

Ἐικὼν καὶ Δόξα Θεοῦ: An Interpretive Key to 1 Cor. 11:2-16

Dr. A. Philip Brown II
God's Bible School and College
Cincinnati, OH
pbrown@gbs.edu

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First Corinthians 11:2-16 presents the NT interpreter with a daunting array of lexical, syntactical, discourse analytical, hermeneutical, theological, and practical challenges.² In addition, there is little agreement within the literature on the answers to these issues. The positions surrounding this passage, however, may be cataloged under two basic headings: the nature of the covering and the hermeneutical approach to its modern application.

Historically the covering has been identified as a material item, such as a veil or hat. More recently, certain scholars have argued that the covering is hair.³ This position subdivides further into those who regard Paul's concern as hair style or those who regard it as hair condition (long and uncut).

More important even than how one identifies the covering is the stance one takes towards its contemporary relevance. The majority of interpreters see Paul addressing a uniquely Corinthian or perhaps first century practice that violated the

¹ This is a slightly revised and correct edition of the paper presented July 2003.

² Scholars dispute the contextual sense and/or reference of the following terms: κεφαλή (3-5, 7, 10), ἀνὴρ/γυνή (*passim*), ἀκατακάλυπτος (5, 13), ἐξουσία (10), κόμη (15), κομάω (14-15), and ἀντί (15). Disputed syntactical items include the presence/absence of the article in v. 3, the significance of δέ in v. 3b, the function of διὰ τοῦτο in v. 10 and πλήν in v. 11. On a discourse level: Is the pericope one continuous argument, or are verses 3-7a Paul's paraphrase of a Corinthian argument and 7b-16 Paul's response? Are vv. 13-14 statements or are they rhetorical questions? From a hermeneutical standpoint: How does the occasional nature of this epistle condition the relevance of Paul's requirement? Theologically: What is the significance of the headship structure outlined in v. 3? Who are the angels in v. 10 and how do they relate to women having authority on their heads? Practically: How does one effectively call American Christians to submit to this passage's teaching in light of its contested nature and their propensity for radical individualism?

³ Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "Gender and Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16: A Study in Paul's Theological Method," in *Evangelium, Schriftauslegung, Kirche* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 151-71; Alan Padgett, "The Significance of ἀντί in 1 Corinthians 11:15," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45 (1994): 181-7; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Once Again," *CBQ* 50 (1988): 265-74; "Sex and Logic in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *CBQ* 42 (1980): 482-500; J. Keir Howard, "Neither Male nor Female: An Examination of the Status of Women in the New Testament," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983): 31-42; Stephen A. Reynolds, "Colloquium," *WTJ* 36 (1973): 90-91; James B. Hurley, "Did Paul require Veils or the Silence of Women: A Consideration of 1 Cor 11:2-16 and 14:33b-36," *WTJ* 35 (1973): 190-220; William J. Martin, "1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation," in *Apostolic History and the Gospel*, ed. Gasque-Martin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 231-41; Abel Isaksson, *Marriage and Ministry in the New Temple. A Study with Special Reference to Mt. 19:3-12 and 1 Cor. 11:3-16* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1965).

general principle of a distinction between the sexes. Paul's directive reflects his concern to maintain current, cultural gender distinctives and, therefore, should be applied in a culturally relevant way today. Practically this means that whatever the nature of the covering, it is irrelevant for the modern application of what Paul was teaching.⁴ On the other hand, a minority of scholars contend that Paul's argumentation is rooted not in cultural norms but in creation and in God-ordered nature. The practice which Paul requires of the Corinthians is, therefore, a transcultural principle which should still be applied today.

This paper has two specific aims. First, to explore the implications of v. 7 for identifying the nature of the covering, and second, to delineate the hermeneutical ramifications of v. 7 for the relevance of this passage to the modern situation.

Setting the Stage: The Divine Order of Headship

After his opening words of praise in (v. 2), Paul announces the primary principle from which his discussion will flow in verse three: the divine order of authority for the Church. Paul uses the term "head" (κεφαλή) to describe three relationships: 1) Christ is the head of man, 2) man is the head of woman, and 3) God is the head of Christ. All three relationships involve functional subordination to their respective head.

There are currently four views on the significance of "head" in this passage. The traditional view understands κεφαλή in the sense of "ruler, authority over."⁵ Coincident with the growth of feminism within evangelicalism, the view that κεφαλή means "source, source of life" has gained broader acceptance among commentators.⁶

⁴ To be fair, some would argue that the covering was a symbol that requires some sort of corresponding symbol today, though not necessarily the one required by Paul. Daniel B. Wallace, "What is the Head Covering in 1 Cor 11:2-16 and Does it Apply to Us Today?," (Biblical Studies Press, 1997); <<http://bible.org/docs/soapbox/covering.htm>> Accessed 7/22/2003.

⁵ The literature supporting the traditional view of κεφαλή includes, Wayne Grudem, "Does Κεφαλή ('Head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985): 38-59; "The Meaning of Κεφαλή ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," *Trinity Journal* 11 (1990): 3-72; "The Meaning of Κεφαλή ('Head'): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged." *JETS* 44 (2001): 25-65; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Another Look at ΚΕΦΑΛΗ in I Corinthians 11:3," *New Testament Studies* 35.4 (1989): 506-10; "ΚΕΦΑΛΗ in I Cor. 11:3," *Interpretation* 47 (1993): 52-59; and Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity," 124-139, 485-487. It is certainly worth noting that the church fathers generally interpreted κεφαλή as "ruler, authority over" in 1 Cor. 11:3. For citations of church fathers who interpret 'head' in this fashion, see Ruth A. Tucker, "Response," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 111-17.

⁶ Key proponents of this view include: Stephen Bedale, "The Meaning of κεφαλή in the Pauline Epistles," *Journal of Theological Studies* 5 (1984): 211-15; Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "What Does *Kephale* Mean in the New Testament?" in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, 97-110; Philip Barton Payne, "Response," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, 118-32; Richard S. Cervin, "Does Κεφαλή Mean 'Source' or 'Authority' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal," *Trinity Journal* 10

More recently some have suggested that κεφαλή should be understood as “that which is more prominent, pre-eminent.”⁷ Synthesizing these views, some scholars have suggested that Paul deliberately uses κεφαλή as a polyvalent term since man is related to woman both as authoritative head and the original source of her life.⁸ Despite the continuing controversy over this issue, none of the opponents to the traditional view have offered substantial lexical or exegetical reasons for abandoning what is clearly a legitimate metaphorical sense of κεφαλή (“ruler, authority over”).⁹ The close semantic parallelism of Paul’s three statements strongly suggests

(1989): 85-112; Catherine Clark Kroeger, “The Classical Concept of *Head* as ‘Source,’” Appendix III in *Equal to Serve*, by Gretchen Gaebelin Hull (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987), 267-83; and Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987). Given his understanding of κεφαλή as “source of life,” Fee interprets verse three as follows: Christ is the source of the Christian man’s life; man [Adam] is the source of the woman’s physical life, and God is the source of Christ’s incarnate life (501-505). In support of this interpretation, he offers what appears to be convoluted logic. He relates the middle phrase “man is the head of women” to verses 8 and 12, and then concludes that this must be what Paul is talking about in v. 3. Once that is established, he has to go to great lengths to explain the meanings of the first and third phrases, taking special care to avoid Arianism (Christ was created by the Father) which is precisely what the third phrase would seem to mean on the surface, given his definition of “head.” Once Fee is finished, the reader understands why he introduced this verse as he did: “It should be noted that this theological statement is not something Paul sets out to prove; nor is it the main point of the section. *Indeed, after the references to “every man” and “every woman” shaming their “heads” in vv. 4-5 there is no further reference to it*” [italics mine]. Fee’s interpretation rends this verse from its context and leaves it a strange, dangling appendage with neither relevance to Paul’s immediate point, nor internal coherence.

⁷ Walter L. Liefeld, “Women, Submission, and Ministry in 1 Corinthians,” in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Mickelsen (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 134-54; A. C. Perriman, “The Head of a Woman: The Meaning of ΚΕΦΑΛΗ in I Cor. 11:3,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 45.2 (1994): 602-22; Gundry-Volf, “Gender and Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” 159. Similarly, R. Weldon Crabb argues that *kephale* does not have the sense of “head or chief of persons” in NT times but that it may have the sense of ‘first,’ ‘foremost,’ or even ‘determiner.’ “The ΚΕΦΑΛΗ Concept in the Pauline Tradition with Special Emphasis on Colossians” (Ph.D. diss., San Francisco Theological Seminary, 1968).

⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16: An Interpretation,” *BibSac* 135 (1978): 48-51; David K. Lowery, “The Head Covering and Lord’s Supper in 1 Cor 11:2-34,” *BibSac* 143 (1986): 157; Kenneth T. Wilson, “Should Women Wear Headcoverings?,” *BibSac* 148 (1991): 445-46. Waltke’s thesis is that “the word *head* in this context is an intentional *double entendre* and serves as the *Stichwort*, the crucial term about which the rest of the argument is constructed” (51).

⁹ As Grudem notes, “these authors [those cited in ftnt. 6 above] have taken the meaning ‘source,’ for which there is only one possible example in the fifth century B.C. (*Orphic Fragments*, 21a), two possible (but ambiguous) examples in Philo, no examples in the Septuagint, and no clear examples applied to persons before or during the time of the New Testament, and called it a ‘common, recognizable, ordinary meaning.’ What kind of logic is this? Forty examples [of *kephale* meaning ‘authority’] make a meaning ‘rare,’ but zero unambiguous examples makes the meaning ‘common’? The meaning ‘authority over,’ which is in all New Testament Greek lexicons, is unlikely

that κεφαλή denotes the same concept in each of them. The meaning which makes the best sense in each of the three relationships described in verse three is “authority over.”¹⁰

Covering Glory; Shaming One’s Head

In verse 4 Paul addresses both the problem with the Corinthian men’s corporate worship practice¹¹—they were praying and prophesying κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων—and the consequence of this practice—they were shaming their head (Christ, v. 3). Paul defers the explanation for why praying and prophesying in this manner shamed their head until after his statement concerning the shameful practice by women (5-6). Then, in verse 7, Paul provides the theological rationale for the shamefulness of both practices:

Ἄνθρωπος μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων· ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστίν.

For a man, on the one hand, ought not to cover the head, being (the) image and glory of God; but the woman, on the other hand, is (the) glory of man.¹²

and rare and ‘not part of the ordinary range of meanings for the Greek word,’ but the meaning ‘source,’ which is in no lexicon for the New Testament period and is reflected in none of the *early* Fathers, who took it to mean ‘authority,’ is called [by Fee] ‘almost certainly the only one the Corinthians would have grasped’ (Fee, *First Corinthians*, p. 502)” (Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephale*,” 466).

The articles by Grudem (1990, 2001) and Fitzmyer (1993) provide the best apologetic for the traditional view.

¹⁰ Despite being certain that v. 3 reflects a divine order of authority, I am open to the possibility, suggested by Waltke above (ftnt 8), that Paul deliberately plays on the multiple senses of *kephale* throughout the passage, including perhaps even ‘source’ in vv. 7b-9.

¹¹ There are several items that argue for understanding this passage within the context of the local church. (1) I Corinthians 11:16, the last verse of this paragraph, relates the teaching of the previous verses to that of the local “churches of God.” (2) The following paragraph, I Corinthians 11:17-34, dealing with the conduct of believers at the Lord’s table, specifically identifies the context as “when ye come together in the church” (11:18). (3) The very nature of prophecy as a “speaking unto men” demands the context of the local church, not a private gathering (1 Cor. 14:3-5). (4) 1 Cor. 14:34-36 does not forbid woman from any form of speaking in the church, but most probably forbids them from participating in the evaluating of prophecies given in the congregation. D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1991), 145. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 132.

¹² Theoretically, verse 7a could be translated, “For a man ... is not obligated to cover the head, being (the) image and glory of God.” However, the thrust of the passage indicates that Paul intends to be more definite: men must not cover the head. G. G. Findlay, *St. Paul’s First Epistle to*

Theologically, the reason men are morally obligated to not cover their heads is because they are the image and glory of God.¹³ The basis for Paul's argument is Genesis 1:26-27 where the triune God voices His determination to make man in His image and likeness and then does so: "And God created the man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them."

Paul's use of Genesis 1:26-27 (and Gen. 2:18-25 in vv. 8-9) raises a host of questions: Do men and women both bear God's image or is the man alone the image-bearer?¹⁴ What is the image of God in man? Why is man God's glory? Where does the idea of man as God's glory come from? What does it mean for man to be God's glory? Why is woman man's glory and what does that mean? How does man's status as God's glory necessitate that his head not be covered in worship?

These are all valid and worthy questions. In the attempt to answer them, however, it appears that virtually everyone who has wrestled with this *crux interpretum* has overlooked two more significant questions:¹⁵ (1) If man's status as the image and glory of God necessitates an uncovered head in worship, how does one account for the OT requirement that priests wear a material covering when ministering in the tabernacle? and (2) What does Paul's appeal to man's created status imply about the continuing relevance of his application?

Man's Status as the Image and Glory of God

Although the image of God in man was defaced in the fall, it was not erased. Yahweh reaffirmed the presence of His image in man to Noah in Genesis 9:6. That image, though imperfect, is being restored in believers by the sanctifying work of the Spirit (Col. 3:10), and both Paul (1 Cor. 11:7) and James (Jam. 3:9) regard it as an essential aspect of man's nature. Despite the fact that we are still falling short of

the Corinthians, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (n.d., repr. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002), 873. This appears to be the approach followed universally by English translations. All other Biblical examples where ὀφείλω is negated support the conclusion that the negative particle (οὐ/μή) preceding ὀφείλω actually negates the infinitive that completes ὀφείλω (Acts 17:29; 2 Cor. 12:14; see also Wisdom 12:15).

Scripture translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

¹³ The participle ὑπάρχων is causal, indicating the reason men ought not to cover their heads.

¹⁴ Although it is not the purpose of this paper to explore this issue, it is my understanding that both men and women bear the *imago dei*, but men alone are the *gloria dei*, whereas women are the glory of men (*gloria viri*).

¹⁵ In the literature reviewed for this article, I found five authors who alluded to OT worship practice: Alan D. Ingalls, "Headcoverings in the Old Testament," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 4.2 (2000): 41-52; Hurley, "Did Paul require Veils or the Silence of Women," 195; O'Connor, "Sex and Logic," 485; Howard, "Neither Male nor Female," 35; and G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthians Letters of Paul* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), 135. Of these, Ingalls was the only author who explored the issue at any length, and he did not consider its relevance to man as the image and glory of God.

the glory of God (Rom. 3:23), believers are moving from “glory to glory” and increasingly fulfilling our creative design (2 Cor. 3:18). This biblical data indicates that man is and has always been the image and glory of God.

Old Testament Worship Attire

Part of the worship regalia that God designed and required both for priests and the high priest was a material headcovering. For the High Priest it was a linen turban called a “mitre”¹⁶ (מִצְנֶפֶת; Exod. 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev. 8:9; 16:4). The regular priests, on the other hand, wore “bonnets” or “caps” (מִנְבֵּעָה; Exod. 28:40; 29:9; 39:28; Lev. 8:13).¹⁷ These headcoverings were not reserved for special occasions but were the normal garb for all priestly functions.

It seems highly improbable that God would mandate worship attire that because of man’s status as His image and glory would bring shame upon Himself. This OT data provides a crucial piece of the cipher for this difficult passage. Since man has always been the image and glory of God and God instituted a material covering to be worn in the course of corporate worship, it follows that Paul is *not* saying that a material headcovering shames Christ when men pray or prophesy.¹⁸ In other words, the covering forbidden to men in 11:7 is not a material headcovering.

Potential Objections Answered

Since the transition between the covenants did not affect man’s status as the image and glory of God, it appears to have no bearing on the application of that status to worship. It has been suggested that Paul is instituting a new worship regulation that supercedes the OT pattern.¹⁹ It is true that we see instances in which OT regulations were replaced or removed (e.g., clean and unclean food laws; Mark 7:19). However, there are no examples where a practice based upon man’s created status is superceded. Man’s created status has remained constant from Eden to the present. Further, Paul argues that when a male covers his head he dishonors his authoritative head, Christ, and thereby dishonors God who

¹⁶ From the LXX μίτρα.

¹⁷ κίδαρις is the normal LXX translation of מִנְבֵּעָה, the one exception to this pattern appears to be Exod. 28:4 where it is used (mistakenly?) to translate מִצְנֶפֶת.

¹⁸ Note that I am not arguing that the OT practice necessitates the wearing of a head covering by men when praying or prophesying. Divinely instituted practices will never violate God’s creative design. Such practices, however, are not necessarily prescriptive.

¹⁹ Michael Barrett, *Headcovering for Public Worship: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16* (Greenville, SC: Faith Free Presbyterian Church, n.d.), 3.

established the headship structure.²⁰ One must conclude then that whatever it was that violated man's created status and dishonored God in the Corinthians' worship would have always violated that status and dishonored God.

Another objection might be that praying and prophesying are uniquely New Testament functions. Although the OT does not expressly indicate whether prophecy was a part of the OT priestly worship context,²¹ it is indisputable that prayer was a major component of the priests' duties in representing man to God (2 Chron. 30:27).²²

One final objection is raised by G. Campbell Morgan. He argues from 2 Corinthians 3:14 that

the man praying or prophesying, covered, dishonours his Head, his Lord and his Master, the One Who is in high authority over him. ... He has not recognized that the veil has been done away in Christ, and the glory is no fading glory, but a lasting one, the glory of His message. In Christ the veil is done away, both for praying, speech to God; and prophesying, speech to man.²³

Although initially attractive, Morgan's argument hinges on a faulty analogy. The glory which Paul directs men not to cover is not the unfading glory brought in by Christ, but rather the glory of God that men as men have always had. Further, the veil that is done away in Christ is no physical veil—Moses' veil was removed once the glory faded from his face. The veil that covers unbelieving Jews' hearts (not heads) is blindness or hardness of heart that refuses to see Christ as the "end of the law for righteousness" (Rom. 10:4).

The Identity of the Covering

In order to identify the covering Paul forbids to men, one must correlate the terminology he uses in this passage for being covered/ uncovered and the glory-

²⁰ As Barrett rightly points out: "Any violation of God's established order is ultimately an affront against God Himself" (ibid., 3).

²¹ Isaiah and Jeremiah both functioned as priests and prophets (Isa. 6:1; Jer. 1:1). Further, since "prophecy" involves speaking to men for "edification, exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3), it seems appropriate to describe the priestly duty of teaching the people the law as "prophecy" (cf. Deut. 17:9-11; 33:8-10).

²² "And the Levitical priests arouse and they blessed the people; and their voice was heard and their prayer [תפלה] reached his holy dwelling place, Heaven." See also 1 Sam. 7:5 and 12:23, where Samuel affirms his responsibility to pray for the people.

²³ Morgan, *The Corinthians Letters of Paul*, 137. Ingalls also advances this same argument ("Headcoverings in the OT," 51).

shame motif he develops.²⁴ According to verse four, if a man prays or prophesies κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων, he shames his head. This phrase must refer to the state created when a man covers (κατακαλύπτεσθαι) his head (v. 7). In verse 14, Paul specifically identifies ‘wearing long hair’ (κομῆ) as dishonoring (ἀτιμία). In view of the thematic connection between vv. 4 and 14, it is reasonable to conclude that, since κόμη is a shame to a man (v. 14), it is the implied object of ἔχων in verse four: “when a man prays or prophesies having [long/uncut hair] down from his head, he shames his head.” Given the use of κατακαλύπτω in verses 6 and 7, if long/uncut hair is indeed the covering forbidden to men (οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι; v. 7), then it must also be the covering women are commanded to have (κατακαλυπτέσθω; v. 6). Although this inference seems logical enough, there have been several substantive objections raised against it.

Objections to Identifying the Covering as Long Hair

The first objection to identifying the covering as long hair is the claim that “there is nothing in the word [κόμη] that dictates length. Rather, it represents that hair which is ornate, a hairdo, ... that coiffure that belongs exclusively to the woman.”²⁵ A survey of the uses of κόμη in Greek literature (extra-biblical, LXX, and NT) appears to offer no support for this claim.²⁶ On the contrary, Septuagintal usage indicates that κόμη may refer to (1) hair on a man or woman—without any connotation of length or condition (Job 1:20, 16:12; Judith 13:7; Bel 1:36; (2) the long hair of women (3 Macc. 1:18, 4:6); or (3) uncut hair on either a man or a woman (Num. 6:5, Eze. 44:20).²⁷ The point here is not that κόμη always means “long/uncut

²⁴ The following terms for shame occur in this passage: αἰσχυνω (4, 5); αἰσχροσ (6); and ἀτιμία (14). Glory (δόξα) occurs three times: twice in v. 7 and once in v. 15. The distribution of these key terms does not, however, completely reflect the development of this motif. Verses 8-9 also contribute to the motif as explanation of why woman is the glory of man.

²⁵ Barrett, 7. Although no source is given for this claim, it appears to have been derived from Thayer’s comment on κόμη: “(According to Schmidt (21, 2) it differs from θρίξ (the anatomical or physical term) by designating the hair as an ornament (the notion of length being only secondary and suggested).” This distinction, however, cannot be supported by Septuagintal use of the term. Κόμη is used 11 times in the LXX (κομάω does not occur in the LXX). Of those 11x, it translates the word for long hair (עֲרֵב) 2 times (Num. 6:5; Eze 44:20), the word for corner (קַרְנָה) once (Lev. 19:27), and the word for turban or headdress (קַפֵּי) once (Eze 24:23). It also seems to be a free translation of עֲרֵב in Job 16:12 for the word ‘neck.’

²⁶ Space constraints forbid the listing of the extra-biblical data here—the Persus Digital Library lists 270 extra-biblical occurrences of κόμη (www.perseus.tufts.edu). However, none of the most recent major Greek lexicons list ‘styled hair,’ ‘coiffured hair,’ or some similar sense for κόμη. BDAG³ offers one sense: “hair of a person’s head, (**long**) **hair** of women.” Louw-Nida lists “hair of the head of human beings.” Liddell-Scott-Jones offers “hair of the head.”

²⁷ Note that in Ezek. 44:20, growing κόμη serves at the antithesis of having a shaved head, both conditions being forbidden to priests. Instead, priests were required to cut their hair.

hair,” but rather that it can mean that and that it does not appear to be used in the sense of ornate or coiffured hair.²⁸

The second objection is the charge that the long hair view is incompatible with verses 5 and 6. Noel Weeks argues

If the covering is merely long hair, there would be no need to argue that being uncovered is the same as being shaven. To take off the covering would be to shave the head. ... Or if the passage were teaching the inappropriateness of short hair for women, then all the discussion about prayer and prophecy would be irrelevant. If Paul believes that short hair is unbecoming for a woman, then surely it is not unbecoming only for a woman who leads in prayer and prophecy.²⁹

In a similar vein Joel Delobel contends

If v. 14 as such is used as a parallel to interpret v. 4, then v. 4 also means ‘long hair’ The opposite then in v. 5 can only be ‘short hair,’ but this would lead to a nonsense interpretation in v. 6: ‘if the woman has short hair (εἰ οὐ κατακαλύπτεται), then she shall cut off her hair’ (κείρασθω).³⁰

This objection fails on four grounds. First, both Weeks and Delobel have missed the fact that κόμη may refer to uncut hair (Num. 6:5). If that is the case here, then the opposite would be cut hair, rather than simply short hair. Second, in verses 5-6, Paul does not *equate* the condition of having an uncovered head (ἀκατακαλύπτω τῆ κεφαλῇ) with being shaven (ἐξυρημένη) or shorn (τὸ κείρασθαι). Rather, he says that being uncovered (ἀκατακαλύπτω) is *the same as* being shaven or shorn, implying that ἀκατακαλύπτω refers to a condition similar to but distinct from being shaven or shorn. Third, the verb κείρω is most commonly used in the context of shearing sheep.³¹ Obviously, when one shears sheep, the hair is cut quite short.

²⁸ One comment in the BDAG³ entry on κομάω deserves mention. The sense listed is “wear long hair, let one’s hair grow long.” Toward the end of the entry, however, it comments: “Perhaps Paul refers to the effeminate manner in which some males coiffured their long hair, rather than to the mere wearing of hair in full length.” The fact that men who wore long hair (κομάῳ) were often regarded as effeminate or even homosexual appears to underlie BDAG³’s comment (cf. *Pseudo-Phocylides*, 212, ἄρσεσιν οὐκ ἐπέοικε κομᾶν χλιδαναῖς δὲ γυναιξίν “Long hair is not fit for men, but for dainty women.”). However, Paul’s use of κόμη and κομάω in reference to women does not support the idea that κόμη itself denotes coiffured hair. The fact that Paul appeals to the natural order in v. 13 and says a woman’s κόμην has been *given* to her for a covering in v. 15 suggests that he is speaking of a woman’s hair as created by God. If that is the case, it certainly does not come already coiffured.

²⁹ “On Silence and Head Covering,” *WTJ* 35 (1972): 24.

³⁰ “1 Cor 11,2-16: Towards a Coherent Interpretation,” in *L’Apotre Paul* (Leuven: University Press, 1986), 372.

³¹ Gen. 31:19; 38:12-13; Deut. 15:19; 1 Sam. 25:2, 4, 7, 11; 2 Sam. 13:23-24; Cant. 4:2; 6:6; Isa. 53:7; Acts 8:32. There are four clear OT instances in which κείρω is used with reference to human hair. In 2 Sam. 14:26 Absalom cuts his hair once a year. Here κείρω translates כָּנַח which means

In this light, verse 6b may be paraphrased “since it is a shame for a woman to have her hair shaved off or cut very short, let her be covered by letting her hair grow long without cutting it.” Fourth, it is likely that Paul is speaking ironically in verse 6a: “If a woman is ‘uncovered’ by cutting her hair, then she might as well go ahead and have it cut very short.”

The final major objection is that “the words for covering that Paul uses in verses 4-6 and verse 13 ... most often refer to a [material] covering.”³² In support of his claim, Schreiner notes (1) that the phrase *κατὰ κεφαλῆς* occurs in Esther 6:12 and Plutarch’s *Moralia* 200f where it clearly refers to having the head veiled; (2) that *κατακαλύπτω* and its cognate *ἀκατακάλυπτος* “normally refer to a covering of some kind” as does *ἀκατάλυτος* in Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation*, II, 29 and Polybius 15, 27.2; and (3) that Philo, *Special Laws*, 3:60, “uses the phrase *ἀκατακαλύπτω τῆ κεφαλῆ* in reference to a priestess who had just removed her kerchief.”³³

It is true that these terms and phrases are used with reference to a material covering at times. That they necessarily have such reference, however, does not follow. In regard to Plutarch’s oft-cited phrase *ἐβάδιζε κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων τὸ ἱμάτιον* (‘he was walking with his garment covering his head’),³⁴ it is crucial to note that a word for a material covering (*ἱμάτιον*) is explicitly used.³⁵ Second, a survey of *κατακαλύπτω* in the LXX shows that the object used to cover is quite often not a veil or similar item. For example, it may be the fat of sacrificial animals (Exod. 29:22), water (Ezek. 26:19), wings (Isa. 6:2) or even an abstract concept such as dishonor (Jer. 28:51). Further, in the three instances in which the word is used without an explicit object, it involves disguising or covering oneself so completely that the face is either not visible or recognizable.³⁶ The nature of the covering, therefore, is not immediately clear simply from the use of these terms. Finally, since these terms permit covering by an object other than a veil, if other contextual factors suggest

“to shave.” In Job 1:20 it translates *יִגַּד*, the standard Hebrew term for shearing a sheep. In Micah 1:16 it functions in parallel with *ξυρώ* (‘to shave’) and again translates *יִגַּד*. It is also used metaphorically in Jer. 7:29 of Jerusalem, as a woman, cutting off her hair in mourning (*יִגַּד*). In the light of this pattern of usage, when Paul cut his hair in Acts 18:18, it is probable that he shaved or cut his hair rather short.

³² Schreiner, “Head Coverings, Prophecies and the Trinity,” 126.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Sayings of the Romans* 200F; from *Plutarch’s Moralia*) in Murphy-O’Connor, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16 Once Again,” 267.

³⁵ In regard to Esther 6:12 where Haman, humiliated by leading Mordecai through the streets, returns home *λυπούμενος κατὰ κεφαλῆς*: here the material covering is implicit, however, note that this phrase also lacks the verbal form *ἔχων*, making it an incomplete parallel to Paul’s *κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων*.

³⁶ Gen. 38:15; 2 Chron. 18:29; Sus. 1:32.

that hair and not a veil is the covering, there is no syntagmatic problem with hair being the covering.³⁷

The Hermeneutical Implications of 1 Cor. 11:7

If men's status as the image and glory of God and women's status as the glory of men are unchanging aspects of human nature, it follows that any injunction based on this universal principle will have universal applicability. This conclusion is supported by James' application of this principle to our speech: it is inconsistent to curse men and bless God, for abuse of an image-bearer necessarily connotes disregard for the original image (Jam. 3:9). Another example that could arguably be used in support of this position is the penalty for intentional slaughter of one made in God's image—capital punishment. This penalty is established in Genesis 9:5-6, is reiterated in the theocracy (Exod. 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:33), and is God's implied expectation for all human government (Rom. 13:4).

The universality of this principle also raises Paul's application above the cultural level. Regardless of the prevailing cultural views regarding male hair length or style, as long as man is the image and glory of God, he is obligated not to "cover" his head when praying or prophesying publicly. The inverse is true for the woman: her head must be "covered." Since the issue is hair and not a material covering, this renders moot the question about whether it was a Greek, Roman, or Jewish custom that Paul is requiring adherence to. The entire cultural question is no longer relevant.

Conclusion

In light of the divinely ordained OT priestly regalia, Paul's appeal to man's created status as the image and glory of God indicates that the covering he was forbidding to men and requiring of women was not a material covering. The connections created between vv. 4-7 and 13-15 by Paul's glory-shame motif suggest that the covering is uncut hair. From a hermeneutical standpoint, the fact that Paul bases his argument on man's unchanging status as the image and glory of God, and not on cultural propriety or traditional practices, means that such considerations are not relevant to determining how to apply this passage to the church today. A careful consideration of the nature of Paul's argumentation in 1 Cor. 11:7 leads to the conclusion, therefore, that uncut hair on men and cut hair on women brings shame to God when they pray or prophesy because they are violating God's design for the proper symbolic display of His authority structure in the church. Stated

³⁷ Another objection, though less serious, that is frequently raised is the case of the Nazirite vow as an example of men wearing uncut hair with divine approval. The very nature of the vow, however, indicates that it was requiring the participant to behave in an exceptional manner. It was normal to eat the fruit of the vine, to touch the dead when mourning, and for men to have cut hair. That God would make an exception to the normal pattern of behavior serves to confirm it rather than invalidate it.

positively, men and women fulfill their respective roles as the glory of God and the glory of man and thereby accurately symbolize the authority structure of the church when they pray and prophesy appropriately covered: cut hair on men and uncut hair on women.

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