

Exegesis of I Corinthians 11:3-16

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These verses address the Corinthians about the *custom* of veiling and wearing long hair that in their society also gave expression to the *principle* of the headship of man. Paul shows the Corinthians that the latter is a principle established by God in the manner and purpose of woman's creation. Since the *custom* gave expression to the Biblical *principle*, to refuse to follow the *custom* could also be understood to be a denial of the Biblical *principle*. This passage does not establish the custom as a universal principle, but it does establish that social customs, which give expression to the Biblical principle of the headship of man, will be observed by Christians as a witness of their faith. Obviously much is also said about the Biblical principle in this pericope, and thereby more light is thrown on the role of man and woman toward each other according to God's good and gracious will.

The development of the thought could be outlined as follows:

v3 The headship of man is to be viewed in the light of the headship of Christ and the headship of God.

vv4-6 What man and woman were to do in regard to the custom in Corinth because of the principles stated in v3.

vv 7-10 God established the headship of man by the manner and purpose of woman's creation.

vv 11-12 Man is reminded that his existence is intertwined with woman's so that he does not abuse his headship but honors and appreciates woman as a gift of God.

vv 13-16 The Corinthians are asked to consider whether they can ignore a custom, even though it is only a local one, which made the distinction of the sexes a matter of honor if observed and a matter of disgrace if ignored.

11:3 *de* ("and") This connecting particle does not introduce a contrast, but following the commendatory statement of v2, it introduces another item which he wishes to share with them. Paul is confident that they will hold to what he will now present just as they have held to all else which he had passed on to them as God's inspired apostle (cf. v2).

theloo humas eidenai hoti These words introduce the basic concept Paul wants to share with them and which he will explain in vv4-12 not only as to its application to the problem or question they were presently facing (vv4-6), but also as to why this principle applies (vv7-10), and why men must guard against any misapplication of the principle (vv11-12). The verb *theloo* indicates that Paul is personally and deeply concerned about sharing the knowledge of this principle with them. He uses the word *eidenai* instead of the synonym *ginooskoo* to convey the thought that this is not a knowledge they can gain by experience but only by its being presented to the mind—in this case, presented to the minds of believers enlightened by the Holy Ghost through a writer inspired by the Holy Ghost.

ho christos estin The use of the article with *christos* is usually omitted in the epistles, and it is regarded as a proper name (Moulton 167). Since proper nouns lack the article if they are predicate nouns (Moulton 183), the use of the article with *christos* designates this as the subject of the sentence rather than the predicate nominative. We should translate "Christ is the head of every man" (cf. NASB) rather than "The head of every man is Christ" to be accurate. This observation is confirmed by the third member of the parallel expressions in this verse. There the article with another proper noun *theos* also serves no other purpose than to designate it as the subject rather than the predicate nominative (i.e. "God is the head of Christ. ") While the basic meaning of all three clauses does not change when we recognize that Christ-man-God are the subjects instead of *kephalee*, there is a little different emphasis. It is not the headship itself that is in primary focus, but rather who the head is in each case. In the following verses (vv4-12) when our attention is turned in particular to the second member of the three parallel thoughts expressed in this verse, we note that there, too, it is the person who is the head around which the whole development centers (i.e. what he is to do as head in the present problem vv4-6, why he is the head vv7-

10, and what is not to be assumed because he is the head vv11-12). The unusual word order with the verb at the end and the subject in the second last position serves to underscore this same point also.

he kephalee. Since Christ is the subject, the article used with *kephalee* (N.B. The article is lacking with *kephalee* in the next two clauses (Christ-man-God) is the head literally, but rather figuratively. What is the point of comparison? The suggestion is made by some that *kephalee* in this context is a way of expressing source. This suggestion is usually linked to the thought expressed in v8 and in v12 that women came out of man. But there are several serious problems with this assertion. A careful study of the meaning of *kephalee* in its usage, especially in a metaphorical usage involving persons, does not support the meaning of *kephalee* of source (cf. Liddell and Scott, Kittle, Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, Thayer). Nor can one ignore the fact that the metaphorical use of *kephalee* begun in verse 3 is carried over into verse 4 and 5 (i.e. as the object of *kataischunoo*) where it is linked to the custom in Corinth which is under discussion in this pericope. This custom had nothing to do with as the source of woman, but rather with the relationship of woman to man. The metaphorical use of *kephalee* in verse 3 (three times) and verse 4 and 5 (once each) must be one which fits all five usages. The only point of comparison which is appropriate here is that which the lexicons all indicate is the meaning of *kephalee* when it is used in metaphors involving persons, namely, headship or leadership. The Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich lexicon may be oversimplifying when it says that *kephalee* “in the case of living beings denotes superior rank.” If this understood to imply that the “head” has a position of privilege which he is free to exploit to the detriment of his “body”, this would be totally out of line with all other uses in the NT of *kephalee* with persons. Rather *kephalee* denotes a close relationship in which the one who is the “head” has a deep interest what happens to the “body” (a person or persons) connected to him, and that, as a leader, the “head” guides and directs things regarding the “body” just as the head of a human being does for the best interest of the human body. In Ephesians 4:15-16 Christ is described as the head to whom believers grow more attached as they grow in faith, and through Christ all believers are bound together as they support and encourage one another in their spiritual growth. In Ephesians 5:23 and 25 Christ is described as the head of the church who loved and saved the “body”, and husbands are encouraged to be the same kind of heads for their wives. In Ephesians 1:22 Christ is described as a head in two senses. He is a head who controls everything in the world and the universe so that as the head of the church he may guide and direct everything for the latter’s good. In Colossians 1:15-20 this double headship of Christ is described in greater detail. He guides and controls all things in the universe as its head (cf.2:10). Because he created and sustains the universe; he is the one who directs the affairs of the church as its head because he redeemed all things by his blood. The related idea of the “body” subjecting itself to the guiding and directing action of the “head” is also expressed in each of these passages directly (Eph 5, Eph 1, Col 1) or implicitly (Eph.4). Thus the idea of headship in each case is a guiding and directing activity which the “head” carries out and which the “body” acknowledges and follows.

Pantos andros The passages from Ephesians 1 and Colossians 1 noted above indicate that since Christ is the “head” of the universe Paul could have said *pantos anthropou* instead of *pantos andros*, that is, that Christ is the head “of every human being” instead of just “of every male human being.” Why then does he say *andros* rather than *anthropou*? Because in this context it is the headship of man in relation to woman which is the center of attention. In this clause, Paul is stating that man, who in the next clause is designated as the head of woman, himself has one who is in a position of headship over him, namely Christ how man conducts himself, in his position of headship, that is how he as “head” guides and directs the matters in relation to his “body”, will be done as he himself as the “body” is guided and directed by his “head” Christ. Why does Paul say *every man*? The thought might suggest itself to us that the unbelieving man does not recognize or follow Christ’s headship since this can be done only in faith. But Christ is the head of the whole universe also as a result of his redeeming work (Col 1:20, Eph.1:22). Also, in the development of the thought in verses 8,9, and 12, Paul speaks of every man with the creation of man and woman in mind. An unbelieving man may reject both the truth which God’s Word

presents about his position as “head” by creation and his position as “body” by creation and redemption, but the rejection of these truths does not make them any less true. Could *andros* here mean “husband”? In other words, could Paul in this particular context be narrowing down Christ’s headship not only from “all human beings” to “all, male human beings,” but even further to “all husbands.” The question is legitimate since in Greek *aneer* can mean “male human being” or “husband”; the context alone decides the matter. The answer to this question then, is one that will have to be decided on the basis of the whole context as we study it in the following verses. We will find that verses 8,12, and 14 make it evident the *aneer* in this context is not referring to “husband” but to “male human being.”

de ho aneer. The connecting particle *de* joins this clause as a coordinate thought with the previous clause. The *de*, which follows in the next clause, indicates that this second clause is also coordinated with the following clause. This is important to note especially in determining the reason for the article with *aneer*. Since the clauses are coordinated and thus are a triad of parallel thoughts, and since the parallel nouns in the preceding and following clauses have the article to designate them as subjects rather than predicate nominatives. (cf. the discussion of *ho christos* and *ho theos* above), the article with *aneer* also is used to designate this noun as the subject rather than the predicate nominative. The translation “her husband” is precluded for four reasons, therefore: 1)The usage in this triad of clauses indicates that the article here is used to designate the subject over against the predicate nominative; 2)The development of this whole section, especially verses 8,12 and 14, show the vocable meaning of *aneer* in this context to be “male human being”; 3)While on occasion some Hellenistic Greek writers did use the article with the subject to designate a connection with another noun in the sentence, this usage is normally limited to the object in a sentence to designate a connection of the object with the subject (Moulton 173); and 4) A switch in the meaning of *aneer* from “Man” in the first clause to “husband” in the second clause which by construction (cf. *de*) is a parallel would be highly unusual.

kephalee gunaikos. As was noted above (cf. the notes on *kephalee*), *kephalee* is not a figure of speech for source but headship. At this point, all the inspired writer is doing is stating who the head is in the man-woman relationship. By sandwiching this thought between a clause which reminds man that his “head” is Christ and a clause which states that God is the “head” of Christ, Paul also points to the proper understanding of man’s headship of man. While the preceding clause reminds him that Christ as his “head” will guide and direct him in his actions as the “body”, the clause which follows stresses that he will want to follow Christ’s example in always acting in accord with the guiding and directing of Christ just as Christ followed the will of his “head”, the heavenly Father (John 4:34,5:30,6:38). The sandwiching of this key clause between the other two instead of moving in a descending or ascending order (i.e. God-Christ-man or vice versa) also serves to emphasize the meaning which the first and third clauses are meant to lend to this second clause.

de ho theos. As was mentioned earlier, *de* joins this clause to the two preceding clauses as a parallel thought. And as was also discussed earlier, the article with *theos* is used to designate *theos* as the subject of the clause.

kephalee tou christou. Since *christos* in the epistles appears normally without the article because it is regarded as a proper name (Moulton 167), the article here requires special attention. The article is either anaphoric (i.e. indicating that this is the same person as was mentioned earlier in the context (Moulton 173), or, as seems more likely in this instance, it is stressing what the common usage in the Gospels does, namely, that he is the well-known promised Messiah. In either case the significance is the same since it serves to emphasize the main point of this whole clause. Jesus is the “body” who is guided and directed by the Father as his “head” in carrying out his earthly mission of redeeming mankind. “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work,” he said. (John 4:74). And again: “By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”(John 5:30) And again: “I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.” (John 6:38) Thus Jesus total and willing subjection to the guiding and directing of his “head” serves as

an example both to man in his relationship to his “head”, Christ, and to woman in her relationship to her “head”, man. This double application of this example also explains why this clause comes in third position in this triad.

Summary of verse 3. Paul is deeply concerned that three parallel truths be impressed on the minds of the Corinthians. These truths will help put the man-woman relationship in proper perspective so that each will conduct himself or herself properly in the problem at hand in Corinth. Man is not without a head to guide and lead him, but Christ serves as his head. Woman is not without a head to guide and lead her but man serves as her head. Christ in his redeeming work was not without a head to guide and lead him, but God was his head. Paul impresses these three truths on them at the outset of this pericope to remind man to conduct himself properly, toward Christ his head in the problem at hand, and to remind woman to conduct herself properly in relationship to man her head in the problem at hand.

11:4 *pas aneer proseuchomenos ee proheeteuoon.* The participles are attributive (adjectival). They narrow the scope of *pas aneer*. The subject of this verse, therefore, is not every male human being in the world but every male human being who is involved in either one of the activities described by the participles, that is, a man who approaches God in prayer or who shares God’s Word with others to strengthen, encourage, or comfort them (cf. “prophesy” in 1 Co 14:3; 6:14). The men spoken of are further reduced in number by the clause that follows.

echoon kata kephalees.

The participle *echoon* is circumstantial (adverbial) and indicates the circumstance under which the thought of the main verb applies. *Kata* with the genitive means literally “down from something” thus the expression “having (something) down from his head” most likely refers to the wearing of a veil or some other covering of the head. The use of *katakalupto* in verses 5 and 7 confirm this. However, the use of this same verb *katakalupto* in verse 13 which is followed by the thought of man wearing his hair long suggests also that the covering spoken of here might simply be long hair (as the alternate translation in the footnote. Of the NIV indicates.) We need not spend a lot of time trying to settle whether Paul is referring to a veil, some other covering, or the wearing of long-hair since this does not affect our understanding of the main point of these verses. It is the significance of the custom for the relationship of the sexes rather than the custom itself that is most important in this context. We do need to note, however, that the custom referred to in these verses had a particular strength in Greece, which it did not have throughout, the Roman society of that day (cf. v16 “We do not have such a custom, nor do the churches of God.”) Strack and Billerbeck (III, 423-426) show that the practice of Jewish men covering their heads began first in the fourth century A.D. Plutarch in (Vol.IV,14) writes in answer to a Roman inquiry about the peculiar habits of the Greeks, “In Greece, whenever any misfortune comes, the women cut off their hair and the men let it grow, for it is usual for men to have their hair cut and for women to let it grow. . . The unusual is proper in mourning, and it usual for women to go forth in public with their heads covered and men with their heads uncovered.” Nor was this custom always the same everywhere in Greece. Liddell and Scott write under *komaoo*, “In early times the Greeks in general wore their hair long...At Sparta it continued to be a custom. . . though here it also fell into disuse. At Athens it was so worn by youths up to the 18th year when they entered the age of *epheboi* (arrived at puberty) and were enrolled in the list of citizens. At that age they offered their locks to some deity . . . and for men to wear long hair was considered a sign of foppery and dissolute habits.” Smith’s *Greek and Roman Antiquities* adds: “Among the Greeks only slaves wore a head covering among men; philosophers wore long hair as an ascetic trait (for which they were also often looked on as effeminate). One local exception were the Spartan men.” Nor was the custom limited to married men and women. That is evident from the foregoing quotes, but it is made even more clear by a quote of Tertullian’s (*Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 24, 1920, p107): “As, then, in the masculine sex, under the name of ‘man’ even the youth is forbidden to be veiled, so too, in the feminine, under the name of ‘woman’ even the virgin is bidden to be veiled.

Equally in each sex let the younger follow the discipline of the elder...Wear the full garb of woman to preserve the standing of virgin.”

kataischunei teen kephaleen autou.

The verb *kataischunoo* means to dishonor, disgrace, put to shame, disappoint, or humiliate. The present tense indicates that the action is a continuous one as long as the action of the participle continues (*echoon*). The meaning of the verb in this context is determined primarily by its object *kephaleen*. Some suggest that *kephalee* is used here as a part of man’s body standing for his whole body or his person (*synecdoche*) and that the meaning is that he disgraces himself or shames himself. This understanding not only limps in the context, but also a shift from the main meaning of *kephalee* as a metaphor in verse 3 to a meaning of *kephalee* as *synecdoche* in verse 4 (and 5) is not very likely. Rather the anaphoric use of the article and of *autou* with *kephaleen* points emphatically back to verse 3 where his “head” is identified as Christ. How does every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered shame or dishonor Christ? Since covering the head was a custom which expressed submission to the opposite sex man *must not* cover his head (v7) because (v8, *gar*) he was not taken out of woman nor was he created for woman (v8). Thus to suggest by veiling himself that woman was his “head” whose leading and guiding he would follow would be a denial of Christ who was his own God-given head. He would not be following the will of his head, Christ, and so dishonors him.

Summary of verse 4. Paul reminds every man that following his own head Christ means that he will not deny his own headship in relationship to woman by covering his head when praying or prophesying.

11:5 *de* (and) With this particle verse 5 is joined to verse 4 as a coordinate thought.

pasa gunee proseuchomenee ee propheeteuoussa. Again the “every woman” is narrowed by the attributive (adjectival) participles *proseuchomenee* and *propheeteuoussa*. These are the same activities ascribed to the men in verse 4, that is, approaching God in prayer and sharing God’s Word with others to strengthen, encourage, or comfort them (cf. “prophesy” in 1 Cor.14:3). Thus the context seems to point to praying and prophesying in which the men women present participated. The issue here is not whether women did this singly or jointly. Rather it was the manner or spirit in which they (she) did it as the dative of manner that follows clearly indicates. A woman’s praying or prophesying was always to be done as “body” not as “head.” Ant assertion that Paul is saying that a woman assume the headship over man by the praying or prophesying activities he refers to here just doesn’t fit the context. In fact, any assertion makes the apostle’s admonition for women to keep their heads (her head) covered totally pointless.

akatakaluptoo tee kephalee. This is a dative of manner. When a woman prays or prophesies in this manner, namely, with a head which is uncovered (attributive or adjectival participle), then the thought of the main verb applies.

kataischunei teen kephaleen autees.

The special emphasis made by the article with *kephaleen* together with *autees* again points back to verse 3. A woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered was declaring her independence from the headship of man. This action implied that she was not ready to follow man’s leading or guiding as her head and so she dishonored or shamed him.

gar. The reason is given for the assessment of the woman’s action is stated in the previous clause.

hen estin kai to auto tee eksureemenee. The action of a woman who appears in public in Corinth with her head uncovered would not go unnoticed but would cause an outrage no less than that of a woman whose head is shaved. The participle is a perfect passive and attributive; therefore, translated, “one whose head has been shaved.” To have her hair cut off made a public spectacle of a Greek woman that would be talked about by everyone.

Summary of verse 5. Paul reminds every woman that following man as her God-given head means that she will not deny his headship by praying or prophesying with her head uncovered. To do so would cause a public outrage not one bit different from having her head shaved.

11:6 *gar* (“indeed”) Paul will emphasize that the comparison used at the end of verse 5 is not, as it might seem at the first hearing, an overstatement on his part. Rather, it is meant exactly as he spoke it.

ei ou katakatluptetai gunee, kai keirasthoo. Paul states a condition and then, with a middle imperative, urges what should be done without question (aorist tense) when that condition exists. If a woman wants to appear with her head uncovered and thus declare her independence from man as her head, then she should go all the way and make her declaration very clear by cutting her hair in addition to (*kai*) having her head uncovered. Cutting her hair short like a man’s (cf. v14) would make her intentions crystal clear.

de (“but”) This particle introduces the opposite and only other alternative.

ei aischron gunaiki to keirasthai ee ksurasthai, katakaluptesthoo Paul states the alternate condition and then urges (imperative) what should be done without question (aorist) when that condition exists. If there is a stigma attached to a Corinthian woman cutting her hair short or shaving her head—and the condition of facts states that there is such a stigma—then Paul urges the woman to have her head covered.

Summary of verse 6. Paul emphasizes that given their particular society for a Corinthian woman to uncover her head could mean but one thing because it would cause an outrage no less than if she appeared with her hair cut short or completely bareheaded. The reminder of this fact is intended to encourage the have her head covered when she prayed and prophesied. . .and thus to honor her “head.”

11:7 *gar men*. . . *de*. The reasons (*gar*) are now given why the man on the one hand (men) and the woman on the other hand (*de*), are not to shame their respective “heads” by praying or prophesying with the head covered or uncovered respectively.

aneer. The lack of the article indicates that what is said in this verse is said of any man. Again this would have to be understood as any man in Corinth since this is the scope of this whole section (cf. v16).

ouk ophheilei katakaluptesthai teen kephaleen. The verb *opheiloo* speaks of an obligation, which one owes. Why the man in Corinth is obligated not to cover his head is given in the circumstantial clause that follows and why the woman is obligated to cover her head will follow in the next sentence. What Paul is underscoring with *gar* and *opheiloo* is that man and woman should be moved to proper actions in the present situation by the principle that is involved. This principle had been stated at the outset in verse 3 in a very brief form; now it will be explained more fully.

huparchoon. This is a circumstantial participle (causal) which together with the predicate nominative expresses the reason why man has the obligation not to cover his head.

eikoon kai doksa theou. The fact that verses 8-9 give the proof for what Paul states here in verse 7 makes it evident that he is ascribing these characteristics (“image” and “glory”) to man on the basis of the way God created and the purpose for which God created him. What set man apart from all the other creatures that God made at the beginning was that he made man in a special way, namely, in God’s image. God also established a special purpose for man, namely, he was to rule over everything God had created; thus God placed man in a relationship to himself which was different from all the other creatures and made man the crowning glory of creation. As the psalmist says (8:1,5-9): “Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth...You made man a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the work of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. Oh Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth.”

he gunee doksa andros estin. This is the second part of the reason that is given in v7 (*gar*) why Paul had given the instructions in vv4-6. The article with *gunee* makes clear that *gunee* is the subject and *doksa* is the predicate nominative, otherwise, it would have been without the article as its corresponding member (i.e. *aneer*) in the first part of this verse. As Paul had given instruction to man, now he instructs woman. A woman is obligated to cover her head (cf. V10) because she is the glory of man. What is meant by the “glory of man”? Again, the answer lies in verses 8-9 that will supply the reasons why Paul could say

what he did in verse 7. Since woman was made out of man and, therefore, man treasured her as “woman” because she was “bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”, and because woman was made as a helper suitable for man, woman is the “glory of man.” By omitting “image” Paul is not slighting woman: Genesis 1 says the woman was also made in the image of God and Paul knows that. But the point Paul is developing here is the headship of man, so he will not stress the similarities but the differences but the differences in the creation of man and woman. Woman is man’s glory because in her creation she was placed in a relationship to man that was different from that of all the other creatures.

Summary of verse 7. Paul gives the reasons for his instructions about covering the head, which had been given in verses 4-6. He will give proof that his reasons are correct in the verses that follow by pointing to the way God created man and woman (v8) and the purpose for which he created each (v9).

11:8 *ou gar aneer ek gunaikos, alla gunee eks andros.* The first proof (*gar*) is the way God created each. Man was not made from rib taken out of woman, but, just exactly the opposite (*alla*), woman was made from a rib taken out of man. What is the point Paul wishes to emphasize with this antitheses stated in verse 8? The *kai gar* which begins verse 9 tells us that the thought will be carried further and amplified by the consideration of second important truth. But before going to verse 9, we should again take up the meaning of *aneer* and *gunee*. Is it “husband-wife” or “man-woman”? Verse twelve answers the question for us when the very same thought presented here in verse 9 is called to mind again, by the particle *hoosper*, and then this truth about the origin of woman from man (v8 and v12a) is compared to another truth by *houtoos* (v12b). In 12b the meaning cannot be any other than “man-woman” This in turn dictates the meaning of v12a, and thus in turn of v8.

11:9 *kai gar.* A second and closely related truth is added as a further (*kai*) proof (*gar*) of the truth presented in verse 7. For a similar usage of *kai gar* see Matthew 8:9 where with a *kai gar* the centurion adds the statement about the effectiveness of his words and thus expresses his confidence in the power of Jesus’ word. Or, in Luke 6:32, where Jesus uses a *kai gar* to add a second truth as proof of his assertion in the first part of the verse.

ouk ektisthee aneer dia teen gunaikan alla gunee dia ton andra. Again Paul’s source for this statement is the Scriptural record of the creation of man and woman. Woman was not the one who was without a suitable helper, made to feel this need by finding no suitable helper among the beasts and birds, and then provided with a suitable helper from her rib; just exactly the opposite (*alla*) was the case. Thus Paul’s use of *dia* with the accusative to express the purpose for which woman was created is not the result of following some rabbinical exegesis of Genesis 2 (as some suggest), I but it is a simple summary of the whole description of God’s record of woman’s creation. In addition to the blessings of a paradise and constructive work to do in that paradise, God made woman as a blessing for man. She was to fill the need suitable helper. This purpose for which God created woman is an added proof to that given in verse 8 for the statement made in verse 7. One final minor point: the article with the accusative in each case helps underscore the fact that the accusative is where the emphasis lies since it designates the one for whose sake the subject was created.

Summary of verses 8-9. Paul offers two proofs of the statement made in verse 7. Man is not to cover his head because he is the glory of God as is proven by the manner and purpose in which he was created. Woman is to cover her head because she is the glory of man as is proven by the manner and purpose for which she was created.

11:10 *dia touto opeilei he gunee.* Paul returns to the statement made in v7b (*he gunee doksa andros estin*) to add one further thought to the development. In v7a Paul had told man on the one hand (men) what he was obligated to do (*opheilei*) because he was the image and glory of God. In v7b Paul had stated that woman on the other hand (*de*) was the glory of man. In vv8-9 he had gone on a short tangent to prove this assertion. Now he returns to this assertion to state what the fact that the woman is the glory of man

(*dia touto*) obligated (*opeilei*) her to do. The article with *gunee* also helps to establish the connection of v10 with v7b instead of a continuation of the thought in vv8-9.

eksousian echein epi tees kephalees. Some interpreters suggest that *eksousia* might be a reference to the respect a woman gains from wearing a head covering, or to the control a woman gains over her rebellious head by wearing a head covering. Such interpretations cannot be given consideration because the first assigns a unique and forced meaning to *eksousia*, and the second introduces an idea totally foreign to the context. The simplest way to interpret *aksousia* is “a symbol of authority.” This takes *eksousia* as a metonym, that is, what the head covering would mean in the Corinthian society is substituted for the head covering itself. This understanding is supported by the parallel of *eksbusian exein* in verse 7 which is *katakalyptestha*. So because woman is the glory of man, she is obligated to have a sign of authority on her head lest she bring shame on her “head”, namely man (v6). The objection that with this interpretation the idea of *eksousia* is changed from “authority” to “subjection” is answered by the fact that *epe tees kephalees* clearly indicates where the symbol of authority is to be worn (*echein*), and that Paul wants the woman to wear this sign on her own initiative rather than being compelled by man. It is worthy of note also that *eksousia* is used rather than *dunamis*, since the former indicates an authority exercised because of position rather than because of power at one’s command as the latter would suggest. Thus *eksousia* again echoes the principle introduced at the outset in verse 3 and which has been at the heart of the discussion in all the intervening verses also.

dia tous aggelous. This does not refer to evil angels who would be aroused by the uncovered heads of women (as some have actually suggested), but rather to God’s angels who observe all that happens to people (1 Co 4:9), who are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14), who are deeply concerned with all matters concerning God’s kingdom (1 Pt 1:12), who rejoice over every sinner who repents (Lk 15:10), because of whom we are warned not to despise one of God’s little ones (Matt. 18:10) —and who, therefore, would have a deep interest also in the affairs in the congregation at Corinth. Paul’s instruction to the women of Corinth to have their heads covered “because of the angels” is an appeal to them as Christians to conduct themselves in a way which would make the angels rejoice because God’s will was being done.

11:11 *pleen* This adversative particle makes vv11-12 a counterpoint to the previous exposition of man as the head of the woman. The relationship God gave man as head by the manner and purpose of woman’s creation ought not lead man to disrespect woman. Verses 11-12 remind man of God’s gift of woman so that he does not abuse his position as head.

en kurioo. Translated literally it means “in the sphere of the Lord.” Note it’s emphatic position at the end of the sentence. In verses 3-10 the focus had been on man and woman’s relationship to each other in their earthly lives. Now the focus is shifted (*pleen*) to a different sphere, namely, their interrelationship before God (cf. the use of *en kurioo* in 2 Co 10:17, Eph. 5:8, Php 2:29, Phm 16). How could man regard woman with anything but the deepest respect when he remembers that it is through woman that God gives man the gift of life (v12b)?

oute gunee chooris andros oute aneer chooris gunaikos. The verb “is” or “exists” has to be supplied. Neither man nor woman can stand before God and boast that he or she exists completely apart from (*chooris*) the other (cf. v12). As was noted in the remarks on *pleen* above and as the climax of this section in v12b indicates, these words are not spoken so much for the woman to take note of as it is for the man to mark carefully. Man is the head, but as a body is dependent on its head, so is the head dependent on the body.

11:12 *gar* Verse 12 will provide the reason for the statement in verse 11.

hoosper. With this particle the fact used in v8b as proof of man’s position as head is recalled to be used together with the last part of the verse (*houtoos kai*) as proof of verse 11.

he gunee ek tou andros. *Ek* expresses source. The verb came into existence is implied since, as in v8b, the reference is to Genesis 2:22 where Scripture says “God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of

the man.” These words prove the statement in v11a that the woman does not exist apart from the man. The use of the article with *gunee* and *andros* is generic (Moulton 172: “contrast between the whole class, as such, and the other classes”). This is confirmed in the second part of the verse which is a correlation (*hoosper ... houtoos kai*). Thus the point made by these words is this that the female is taken out of the male. We noted earlier the importance this meaning of *gunee* and *aneer* has for the interpretation of these words in v8 and in v3.

houtoos kai. The thought of the second part of the verse is coordinated with (*kai*) and put on an equal footing with (*houtoos*) the thought in the first part of the verse.

ho aneer dia tees gunaikos. *Dia* with the genitive expresses the agent by whom something is done. The verb “comes into existence” must be supplied to make the thought of this part of the verse correspond with the thought both in v12a and v11. The male comes into existence through the female; the articles are obviously generic because the meaning cannot be that the husband comes into existence by his wife. That man is given the gift of life by the agency of woman is proof of the statement in v11b that man does not exist apart from the woman. Since this is the climax of the thought begun in verse 11, it shows that the point of these two verses is to remind man that his position as the head of the woman should not be viewed apart from this truth lest he begin to abuse his headship. The purpose of using *pleen* at the beginning of verse 11 was to set this thought over against the previous verses. This too, is underscored by the following words which close verse 12 by emphasizing the thought of *en kurioo* in verse 11.

ta de panta ek tou theou. *De* ties this to the foregoing. *Ta panta* could refer to both the headship of man discussed in verses 3-10 and also the intertwined existence of man and woman discussed in verses 11-12, or it could refer just to verses 11-12. The continuation of the general subject in the verses which follow suggest that these words are not the climax of the whole section, so they most likely refer only to verses 11-12. But in either case, the stress is on the fact that God is the source of all of this (cf. the same words and thought in 2 Co 5:18). Knowing this man will view woman in the proper way as a gift of God to be honored and appreciated.

11:13 *en humin autois krinte*. In verses 13-15, as a conclusion to the matter of women covering their heads in Corinth, an appeal is made to maintain the distinction of the sexes according to the order of things (*phusis*, v1-41) or the custom *suneethia*, v16) in Corinth. The sphere (*en*) to which the Corinthians are now directed to turn their attention is the situation in Corinth itself and even more specifically to their congregation (*humin autois*). The apostle tells them to think about or to consider (*krinte*) this whole matter also from this viewpoint. For a similar use of *krino* with *en*, see 1 Co 7:37.

prepon estin. With the word *prepon* an appeal is made to what is fitting in this circumstance. Verse 14 explains that what is spoken of involves the matter of distinguishing the sexes in this situation. To do what is not fitting for a man is a shame (*atimia*) and to do what is fitting is a glory (*doksa*) for the woman. The appeal is made in the form of a question because the Corinthians have been asked to judge in this matter in their own situation.

gunaika akatakalupton too theoo proseuchesthai. In verse 5 the matter of a woman praying to God was considered from the viewpoint of what it would mean over against man as her head. The discussion earlier under verse 4 showed that the custom of women having their heads covered was particularly strong in Greece. While in those earlier verses this custom was tied to the principle of man being the head of the woman, now it is being discussed in connection with what was considered fitting among the Corinthians to distinguish the sexes. (v14)

11:14 *oude*. This conjunction introduces a question which is not only a follow-up to the question in verse 13, but helps support the negative answer which Paul is sure the Corinthians will give to that question. The positive answer, which *oude* suggests should be given to this second question, explains why it would be improper for women to pray with their heads uncovered in Corinth

he phusis autee didaskei humas. When Paul speaks of *phusi* as a teacher, he is either referring to the order of nature as God established it, or simply to the “innate properties and powers by which one differs from

others” (Thayer). The former would refer to a universal principle that applies to all people at all times. This would not fit in this context. What is under discussion is a custom (v16) which made the covering of a woman’s head the proper thing to do in Corinth (v13). The context points simply to *phusis* being used to refer to the distinction of the sexes. While this is something God pleasing, it is not a matter in which God has set down laws for the New Testament Christian as to just exactly how the distinction of the sexes is to be maintained. The custom in Greece, however, established a way for that society how this was to be done (cf. the notes on v4 above). What Paul is asking the Corinthians to consider is whether *phusis* itself did not teach them in their circumstance (V13 *en humin autois*) to observe this custom (v16).

hoti ... men ... de ... hoti. The first *hoti* introduces a clause that contains the lesson taught by *phusis*. The *men* and *de* divide this *hoti* clause into two opposing thoughts (“on the one hand. . .on the other hand”). The second *hoti* clause is causal and gives the reason why the clause introduced by *de* is true.

aneer men ean koma atimia autoo estin. This is a present general conditional clause. The custom in Greece made it a shame and disgrace if ever a man let his hair grow long. The discussion of this custom in connection with verse 4 pointed out that there were a few exceptions to this general rule in Greece (e.g. Sparta), but it must have been strictly observed in Corinth, else Paul’s argument would fall flat.

gunee de ean koma doksa autee estin. Again this is a general conditional clause. The custom, strictly observed as it was in Corinth made it a matter of honor to every woman who wore her hair long. *Doksa* is not used here in the same sense as it was in verse 7 because there it was used with the genitive *andros* and the woman was spoken of as the glory of man. Here *doksa* is used with the dative of possession *autee*, and the “glory” thus is the woman’s. Since it is used in contrast to *atimia* in the preceding clause, *doksa* here means “high honor.” When we remember that Corinth was a trading center which was infamous for excess and sexual license, including the thousands of temple prostitutes at the shrine to Aphrodite on the heights of the acropolis, it is not hard to understand why the respectable woman who kept her head covered (cf. next clause) with her long hair would be highly honored for this.

hoti he komee anti peribolaiou dedotai autee. Here the reason is given why the woman who wore long hair was highly honored. In place of a cloak or a mantle, her hair served as a covering. But what is meant by *dedotai autee*? Who is doing the giving? Again it is important to remember that the covering of the woman’s head or the wearing of long hair is not a law of God but the custom of Greece. It is the custom that gave woman her long hair as a mantle or a cloak. Since her hair according to the custom was her covering which kept the distinction of the sexes clear, it brought honor to the woman in Corinth who wore her hair long.

11:16 *de* (“but”). This particle joins verse 16 to the foregoing three and presents a thought that must be added as a counterpoint to those verses to put them in their proper perspective.

ei tis dokei philoneikos einai. The *ei* introduces a simple conditional. If the situation set forth in the *protasis* takes place, Paul wants the fact set forth in the *apodosis* to be placed alongside it to provide the solution. Paul assumes that in reading the words he has just written someone (*tis*) might be ready to dispute them or raise a point of contention about them *Philoneikos* often has a bad connotation, but it can also be a neutral expression in this way that a point might simply be contended or disputed by someone who, for example, feels there is a weakness in a plan or an argument being presented (cf. Moulton and Milligan on the use of *philoneikos* in the papyri). With the word *dokei* the edge is taken off the word *philoneikos*, but even if someone would only “seem” to be raising a point of contention concerning the foregoing verses, Paul wants them to know what follows.

heemeis toiauteen suneetheian ouk echomen. *Suneetheia* indicates something which one does so regularly that it is just taken for granted (practice, usage, custom, habit). In John 18:39 it refers to the practice of the Roman governor in releasing a prisoner to the Jews at the time of the Passover each year. In 1 Co 8:7 it refers to the fact that people were so accustomed to thinking of the meat offered to idols as part of idolatry that they cannot think of this meat in any other way. In the section now being completed, Paul

had urged the Corinthian men and women to observe the practice in their midst because it was proper to do so to uphold the distinction of the sexes which brought honor to the woman (vv 13-15) and because this practice gave expression to the principle of the headship of man established by God in the manner and purpose of woman's creation (vv2-10). Paul wants anyone who might even begin to raise an objection to know that this is not intended to establish a regulation which is to be applied throughout the Christian church. With the emphatic *heemeis*, he says that this is not a practice that he and his coworkers followed regularly as something taken for granted among them (*suneetheia*). With *toiauteen* Paul makes it clear that this is a practice unique to Corinth and thus applicable only there. The final words of this verse underscore this.

oude hai ekklesiai tou theou. The *oude* points to another group where the lack of the practice of those in Corinth also obtained. The article with *ekkleesia* in the N.T. usually refers to the local congregation in each city. The *tou theou* identifies these congregations as those who belong to God—an obvious reference to their being faithful to his Word because only thus could they belong to God. So Paul is also stating that the practice under discussion in these verses is not a general practice throughout all the Christian congregations which existed at this time. Do these last words imply that it was only in Corinth of the Greek congregations where this practice prevailed? What about Athens and Thessalonica? The words themselves do not decide for us since it could be argued that the words “all the other” would have to be added to isolate Corinth as being unique. All the words say is that it is not a general practice in the churches without clearly stating whether Corinth was the only exception or whether there were perhaps one or two others also. Surely Paul's exposition made it plain that if the practice prevailed in a city it should be followed while these last few words made it plain that this was not to be construed as a universal rule. A comment is also in order about the *NIV* translation “we have no *other* practice.” *Toiauteen* could be translated with “other” only if the translators had a preconceived idea of what the verse should mean and ignored the real meaning of *toiauteen* in order to have the meaning of the passage come out as they thought it should. Lenski's interpretation that the *suneetheia* refers to being contentious is beside the point completely because it not only ignores the *de* which ties this verse to the foregoing, but it also makes Paul deny that the Christian congregations had a custom of being contentious—something which surely is not the point Paul is making in his final words on the subject which he has discussed at such length.

Conclusion:

Does Paul with the final verse imply that there is nothing to learn in these verses for anyone outside those in such a city where a practice such as this one prevailed? Not at all! While the admonition to follow the practice applied only to such a situation, there is much we can learn from these verses about the headship of man and the importance of doing what is proper to keep the distinction of the sexes—both truths which are important for all Christians of all times to know and so truths which the Holy Spirit caused Paul to write as part of his inspired letter to the Corinthians.