Christ and Christ to God involve a certain “unity of will and purpose.” Paul’s point is that man and woman should have a similar “unity of will and purpose.”¹⁹ How a woman conducts herself in worship reflects her view of male-female relationships and that is vital for the problem in the church at Corinth.

Paul is writing within and to a distinctly hierarchical cultural perspective. He is not concerned here, however,

¹⁸J. W. McGarvey and P. Y. Pendleton, *Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1916): 109. See also Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985): 150.

¹⁹See Reuf, *Paul’s First Letter to Corinth*, in fn. 146.

with a hierarchical “order of creation,” but with behavior which shows blatant disrespect for cultural expectations. Headship in this text does not connote hierarchalism or authoritarianism, but a “head-body” metaphor which focuses on the unity of will and purpose between man and woman. This is Paul’s meaning of “head” in this context.

As noted, this text actually begins the section 1 Cor 11-14, which deals with relationships in the worship of the Corinthian church. Emphasis, then, in this passage is upon conduct in relationships. The problem is not one of Jewish Christian women overstepping traditional boundaries in Corinth. The problem is rather Gentile women and men in the church who are either unaccustomed to traditions and customs widely accepted in Christian worship, or perhaps unsympathetic with such customs and traditions. This is why Paul begins (v. 2) and concludes (v. 16) this admonition regarding women and men in Christian churches with appeals to contemporary custom and tradition.

3. *Why is wearing the veil important?*

Specific points in vv. 4-5 for the Corinthian situation are: 1) any male who prays or prophesies in a culturally-unacceptable appearance dishonors Christ,²⁰ and 2) any woman who prays or prophesies in a culturally-unacceptable appearance dishonors the males who are present.

It was acceptable for Roman and Greek women to go unveiled in public.²¹ However, in many places Jewish women were veiled in public.²² Jews thought it typical and somewhat scandalous of Gentile women that they went unveiled in public. In Roman custom a woman’s veil would be pulled up over her head during worship.²³ It is my

²⁰See Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 150.

²¹See A. Oepke, “*apokalupto*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 3.562.

²²See Tertullian, *De corona*, 4, with reference to North Africa.

²³R. MacMullen, “Woman in Public in the Roman Empire,” *Historia* 29 (1980): 208-218.

understanding that this was common practice elsewhere in the Roman empire.²⁴ Oster²⁵ has argued well that some of the men in the congregation were wearing veils as well, a practice well-documented in the Greco-Roman world. He has assembled considerable evidence from archaeology, including ancient literature, inscriptions, and coins, to make his point.

Illustrative of this point, Athenaeus²⁶ says of men worshipping Hera,

they wore bracelets on their arms, and when they celebrated the festival of Hera they marched with their long hair carefully combed down over the breast and shoulders. This custom is attested by the proverb, "Marching to the Heracum with braided hair." . . . And they, when they had combed their locks, would go to the precinct of Hera, swathed in beautiful clothing, with snowy tunics that swept to the floor.

He also says of the men of Colophon that they went,

with their long locks decked with golden ornaments, as Xenophanes also says, . . . they used to walk to the place of assembly clad in robes all of purple, no fewer than a thousand in all, with proud mein, delighting in their beautiful locks.

²⁴C. L. Thompson, "Hairstyles, Head-coverings, and St. Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth," *Biblical Archaeologist* 51 (1988): 133.

²⁵Richard Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4," *NTS* 34 (1988): 481-505. He comments: "It is a pity that Prof. Gordon Fee has dismissed the possibility of a Roman context to 1 Cor 11.4 in his recent commentary . . . when he asserts, 'There is almost no evidence (paintings, reliefs, statuary, etc.) that men in any of the cultures (Greek, Roman, Jew) covered their heads'."

Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990): 116-34, argues that the problem underlying 1 Cor is a major battle between the sexes and that the women were rebelling. She also holds that Paul is a misogynist. Neither contention is convincing.

²⁶Athenaeus, *The Deipnosophists* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1955): 373.

Philostratus²⁷ comments on the festival of Dionysius, decrying their "dancing lascivious jigs" and dressing as "nymphs" (393). He decries their "soft dance and one of effeminate tendency" (395), saying,

What do you mean by your saffron robes and your purple and scarlet raiment? Surely the Acharnians never dressed themselves up in this way. . . . You are softer than the women of Xerxes' day. . . . Now no one bears a helmet, but disguised as female harlequins, to use the phrase of Euripides, they shine in shame alone.

Clement of Alexandria²⁸ also rails against the effeminacy evident in much art of the period. Against this background, then, the problem in 11:4-7 surely involves both the veiling of the men and the unveiling of the women.

For a woman to take an active part in the public worship by praying or prophesying poses no problem for Paul. However, for her to do so unveiled would be inappropriate and would dishonor the males as much as having her own head shaved would dishonor her, for this would create the impression that she was sexually immoral. For a woman to remove her head-covering in public and expose her hair would be to signify that she was sexually promiscuous.²⁹ If shaving her head would be embarrassing for a woman, Paul argues that praying in public unveiled certainly should be considered equally embarrassing.³⁰

In fact, Paul says in v. 6, if a woman does not wear a head-covering in worship, she might as well go on and

²⁷Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1969): 393-97. See also Philostratus, *Imagines* (LCL; London: W. Heinemann, 1931): 11-13.

²⁸Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953): 139. See also, Plutarch, *Lives* (LCL; Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1959): 43.

²⁹Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, 5.13. See also Oepke, "katakalypto," *TDNT* 3.562-63.

³⁰Reuf, *Paul's First Letter to Corinth*, 109, calls this "rhetorical overstatement."

shave her head because she is already disregarding an accepted cultural norm by not wearing the veil in worship. Although this is a classic overstatement, Paul implies that for a woman to have a shaved head would be to signify that she had been publicly disgraced because of something that she had done, or that she was flaunting her independence and refusing to be respectful to her husband or to males in general. Paul goes on to say that if it is disgraceful for a woman in Corinth to have her head shaved, she should wear a head-covering and show some respect. On the other hand, Paul says in v. 7 that a man ought not wear a head-covering because he is “the image and glory of God.”³¹ Man was created “for God,” not vice-versa. A man should appear in a manner that reflects well on God and His intent for creation.

Now the phrase that man is the “image and glory of God” is very important to Paul’s argument. The Greek word translated “glory” [*doxa*] also has other meanings, e.g., “splendor, radiance, fame,”³² and “expectation.”³³ NRSV translates 11:7, “image and *reflection* of God.” This translation is based upon the connotation of “glory” [*doxa*] as “reputation, popular estimate.”³⁴ By their conduct, individuals reflect upon those with whom they have a relationship. In Corinthian society, a Christian man’s conduct would reflect on people’s view of God. Similarly, a Christian woman’s conduct would create a perception of her relationship with males and her view of the distinction of the

³¹Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980): 482-500, sees here a reference to long hair and possible homosexuality, but alternatively Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 150, thinks a head-covering is Paul’s concern.

³²W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; 2nd ed. rev. F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1979): 204.

³³H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed. rev. H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973): p. 444.

³⁴For this use see Polybius *Histories* 15.22.3; 35.4.8; Diodorus Siculus, *History* 15.61.5; Appian, *Roman History* 2.9.

sexes. Public prayer by an unveiled woman or a veiled man would demonstrate a flagrant abuse of custom and be taken as flouting accepted norms of behavior—it would show blatant disrespect and be disruptive.

Referring in 11:8-9 to the Genesis account of creation, Paul gives two reasons for his appeal to culturally-acceptable behavior in worship. First, he says, woman was created from man (Gen 2:21ff). Second, woman was created for man (Gen 2:18). As v. 7b puts it, “Woman is the glory of man.” This means that vv. 8-9 are analogous to v. 7a. That is to say, just as a man’s behavior reflects upon God, so woman’s behavior reflects upon man. His argument is that man and woman were originally intended to be in relationship. Any behavior which would militate against that relationship would be improper, and in Corinth that meant that women should wear veils when at worship, as this was culturally-expected.

In the preceding verses, Paul has argued that it is a cultural expectation that women should wear veils in worship and that men should not. In v. 10, Paul adds a further cultural argument that women should wear the head-covering “on account of the angels.” Now this point, which is intended to conclude the argument in v. 7, may seem rather strange to modern readers. What would angels have to do with this situation?³⁵ Certainly Paul was thinking here of some danger women might face from angels, and *vice versa*. These two facets of this problem are important to discuss.

First, Paul may have in mind the prominent Jewish story of male angels being seduced by the beauty of women. Some take Paul’s reference to be to “fallen angels” of 1 Enoch 6-11. This classic text mentions the “Watchers” (10:7; 9), “fallen angels” who left heaven, came to earth,

³⁵We will not even attempt to survey the large number of conjectures which have been made about this text. In a book written over a century ago, Arthur P. Stanley, *The Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians* (London: J. Murray, 1876): 186, listed many.

saw women, lusted for them, and had sex with them. These evil angels taught women various charms and to use enchantments (7:1), bracelets, ornaments, costly stones, coloring tinctures, and beautifying eyelids (8:1-2). They committed fornication (8:2; 9:8), and made women pregnant (7:2). For this they were condemned to eternal punishment (10:11-16). Although there is no reference in the OT to such "fallen angels," 1 Enoch 6-11 was taken later by many to refer to Gen 6:1-4, where the "sons of God" had sexual relations with the "daughters of men."³⁶ The Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint, took "sons of God" in Gen 6 as "fallen angels." The book of *Jubilees*, which was a rewriting of Genesis, alludes to 1 Enoch and this sin of the "fallen angels" with women.³⁷ In this view, Paul's stipulation would be that women should wear veils for their own protection from the prying eyes and lustful advances of evil angels.

Second, others see here a reference to "good angels," who would have an interest in Christian worship.³⁸ It has been argued by Fitzmyer and Hooker, for instance, that

³⁶In Carroll D. Osburn, "Discourse Analysis and Jewish Apocalyptic in the Epistle of Jude," in *Linguistics and New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Discourse Analysis* (ed. D. A. Black; Nashville: Broadman, 1992): 296-97, I discuss the "fallen angels" legend in Jewish and early Christian perspective. U. Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1973): 17-28, argues well that fallen angels are not found in Gen 6, but that the idea arose at a later period. Certainly, by the time of 1 Enoch 6-16 and 86-88 the idea of fallen angels had achieved rather developed form. In the authoritative Jewish writings of the period, great stress is placed upon the fact that nowhere in Scripture is one to find reference to intercourse between angels and women. "Sons of God" in Gen 6 was taken to refer to "distinguished men" in Sifre Numbers 86 and Bemidhbar Rabbah 27:2-5. Jude 6 makes no reference to Gen 6:1-4 but to contemporary Jewish legend as found in 1 Enoch.

³⁷See Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1984): 69-104.

³⁸Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 152-53;

angels were thought to be present at Christian worship.³⁹ If Paul considers angels to be present in Corinthian worship,⁴⁰ then he suggests either that women should not lead them into temptation or that women should wear a veil in shame before them. Héring⁴¹ writes,

it was in the cult, notably when inspiration was being spoken of, that contact was made with the supernatural world and the angels. 'Before the angels (*'elohim*) I will sing thy praise,' says the Psalmist in Psalm 137.1 (138.1)—with no intention of referring to a canticle sung after death.

It is clear that Paul's argument is based upon later Jewish intertestamental understandings of angels and not upon the OT text per se. Paul says, women need "authority" on their head when praying publicly. Morna Hooker⁴² concludes correctly,⁴³

Far from being a symbol of the woman's subjection to man, therefore, her head-covering is what Paul calls it—authority: in prayer and prophecy, she, like the man, is under the authority of God.

In v. 11, then, Paul brings his argument in this section to a head, saying, "However, woman is not without man nor

³⁹J. A. Fitzmyer, "A Feature of Qumran Angelology and the Angels of 1 Cor. xi.10," *New Testament Studies* 4 (1957): 48-58; and Morna D. Hooker, "Authority on her head," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963-64): 410-16.

⁴⁰Psa 138:1 in the Septuagint [137:1] reads, "I will sing praise to you before angels." English, however, renders the Hebrew text, "I will sing your praise before the gods." In the third century, Origen, *De oratione*, 31, says that angels surround Christian assemblies.

⁴¹Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* (trans. A. W. Heathcote and P. J. Allcock; London: Epworth, 1962): 107.

⁴²Morna Hooker, "Authority on Her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor xi.10," *New Testament Studies* 10 (1963-64): 416.

⁴³Against Martin Dibelius, *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909): 223ff., who suggests that the "veil" was to give power against invisible enemies.

is man without woman in the Lord.” This is not an afterthought. It is the climax of Paul’s argument that began in v. 2. From the beginning, he says in v. 12, the relationship between man and woman is set by woman being “out of the man” and man coming “through the woman”—in other words, the interdependence of the sexes is in focus. Héring⁴⁴ observes well the importance of male-female relationships in the church when he holds that, “only by referring everything to God can we fall into the line of the specifically Christian code of ethics.” And Goudge⁴⁵ notes correctly that “man and woman are mutually dependent. Christianity does nothing,” he says, “to make either self-sufficient.” Robertson and Plummer⁴⁶ remark, “In the Christian sphere each is dependent upon the other, and both are dependent upon God (viii.6; Rom. xi.36); . . . Each sex is incomplete without the other.” Paul’s summation of his point in 11:2ff is put succinctly by Morris,⁴⁷

Paul makes it clear that what he has been saying is not meant as an undue subordination of women. There is a partnership between the sexes and *in the Lord* neither exists without the other (NEB, ‘in Christ’s fellowship woman is as essential to man as man to woman’). The man must not exaggerate the significance of his having been created first. There is fundamental equality.

In v. 13, Paul asks the readers to decide for themselves what is “fitting” in this regard. In vv. 14-15, he asks if long-standing custom does not have women wearing long hair and men short hair. If so, does not nature itself suggest that if she honors the cultural norm of long hair, she should also honor the custom of wearing a special covering in the assembly?

⁴⁴Héring, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, 109.

⁴⁵H. L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (5th ed.; London: Methuen, 1926): 96-97.

⁴⁶Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *The First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914): 234.

⁴⁷Morris, *1 Corinthians*, 153.

In v. 16, Paul appeals to widely-practiced custom in the early church. That women should wear veils and men should not is a Christian “custom” which reflects a respectful relationship between women and men in the church.

4. Conclusion.

The ancient Joel prophecy (Acts 2:17), reads, “Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.” According to 11:2-16, women in the Corinthian church are praying and prophesying in the public worship. In 14:34-36, certain women are also speaking in the public worship in an instructional setting, but doing so in a disruptive way. The commonality shared by 11:2-16 and 14:34-36 is not “women speaking in public,” but women showing disrespect for others, for decorum, and for propriety—and thus contributing to chaos, disruption, and disunity in the congregation. Both women and men in 11:2-16 are flouting commonly-accepted cultural norms and showing disrespect for one another. They are told that they should pray and prophesy in public worship in a way that would not dishonor others. Even so, Barclay⁴⁸ was correct in noting that, “it is quite unfair to wrest a local ruling from the circumstances in which it was given, and to make it a universal principle.”