



# Head Covering

---

- **The doctrine of divine headship**
- **The circumstances at Corinth**
- **Whose head is to be covered and why?**
- **What is a covering?**
- **The local assembly's responsibility**
- **Is the woman's hair her covering?**
- **What about the Gospel Meeting?**
- **How long is long hair?**
- **The heart or the head?**

---

Some years ago we had the privilege of gathering unto Christ with an assembly that occupied rented school premises. The school principal often observed our coming together when he was obliged to conduct school maintenance on Sundays. After a period of time he approached us with a number of questions relating to our gathering. He had particularly noted that the women in the assembly without exception and on each occasion had their heads covered during the meetings. He was curious to know why. It was not something he had seen done among the churches with which he was acquainted. Was it simply a quaint tradition or was there more to it? It was a good opportunity to explain to him not just why the women without exception had their heads covered, but also why all the men had theirs uncovered during the meetings. It was also a timely reminder to us that our collective testimony was being observed by others. We explained that while some Christians may regard this practice as mere tradition, there are clear and compelling biblical instructions for it; it relates to the doctrine of divine headship. Let us examine these reasons prayerfully before the Lord because it relates to our behavior within His house and to the glory of His house.

---

## The Context – the local church as the house of God

Some claim that the teaching about “head covering” and “headship” in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is not applicable to the local church. It is vital therefore that we prove this to be incorrect before we proceed. First, in verse 2 Paul employs the expression “you brethren”, which he also used when addressing the *church* in regard to the divisions within it (1:10, cf 11; 2:1). Second, he refers to the “ordinances” or “traditions” that he handed down to the church at Corinth, as he did elsewhere in his apostolic authority. “Therefore, brethren [the church at Thessalonica], stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye [the church at Thessalonica], have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess 2:15). The word ‘tradition’ (ordinance) is in both cases *paradosis* and means ‘precepts’ which intimates a collective observance. Third, the assembly context is given in verse 16. “But if any man seem to be contentious [i.e., disposed to debate the doctrine], we [the apostles] have no such custom, neither the *churches of God*.” The words “no such custom” does *not* refer to the absence of contention.<sup>1</sup> Paul raises the matter of some believers at Corinth disputing his teaching concerning headship and head covering – his subject in the previous verses. He assures them that the apostles (we) were all in agreement in this matter. And further, so were the *churches of God*, for they all observed the teaching. Verse 16 proves that the subject and the doctrine of head covering was known and held among all the *churches*. It records the fact that the *churches* did not follow cultural customs. Paul’s reference to “the churches of God” clearly indicates the whole matter is to do with sphere of the local church - its public testimony. We note the same context in Chapter 14:34. “Let your women keep silence in the churches.” All this agrees with the opening salutation that the epistle is to the churches of God in every place (1 Cor 1:1-2). Fourth, prophesying, which is mentioned in connection with head covering, is in this epistle seen to be a gift to be exercised for the good of the saints of God when they assembled together (in the absence of the completed Scriptures, (1 Cor 14:4; 26-39)). Fifth, we observe that *both* men and women were in transgression, which suggests they were together in mixed company – the local church.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> “Not the custom of contentiousness, but that of women speaking unveiled. The testimonies of Tertullian and Chrysostom show that these injunctions of Paul prevailed in the churches. In the sculptures of the catacombs the women have a close-fitting head-dress, while the men have the hair short.” M V Vincent *Word Studies in the NT*, Vol III; 1 Cor 11.

<sup>2</sup> Those who deny that the matter of *head covering* in this passage refers to the corporate life of the local church, must find a biblical limitation of it to activities *outside* the church. Where in Scripture are the principles of head covering *excluded* from within the church?

## The concern over the assembly at Corinth

The subject of this portion is the covering associated with the head – the physical head: *Whose* head should be covered, *when* and *why*? In verses 4-6 two circumstances are identified that breach divine principles.

1. **Men** praying and/or prophesying with their heads **covered**,
2. **Women** praying and/or prophesying with their heads **uncovered**.

We have here also the serious consequences of this breach – the collective failing in the doctrine of **divine headship**. It is vital that we understand that the irregular circumstances at Corinth did not create the doctrine. The doctrine already existed as we shall see. The failure at Corinth served to raise it. The correct observance of head covering serves to proclaim it. To gain a proper understanding of this passage it is important therefore to *first* know the doctrine and its origin, and *then* examine the circumstances in the light of it. The difficulty some have here and with other passages of Scripture, is that they move from circumstance to the doctrine, rather than from the doctrine to the circumstance.

## The doctrine of headship – the man and the woman

### Seen in its institution

Divine *headship* relates to the order of *authority* in divine administration (divine government). When the term *head* is used in expressions such as “the head of every man is Christ”, it refers to *authority* and, by implication, *subjection*. God is a God of order. In his teaching to Timothy about headship and its importance to proper behavior in the local church, Paul did not manufacture arguments from culture or his personal morality; how could he possibly do so if he was led by the Spirit of God? It is the Spirit of God that takes him to the divine Record, to Genesis and creation for the teaching. When God created the world and the things in it He placed man – the *male* in the position of authority, responsibility and leadership. Man is therefore presented as the head of the woman (v 3). This divine order is clearly set out in Genesis and is never revoked. Man, not the woman was created in God’s image. The term image – *tselem* refers to “representation” and it is associated with rule (Gen 1:26-27).<sup>3</sup> This is supported by the passage itself. The woman taken from man’s side was to be his “help-meet.” She was divinely appointed to occupy a place of subjection yet in intimate nearness to the man – *never* inferior for they were “one flesh.” We are also informed that the man’s representative responsibility to God was instituted

---

<sup>3</sup> *Tselem* – image = representative figure (Strong)  
HEAD COVERING © J W de SILVA

*before* the woman was formed. God told Adam of the prohibition in the garden and doubtless the woman was informed of it by him for she knew of it (Gen 2:15-16; 3:2-3). Under the Spirit's inspiration and with complete biblical authority Paul therefore declares the woman is to be in subjection to the man, not to teach nor to have authority over him, but to be in silence. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim 2:11-13). Scripture confirms itself and in so doing dispels any notion that headship is merely an OT manipulation, a cultural aberration or Paul's personal invention. We have further biblical proof of this when we read how God's divine order of headship was compromised leading to sin and the fall of man.

### **Seen in its contradiction**

The woman was enticed by Satan to step outside her divinely ordained place of subjection to the man. We know how her insubordination brought calamity upon all creation. Satan had himself defied God's order in divine administration and was cast out of heaven. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer...For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: ...I will be like the most High" (Isa 14:12-14).<sup>4</sup> He attacked God's administrative order on earth by deliberately approaching the woman who was to be subject to the man. But observe it was Adam as the head of the woman who God held responsible for the deed and its consequences. It was the *man*, the divinely ordained head who God called to give an account of it. "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou" (Gen 3:9)? Note too that divine judgment was pronounced with specific reference to the breach of divine headship. "Because thou hast harkened to the voice of thy wife ... cursed be the ground for thy sake" (Gen 3:17). So we have Scripture confirming itself. "For by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world" (Rom 5:12). "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Rom 5:19). A woman is not to teach nor have authority over the man, but to be in subjection and silence. For what reason? Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression (1 Tim 2:14).

Scripture is clear to all who bow to it. Where we have *divine government* and *administration* involving the people of God, God demands that the man must take the place of authority over the woman who is to be subject to the man. We note however, that while there is a divine order of authority and subjection in

---

<sup>4</sup>Jude 6; 1 Pet 3:7

respect of men and women in divine government, there is none in divine *grace* wherein we all stand. In the Body of Christ the matter is not of *service* but of *standing*. Here there is no distinction between male and female (Gal 3:28).<sup>5</sup>

## The Doctrine of Headship - the coming of Christ

The doctrine of divine headship was established in *creation*, denied by the first man in his *degradation* and affirmed by the last Adam and second Man in the *incarnation*. The divine order of administration has its basis in the order God assigned man and the woman when He created the worlds. It was then *God – man – woman*. Since the incarnation it is *God – Christ – man – woman* (1 Cor 11). This divine order is to be part of the local assembly's *proclamation*. We note below more on the divine order of headship, God – Christ – man – woman.<sup>6</sup>

## The circumstances at Corinth - verses 4-5

We have to this point examined briefly the divine doctrine of headship as taught in Scripture and ignored the circumstances given in verses 4-5. We have seen that divine headship is rooted in Genesis and confirmed in the NT. It exists independently of the circumstances at Corinth. They do not teach it; they breach it. There is what we may call the primary breach in verses 4-5, which relates to **head covering**. The men had their heads *covered* when they prayed and prophesied, and the women did so with their heads *uncovered*. Men and women are addressed because both have equal responsibility to God in this matter. The men would have been Jewish converts whose custom as Jews was to pray with their heads covered; the women would have been Greek converts whose custom was to pray uncovered.<sup>7</sup> (Paul will say later “we have no such custom” – the uncovered head of the woman and the covered head of the man).

In addition to this primary breach there is a secondary breach of doctrine - the **women speaking** in the church - their praying and prophesying.<sup>8</sup> We refer to

---

<sup>5</sup> This verse refers to every believer's *standing* in Christ – as accepted in Him. Here there is no distinction between male and female. In public *service* for Christ however there is a clear distinction between male and female given in divine headship clearly taught in Scripture.

<sup>6</sup> It is here, the “head of every man is *Christ*” and not the “head of every man is the *Lord*”. The latter expresses His *lordship* – in divine *possession*; the former expresses His *headship* – Christ, the anointed authority of God – in divine *administration*. Both truths are vested in one Person and are relevant when the local assembly gathers as evident in 1 Corinthians 11. (cf Eph 1:22, “Christ...the head over all things to the church”; Eph 5:23, “Christ is the head of the church”).

<sup>7</sup> In the OT economy Aaron and the priests had to have their heads covered in the congregation. The mitre and bonnets were mandated as symbols of the presence of God. In the NT economy with the coming of Christ these symbols were obsolete.

<sup>8</sup> Praying may be silent but prophesying by its very nature was audible. It would appear that both were done audibly at Corinth.



this as a secondary matter not because it is of a lesser degree, but because Paul does not take it up until chapter 14. His first task is to address the matter of head covering and then deal with the error of women taking an audible part in the assembly. It is vital to emphasize that if these circumstances refer to what took place in the local church at Corinth, as they surely do, then in the light of NT church truth, there *must* be two distinct errors in verses 4-5. Verse 5 cannot therefore be used to assert that as long as women are covered they can speak in the church.<sup>9</sup> A woman speaking in the church is a contradiction to the clear prohibition given in Scripture already noted (1 Cor 14, 1 Tim 2). The women praying and prophesying audibly is this secondary error. The women at Corinth could not speak while they were veiled, for their veil marked their subjection. But when the veil was removed (as per Greek custom) and with it the symbol of subjection, it appears the women were then free to speak within the church – or so they thought! So Paul addresses the matter of head covering first and later takes up the matter of the women speaking in the church.

By coming uncovered into a sphere of divine administration the women denied the divine order of authority. There is no head (authority) above God and no order of subjection below the woman. “But 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.” Paul states here the divine *order of authority*. This confirms that the circumstances and doctrine in this portion relate to the local assembly, because the local church is a sphere of divine administration. This confirms that there are two distinct breaches in verses 4-5, the primary one being dealt with first. There is another sphere in which divine headship and its associated divine administration applies in regard to man – the home. Clearly here however it is not the home but the local assembly in view.<sup>10</sup> It is the *Church* in its local public testimony that is charged with making known the manifold wisdom of God to principalities and powers (Eph 3:10). When they gather locally, the churches must bear testimony to God’s wisdom and glory through their conduct, one aspect of which is divine headship.

Man is not in a position of superiority to the woman but in the role of authority over her. In the house of God the veiled head of the woman is to

---

<sup>9</sup> As noted by others, in Chapter 8:10 there is no prohibition in regard to sitting at the table in the temple of idols. Paul states only that it can be a stumbling block to another in Christ. It is not until Chapter 10:20-22 that Paul prohibits sitting at the table of idols. He deals with the principle of stumbling first and then takes up later that which relates to eating at the table of idols.

<sup>10</sup> The terms man – *aner* and woman – *gune*, can refer to male/female or husband/wife respectively. The context is the key. Here their use is to distinguish gender – male/female which is consistent with the references to creation. It was man – the male who was created in God’s image – not the ‘husband’ (Gen 1:26).

symbolize her subjection and subordinate role in God's divine order of administration. Her submission does not mean her place or role is less significant or inferior to the man's; for *that which glorifies God* can never be so. "Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Cor 11:11). A woman with her head veiled is doing what only a woman can do when glorifying God – what a peculiar divine privilege and responsibility is hers in the public testimony of the assembly! Dear sister in Christ, remember that the place of subjection was the sublime place and profession the divine Son took in His incarnation as man. He was never inferior to God, but as Man He voluntarily took His place in subjection to God and glorified Him through it, as testified throughout Scripture (Matt 26:39; Jn 5:30; Phil 2 etc). As pre-eminent over all things He is the head of man. So, too, must the man and the woman be in obedient subjection, acknowledging Christ as Head over the man, and the man as the head of the woman respectively. Not to do so is a flagrant denial of the mind of Christ in us. The uncovered head of the man and the covered head of the woman symbolize the divine order, the required subjection and acknowledged pattern of authority. The woman must not take the place of man and neither the man of the woman in divine administration. If the woman's physical head is uncovered she publicly dishonors her figurative head, the man. The marring of the divine order however is not limited to the man and extends to Christ. When a woman's head is uncovered she takes the place of the man in authority and she mars the testimony as to the relative place of the One above man – Christ. *Christ* is testified as *her* head, bringing Him into public disgrace by putting Him in the place of created man. How solemn! Man disgraces himself and the headship mandated to him by God if he wears the symbol of the woman's subjection on his head. In so doing he dishonors his head – Christ and publicly disgraces Him. He fails to represent Christ.

### **The aspect of image & glory**

In verse 7 Paul introduced another aspect of doctrine that underpins headship and head covering. "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is image and glory of God: but the woman is glory of the man."<sup>11</sup> Man's head must be uncovered because man was created in the *image* of God as declared in Genesis (1:26-27). Image in verse 7 is *eikon* and it refers to *representation*. This is linked to man being the glory of God. The word glory, *doxa*, means reputation. So we have not only representation but also *manifestation*. Man has the responsibility to represent and manifest the reputation of God in authority. We

---

<sup>11</sup> Note that Paul addresses the case of the man first in keeping with the responsibility the man has in divine order. The definite articles are absent (cf AV).



have here divine representation and manifestation as the doctrinal basis for the man having his head uncovered.

What does this aspect of the doctrine say to the woman? Observe first that under the Spirit's guidance Paul does not say she is the image of man – his *representation*. This would contradict the doctrine relating to headship – the man's authority as the head of the woman. Second, she must have her head covered because she is the glory of man. She is the *manifestation* of the man's reputation. According to divine order, in the woman we have manifestation but no representation. Paul again draws from creation and Genesis to support this truth. Woman is *of* the man – her physical *origination* from him. She is *for* the man – her moral *obligation* to him in the matter of authority (vv 8-9). As the glory of man she must veil her head so that man's glory does not manifest itself in God's house.

### **Divine headship - its witness to the angels**

Verse 10 reveals the angels as witnesses to what is declared in all aspects of the doctrine of headship, *authority*, *subjection*, *representation* and *manifestation*. Angels desire to examine that which relates to the Church and this dispensation – “which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12).<sup>12</sup> So Paul writes “we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor 4:9); And again, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10). Angels (like school principals) cannot search the hearts and must learn from symbols and events. The angels look on when the house of God gathers and note the divine order represented by the men with their heads uncovered and the women with their heads covered. The angels witnessed the creation of the first man and knew the place God ordained for him as the image and glory of God; they witnessed the degradation of him through the Fall by one of their own – Lucifer; they watched as Adam became the fallen head; they witnessed the condescension, incarnation and crucifixion of the second Man because of the Fall; they saw Him, the Creator take His place in creation as the Firstborn, the Head of creation (Col 1:15); they witnessed the triumph of Him as the risen Head who is now seated as the Church's ascended Head in heaven (Col 1:18). The angels are seen throughout divine revelation as vitally interested in all divine work and the divine order that accompanies it. The divine order reflects the divine reputation – the glory of God. So they look upon the house of God – those gathered as new creations in Christ. They expect to see and be taught the new

---

<sup>12</sup> “Look into” is to stoop down and make an earnest enquiry” - into that which pertains to the Holy Spirit coming down – the formation of the Church which is the Body of Christ with Him as Head.

order that reveals the appointed place of the *last Adam* and *second Man*, Christ. Here the local church teaches angels. “For this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head because of the angels.” (i.e., her authority under man is symbolized by her head covering). This no doubt impacts on their worship of God. Angels are charged with the preservation of divine order in their sphere of administration. The elect angels in obedient subjection retained their appointed place; they kept their first estate (Jude 6). Their joy is confirmed and their worship enhanced by obedience to divine order shown in God’s house. The fallen angels are rebuked by it. What a privilege yet solemn responsibility is given to the local assembly in this matter. What possible interest and learning would worshipping angels have in something that is cultural or of a personal opinion?

### **The responsibility of the local church**

The local church is “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). It is gathered unto **Christ** by His Spirit. When an assembly observes headship it declares publicly the divine governmental relationship of those within to **Christ** – the Head, the man and the woman in their appointed place relative to **Christ** – the Centre. *All* believers in a local church are in an organic association in this collective testimony. What does Satan seek to cultivate and what prompts the unbeliever’s scorn? It is *inconsistency* among God’s people and in the testimony of His house! What one person does in the local church implicates all within. So Paul exhorts, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10). If divine headship is not observed the local testimony to God’s glory is marred. God can only be grieved and offended by this. We, too, who seek to please Him must be grieved when this order is denied – whether unintentionally or intentionally, for either way the divine order is compromised. Let us follow and reverence the unhesitating obedience of the Son of God as Man in His ordained place of subjection.

### **What about the Gospel meeting?**

There is a tendency to regard the assembly gospel meeting as an occasion where the doctrine of divine headship is optional. The reasons given vary, such as the gospel meeting is not an “assembly” meeting, or the wearing of hats will “turn off the unsaved.” It is sad, that the redeemed in Christ would seek to forego such a blessed opportunity to display the God-honoring truth of divine headship before a world that knows nothing of it, and before the angels that rejoice in it.

Observe the ready and willing way in which the world displays its religious symbols, from the iconic crucifix to the idolatrous crests of its clubs and societies. Better still, let us be persuaded into subjection because we are a people desirous of living according to our holy, high, heavenly and our humble calling (2 Tim 1-4; Philipp 3:14; Heb 3:1; 1 Cor 1:26-31). The idea that many are “put-off” by a display of headship is symptomatic of the compromising attitude which has seen a falling away in the message of salvation itself. It is nothing short of surrendering to man. “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Pr 29:25). Beloved in Christ, it is biblical that an assembly comes together to proclaim the gospel – it is, or it should be - an occasion where Christ is collectively magnified as the **sinner’s friend**. There are indeed evangelists who take the gospel far and wide; but then there are too the local assemblies, which like the Thessalonians, should seek to “sound out the word” such that in every place their faith to God is spread abroad (1Thess 1:8). Tell us – more, tell God why His assembly should *not* come together to preach the gospel. When the assembly does come together to preach the gospel -or for any other purpose, it does so believing Christ is *in the midst* and He is to be magnified (Matt 18:20). Where this is owned there can be no question that the symbols of divine headship must be observed. May we encourage each other before the Lord in this matter. “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Ps 34:3).

### **What constitutes a ‘covering’?**

We must avoid legality as to what constitutes a covering. There are biblical guidelines to follow. The ‘covering’ in this passage is that which “covers up” – *katakalypto* – “veils from view.” A “see-through” covering therefore we suggest would not seem appropriate. A “partial” covering of the head is not envisaged either; nor one that “adorns” the head in an ostentatious display. The expression “covered” means ‘a veil hanging down from the head’. These observations should give practical help in determining the form of the covering.

### **Is the woman’s hair her covering?**

“But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” Some say that because of the preposition *anti* the statement means her hair is given “instead of a covering.”<sup>13</sup> This cannot be so. First, the term “covering” here is quite different to that in verses 4-7. Here it is *peribolaion* - “that which is thrown around” and is used of something that is an adornment.

---

<sup>13</sup> “For a covering (*anti peribolaion*). Old word from *periballô* to fling around, as a mantle (Heb 1:12) or a covering or veil as here. It is not in the place of a veil, but answering to (*anti*, in the sense of *anti* in Joh 1:16), as a permanent endowment..” A T Robertson, *Word Pictures in the NT*; Vol IV. HEAD COVERING © J W de SILVA

This is in keeping with the previous remark made by Paul that nature has adorned the woman with glory in her long hair. Second, in verse 6 Paul declares that if a woman is uncovered she may as well be shorn. Suppose that in this verse her hair is the covering as claimed by some. It follows then that for her to be “uncovered” would mean she would have no hair. How then can she be shorn? Third, there are *two* coverings associated with the woman. First, her hair which is the permanent one symbolizing her place in the *natural* realm – her personal glory; second, the temporary veil, symbolizing her place in the *spiritual* realm. Within the assembly the temporary veil is needed so that which is natural – her personal glory is not visible in the presence of God and that her place in the divine order of authority – her subjection to man, is symbolized.

### **Long hair**

The woman’s (long) hair is her personal glory – it is a “glory to her.” Therefore, says Paul it is a shame for a man to adorn himself with something that symbolizes the woman’s personal glory – long hair.<sup>14</sup> It is not without coincidence that the common symbol of rebellion against divine design known as “the women’s liberation movement” or “feminism” is short hair or a shaved head among women. Such rebellion surely serves to sanctify the hearts of God’s people to unfeigned observance of the truth of divine headship. There is a solemn message from Revelation. The hellish hordes from the pit had “the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women” (Rev 9:7-8).

### **How long is long?**

There are instances where we wish Scripture would give us a precise ruling. The appropriate length of hair is one example of it. But God in His wisdom has left the matter for our spiritual discernment tutored by His word. On one hand we are to assiduously avoid legality. On the other hand we are to equally avoid laxity. Surely the yardstick is that our appearance is unto modesty (1 Tim 2:9); to “abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thess 5:22); that we “be not conformed to this world” but “transformed by the renewing” of our minds, that we “may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom 12:2). A sign of increasing ungodliness is the blurring of the distinction between men and women in their roles and in their appearance. May it not be too bothersome for

---

<sup>14</sup> Some assert that the Lord had “long hair.” Such a notion is derived from man’s imagination replicated in his art. The Lord was never a Nazarite (those who let their hair grow long during the time of their Nazarite vow). He was from Nazareth – a Nazarene. The long hair of the Nazarite was a mark that he had taken the place of separation and submission, denying the rights as a man. The law of the Nazarite confirms that men ordinarily were not to have long hair. How short is “short” hair? Perhaps hair of a length that precludes it being “braided” (1 Tim 2:9)?



us who hold the blessed hope that we will one day be “like Him”, to do that which is needful to preserve in appearance and in role the divine distinction between man and woman.

### **The Heart or the Head?**

We can obey biblical teaching with self-righteous conformity. Such coldness of heart is not within the mind of God. However, neither is disobedience countenanced in God’s eyes. The fact that some may not have the correct spiritual exercise when complying with divine headship – or any other divine principle, can never be a biblical reason for us not complying with it. Let God judge the unseen motives of the heart and man superintend those things that have been assigned to him - that which is *seen*! Some say where there is no understanding it is improper to insist on conforming to Scripture because a person’s “heart may not be in it”! Such an assertion is spiritually unwise. When we were children our parents required that we conform to certain behavior. At the time we did not always understand why but we submitted to their authority. As time passed (perhaps when we had children of our own) we understood why our parents were insistent that we obey them. They loved us and we were to obey for our **good**. The same principle applies in regard to divine headship. God requires willing obedience even though we may not understand a particular matter. Later, through the school of obedience we come to know the reason why, and realize that it was not only for our spiritual good but also for God’s **GLORY**. “Through thy precepts I get understanding and hate every false way” (Ps 119:104). We thank our parents for responsible love and honor them for it, for through it they preserved us from falling. When a sister who is unacquainted with the truth of headcovering is required to veil her head, it is done because of that love which seeks to keep her from “dishonoring her head” and denying the truth of divine headship and its glory to God. So too, in regard to a brother and the uncovering of his head. “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” (1 Jn 5:2). “Some things are commanded because they are right; other things are right because they are commanded” (Anon). Some believers sadly regard the matter of head covering “a little thing.” A prayerful and submissive study of Scripture will dispel such a notion. Let us be mindful that “He that is faithful in that which is least [the little things] is faithful also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Yet, biblical headship is still by some regarded as out of step with the liberated woman in contemporary society. They assert Paul expressed a personal



view, limited to the cultural and religious attitudes of his day.<sup>15</sup> Such thinking fails to bow to role **God** has inviolably assigned to men and women in creation; it has rejected the **Spirit's** endorsement of Paul's pen, that "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor 14:37); it has failed to obey the **Lord's** commission, to go and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded, directly, and indirectly through His inspired apostles (Matt 28:19-20); it fails to bow to the **biblical example** of the believers of the early Church in that "they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). Above all it fails to comprehend that true Christian liberty is freedom from self-will to serve God according to *His* will. "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor 5:15). If the relationships declared by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 are in any way determined by his personal or cultural views, then it brings into question the doctrinal and practical worth of every relationship he spoke on – husband and wife, master and servant, parent and child – even Christ and the Church!

J W de Silva 2003/4

---

<sup>15</sup> We should be aware of the devices some use to avoid bowing to the doctrine in God's word. A doctrine is said to be *cultural* – the matter was part of the culture of a past day; it is *dispensational* – the matter is only relevant to the theology of a past day; it is *spiritual* – the matter is not be taken literally; it is *trivial* – the matter is true but insignificant; it is *legal* – not within the "spirit of love."