

# CUSTOMS *and* CHRISTIANITY

With a Special Discussion

OF

# BOBBED HAIR

Should Women Wear Men's Garments?

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## Introduction to the Topic

The custom among women of wearing the hair cropped or bobbed or completely shorn has now become general and many of our best Christian women have conformed to this custom. When some fifteen years ago only a few moving picture actresses began cutting off their hair there was a great protest raised among the women and no conservative cultured woman, to say nothing of a Christian woman, would have thought of sanctioning such a practice and much less of adopting it. But the actresses won out and sentiment has so completely changed that the woman, or the man either, who now opposes bobbed hair is the exception and is therefore something of an oddity, and, in the eyes of some people, a **crank**. However there are still a few women left who have scruples against bobbed hair; and a great number in whose minds there is a question about the propriety and the scripturalness of this practice.

Also there are many men who object seriously to this custom. In some instances it has caused divorces. In others it has brought about marital unhappiness and in a few instances men have committed suicide because their wives bobbed their hair.

Some preachers of the gospel consider this practice an open violation of divine law, the flaunting of disobedience and defiance of a scriptural prohibition.

In view of these conditions it seems important that we should give this question serious study and if possible make the truth about it so plain that there can be no further question. If it is not wrong for women to wear short hair that fact should be generally known so that those who yield to the custom with mental reservations and qualms may be freed from such annoyances and those who cannot get their own and their husband's consent to cut their hair but who nevertheless long to be in the style may be relieved and set free. But if it is wrong

and unscriptural it is far more important that this fact be made known, for many souls are in danger.

Let us therefore turn our attention to this question in a serious and prayerful way. These lines are not written for those who are biased. They are written for those upon either side of the question who desire earnestly to know what is right and proper and, above all, what will please the Lord. There are some women who would continue to bob their hair if we should show them a plain, positive "thou shalt not" in the holy Scripture. But it is needless to say that a woman with that sort of spirit is not a Christian with either short or long hair.

Likewise there are some men who are prejudiced against women and who object strenuously to women's doing anything that is not in accord with their narrow and prejudiced ideas of propriety. Then there is another and a larger class of men who are more reasonable but who nevertheless object to bobbed hair from purely sentimental reasons. They don't like the custom. They were never used to it, therefore it is wrong. But such objections are not valid—that is they are not valid as a general law against bobbed hair. Of course any Christian woman should be careful about disregarding such objections from her own husband. Even sentiment, likes and dislikes must be considered in married partners if congeniality and domestic felicity are desired.

## The Attitude Of Approach

Let us now come to this subject resolved to be honest and open-minded, not to be swayed by sentiment, prejudice or by the customs of this age or of any past age. If the Bible has spoken upon this question let us learn what it says and abide by its teaching regardless of whether others do or do not heed it or believe it.

The laws of Jehovah are eternal and they are based upon man's nature and needs and are therefore perpetually applicable to every generation.

The fads of men are fleeting and transient as a rule. There are customs however that become firmly established and continue to be observed through many generations and in such cases the custom comes to be regarded as sacred and any departure from it is looked upon as sinful. It is necessary therefore for us carefully to distinguish between

## Human Customs And Divine Law

When any custom is generally observed among any people for a long period of time it becomes recognized as a characteristic of that nation or people and any departure from it will be looked upon as disloyalty to national or race traditions. Customs and traditions some times become so deeply impressed and ingrained that they seem to be laws of our nature and when we endeavor to change such a custom we appear to be fighting against nature. And in some cases the customs of men are indeed built upon some primal instinct, some biological law or some social necessity and to change such a custom without substituting one that would better meet those fundamental needs would be foolish. It would bring about intellectual and moral confusion and social unrest and unhappiness. And such a condition would continue to prevail until men could work out and establish a practice that would meet their needs. We should therefore be very careful to distinguish between a mere convention and a useful, sensible and salutary custom—even though it is only a custom.

World conditions have changed radically in the last twenty-five years. Our mode or method of living is entirely different from that of our fathers. Hence we were reared under one set of conditions and we are now rearing our children under another set of conditions. We were also reared under one system of rules and we are rearing our children by a different system—and in many cases by no rules at all. The world is now in a large measure in confusion. There seems to be no standard of conduct that is universally recognized. A certain class of literature today is filled up with some such ideas and expressions as "the modern revolt," "the revolt of youth," etc. Naturally we ask what these "revolts" are against? The best answer we can get from the writers who use those expressions is that they are not only against all traditions, conventions and customs but they are against all established institutions, all laws, human and divine. Every man must be a law unto himself. He must be free to

satisfy every desire of his flesh and no man has a right to say him nay. Such propaganda is being broadcast throughout the land and it is no wonder that crime and immorality are holding high carnival among the youth.

Before we fall too much in line with any of the modern styles and customs we first should ascertain whether or not they are brought about by or contribute to this vicious propaganda.

## What Say The Scriptures?

The Bible is not at all silent upon the relation of the sexes and upon their behavior toward each other. Nor is it silent upon the question of dress and adornment, including the style of arranging and dressing the hair. Some things that are said upon these questions may be intended as a condemnation of extravagances that were practiced at the time the writer lived but if we believe that the writer was inspired we will understand that those same extravagances are still condemned. What was wrong then is wrong now, that is what was morally wrong. (Some things in the Old Testament were only ceremonial). Moral principles do not change. Even if the same things that are condemned in scripture are not in vogue today there will usually be found a principle in the teaching of the scripture that applies to us and to all generations.

**1. Then What Say the Scriptures About Customs?** The general teaching of the New Testament seems to be that Christians should live in harmony with the customs of their time when these customs are not condemned as sinful. They should not make themselves either obnoxious or conspicuous by defying the established or accepted rules of behavior. When there is no principle involved, when the custom is neither right nor wrong **per se**, the Christian will be governed by the general practice. He will do as the people where he is do (See 1 Cor. 8:8-13; 9:19-26; 10:23-33; Rom. 14, 15:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:21).

But the Christian should not in any sense conform to, partake of or connive at the evil practices of the world or any custom that grows out of or lends itself to such practices. (see Eph. 5:7-21; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Pet. 4:1-6; 1 John 2:15; 1 Thes. 5:22 and many other passages. Read your Bible).

**2. What Say the Scriptures About Dress?** Upon this question we shall give the exact words of the inspired writers. Hear them:

"Moreover Jehovah said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and Jehovah will lay bare their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the beauty of their anklets, and the cauls, and the crescents; the pendants, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the headtires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the rings, and the nose-jewels; the festival robes, and the mantles, and the shawls, and the satchels; the hand-mirrors, and the fine linen, and the turbans, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness; and instead of the girdle, a rope; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a robe, a girding of sackcloth; branding instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she shall be desolate and sit upon the ground. And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name; take thou away our reproach" (Isaiah 3:16-26, 4:1).

"A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah thy God" (Deut. 22:5)

"I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing. In like manner, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works. Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not



beguiled, but the woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression: but she shall be saved through her child-bearing, if they continue in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety" (1 Tim. 2:8-15).

"In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives; beholding your chaste behavior coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner aforetime the holy women also, who hoped in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands: as obeyed Sarah Abraham, calling him Lord: whose children ye now are, if ye do well, and are not put in fear by any terror. Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Pet. 3:1-7).

These passages clearly teach that it is wrong for women to dress or adorn themselves in any style that is gawdy, immodest or wanton. And we may put that down as the one correct conclusion from their teaching—the sum of all that is said here. Women are forbidden to "braid" or "plait" (A. V.) their hair but since they must dress and arrange their hair in some manner it seems clear that Paul and Peter allude to the gawdy braiding of the hair which was practiced by the heathen women who wreathed or wove fine jewelry into their hair.

The following note from Dr. Macknight upon the passage in Timothy is appropriate here:

"For, in this passage, the apostle doth not forbid either the richness or expensiveness of the dress of women in

general, as is plain from the commendation given to the virtuous woman (Prov. 31:21-22), who, through her industry, clothed all her household with scarlet, and herself with silk and purple; not to mention that the good of society requires persons to dress themselves according to their rank and fortune. What the apostle forbids is, that immodest manner of dressing which is calculated to excite impure desires in the spectators; also that gawdiness of dress which proceeds from vanity, and nourishes vanity; in short, that attention to dress which consumes much time, leads women to neglect the more important adorning of the mind, makes them careless of their families, and runs them into expenses greater than their husbands can afford. How apt the eastern women were to indulge themselves in finery of dress, we learn from the prophet Isaiah's description of the dress of the Jewish ladies of his time" (Is. 3:16-24).

With this understanding of the teaching of Paul and Peter, surely no one can deny that it is applicable to our generation and needs to be emphasized today much more than it is.

But some one may ask why it is wrong for a woman to put on man's clothing or **vice versa**. The fact that God says it is wrong is reason enough for those who desire to walk according to his word, but if we can see a reason beneath this divine law, it will only increase our appreciation of it.

This is entirely in harmony with the laws of nature. The sexes are different and nature gives them distinguishing marks. There is a difference in feature, in figure and in voice as well as in characteristics of movement and manners. These differences are brought about solely by the male or female organs. These marks are called **secondary sexual characters**. That is, this is what is done by the sex generative organs in addition to their primary function of procreation. The ovaries of the woman manufacture an internal secretion which consists of various chemical

substances and has a tremendous influence not only upon the development of her body but also upon her feelings. Without it the woman would look more or less like a man; she would not develop her pretty long hair, her feminine voice, etc.

It is some times argued that nature does not give to woman any longer hair than she would give to man if he would permit his hair to grow. But this is a mistake. An abundance of long hair on woman is a secondary sexual character. A man with such an abundance of hair as long as a woman's hair would be an exception just as a bald headed woman is an exception. Nature does not herself destroy these distinguishing marks. When they are destroyed there is something wrong with bodily functions, unless we destroy them by artificial means. Why should we want to do this?

But some one may say, if nature gives us these distinguishing peculiarities why do we need to have a distinction in clothing? The difference in clothing is called for by these natural differences. And we thus recognize and honor nature's differences. For the sexes to exchange clothing is an abomination to Jehovah and it is also abhorrent to men.

There are civil laws against this practice. A man could not walk through any city in woman's dress without being arrested, unless his disguise was so complete as not to be detected. He would at once be suspected of some crime or of some criminal intent. For the authorities **know** that no normal, sane man is going to try to look or act like a woman unless it is for some special purpose, and that could not be a worthy purpose unless it is only for a few moments of amusement.

The authorities overlook a violation of this law by women as a sort of a patronizing concession to one of their various whims. Some of our "equal rights" sisters surely ought to protest against this and demand that they be arrested like men!

There is another and yet a deeper reason why Jehovah may have prohibited this exchange of wearing apparel. As we have seen, the sexes are different and have different functions and God, nature and reason demand that these differences be respected. Yet there have always been perverts in the world. We have them today as all medical men know.

Persons who confuse, pervert and abuse sex functions. Homosexuals, sadists, etc. Such perverts were very numerous in Old Testament times. Men with men "working that which is unseemly." Women doing that which is against nature. The men of Sodom were such vicious perverts that they refused Lot's virgin daughters and demanded the men who were in his house (Gen. 19:1-12). Hence these perverts are still known as Sodomites and those who yield to such abuse are known as Catamities (Effeminate, is the word used in English Scriptures) (See Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Thes. 4:5).

These are vile things to even think about and very few preachers ever speak or write about matters of this nature. And many good people perhaps do not even know that such things exist. But they do exist and they constitute a real social problem.

Now these poor perverted individuals were not all so born. They became that way by their own practice. By their own perversion of their natural powers.

Is it necessary to say that we should not want to do anything that would give us the remotest resemblance of a pervert? Should we do anything that would look like an effect to confuse or exchange our sex natures? Should we even start in the direction of such a possible ultimate end? Or is an indication of dissatisfaction with one's sex a wholesome sign? Should we not recognize and emphasize the difference of sexes and honor the function of each?

Jehovah's word is not to be ignored and laughed at.

Let us now, before we study the one passage of Scripture that bears more directly upon the subject of bobbed hair, sum up what has already been said and draw some conclusions:

1. The Christian should conform to the customs of the people around him when these customs are not wrong.
2. The Christian must not partake of any evil practice. He must abstain from the appearance of evil.
3. There is a wide spread propaganda in the world today which has as its purpose the throwing down of established institutions and customs with nothing better to offer. We should be careful not to aid in this sinister movement by adopting styles that it dictates.
4. Gawdy and immodest dress is condemned. It shows a lack of taste and culture; a lack of humility and refinement; a lack of devotion and spirituality and other qualities that should adorn the mind or heart.
5. The sexes are different and are given distinguishing peculiarities or characters. To pervert the sex function is the grossest of bestiality. To destroy the secondary sexual characters is a mistake and a sin. Long beautiful hair on woman is a sexual characteristic. The mere cropping of the hair does not destroy this mark but the shingling of the hair in the style that men wear does destroy the mark. It is to simulate the appearance of one of the opposite sex: it is at least an apparent effort to disguise or hide the real sex and appear to be of the other sex. Such a thing can hardly be thought proper by right thinking people. It is condemned by Jehovah.

## What Say the Scriptures About Bobbed Hair?

We are ready now to enter upon a study of that one chapter that serves as a battle ground for those who contend over this question. Let us study it analytically and prayerfully, laying all preconceived notions aside. Do not tell yourself that you already know exactly what it says; that you understand it so well that you do not need even to reread it. Some men who thought for years that they understood this passage have changed their ideas concerning it upon a more careful examination of the language.

It would be impractical to submit here a copy of the Greek text, but in the hope that the different ways of expressing the thought may cause it to stand out so that no one can fail to get the meaning, we here submit three different versions or translations of the verses. The passage is of course (**1 Corinthians 11:3-16**).

### 1. (*American Standard Version.*)

"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. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the

woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."

## 2. (*New Testament in modern speech—Weymouth.*)

"I would have you know, however, that of every man, Christ is the Head, that of a woman her husband is the Head, and that God is Christ's Head. A man who wears a veil when praying or prophesying dishonours his Head; but a woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her Head, for it is exactly the same as if she had her hair cut short.

"If a woman will not wear a veil, let her also cut off her hair. But since it is a dishonour to a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her wear a veil. For a man ought not to have a veil on his head, since he is the image and glory of God; while woman is the glory of man. Man does not take his origin from woman, but woman takes hers from man. For man was not created for woman's sake, but woman for man's. That is why woman ought to have on her head a symbol of subjection, because of the angels. Yet, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man independent of woman. For just as woman originates from man, so also man comes into existence through woman, but everything springs originally from God.

"Judge of this for your own selves: is it seemly for a woman to pray to God when she is unveiled? Does not Nature itself teach

you that if a man has long hair it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair it is her glory, because her hair was given her for a covering? But if any one is inclined to be contentious on the point, we have no such custom, nor have the Churches of God."

3. (*The Twentieth Century New Testament.*) "But I am anxious that you should understand that the Christ is the Head of every man, that man is the Head of woman, and that God is the Head of the Christ. Any man who keeps his head covered, when praying or preaching in public, dishonours him who is his Head; while any woman, who prays or preaches in public bareheaded, dishonours him who is her Head; for that is to make herself like one of the shameless women who shave their heads. Indeed, if a woman does not keep her head covered, she may as well cut her hair short. But, since to cut her hair short, or shave it off, marks her as one of the shameless women, let her keep her head covered. A man ought not to have his head covered, for he has been from the beginning 'the likeness of God' and the reflection of his glory, but woman is the reflection of man's glory. For it was not man who was taken from woman, but woman who was taken from man. Besides, man was not created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. And, therefore, a woman ought to wear on her head a symbol of her subjection, because of the presence of the angels. Still, when in union with the Lord, woman is not independent of man, or man of woman; for just as woman came from man, so man comes by means of woman; and all things come from God. Judge for yourselves. Is it fitting that a woman should pray to God in public with her head uncovered? Does not nature herself teach us that, while for a man to wear his hair long is degrading to him, a woman's long hair is her glory? Her hair has been given her to serve as a covering. If, however, any one still thinks it right to contest the point—well, we have no such custom, nor have the Churches of God."



## Comment on I Corinthians 11:3-16

Next, we shall give our readers the benefit of the comment, by McGarvey and Pendleton upon these verses:

***3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.***

Paul settles the humblest difficulties by appealing to the loftiest principles: thus he makes the headship of Christ over man the basis, or principle, on which he decides that the man has headship over the woman, and as we shall see further on, he makes the headship of the man over the woman the principle by which he determines the question as to whether men should worship with uncovered, and women with covered heads; for the uncovered head was the symbol of royalty and dominion, and the covered head of subjection and submission. The order in which he states the several headships is peculiar. 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 (Matt. 18:21-35; 5:7). Again, 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. The unquestioned, immediate and absolute submission and concurrence of the Son leave no room for the exercise of authority on the part of the Father, and the infinite and unsearchable wisdom, love, benevolence and good-will on the part of the Father take from the Son every occasion of unwillingness or even hesitation. All Christian husbands and wives should mutually remember this

parallel. Jesus the Incarnate, the Son of man and the Son of God, is subject to the Father, by reason of his humanity and his mediatorial kingdom (ch. 3:23; 15:24-28; John 14:28). As to the subjection of the Logos or the eternal Word of the Father we are not informed (compare Phil. 2:6).

***4 Every man praying or prophesying*** [speaking by divine inspiration], ***having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. 5 But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head.***

Corinth was made up of Greeks, Romans and Jews, and all these three elements of her population were found in the church to which Paul wrote. The Jew and the Roman worshipped with covered, and the Greek with uncovered, head. Naturally a dispute would arise as to which custom was right. Moreover, as the women were beyond all doubt acquainted with the principle that there is neither male nor female in the spiritual realm (Gal. 3:28), they seem to have added to the confusion by taking sides in the controversy, so that some of them asserted the right to worship with uncovered heads after the fashion of the Greeks. Now, in the East in Paul's day, all women went into public assemblies with their heads veiled, and this peplum, or veil, was regarded as a badge of subordination, a sign that the woman was under the power of the man. Thus Chardin, the traveler, says that the women of Persia wear a veil in sign that they are "under subjection," a fact which Paul also asserts in this chapter. Now, the symbolic significance of a woman's headdress became the determining factor in this dispute. For a man to worship with a covered head was an act of effeminacy, a disgrace to his head, and for a woman to worship with uncovered head was likewise disgraceful, for it would at once be looked upon as a bold assertion of unwarranted independence, a sign that she had laid aside her modesty and removed from her sphere. From this passage it is plain that it was not intended that Christianity should needlessly vary from the national customs of the day. For Christians to introduce

needless innovations would be to add to the misconceptions which already subjected them to persecution. One who follows Christ will find himself conspicuously different from the world, without practicing any tricks of singularity];

*(verse 5 continued) for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. 6 For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn [with shears] or shaven [with a razor], let her be veiled.*

Paul does not command that unveiled women be shorn, but he demands it as a logical consistency, as a scornful **reductio ad absurdum**. For a woman to wantonly lay aside her veil was an open repudiation of the authority of her husband, and such a repudiation lowered her to the level of the courtesan, who, according to Elsner, showed her shamelessness by her shorn head, and likewise to the level of the adulteress, whose penalty, according to Wetstein and Meyer, was to have her head shaved. Paul, therefore, demands that those who voluntarily seek a low level, consent to wear all the signs and badges of that level that they may be shamed into rising above it. Having thus deduced a law from human custom, Paul now shows that the same law rests upon divine and creative relationships.

*7 For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God*

Man has no created superior (Gen. 1:27; Ps. 8:6), and, in addition to the glory which is his by reason of the nature of his creation, his estate has been further dignified and glorified by the incarnation of the Son of God (Heb. 1:2, 3), so that, because of his fellowship with Christ, he may stand unveiled in the presence of the Father. Therefore, by covering his head while at worship, man symbolically forfeits his right to share in the glory of Christ, and thus dishonours himself. We are no longer slaves, but sons (Gal. 4:7). "We Christians," says Tertullian,

"pray with outspread hands, as harmless; **with uncovered heads**, as unashamed; **without a prompter**, as from the heart"

*but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: 9 for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man [Gen. 2:18, 21, 22]: 10 for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels.*

The argument here runs thus: The rule which I have given you rests upon symbolism—the symbol of the wife's subjection. But this symbolism is correct, for, as man proceeded from God, being fashioned as a minor representative of God, so also woman proceeded from a man as a minor representative of man, and her minor state is apparent from the fact that she was created for the man, and not the man for her. Hence, women ought not to do away with the veil while in places of worship, because of the symbolism; and they can not do away with the subordination which it symbolizes, because it rests on the unalterable facts of creation. To abandon this justifiable and well-established symbol of subordination would be a shock to the submission and obedient spirit of the ministering angels (Isa. 6:2) who, though unseen, are always present with you in your places of worship" (Matt. 18:10-31; Ps. 138:1; 1 Tim. 5:21; ch. 4:9; Eccles. 5:6). Here we find Paul not only vindicating the religious truths of the Old Testament, but authenticating its historical facts as well.

*11 Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman in the Lord [means by divine appointment.] 12 For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God.*

Lest any man should be inflated with pride by the statement in verse 7, fancying that there was some degree of proportion between the exaltation of God over man and of man over woman, Paul adds these words to show that men and women are

mutually dependent, and hence nearly equals, but that God, as Creator, is exalted over all. The idea of proportion, therefore, is utterly misleading. To the two reasons already given for the covering of a woman's and the uncovering of a man's head, Paul adds two more.

### ***13 Judge ye in yourselves***

he appealed to their own sense of propriety, as governed by the light of nature.

***is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonour to him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.***

Instinct should teach us that the head of a woman is more properly covered than that of a man, for nature grants it a greater abundance of hair. In Paul's time the hair of a man, unless he was under some vow, such as that of the Nazarite, was uniformly cut short. Long hair in a man betokened base and lewd effeminacy, and we find those who wore it ridiculed by Juvenal. Since nature gives a woman more covering than man, her will should accord with nature, and **vice versa**. Masculine women and effeminate men are alike objectionable. Let each sex keep its place. And in point of attire it is still disgraceful for men and women to appear in public in each other's garments.

***16 But if any man seemeth to be*** [a mild way of saying, "if any man is"] ***contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.***

Knowing the argumentative spirit of the Greeks, and being conscious that it was likely that some would even yet want to dispute the matter, despite his three reasons to the contrary, Paul takes it entirely out of the realm of discussion into that of precedent. The settled and established practice of the church

had from the beginning followed the course outlined by Paul, which showed that other apostles beside himself had either established it by rule, or endorsed it in practice. In this appeal for uniformity Paul makes it clear that all churches should strive to make their practices uniform, not variant. Paul is here discussing how men and women should be attired when they take a leading part in public worship. He will speak later as to whether **or** not women should take any such part at all in public worship (ch. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:12). We today as males worship with uncovered heads in consequence of Paul's instruction; but not for his reasons. It is now an expression of reverence, which the Jew then expressed by taking off his sandals. "Holland," says Stanley, "is the only exception. In Dutch congregations, men uncover their heads during the psalmody only. "In Western countries a woman's hat has never had any symbolism whatever. We see nothing in Paul's argument which requires us to make it symbolic. The problem in Western assemblies is how best to persuade women to take their hats off, not how to prevail upon them to keep them on. The principle, however, still holds good that a woman is subordinate to the man, and should not make any unseemly, immodest, vaunting display of an independence which she does not possess.

*(Commentary on Epistles, Standard Publishing Company.)*

## Further Examination of the Topic of Head-Coverings

It would seem unnecessary to add further remarks upon this passage but since in this age we have persons who not only "seem" to be contentious but **are obstinately** so, we shall continue this examination a little further. We cannot dismiss the subject as Paul did by saying we have no such custom as women praying with uncovered heads or wearing short hair. Some of our women do both. Whether they do wrong or not depends upon what Paul here teaches.

1. In the first place let us observe that Paul is here giving instructions, to regulate the conduct of men and women in a worshipping assembly primarily. These are the things they should do or not do when praying or prophesying. In giving his reasons for these instructions he tells something of the relationship of men and women and therefore something of their general behavior.

2. Let us also remember that it was the custom among the Greeks, the Romans and the Jews for women to wear a veil in the presence of men, especially men whom they honored (See Gen. 24:65; 38:14-16; Ruth 3:3, 15). It appears that Rebekah did not have on her veil in the presence of the servant but put it on before meeting Isaac. But none but harlots went without veils. They did and they also wore short hair.

3. A woman who was found guilty of impurity was punished by having her veil taken from her and her hair cut off. Thus she was marked as a harlot (Numbers 5:18). (For proof that this was the custom among the other nations as well as among the Jews see the commentaries by Drs. Clark and Macknight and the classical authors cited by them.)

4. The veil was a symbol of submission, subjection, and inferiority. Hence a woman **put on** her veil when going into the

presence of men to express her **inferiority**. Men **took off** their hats or head coverings in the presence of women to express their **superiority**. The custom among men of uncovering in the presence of women, on entering a house, in the presence of the flag, when singing our patriotic hymns, at funerals or burials and in all religious services still prevails. But the meaning of it has changed. Instead of thus expressing **superiority**, men now do it to show respect, reverence and honor. We have passed through the age of chivalry since Bible times when men took off their hats to express respect for and honor of women; bowed upon the knee before them, kissed their hands etc. But women were not satisfied. They wanted equality. So today women must fight for themselves. They are not respected, protected and guarded as they were fifty years ago, when their honor was avenged by the Gatling gun in the hand of any male relative. Today if they cannot cope with men and keep them from getting the advantage of them that is just their misfortune.

5. Since, in Paul's day, women did not go into the presence of men unveiled, unless they were harlots, and men always uncovered in the presence of women, and since this custom had a meaning, symbolized the relation existing between man and woman by divine command (Gen. 3:16), of course it was wrong to violate or ignore this custom. It would have been tantamount to a refusal to recognize God's order and rule, a refusal to admit that man is the head of the woman. Of course those who thus refuse to obey God could not worship him acceptably. Therefore Paul admonished them to observe this custom.

In our day there is no symbolism whatsoever about a woman's hat or head covering among Protestants and men remove their hats for the **very opposite** reason from that which Paul gives. We would have to change our custom entirely in order to obey Paul's instructions to the Corinthians. This we should be willing to do, however, if Paul was laying down divine laws.



6. The man who says that Paul was giving the sanction of inspiration to the then existing custom with its symbolism, thus making it a divine law which must be obeyed for all time, is compelled by every demand of logic as well as by the plain facts in the case not only to demand that women wear long hair but **that they also always wear a veil or head-covering in worshipping God.** According to that position any woman who comes into a worshipping assembly with uncovered head is a rebel against God's authority. She should be withdrawn from if she persists in her rebellion. There can be no escape from this conclusion.

But in an effort to escape some superficial reasoner will say "But Paul says in the fifteenth verse that the woman's hair is given her for a covering. Therefore if she has long hair she doesn't need a hat or veil." And he dismisses the subject with a self-assured, self-satisfied, complacent air. He is committed on the one hand to the theory that it is all right for women to go to church bareheaded and on the other hand that it is all wrong for them to bob their hair, and therefore to justify his inconsistent and mongrel idea he adopts, unconsciously no doubt, the sectarian and infidel trick of making one verse offset and contradict another.

Look carefully at the sixth verse. Paul says **if a woman will not wear a veil—artificial covering—let her also have her hair— natural covering cut off.** How then can any honest thinking man say that he contradicts himself in the fifteenth verse and says, **If only a woman will not cut off her hair— natural covering—she may with perfect propriety leave off her veil or artificial covering. The very reverse of what he says in verse six.**

It was not the hair or natural covering that was symbolic— the sign of authority, verse 10—it was the veil. All the women who wore the veil had also long hair. Those who threw off the veil in

addition cut the hair or even shaved the head. If the hair covering is symbolic, then man's head is also covered!

Now look again at verse 15 and note its meaning. A woman's **hair is her glory**—something to be proud of, to delight in—for it is given her for a covering. What sort of covering? The one that is a sign of authority to which she must submit as a memorial of Eve's transgression? Is that covering a glory, **something to delight in**? No. Woman's hair is given her—by her nature, her sex nature, of which of course God is the author—as an **ornamental covering in which she may delight or glory**. Its abundance and length and lustre make her attractive and beautiful and mark her as distinctly feminine.

What other sort of covering could this verse mean? The longest hair does not cover the body and short hair still covers the head. Inevitably Paul here speaks of woman's **ornamental glory**—her long hair. On man long hair would be an attempted denial of his sex nature and an effort to appear feminine, hence shameful or disgraceful.

Keep the sexes distinct and in their places even as nature teaches you, is Paul's argument here.

The sixteenth verse shows that Paul was not giving a divine law but discussing customs and the propriety of observing them. It has been thought by some that the apostle here meant to say "we have no such custom" as the one he had been discussing, namely, of women praying with the head covered and men with the head uncovered etc. But this is so obviously wrong that it does not need correction. That was exactly the custom they did have. The translations and comments hereinbefore quoted make the meaning of this verse plain. If any one contends against what Paul had just said he must know that his contention is also against the practice of the churches. The rules that Paul had given were the ones by which the churches were governed. As Brother McGarvey says, Paul here takes the matter out of the

realm of discussion and places it in the realm of precedent. But the fact that Paul settles the matter by an appeal to precedent shows conclusively that he had not been legislating on the question. Otherwise he would no doubt have said as he did in Chapter fourteen; If any man seemeth to be contentious, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord.

That women have been put in subjection to men is a fact that admits of no dispute by those who believe the Bible, but that the manner and way that ancient women acknowledged and expressed this subjection should be adopted and followed by women for all time is a very different question. Paul's reasoning was to this purpose: women and men ought to honor this law of God in reference to their relation by those marks of respect which the customs of the countries where they live have established as marks of respect. Whatever is understood as a recognition of God's law must be observed: whatever is or would be understood as a rejection of God's law must be refused and avoided.

The whole teaching of this passage relates then to the Christian's attitude toward the custom of women praying with head veiled—artificial covering—and men praying with head uncovered. What is said about long hair for women and short hair for men is a collateral consideration. The apostle just calls attention to the difference which nature has thus made between the sexes and uses that to enforce his argument for those outward, artificial marks of acknowledgment and respect for this difference.

## The Conclusion

We conclude therefore that

**THERE IS NO POSITIVE DIVINE LAW REQUIRING A WOMAN TO WEAR A HEAD COVERING IN PUBLIC WORSHIP OR PROHIBITING HER FROM BOBBING HER HAIR. IF THE LATTER IS PROHIBITED THE FORMER IS CERTAINLY ENJOINED.**

But even though there is no statutory law violated, still

1. If bobbing the hair serves to deny the sex and makes the woman mannish it is condemned by the general teaching of the Scriptures.
2. If bobbing the hair is immodest or flapperish and serves to mark the woman as lacking in piety or in quiet, conservative, refined and cultured disposition, it is wrong.
3. If bobbing the hair is a concession or a giving way to that vicious propaganda which cries against all restraints and all laws under the spacious plea of "emancipating women" strikes at home and marriage and preaches free love and promiscuous sex intercourse, then bobbing the hair is a step toward hell.
4. If bobbing the hair comes from or lends itself to the tendency to renounce religion, denounce the Bible, ignore and deny the difference in the sexes and throw men and women together in a lawless relationship—then it were better that our women cut off their heads instead of their hair.

Now whether or not the practice of bobbing the hair comes from or belongs in any of the classes mentioned, the readers may decide for themselves. But the following page from a moving picture magazine of only a few months ago may help the readers to see what is regarded as the difference in appearance

between a girl with long hair and one with bobbed hair. The page consists chiefly of pictures with a few words under each picture. We cannot reproduce the pictures but we give the words and must ask the readers to see the pictures in imagination. At the top of the page we have the headline and the subheadline thus:

## **BARBEROUS TREATMENT TO THE GIRLS**

### **Real Salt Tears, Not Glycerine Ones Were Shed by Helen and Lois.**

First picture, a barber cutting off the flowing tresses of a sad-looking, sweet faced girl. Underneath the picture are these words:

"Helen Costello's hair was long, beautiful and curly. But directors cannot see long hair in snappy modern comedies. With a sob in her throat and tragedy in her eyes, Helen allowed herself to become a shorn lamb."

Second picture, another barber at work with a director standing by and watching. Under the picture these words:

"Herbert Brenon felt like a tyrant, the barber felt like a hangman, when Lois Wilson's hair was bobbed for 'The Great Gatsby.' And Lois wept all during the operation."

Third picture, Lois before the operation, back turned and long, thick, curly, beautiful hair hanging far below her waist. These words:

"Lois beautiful hair was the pride of her life." (A woman's hair is her glory—Bible) "To her it was a symbol of protest against a flippant and flapperish world. She resolutely refused to have it cut, until friends

and directors coaxed her to make the sacrifice to the Great God Pep."

Fourth picture, the shorn head of poor Lois These words:

"Curiously enough the bob has changed Lois' personality. Gone all the old demureness. And in its place an unsuspected piquancy."

This page in a moving picture magazine preaches its own sermon. Whether pep and piquancy and a flippant and flapperish appearance is more becoming in Christian women and girls—especially women—than demureness, judge you.

"Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil."—Paul.