

The Covering of I Corinthians 11

Jere E. Frost

It has been my lot for more than forty years to be involved in much study and many discussions on what is commonly called "The Covering Question." It is my observation that most of the confusion exists because of unwarranted assumptions. But the pertinent facts on this matter can be easily researched and understood, and many of the common assumptions can thereby be clearly refuted and dismissed. Since simplification is said to be the first step to understanding any subject, my approach will be simple, and we will break the subject into definable parts, as follows:

1. The Custom: There was a custom in Corinth of the woman, when in public, being covered.
2. The Covering: The custom's covering was a katakalupto that completely covered the head.
3. The Prophesying: This was a spiritual gift.
4. "Nature" Teaching: "Nature" is social propriety, the ways of a society.
5. Women Prophesying: They did prophesy, but this did not exempt the prophetess from moral implications associated with the customs.
6. Today: We have neither the custom nor prophesying.

1. Corinth Had a Custom of Women Wearing a Covering

The evidence of a custom in Corinth concerning women being covered is irrefutable. It bothers me when this fact is denied by those who insist that women are to wear a hat in worship services today. Every man has a right to his own opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts. That such a custom indeed prevailed, history and scholarship leave no doubt:

"In Greek, as well as in Eastern cities, it was customary for women, except those of bad character, to cover their heads in public." (The One Volume Bible Commentary, J.R. Dummelow, on I Cor. 11)

"No respectable woman in an eastern village or city goes out without it, and, if she does, she is in danger of being misjudged." (Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible)

"In NT times, however, among both Greeks and Romans, reputable women wore a veil in public (Plutarch Quaest. Rom. xiv) and to appear without it was an act of bravado (or worse); Tarsus, St. Paul's home city, was especially noted for strictness in this regard ... Hence .. Paul's indignant directions I Cor. 11:2-16 ... have their basis in the social proprieties of the time. The bearing of these directions, however, on the compulsory use of the hat by modern women in public worship would appear to be very remote." (ISBE, vol. 5, p. 3047)

"A Corinthian woman's veil would be the peplum, worn over the shoulders in the house, drawn over the face in public. [At Corinth a 'shorn' woman would be a harlot.]" (The Preacher's Homiletic Commentary, I Cor.11)

"I Corinthians 11:10. Respectable women went out with their heads covered and wore veils. Only prostitutes displayed their faces and showed off their hair in order to attract men.... Even when Christians have liberty in the practice of their faith they are not to shock propriety." (Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Ralph Gower, p. 20)

"We must remember the place of the veil in the East. To this day the Eastern women wear the yashmak which is a long veil leaving the forehead and the eyes open but reaching down almost to the feet. In Paul's time the Eastern veil was even more concealing. It came right over the head with only an opening for the eyes and reached right down to the feet. A respectable eastern woman would never have dreamed of appearing without it." (Wm. Barclay, Daily Study Bible, commentary of I Cor. 11:2-16)

The reader can see the plain and simple evidence -- Corinth had a custom of women wearing a covering in public.

2. The Custom's Covering, a Katakalupto, Completely Covered the Head.

The word for the woman's covering in I Corinthians 11 is the Greek word *katakalupto* (*kata*, down, and *kalupto*, cover). It bothers me that some who advocate that a woman must wear a hat, or just something on her head, acknowledge the literal meaning of this word to completely cover and hang down, then shift its meaning to an "adequate" covering, and after some incredible reasoning and mixing of terms conclude that it means "anything" on the head. Unbelievable! It is like a Methodist who goes from baptism literally meaning immersion, rationalizing it to mean an "adequate" amount of water, and concluding that it means "any" water at all. The facts belie the labored efforts of hat-advocates and Methodists to change words' meanings. The character of the covering is noted in the last three quotes above (kindly reread) and in the following:

"Outside the NT the word means "to veil (oneself)." In the LXX Moses hides the ark behind a curtain (Exod. 26:34), the Seraphim cover their faces (Isa. 6:2) ..." (Theological Dict. of the NT, Kittel and Friedrich)

"To cover up (*kata*, intensive), in the Middle Voice, to cover oneself, is used in I Cor. 11:6,7 .." (Vine's Expository Dictionary)

".. to cover up ... to veil or cover one's self: I Co. xi.6." (Thayer, p. 331)

".. to cover fully ..." (Young)

"In Greek, as well as in Eastern cities, it was customary for women, except those of bad character, to cover their heads in public." (Commentary, J.R. Dummelow, on I Cor. 11)

3. Prophesying Was a Spiritual Gift

Advocates of the covering as a binding requirement today characteristically distort the meaning of every key fact and word. What they do with the Corinthian custom and *katakalupto*, they do with prophesying -- they change its meaning. Some say prophesying merely means teaching, and others say that it is a synecdoche for the worship of the church. But such is fanciful speculation and imagining that arbitrarily assigns the meaning that is wanted so as to reach the conclusion desired. That prophesying was a spiritual gift, we call the reader's attention to (1) several passages of Scripture that so identify it, and to (2) lexicons' and scholarly commentators' observations about it.

"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy ..." (Romans 12:6)

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ... to another prophecy .. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit." (I Cor. 12:8-11)

"And God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets ... Are all apostles, are all prophets? ..." (I Cor. 12:28,29)

"And though I have the gift of prophecy .." (I Cor. 13:2)

"... whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ..." (I Cor. 13:8)

"Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue ..." (I Cor. 14:1,2)

"Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues." (I Cor. 14:39)

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some ... teachers .." (Ephesians 4:11)

All these Scriptures declare and clarify the role of the prophet as an inspired spokesman. Though he taught, he is distinguished from the mere teacher just as the apostles, who taught, are more than mere teachers. The apostles and prophets were inspired. Peter declared that when the prophets spoke, the Spirit "which was in them" was signifying, or testifying (I Peter 1:11). The Scriptures call prophesying a spiritual gift, and scholars concur.

"Secondarily, prophets ... a person who, under Divine inspiration, predicts future events ..." (Adam Clarke on I Cor. 12:28)

It may be noted that Clarke wobbles on the point in his discussions, much as Methodist theologians do on baptism. But Clarke can tell you the meaning of the word baptize, and the meaning of the expression, "for the remission of sins," but he abandons scholarship and the meaning of words when he proceeds with Methodist doctrine, sprinkling etc. This is exactly what he does on "prophet" -- but he also gave, as you just read, its actual meaning without his personal theology and beliefs added. Other scholars (such as Vincent), do not back away from their scholarship. They declare prophets inspired and distinguish them from teachers.

"Prophets. Preachers and expounders under the immediate influence of the Spirit, and thus distinguished from teachers. I Cor. 12:10."

On Hebrews 1:1: "By the prophets ... does not mean in the ... writings .., but rather in the prophets themselves as the vessels of divine inspiration. God speak in them and from them." (Vincent's Word Studies)

"..[T]he prophets made new revelations, and spoke all their prophesyings under the Spirit's influence." (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown on I Cor. 12:28)

"There were the prophets. The word prophet does not so much mean a fore-teller as a forth-teller... Their message was held to be not the result of thought and study, but the direct result of the Holy Spirit." (Wm. Barclay, Daily Study Bible, Eph. 4:11)

"prophecy ...prophecy, i.e. discourse emanating from divine inspiration .." Prophet: "... one who speaks forth by divine inspiration ... II. In the N.T. 1. one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ and spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration ..." (Thayer, p. 552)

4. How "Nature" Teaches

"Nature," in the sense of the purely physical universe, teaches nothing as to appropriate hair. Hair lengths and styles are not the result of women's hair naturally growing long and men's hair naturally being unable to grow long, for that simply is not the case. Samson had long hair, and a manlier man never lived. Absalom had long hair, and he was apparently the handsomest man in the kingdom, being without blemish from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. Nature in the passage is obviously "the way of propriety," society" or "custom," as scholars of the Greek language and customs attest:

Nature: "... a natural feeling of decorum ... in respect to national customs in which one is born and brought up ... It was the national custom among both the Hebrews and Greeks, for men to wear the hair short, and women to wear it long." (A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament by Edward Robinson, p. 771)

"The word nature denotes evidently that sense of propriety which all men have, and which is expressed in any prevailing .. custom.... It is doing that which almost universal custom has said appropriately belongs to the female sex." (Barnes Notes on I Cor. 11:14)

5. The Fact of Prophecy Did Not Change the Implications of Customs

We have established two salient facts that should be kept in mind as to what apparently produced the need for this portion of Scripture. First, there was the custom of women in public wearing a *katakalypto* in Corinth. Second, there were women who prophesied, women who were thus moved by the Holy Spirit to speak. It does not matter whether this was in an assembly or not. Philip had four daughters who not only could but who did prophesy (Acts 21:8). Custom dictated the same decorum and manner from them as from other women, and called for it on the street corner, in the marketplace, or in the assembly -- any and every public place. Arguments about the place are irrelevant to the issue of the covering, for the custom applied in all public places. The point is that not even spiritual activity, which would otherwise favorably reflect to the woman's credit and

reputation, would justify ignoring the social mores and customs that were so closely identified with morality and character. As Barnes said:

"There can be little doubt that they had consulted him in their letter (chap. vii. 1) about the proper manner in which a woman ought to demean herself if she was called upon, under the influence of divine inspiration, to utter any thing in public. The question seems to have been, whether, since she was inspired, it was proper for her to retain the marks of her inferiority of rank, and remain covered; or whether the fact of her inspiration did not release her from that obligation ..." (Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on I Cor. 11:2)

In Corinth, as already noted, the absence of a covering in public was generally viewed as insubordination or harlotry. Hat-advocates emphasize a place (a church assembly). The Scriptures do not. The custom was for all the women to be covered in all public places. Only the insubordinate and harlots did otherwise. Yet only the woman praying or prophesying is addressed. Why is that? Obviously, because the Christian women were not otherwise causing a reproach by being uncovered, the only exception being some who may have thought their inspiration and spiritual activity would release them from the need for the covering. Perhaps they thought a covering was demeaning and inappropriate for one who was prophesying. Whatever the reason, they and they alone were the objects of the admonition to be covered. Inquire as to the who, when, where and what of the passage. Hat-advocates do not (cannot) answer the who, when etc. in Bible terms. Their position requires and depends upon assumptions to the contrary. Consider:

WHO is the object of the admonition? The woman who prayed or prophesied. It is apparent that there was no problem with other women. No other woman than one praying or prophesying is mentioned.

WHEN was she admonished to wear it? When she prayed or prophesied, suggesting that at other times there was no problem even with these women.

WHERE was the covering needed in the text? Anywhere! All the women wore it in public. The prophetess was not exempted anywhere just because she prayed or prophesied. Covering-advocates sharply contradict themselves at this juncture. All of them that I have ever spoken with deny that a woman ever prayed or prophesied in a worship service. If they are correct, how then can they say this represents conduct in a worship service? They themselves deny it ever occurred in one! How can they make a behavior that never occurred in a worship service, in their own view and argument, a synecdoche for a worship service?

WHAT was the covering, and what was to be covered? The covering was a katakalupto -- a complete covering. The head, including the face (it being part of the head) was to be covered ala the custom in Corinth.

6. "We Have No Such Custom"

The Greeks, and Corinth (it being a Greek city), had this custom. The only custom in the entire context is a covering. "We have no such custom" therefore references the covering, not contentiousness, for being contentious is not a custom but is forbidden as a sin. He is therefore giving instructions as to how the believers, those women who prayed and prophesied, were to act in view of the customs where they lived. Paul said "we" have no such custom, and also that the "churches" had no such custom. So his admonition does not rest on some apostolic or church law. This is nothing strange, nor is it unusual or unique in Scripture. For example:

Footwashing was the customary manner of hospitality. One had to respect the custom to show proper hospitality. Footwashing was required! (John 13:14; I Tim. 5:10). The principle pertaining to graciousness, humility and hospitality still remains to this day, but the custom of footwashing is not part of our culture and the hat-binders do not try to bind that custom even though it is mentioned more often than the covering, and is commanded. Why do they pick the one and not the other? Can

you imagine the argument if I Timothy 5:10 had said, "if she have worn a hat in worship" instead of "if she have washed the saints feet"?

The holy kiss was commanded five times! (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26; I Peter 5:14) It is illogical to try to bind the covering custom and not bind the holy kiss custom. Principles do not change. Customs do. We need to give a proper, courteous greeting to one another. Women need to appear virtuous. But we shake hands for the former, and women do not need a covering for the latter, in our culture. No brother known to me tries to bind this custom as they do the covering of I Corinthians 11. But the one is as binding as the other!

Paul plainly said the church had "no such custom." Think about that. Repeat it five times. My hat brethren do not read it that way. They read it to say, "we have no other custom" than that, but that is not what it says! "We have no such custom"! It means exactly what it says -- this custom did not issue from the apostles or from the church. To emphasize the intrinsic meaning of the subject sentence, let us restate it but change the negatives. Reverse the point 180 degrees and you will notice that then, and only then, it reads the way hat-advocates believe it:

"But if any man seem to be contentious, we DO have such a custom, as ALSO DO the churches of God." (I Cor. 11:16, Hatters' Translation)

"Hat" brethren are contentious FOR the covering because they believe the apostles and churches DO have such a custom and requirement. But Paul says the exact opposite! This passage reproves whoever is contentious in the matter, and the reason is "for (because)" neither "we" nor "the churches of God" have such a custom. Corinth did! But the apostles did not! But he urged the Corinthians to respect propriety. We should do that equally with the covering, footwashing, holy kissing, and anointing with oil. If it is the custom, "nature" teaches you to conform and not to produce an unnecessary reproach.

Conclusion

If whosoever may chance to read this will respect the simple definition and Scriptural use of words, he will see that this was a matter relevant at a specific time and place. As William Barclay, England's celebrated scholar of the Greek language and customs said:

"It must always be remembered that this whole situation arose in Corinth.... It would be quite wrong to make this passage of universal application; it was intensely relevant to the Church of Corinth but it has nothing to do with whether or not women should wear hats in Church at the present day."

We have none of the essentials for making this passage a binding commandment today. It is as passe' as footwashing and holy kisses. We have no such customs. No one in our culture wears a katalupto. We have no prophets. We have no prophetesses. We have no women praying and prophesying. But principles are ageless, and we should now, as they were urged then, respect the propriety of our social courtesies and customs, and not disregard them to the detriment of the gospel.

Response To "The Covering of I Corinthians 11"

Patrick Donahue

This article is written in response to Jere E. Frost's article entitled "The Covering of I Corinthians 11" which appeared in the September 1997 issue of "Gospel Truths." The conclusion demonstrated by my response is that the veil enjoined by I Corinthians 11:2-26 was required, not by custom, but by divine revelation, therefore it is still binding today.

Cover When?

Let me begin by agreeing with Mr. Frost that the "when" or "where" of the covering was "anywhere." The covering was not just required in the church's assembly, it was required anywhere that the woman prayed or prophesied. It cannot be that the covering requirement was limited to the assembly, because the woman was required to be covered when she prophesied, and she was not to prophesy in the assembly (I Corinthians 14:34-35). The text actually tells us in verse 5 exactly when the covering is required, and it does not say in the assembly; instead it says when the woman "prayeth or prophesieth."

Cover How Much?

I agree with Mr. Frost's point that the covering was "... to cover fully..." (Young), that is, to "completely" cover the head. But that does not mean that the covering has to cover the face also. The New Testament makes a distinction in the head and the face (just as we do today) in passages like Matthew 6:17 ("... when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face").

How "Nature" Teaches

Mr. Frost has a section entitled "How 'Nature' Teaches," obviously drawing from the word "nature" found in verse 14. He thinks one definition for the meaning of this word somehow helps his case for the covering only being a custom of the day and place, but his single faceted definition is shown to prove absolutely nothing by the following other definitions for "nature" (Strong's #5449):

- + Thayer - nature, i.e. natural sense, native conviction or knowledge, as opposed to what is learned by instruction and accomplished by training or prescribed by law ... the native sense of propriety ... I Co. xi. 14 ... guided by their natural sense of what is right and proper, Ro. ii. 14
- + Arndt and Gingrich - may mean instinctively
- + Vine - the regular law and order of nature

Regardless of which definition you choose, just because "nature" teaches something, that doesn't mean it is not binding. The same Greek word is also found in Romans 1:26 to refer to the fact that homosexuality is against "nature." Wouldn't Mr. Frost's reasoning mean that Romans 1:24-27 is not binding? As a matter of fact, one of the points I made in a recent public debate against a homosexual was that "even nature itself" teaches against homosexuality ("because the body parts don't fit"). I did not mean by the argument that revelation did not teach it. I meant that both revelation and nature teach it. Just because nature teaches something, that does not mean that revelation does not teach it. Nature teaches that God exists (Psalms 19:1, Romans 1:20), but revelation also teaches it, and it is not optional whether or not we believe it. The truth is that Paul has already established the artificial covering based upon a number of unchanging reasons (listed later in the article); in verses 14-15, he establishes the covering for women by pointing out something the Corinthians already agreed with: the fact that women are the ones that have the "natural" covering (long hair) ought to tell us that women are the ones that should have the artificial

covering. This is precisely "how" nature teaches us that the artificial covering is required for women. The bottom line is that verse 14 says nothing to make the veil non-binding today.

Footwashing And The Holy Kiss

Mr. Frost puts the covering requirement in the same category as footwashing and the holy kiss. But he presents no evidence that they are in the category, he just asserts it. To the contrary, it can be shown from the scriptures themselves that both footwashing (Genesis 18:4, Genesis 19:2, Genesis 24:32, Judges 19:21, I Samuel 25:41, II Samuel 11:8, Luke 7:36-44) and greeting with a kiss (Genesis 27:26-27, Genesis 33:4, Genesis 45:15, Exodus 4:27, Exodus 18:7, II Samuel 14:33, 20:9, Luke 7:45, 15:20) had been a practice for centuries before the New Testament was written, and the New Testament just regulates these already existing practices. But no man can show from the scriptures that covering the head during prayer or prophecy was a common practice before I Corinthians 11. As a matter of fact, passages like II Samuel 15:30-31 show just the opposite. There the record shows that David prayed with a head covering on. In view of all these facts, the veil requirement is not like footwashing and the holy kiss.

The Spiritual Gifts Argument

Mr. Frost labors to prove that "prophesieth" in I Corinthians 11:5 is a miraculous gift, and therefore the covering does not apply today, since miraculous gifts have ceased. But anybody who knows what the word "or" means understands that this position is completely without merit. Verse 5 requires a woman to be covered when she "prayeth OR prophesieth" (in addition, verse 13 mentions that a woman should be covered when she prays, and it doesn't mention prophecy at all). Granted, prophecy has ceased (I Corinthians 13:8-10), but prayer certainly has not. Notice the following parallel sentence: Every person driving or riding (in the front seat of) a car with belt unbuckled breaketh the law. What does the sentence mean? If you do either, you break the law. The same is true with the covering; if a woman either prays uncovered or prophesies uncovered, she breaks God's law. I am confident that Mr. Frost's wife prays today. Therefore according to God's word, she breaks God's law if she does so unveiled.

Some say that prayer in I Corinthians 11:5 is miraculous prayer since it is mentioned in close proximity to the miraculous gift of prophecy. But this type of false reasoning would make the gifts of "giving, ruling, exhorting, and ministry" miraculous, since they are mentioned in close proximity to prophecy in Romans 12:6-8. Again, this type of false reasoning would make eating bread miraculous, since it is mentioned in the same verse with prophecy in Amos 7:12. You say ridiculous? Then you've got the point. This type of reasoning would mean that Acts 20:7 is not binding today, since the preaching there was undoubtedly inspired. As a matter of fact, practically the whole New Testament would be rendered useless since every book is riddled with the mention of spiritual gifts. What proves too much, proves nothing.

The Scholars Say Custom?

Mr. Frost's primary argument for his custom view was as usual, not the scriptures, but scholars stating that the covering was just a custom. He quotes a few scholars stating such, but predictably leaves off all of the multitudes of scholars that report just the opposite. Notice what the following scholars have to say:

- + Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges - In the remarkable fact that the practice here enjoined is neither Jewish, which required men to be veiled in prayer, nor Greek, which required both men and women to be unveiled, but particularly to Christians.

- + Expositor's Greek Testament - Paul's instructions do not agree precisely with current practice. Jewish men covered their heads; amongst the Greeks both sexes worshipped with uncovered heads.
- + W.E. Vine - Among the Jews the heads of the men were covered in the synagogue. Among the Greeks both men and women were uncovered. + Morris in Tyndale Series - Jewish men always prayed with heads covered (as they still do). Greek women, as well as menfolk, prayed with head uncovered.
- + Vincent's Word Studies - The Romans (the men), like the Jews, prayed with the head veiled.
- + Pulpit Commentary - Having his head covered ... The Jewish worshipper in praying always covers his head with his Tallith.
- + Moffat Series - Men and Women worshipped bareheaded in Greek rites.
- + Robertson in Word Pictures - The Greeks (both men and women) remained bareheaded in public prayer.

What can we learn from the fact that scholars are disagreed on this matter (and just about every issue)? What we should have known all along, that we are just going to have to accept God's revelation on the matter! The scriptures only (and not commentaries) are inspired, and therefore reliable for doctrine (II Timothy 3:16-17).

This brings us to what should be the main point for all brethren. What does God's word reveal as to the reason a woman should be covered when she prays? The text actually gives us seven (as I count) reasons, and not one of them has to do with custom. These reasons follow:

Headship

I Corinthians 11:3-5a teaches that a woman ought to be covered when she prays or prophesies because of the order of headship. I ask the reader, is man still the head of woman? (note: many of our more liberal brethren say no, so they allow women preachers, elders, etc.). If man is still the head of woman, then the Bible still says that if a woman prays to God uncovered, she dishonors her head (man). You can't have one (headship) without the other (the covering)!

From the phrase "prayeth or prophesieth," another significant flaw in Mr. Frost's custom argument becomes apparent. Mr. Frost uses his own scholars to say that the custom was for the women to wear the veil "in public" (similar to women in Arab countries today). But the text says nothing of the phrase "in public." Verses 4, 5, and 13 mention that the application was to be made during times of prayer or prophecy. This is not the same as "in public," because a woman prays in private also (like at the dinner table at home). So if we compare the text to even Mr. Frost's own scholars, we see the practice enjoined by Paul was different than the prevailing custom of the day. To complicate matters further, we have Mr. Frost trying to tell us that it was the custom of the Corinthian people for their women (a bunch of heathens) to veil their heads when they prayed or prophesied. Since when do the heathen pray or prophesy? Moreover, does Mr. Frost really expect us to believe that Paul is telling the Christian ladies that they ought to be veiled when they prayed because the heathen ladies were veiled when they prayed? Conclusion: the phrase "prayeth or prophesieth" shows that the practice was peculiar to Christians (since they were the only ones that actually prayed or prophesied), and therefore proves that Paul is not just regulating a local custom.

Shame Like Shorn Or Shaven

I Corinthians 11:5b-6 teaches that a woman ought to wear the covering because to be uncovered is shameful like being shorn or shaven. Is it still a shame for a woman to be shaven? Then the Bible still teaches that it is likewise a shame for a woman to be uncovered when she prays or prophesies. Actually the verse uses "if" in the sense of "since." Since it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. It is not left up to us. A woman should be covered even today.

Image And Glory

I Corinthians 11:7 teaches that a man should not wear the covering because he is the "image and glory" of God, while the woman is the glory of the man. I would ask, has anything changed about this reason for the covering? Does God still recognize this fact of creation when assigning man and woman their roles? Then the covering still applies today.

Because Of The Angels

I Corinthians 11:10 teaches that a woman ought to be covered "because of the angels." Again I ask, has anything changed about this reason for the covering? Nobody even knows for sure exactly what this reason fully entails, so how could anybody know that the reason doesn't apply anymore? The covering still applies today, because of the angels.

Artificial Covering Needed By Same Gender As Natural Covering

I Corinthians 11:13-15 teaches that a woman ought to wear the artificial covering because she is the one given the natural covering of long hair. Paul's argument is essentially this: "Look, God has given women (not men) the long hair as a natural/permanent covering; that ought to tell you that when it comes to the artificial/temporary covering, God wants the woman covered, not the man." Ask yourself, are women still supposed to have longer hair than men today? Then the veil is still required today.

No Such Custom

Mr. Frost says at one point, "Paul plainly said the church had 'no such custom.' Think about that. Repeat it five times. My hat brethren do not read it that way." Mr. Frost should know that we read it exactly that way (the way verse 16 reads), but we are careful to notice exactly what custom Paul is referring to that the churches do not have. It is not the covering requirement that Paul has been earnestly contending for in the preceding 14 verses that the churches do not have. Rather it is the practice of the man contending against Paul. Read verse 16 again - "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom" What does "such" refer to? It points back to the contentious man and what he is contending for, not to Paul and what he has been teaching.

Instead of hurting the "hat brethren's" case, I suggest that I Corinthians 11:16 actually contains one of the more powerful arguments in favor of the covering being binding today. When you read the verse carefully, you see that Paul is saying that the covering was being practiced by all the Christians at that time everywhere (that is, "we" and "the churches of God"). It was a universal practice at that time, and therefore should be likewise now. Verse 16 teaches like:

+ I Corinthians 4:17 - as I teach "every where in every church"

+ I Corinthians 7:17 - And so ordain I in "all churches"

+ I Corinthians 14:33 - For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in "all churches" of the saints

that the practice of wearing the covering was uniform throughout all the churches everywhere, and was not just a local custom. It is saying that if a man would contend against the covering, the universal practice of the churches would contradict the practice that man is contending for. So the practice of wearing the veil was a general practice, not just a local practice.

Notice that Mr. Frost is contending in his article for the same practice that the contentious man of verse 16 was contending for. Paul rebukes the man of verse 16. What do you think then that Paul (God) would say about people today who do the same by contending against the covering requirement?

Order Of Creation

I Corinthians 11:8-9 teaches that a woman ought to wear the covering because of the "order of creation." Likewise, I Timothy 2:11-13 ("Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.") teaches (among other things) that a woman should not be a preacher because of the "order of creation." Since it is the same argument for both practices, if one practice does not apply anymore, neither does the other. Let me repeat by pointing out that the covering requirement of I Corinthians 11:2-16 and the prohibition against women preachers in I Timothy 2:11-12 stand or fall together, since Paul uses the same argument to make his case for both conclusions. Both passages argue their respective cases from the fact that man, Adam, was created first, and then the first woman, Eve. This argument is not based upon culture, but is based upon the "order of creation." Since it is the same argument for both practices, if one practice does not apply anymore, then neither does the other. The reader must either accept the covering requirement as applicable and binding today, or if he rejects it, claiming it was just cultural, then to be consistent he must reject the prohibition against women preachers upon the same basis, that is, he must teach that the prohibition against women preachers was also just cultural.

The fact that these two teachings stand or fall together was decisively pointed out in the 1990 Freed-Hardeman Forum. The issue in this forum was whether or not women should be given a greater role in the church, including should they be allowed to preach in the church assemblies. In arguing against women preachers, Ralph Gilmore said on page 57 of the book (transcript), "These scriptures are not tied to culture. They are tied to creation ... I do not know how they can say that this is a cultural matter when at least these two instances, and probably three instances [i.e., I Cor 11, I Tim 2, and I Cor 14], it's tied to creation, it's tied to creation, it's tied to creation." On page 72, Mr. Gilmore further argued, "I Timothy 2:12-15 is not cultural because it says the woman came from the man, and woman was deceived in the transgression." Now notice Lynn Mitchell's correct response on page 133 while arguing in favor of women preachers: "In I Cor 11, Paul bases his discussion on whether women should wear veils on the doctrine of creation and the order that exists between God and woman." Mr. Mitchell was correctly pointing out that the covering requirement and the prohibition against women preachers stand or fall together since the same argument is made for both. Mr. Mitchell's contention was that they both fall. The truth is that they both stand.

Some have made the argument that in I Corinthians 11, Paul makes the "order of creation" (and other arguments) in favor of man being the head of woman, and that the covering is just a cultural application of that headship principle. Mr. Frost tries to make this same argument when he applies the statement "Principles do not change. Customs do" to the covering issue. But this same basic argument could be made against I Timothy 2 and its prohibition against women preachers. Many (including Lynn Mitchell) indeed make this argument by saying that the "order of creation" argument is made in I Timothy 2:13 in favor of man's headship over women, and that the rule about women not teaching over the man is just a cultural application of that headship principle.

Some might respond that not teaching over another is inherent in the idea of headship. But that is not so. Who among us thinks it is wrong for a professional at his job to lead a meeting where such meeting includes his own boss? Again, the elders have authority (headship) over the local congregation, but that does not mean that it is wrong for one of the other men of the congregation to lead a class that includes one or more of the elders as students.

The truth is that the covering requirement and the prohibition against women preachers are both divine applications of the divine headship principle. The Bible argues for both teachings using the same argument. God requires that the woman place herself under the headship of man, and God says that applications of that headship are that the woman (and not the man) should be covered when she

prays, and that the woman should not teach over the man. "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11:8-9). "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (I Timothy 2:13). If the covering requirement is only cultural, then so is the women preacher prohibition. To be consistent, Mr. Frost and those who take his position would have to accept women preachers today. The truth is that both (the covering and the prohibition against women preachers) are still binding.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me say that to prove his position, Mr. Frost would need to prove that all of these seven inspired reasons for the covering are temporary in nature. But instead, none of these reasons are temporary or based upon local custom. All of the reasons are permanent, and still apply today. Therefore, the covering likewise applies. I urge you to just accept what the Bible clearly says on this matter!

An Effort to Bind the Covering

A Response to Donahue's Review on the Covering

by Jere E. Frost

"The Covering of I Corinthians 11," an article appearing in the September issue of GOSPEL TRUTHS, is reviewed in a courteous and becoming manner by Patrick T. Donahue in this month's issue. I applaud my brother's forthrightness and good spirit, and invite the reader to first read the original article, brother Donahue's review, and then this response. In this response to the review, I shall use the headings my critic used and accordingly reply to what was under said headings. I hope this helps to clarify and focus on the arguments.

Cover When?

My brother agrees that the covering was required anywhere that the woman prayed or prophesied: "It cannot be ... limited to the assembly .." In fact, by his logic and application, it cannot even be applied to the assembly at all, for he says, "she was not to prophesy in the assembly." We both agree that the passage has nothing to do with an assembly and therefore does not even remotely suggest that a hat be worn in church services. Cover How Much? We are again in agreement that it is to completely cover the head. We are not in agreement that you can cover the head fully and not cover the face. The covering (katakalupto), by definition, is that which covered and hung down. That you can mention the head and distinguish the face is no evidence the face is not part of the head. Let there be no equivocation: the face is part of the head. We can similarly mention the face and distinguish the hair, eyes, lips, nose or cheeks, but a distinction does not mean the hair, lips and nose are not part of the face. If one fully covers the face they fully cover the components that make up the face, and if they fully cover the head they fully cover the components that make up the head.

How "Nature" Teaches

There are indeed several definitions that can fit the word "nature," as is the case with many words. However, only one definition at a time can apply. A word does not carry multiple meanings in a single usage. For example, heaven may mean where the airplanes fly. It may also mean where God is. It never means both at the same time. When Peter said our hope is in heaven (I Peter 1:3-4), he was not speaking of where the airplanes fly; our hope is not in the atmosphere of earth at all. Therefore, in focusing on the word nature, I noted what Robinson's lexicon (dictionary) said it meant in the passage ñ I did not cite irrelevant meanings, or throw out a dozen definitions that would not fit the context, and then say, take your pick. I noted what it means in the passage. He quoted Thayer. Right on! What did Thayer say it meant in the passage? Yes, "native sense of propriety," and specifically applied this definition to I Corinthians 11:14, just as Robinson and Barnes did. He subsequently referenced II Samuel 15:30-31 as evidence that David prayed with a covering on his head. In so doing, he makes my point. This was no social impropriety in David's day. There was nothing against "nature" then. But it would have been against "nature" had David prayed wearing a covering in first century Corinth. Did "nature" change? He has answered himself on the point.

Footwashing and the Holy Kiss

My friend is right. I do put the covering in the same category as footwashing and the holy kiss. But he is remiss in saying I presented no evidence. The evidence abounds, and I cited it, that there was a custom among the Greeks to wear a covering in public; that makes it parallel as to being a custom. Not a scholar my friend cited contradicts the indisputable fact of the custom. (More on this under heading, "The Scholars Say Custom?") He shifts gears on me when he implies "no man can show from the Scriptures that covering the head during prayer and prophecy was a common practice .." So what? It doesn't matter. But look at what he implies and how he shifts gears: (1) He has already acknowledged that the passage only applies to the woman doing the praying or prophesying. Now he applies it during man's prophesying and praying. (2) He has me affirming that there was a custom while someone was praying or prophesying. No. No. Neither I nor the scholars I cited say that. The custom existed independently of anyone's praying or prophesying. The point is that the woman's praying and prophesying, which we agree is the subject person under consideration, does not exempt her from the social propriety of existing custom.

The Scholars Say Custom?

He puts the scholars we have respectively referenced in juxtaposition conflict. But they are not in juxtaposition. The scholars I cited had to do with the general custom of Greek women in public ñ anywhere, not in worship. He himself admits the passage does not apply to the assembly, in which he declares a woman was always forbidden to pray or prophesy, but to the woman who (and when) is praying and prophesying anywhere. He did not cite a scholar who denies the Greek custom of women being covering in public. I reaffirm the point. He refuted a straw man, not the point of Greek women wearing a covering in public.

Headship

Let me get this straight. We agree the passage does not apply to an assembly. It applies to, and only to, a woman praying or prophesying, any where and any time. Yes, that is what was said at the outset. (Reread Donahue's second paragraph!) So his argument that "you can't have one (headship) without the other (the covering) means, according to his exegesis, that the woman must put on a covering when she prays at the dinner table, in bed, or in her closet. But she does not need a covering when she sings, or listens to a man preach. In either event, we agree that the woman does not need a covering to acknowledge man's headship just because she is in a public assembly. It is agreed that the covering was a "sign" of authority, an acknowledgment of man's headship. She did not need it when she cooked, swept the floor, listened to a man preach (in or out of an assembly), sang (in or out of an assembly) or in any other circumstance. She needed it only when she herself "prayed or prophesied" (in or out of the assembly). Remember, we agree that it did not apply to attending an assembly and governed her praying and prophesying.

Shame Like Shorn or Shaven

"Is it still a shame for a woman to be shaven?" No, to my best knowledge it is not a shame now as it was then. It was then the sign of a prostitute. I'm not up on prostitutes, but I have never heard of it being a sign of a prostitute today. Susan Powder, of TV fame for her weight control program, came on TV shaved, but it never crossed my mind that such meant she was a prostitute. Does it indeed mean that today? If so, it is by all means a shame. If it does not mean that, then no, I know of no inherent shame. Image and Glory The "image and glory" argument of Scripture simply notes why the man and woman should both accept and respect the propriety of custom. The covering symbolized authority in that culture. As my brother has already noted, David prayed wearing a covering, for in his generation it did not symbolize disrespect for God's image and glory. But it did in first century Corinth! I do not believe David would have done it in Corinth in the first century because the custom was different from what it was where and when he did it. The leaping to the expression, "forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God" as though it dismisses and negates the fact that it is in respect to custom is something my friend would not dare do on footwashing. Try it. Ignore, as my friend does, that we are dealing with a custom. Then read John 13:14: "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet." Now let's get down to it here. Brother Donahue, the Scripture nowhere calls footwashing a custom. It never does! It does not give its being a custom as the reason why we should wash feet. It gives the reason: "If I have washed your feet ye also ought to was one another's feet." We should respect Christ's example now just as they did then, and just as we respect the "image and glory" of God, shouldn't we?

Because of the Angels

No cogent argument here. "Because of the angels" simply references the need to respect authority. It does not suggest the angels did or did not wear coverings. It does not suggest women had some relationship to angels. The covering was a sign of authority then, and when the woman did something not characteristically her role (praying or prophesying) she needed a "sign" to reaffirm her respect for authority. She does not perform this role today, nor is a covering a "sign" in our culture of a woman's acknowledgment of man's headship.

Artificial Covering Needed by Same Gender as Natural Covering

In all due respect, this argument is sheer fantasy. I am not trying to be cute, and I do not want to be ugly in any way to my brother, for he has written in a nice, courteous way, which I appreciate. But this is so off-the- wall. He says, "Paul's argument is essentially this: ñLook, God has given women (not men) the long hair as a natural/permanent covering; that ought to tell you that when it comes to

the artificial/temporary covering, God wants the woman covered, not the man.'" Huh? First, what he says is not even close to what the Scripture says. One could just as easily say, "Paul's argument is essentially this: 'Look, God has given women (not men) long fingernails as a natural/permanent covering for her fingers; that ought to tell you that when it comes to artificial/temporary covering, God wants the woman's fingers painted.'" The premise in no way warrants the conclusion. In logic, it is called non sequitur. Look around you today. Can men grow hair as long as women? You betcha. And do not forget Samson and Absalom. Does that tell us that God wanted, Samson, Absalom, and today's men who can naturally grow long hair, to wear an artificial covering? Certainly not! The argument is without merit.

No Such Custom

There is only one custom in this entire context. My critic argues that contentiousness is the custom. But contentiousness is not a custom; it is never spoken of, anywhere, as being a custom. Contentiousness is a sin! To make contentiousness the custom is to have Paul say we do not make sinning a "custom," and/or we have no "custom" of arguing against ourselves (I should hope not). Such a spin on the passage is much too much. No, the only custom in the context is the covering, and neither "we" nor the "churches" have the custom, but Corinth does, and social propriety (nature) dictates that you respect it.

Order of Creation

Ignoring the fact and significance of the existing custom leads my brother to make the same old assumptions over and over. The order of creation only relates to the fact that man is the head of woman. It has nothing to do with customs, either in first century Corinth or twentieth century America. It has nothing to do with what the customs were at any given time and place. I again reference Absalom and David.

"The Freed-Hardeman Forum."

Is this supposed to add weight to the argument? Anyway, I risk differing with the forum, and a good bit more of the doctrine and rationale that issues from Freed Hardeman. Now as to I Corinthians 11 and I Timothy 2:11-12, I agree they are from the same God. I agree that the principles in both passages stand or fall together, and I agree they stand. Now what do the passages say? I Timothy says the woman is not to teach "over" the man or "usurp authority over" the man. There is no custom in the context that would symbolize this being done. But in I Corinthians 11 there is a custom, a covering, that the woman was to wear when praying and prophesying! (My brother and I agree that this is the only time the covering was needed in the passage; it does not apply to a woman simply assembling.) Now, why did she need this when she prophesied (or prayed)? As a "sign" of authority, that she was complying with the principle of I Timothy 2, even though she was doing what the man characteristically did. Or does my brother take the position that women commonly and characteristically prophesied publicly and in the assembly? Ah no, he is already on record that this does not apply to the assembly because, he contends, she never did this in the assembly. So, what's the point?

Conclusion

My original arguments stand. They were:

1. The Custom: There was a custom in Corinth of the woman, when in public, being covered.
2. The Covering: The custom's covering was a katakalupto that completely covered the head.
3. The Prophesying: This was a spiritual gift.
4. "Nature" Teaching: "Nature" is social propriety, the ways of a society.
5. Women Prophesying: They did prophesy, but this did not exempt the prophetess from moral implications associated with the customs.
6. Today: We have neither the custom nor prophesying. And I repeat: my brother and I agree that the covering was, and is, needed only when a woman prays or prophesies, and not when she assembles.