

11:2-16 – Understanding God’s Divine Order– Aaron Gallagher

Sometimes being a Christian in an un-Christian society is difficult. The world around us has a large influence on us, even if we would like to pretend that it does not. While we know we are not to be of the world or lovers of the things of the world (John 17:14-16, 1 John 2:15-17), we can’t change the fact that we live in and among this present world. In America, our culture has become increasingly more ungodly and more accepting of ways of life that do not line up with God’s desire for His children. As the world becomes more immoral, the Corinthian letters will become even more impactful to those wishing to follow God’s will.

While the church in Corinth had many problems, Paul had hope for them. That hope was not based on the wisdom of men, but on God and His Wisdom. Paul pleaded with them to follow God’s Wisdom and the examples of those who lived it out in their own lives (1:10, 4:16, 16:15). When we want to put a focus on a certain phrase or word, we sometimes will underline the phrase or place it in bold. Sometimes we may even use all caps. The New Testament writers did not have the “all caps” option considering all the early uncial manuscripts were in all capital letters anyway. Instead of bolding or underlining, they would use petition verbs to draw that extra attention to a word or phrase. It was the koine Greek way of saying “Pay Attention!”

In Ch. 1, Paul uses a petition verb to plead with the Corinthians to speak the same thing, not to be divided, and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgement (1:10). In 4:16, Paul uses another petition verb in order to encourage the Corinthians to “imitate” himself. The hope was not in Paul himself, but in the message that Paul had learned from Christ and taught to those whom he had “begotten through the Gospel” (4:15). Later, Paul uses another petition verb when he urges the Corinthians to be in subjection to men such as the

household of Stephanas and those like him who work for the Lord (16:15). Throughout the New Testament we see that following men of Christian character will result in nothing but good things for us. The Hebrews writer spoke of “imitating the faith” of those men who spoke the Word of God to them and to be subject to their leaders “for they watch over your souls” (Heb. 13:7,17). While the focus of Hebrews is faithfulness in the midst of persecution to return to Judaism, the Corinthians faced the temptation of unfaithfulness due to worldliness.

In chapters 1-6, Paul responds to the information which had come to his attention from the household of Chloe (1:10). In chapter 7, Paul begins to respond to questions that likely were written in correspondence from the Corinthian church to Paul (7:1). Paul addresses questions about marriage, meat offered to idols, matters of conscience, etc.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul seems to echo the petition he made earlier in 4:16 by again telling the Corinthians to “imitate me as I imitate Christ”. The word used in both 4:16 and 11:1 is *mimētēs* (μιμητής) which means to “use another as your model” (BDAG 652). Unfortunately, vs. 1 of this same chapter was separated from its intended context under discussion in chapter 10. Otherwise, we might be trying to figure out how imitating Paul who imitated Christ would have anything to do with women’s head coverings in Corinth, Greece, a place Christ never even visited during His earthly Ministry. It is good to remember that chapter and verse divisions did not originate with God, but with men. For the greater part of human history in face, those who studied the New Testament did not have chapter and verse divisions.

Divisions into smaller sections began as early as the 4th century in Codex Vaticanus and Jerome followed in the 5th century by dividing scripture further into pericopes (small sections). Still, it was not until around 1227 that a professor at the University of Paris and Archbishop of Canterbury named Stephen Langton divided the New Testament into chapters. Still, it was not

for another 300 years until around the 1550's, when a French Printer named Robert Stephens divided his Greek New Testament into verses, followed by his edition of the Latin Vulgate (Orr 469). Finally in 1560, the Geneva Bible became the first English Bible translation to have chapter and verse editions printed in the text (Hutchison 949-950). This considered, the Bible has only had chapters and verses present for the last 460 years of human history. If we remember this, it will help us to look at Scripture as the flowing work of art that God intended, instead of Bible study that sometimes resembles stop and go traffic.

To be fair, the divisions have not all been bad and many times are very helpful in allowing us to find passages of interest quickly to share them with others. With that said, men are fallible and sometimes as in this case, the chapter divisions may have done more harm to the context than good. Only by removing the chapter and verse divisions from our mind will we take a step toward making more sense of the overall picture being given in this and other New Testament texts.

1 Corinthians 11 is divided up into two sections. The first section goes from 11:2-16 and the second from 11:17-34. This latter section deals with the Corinthians misconduct during the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper should have been something that brought them all together, both rich and poor, into a recognition that they were one in Christ, however just the opposite was the truth. They had turned the Lord's Supper into something was causing division among the members. Chapter 11:17 begins to deal with some issues that were present in the Corinthian assembly. These issues included issues with the Lord's Supper and attitudes towards the use of spiritual gifts. Everything after 11:17 is likely addressing the Sunday assembly of the church in Corinth as a common word is found frequently in the latter part of chapter 11 through chapter 14. The word *synerchomai* (συνέρχομαι) means "to come together as a group, assemble, gather"

(BDAG 969). While this word does not always recognize a Christian assembly, the context would suggest it as we see “when you come together as a church” (11:17). We see this “coming together” referenced additionally in 1 Corinthians 11:17,18,20,33,34,14:23,26.

The first half of the chapter however is our assigned text, and so we must 11:2-16 and try to learn not only what the current issue was in Corinth, but also what application would this have today in our lives as Christians. It seems that the issue in Corinth was a lack of modesty and what that portrayed to those around them. This passage shows how modesty shows our respect or disrespect for God’s established order. This passage also deals with how the culture that surrounds us can influence some customs of the church in our everyday lives.

Historically, there have been at least four positions on this passage:

1. The covering is merely the natural covering of hair.
2. The veil or covering is binding on all for all time.
3. The sign of authority is continually binding, but not in a full-face veil.
4. The veil was a local custom and the principles of modesty are continually binding.

We do not have the space here to explain and discuss each position, but the exposition following will make the case that #4 is my current understanding of the passage. There are many men in the brotherhood whom I highly respect and consider my superiors who disagree on this section of Scripture. With that in mind, I am not so naïve as to think that my explanation will solve all the disagreement, but I have done my best to examine the text exegetically. May God forgive any misunderstanding of His Divine Word.

11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

Paul begins by praising them for two things. First, Paul thanks them for remembering him in all things, which could be a reference to the fact that they sought out his thoughts on some of these issues that they were dealing with. Secondly, he thanks them for keeping the traditions just as Paul had delivered them to the Corinthians. The word used here for traditions is the word *paradosis* (παράδοσις) which means “handing down/over” (BDAG 763). It is of interest in this verse “delivered” is the verb form *paradidomi* (παραδίδωμι). As Paul had received these traditions from the Lord, he had passed them onto the Corinthians and he praises them for those traditions they were keeping. While Paul does not mention in this verse where he received these traditions, we know that he did not receive these from men, but from Christ (11:23). It is interesting that in verse 23, Paul uses this word “delivered” or “handed-over” for the both doctrine being delivered and Christ being “handed over” or “betrayed”. The New Testament also uses this word tradition to describe the traditions of the Pharisees which were man-made and not binding in passages such as Matthew 15:2. However these traditions Paul is commending them for were “the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thess. 2:15). These were things “handed down” from God to His children and to be continually handed down to others (Mt. 28:18-20, 2 Tim. 2:2).

It should be noted that there is a textual variant in this verse which omits brethren. The original text likely did not contain brethren in this verse. Bruce Metzger wrote “If the word were present originally (as at 10:1 and 12:1, where no witness omits it), its absence from \mathfrak{B}^{46} & A B C P 181 206 255 429 441 1758 1836 1898 1912 cop^{sa} arm eth^{ro} al would be inexplicable” (Metzger 495).

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

This verse introduces the three most prevalent keywords in this text.

- **16x – woman/wife (gune)**

- This word is used 41 times in the entire letter, but 37 of those times are in chapters 7 and 11, when discussing marriage and modesty. This word is used 16 times in 11:2-16. The word is used 1 time in Ch.'s 5,9 and 2 times in Ch. 14.

- **14x – man/husband (aner)**

- This word is used 33 times in the entire letter, but 30 of those times are in chapters 7 and 11. This word is used 14 times in 11:2-16. It is used 1 time in Ch.'s 13,14,16.

- **9x – head (kephale)** – used in describing both physical heads and spiritual headship

After praising them in verse 2, Paul contrasts this with something that Paul wants to address. Hearing a good thing follow by the word “but” is normally not something you want to hear. Imagine at your job if your boss said, “You are doing a good job on this, but...”. We all know what follows. This case is no different here as Paul then begins to address an issue at Corinth. Paul begins by explaining God’s Divine Order and establishing God’s plan for headship. Paul explains the hierarchy of leadership in the church in this way. God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman. The word used for head in this entire passage is kephale (κεφαλή). Paul will use this word 9 times in our text and will use it to describe spiritual headship and the physical head for the discussion of head coverings. This does not mean that man is more valuable than woman, just as it does not mean that God the Father is more valuable than Christ. This is simply God’s Divine Order that He has established. Christ became subordinate to the Father during His Incarnation, previously having been equal with God (Phil. 2:5-9) Paul now begins to discuss how someone’s dress can in fact show disrespect for God’s divine order.

1 Corinthians 11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

Paul states here that every man who prays or prophesies who has his physical head covered dishonors Christ, his spiritual head. You can see the play on words Paul is using here to make his point. When a man prays with his head covered, he brings shame or dishonor on Christ. Why was this disrespectful in Corinthian culture? In Corinthian culture, covering the head was a symbol of submission to the husband as will be elaborated on further in the following verses. For the man, to have his head covered, would be a symbol of him being submissive to another man, but the Christian man is subject only to Christ in the sense being discussed here.

1 Corinthians 11:5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

Paul then moves on to discuss the woman's physical and spiritual head. Paul states that every woman who prays or prophesies with her physical head uncovered is bringing shame or dishonor on her spiritual head, the man. This is likely discussing her husband for the married woman as the word for man here in this section is *aner* which means male or husband. *Anthropos* which means mankind is not used here. The word *aner* would be translated husband or male based on the context as both are in its semantic range. This would also apply to those unmarried women as well since the thrust of the passage overall seems to be modesty and submission to God's divine order for all men and women.

The question's that then should be asked from this verse are as follows:

1. What does it mean to have her head covered?

2. Why would an uncovered head for a woman be a shame to her spiritual head?
3. Why would an uncovered head be the same as being shaved?

This head covering being discussed here is the word translated “uncovered”. This is the word *akatakaluptos* (ἀκατακάλυπτος) which means “uncovered” (BDAG 35). This is the “alpha negative” added to the word translated covered which is *katakalyptō* (κατακαλύπτω) which we will see used in verse 6. This word is defined by BDAG as “the covering of the clothes on the head is of such a kind that the whole face seems to be covered as with a mask” (BDAG 517). Historically this covering was a full face covering similar to a burka in our modern day understanding.

But why would it be disrespectful for a woman not to have full face? After all, most of our women in America in 2021 show their faces. This requires more study into the cultures of Corinth in the first century. While we do not have the time here to dive fully into all the primary resources, I will attempt to summarize and give the reader more information for a deeper study. Different cultures over time have had local customs that were seen as respectful or disrespectful or conveyed some messages. Consider when Judah saw Tamar and thought she was a prostitute because her face was veiled or covered (Gen. 38:15). In that culture and time, having your face covered told the world “I am a prostitute”. That obviously was not the case at the time of the writing to Corinth.

When one looks at the writings of Philo, they will see that Philo said the head covering was “the symbol of modesty, regularly worn by women who are wholly innocent” (Philo, *On Special Laws* 3.56). Early writings by Hermas, Chrysostom, and even earlier intertestamental writings like the non-canonical additions to Daniel describe similar things. Tertullian even wrote

an entire work called “On the Veiling of Virgins” which gives us much historical information on the cultures of that day. When we consider this type of primary source information, we can see that the veil was a symbol of modesty and submission in the first century in some cultures as in Greece and North Africa, while not in others such as Asia Minor. Plutarch also wrote that Sparta (a region in Greece) took their unmarried girls into public places unveiled, but their married women veiled because the unmarried women were looking for husbands, while the married ones were already taken (Plutarch, Sayings 232:C:2).

With this considered we can now see that Paul is stating that to throw off one’s head covering which was to be a symbol of modesty and submission in Corinth, would be to disrespect her spiritual head, her husband. Paul then says that if she wants to bring shame to herself and to her head, she might as well shave her head bald. This would be even more shameful to a Christian woman. In Robertson’s Word Pictures, he says “Amongst Greeks only the *hetairai*, so numerous in Corinth, went about unveiled; slave-women wore the shaven head—also a punishment of the adulteress” (Robertson 160). In this quote Robertson lays out a few facts concerning Corinth. These *hetairai* were “courtesans to the upper classes” (Mangum). We are told that these were numerous in Corinth and went about unveiled. Robertson goes on to explain that in the first century, women who wore their head’s shaved were either slave-women or those being punished for adultery under the Justinian Code.

One more interesting piece of information Robertson brings up has to do with the last part of the verse which reads “that is one and the same as if her head were shaved” which Robertson believes would be more accurately rendered “one and the same thing with the one shaven.” If this rendering is accurate, then Paul may be trying to tell these women, that to throw off their symbol of submission to their husband, they also are identifying themselves with the

courtesans, slave-women, and those punished for adultery in their community. This would no doubt bring shame on themselves, their husbands, the church, and Christ.

Another question that may be asked is “were these women praying or prophesying in the assembly?” Some hold the position that verses 11:2-16 are dealing only with the assembly. To be honest, I personally held this position for a time until a good brother brought more information to my attention. Here are some reasons that it is unlikely 11:2-16 are dealing with the assembly only.

First, the word *synerchomai* (συνέρχομαι) discussed previously which means “to come together” is not used until 11:17-18 and continues through Ch 14, which seems to contrast those previous sections. Secondly, if this is describing women prophesying in the assembly with men present, you would have a clear contradiction to other New Testament passages (1 Cor. 14:34-35, 1 Tim. 2:8). It also seems the word *exousia* (ἐξουσίαν) seems to be a key word from 8:11 to 11:16 which would naturally place a division between these two sections. Thirdly, while some hold the position that the New Testament assemblies could have been separated like the Jewish synagogues may have been (LaSor 680), this division is still highly debated by Jewish scholars. Even more importantly, there is no New Testament support to this idea. For a much more in-depth analysis of why 11:2-16 is likely not discussing the assembly see Kevin Moore’s book “We Have No Such Custom” listed in the works cited section (Moore 41-42).

1 Corinthians 11:6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

Paul has already previously stated to be uncovered, shorn, or shaved would bring shame on her in the Corinthian culture because it would identify her as an immodest woman. For these

reasons, the woman should be covered and follow the Corinthian societal customs of modesty. The word used here translated shameful is the same word Paul will later use in 14:35 for the woman who addresses the assembly.

1 Corinthians 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.

Since the head covering showed a wife's subjection to her husband in Corinth, it would be disgraceful for a Christian man to have his head covered. Would this not imply to those around that he was submissive to another man? Christian men are submissive not to other men, but to Christ. We know that we are to submit and subject ourselves to those who rule over us and consider others better than ourselves (Phil 2:4), but that is not the context of submission that is under discussion. Just as a woman's hair is a beautiful glory to her, the woman is the glory of man. Nothing is more precious than a godly woman whose worth is worth more than rubies (Prov. 31:10).

1 Corinthians 11:8-9 For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

Paul seems to be taking us back to creation here in order to remind us that man was put to sleep and woman was created out of Adam's rib. She was called woman because she was taken from man. Paul reminds us that Adam was lonely and God said it was not good for Adam to be alone and so made a helper for him (Gen. 2:18). This does not imply the man was worth more than the woman, simply that she has a different role to play in God's divine order.

1 Corinthians 11:10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

This passage has a textual variant. Most major translations read “having a symbol of authority (ἐξουσίαν) on her head” while some manuscripts read “having a veil on her head”. The second reading seems to be an attempt to try and make the more difficult reading “having a symbol of authority on her head” make more sense. Early on some tried to explain what it meant to have a symbol of authority on the head and so changed the text to read “having a veil on her head”. Metzger has noted in his Textual Commentary that the “presumed meaning of the difficult ἐξουσίαν in this passage is given by the explanatory gloss κάλυμμα “a veil,” read by several versional and patristic witnesses...”(Metzger 495-496).

Also notice that “a symbol of” is in italics in the NASB and NKJV which indicates it was added by the translators. If we removed this phrase, the verse would read “Therefore the woman ought to have *exousia* on her head, because of the angels.” This word *exousia* (ἐξουσία) can be translated “authority” (Mt. 28:18) or “right/liberty” (1 Cor. 8:9). In fact, the Greek lexicon BDAG gives 6 examples of semantic range or meaning to this Greek word and then gives a 7th meaning exclusively devoted to the meaning of this word in 11:10. BDAG says under this 7th listing, “various opinions are held about the meaning of 11:10...Many now understand it as a means of exercising power...But the veil may also have been simply a symbol of womanly dignity, especially befitting a Christian woman, and especially in the presence of holy angels” (BDAG 353).

So how should this word be translated in this passage? When we look at how Paul has used this word in Corinthians we see two main usages. Paul seems to have used this same Greek

word in 15:24 to reference “authority”. If this were the case, as most major translations have taken the position, then Paul is saying the woman should have a symbol of authority on her head which represents her submission and subjection to God’s established roles as paralleled in 1 Timothy 2:11.

However, is it possible that Paul is saying that the woman should have “liberty/right over her head” (instead of “on her head”)? In every other case in the book, save 15:24, Paul has used *exousia* in the sense of “liberty or right” (7:37,8:9,9:4,5,6,12(2),18). Is it possible that Paul is saying that the woman should have “liberty or right” to make her own decision about the head covering, but that Paul’s judgement is that she should wear it? Some hold this position as well. This view if correct, would be Paul giving the women in Corinth the decision for themselves whether to wear the veil as to not bring reproach on the church. In this way, the godly woman who respects her role that God has given her and wears the veil to show her submission to her husband would be a glory to the husband. There is nothing more precious to a Christian man than a godly wife.

No matter, the position one takes on that translation, the structure of this entire section of Scripture seems to be a chiasm, which was a literary rhetorical device for teaching. If this is the case, then that would make verse 10 the central idea of this entire section of Scripture. This makes this verse even more crucial, but this verse still proves to be one of the most difficult in the Scriptures.

This phrase “because of the angels” has likely caused as much discussion as any other verse in this section of scripture. Early interpreters had many different views, including the angels being “priests or bishops” by Ambrosiaster, “fallen lusting angels” by Tertullian, “holy

angels” who are present and participate in worship by Augustine, or “guardian angels” by Theodoret (Johnson 196). It is possible that Paul is stating that just as angels had have to follow God’s Divine Order that He established, so should we and it would not be good for the Holy angels to see us rebelling against God’s Divine Order. We see in Scripture that God does charge His angels with error (Job 4:8). We see in Scripture that angels did sin and were cast down to Tartarus in chains of darkness reserved for judgement (2 Peter 2:4). Just as angels had the ability to rebel against God, so do we, and we should not rebel against God’s Divine order which would include principles of modesty for a Christians. In this same letter Paul has already stated that the apostles treatment had been made a “spectacle” or “theatre to angels and men” (4:9). This shows us that both men and angels are aware of the things transpiring in our world. 1 Timothy 5:21 seems to also indicate that angels are present to some degree or at least aware of what is happening in our worship. Since they are aware of the things transpiring in this world, they would likely “be shocked at the conduct of women since angels themselves veil their faces before Jehovah” as in Isaiah 6:2 (Robertson 161).

Some also believe this is a reference to evil angels and even reference to Genesis 6 and the idea of angels being tempted to lust after human women. This idea was held by some early writers such as Josephus, Philo, Tertullian and also present in intertestamental writings such as the non-canonical books of 1 Enoch and Testimony of the 12 Patriarchs.

No matter, what the position one takes on the meaning of the words in this verse and the possible allusions, the verse is stating that in some sense, the women in Corinth who were rebelling against God’s order were influencing angels to some degree. This was not a good influence. Faithful angels are ministering spirits who serve God and submit to His commands. As

Christians who would claim God is our Master as well, we should submit to His Will also as the angels do. As angels have free will and liberty to follow or rebel against God, so do we as humans, and we should use that liberty of ours to obey Christ and not cause others to stumble.

1 Corinthians 11:11-12 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

Lest the men get too high on their high horse, Paul through inspiration is trying to tell us that man and woman do not exist separately from one another, but they exist together and mutually benefit each other. They complement each other in the way the Lord intended when they are submissive to His Will and His divine order. This connects us with the garden of Eden. As woman came from the rib of man, every man since then has come through the woman in birth. God's circle of life shows that man and woman are not mutually exclusive, but the way God created them was to complement one another. Paul focuses on the blessing of motherhood which also came from God. The fact that all of this order being discussed came from God should be reason enough for the Christian to embrace and submit to it.

1 Corinthians 11:13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

This verse starts with the only imperative verb command in this section. Verse 6 has two imperatives but they are in a hypothetical situation. The word judge here is in the imperative mood which is the mood of command. This shows us that Paul is giving them something to do, but Paul is asking them to do the judging. Paul could have directly commanded them yet asks

them to make their own decision as he did with Philemon (Philemon 8-9). Paul wants them to think for themselves and to judge. This word krino (κρίνω) is only used once in 11:2-16 but is a keyword in the entire book and is used 41 times. Paul wants them to make their own judgement based off the information he has already given, although Paul has already given them the answer that should be obvious. After all, if Christians will “judge angels” (6:3), likely in the sense that we have remained faithful while some angels did not, then should we not be able to judge simple things that show us being rebellious in our own cultures? It is almost like a rhetorical question. “Judge for yourselves...although I have already told you what my judgement would be.” This would be similar to the manner in which Paul spoke in 1 Corinthians 10:15 as well. Later in 14:34, Paul would remind the Corinthian’s that the things Paul’s writes are the commandments of The Lord.

1 Corinthians 11:14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

Paul points to the natural order of things in this verse. Now this word Paul uses here for nature should be discussed. The word used here is phusis (φύσις). This word means “the regular or established order of things” (BDAG 1069). Thayer in his lexicon also adds “a mode of feeling and acting by which long habit has become nature” (Thayer 660). I believe the definition Thayer provides fits the context best although I admit this seems to go against the majority of lexical definitions. Consider this, if nature here means the order of things for all time, then why would God instruct Nazarites (Numbers 6) to grow their hair long if that violated the natural order of all things? Would God have made something that was naturally a dishonor and then made it something honorable with the Nazarite vow? Would God not have corrected the men in the OT

who had long hair if they were dishonoring themselves? It seems the imperative in vs. 13 is calling them to make the judgement themselves given that they know of their culture combined with Paul's arguments that he has given. This would apply in my judgement, to the time of writing. At that time of writing, the custom of the day was for men to have long short hair and women to have short hair. Plutarch was a Greek writer who lived near Corinth in the same time frame and wrote a document called Roman Questions where he explained first century Roman customs. Question 14 of this document asked, "Why do sons cover their heads when they escort their parents to the grave, while daughters go with uncovered heads and hair unbound?" Plutarch's answer is a few paragraphs long, but he states that "when misfortune comes the women cut off their hair and men let it grow, for it is usual for men to have their hair cut and for women to let it grow" (Plutarch, Roman Questions 14). He also states it is normal for men to have their hair cut (short) and for women to let it grow.

1 Corinthians 11:15 But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.

Here Paul uses a different word here for covering. This not the same word used in verse 6 which means to completely cover the head with a veil or head covering. Here the word used is peribolaion (περιβόλαιον). This word means "covering, wrap, cloak, robe" (BDAG 800). The woman's hair is a beautiful covering given to her as her glory by God.

There is a textual variant as well in this passage. In the last phrase, "is given to her for a covering" the word translated "to her" is missing in some manuscripts. This is a variant that scholars are divided on whether to include or omit based on the MSS evidence (Metzger 495-496).

1 Corinthians 11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

This passage has been translated in various ways. The NASB and NIV read “we have no other practice” while the ASV, ESV, KJV and NKJV read “we have no such custom”. These seem to convey quite different ideas. Was there no other practice than what was in Corinth or was Corinth the only place that had this custom? This word used is *toioutos* (τοιούτος) which occurs 57 times in the New Testament and is never translated “other” as in the NASB, NIV. The proper translation then seems to be “we have no such practice/custom” which must refer back to the custom, but which custom? While many positions exist, it seems it must logically refer back to the topic of women praying or prophesying with uncovered heads. Paul has been arguing for the head covering in their cultural context because of the message it send to their culture. Paul is anticipating the contentiousness by some in Corinth and saying,

“Look if any of you want to be contentious, we have no universal teaching on this matter, but we are always consistent with the “natural/cultural” standards as to Christian standards of modesty. This is based on your cultural contexts. The church has no such practice globally on wearing head coverings. Yet we always want to respect God’s divine order and sometimes cultural norms will affect that perception. We will always respect local customs to make sure the church does not seem rebellious or immoral by the way we dress. You need to make this judgement for yourself since you know the culture as well as I do.”

It is also very possible due to the chiasmic structure of 11:2-16 that verse 16 naturally is paralleling verse 2. Thus the “no such custom” may be referring to local custom of covering the

head for women which was not a part of the apostolic tradition referenced in verse 2. Paul is explaining that in Corinth, praying and prophesying with an uncovered head is a sign of disrespect to their husband, but this custom is not a universal worldwide custom to be bound on all churches. In 1 Timothy 2:9, we can also see Paul address that they should be modest in their hairstyles as well, which shows the custom of completely covering the head in Corinth did not apply in Ephesus. This is just one example of the many times where New Testament writers through inspiration enjoined cultural customs to the Christians. The purpose was to teach the principle of modesty, while not enjoining a cultural custom for all time.

While we live in a much different culture than 1st century Corinth, the way we dress still tells people a lot about us. While a full head covering today does not say the same thing that it did 2000 years ago, we can still send messages to others based on our dress and modesty. Men and women need to be careful how we dress to show others that we are godly people. Men should consider other New Testament passages such as 1 Timothy 2 which discussed modesty for men and women. In 1 Timothy 2:8, Paul addresses men and then says “in like manner also” in verse 9 and 10 when discussing modesty with the women. Paul tells the women that their adornment should not be with “...gold, pearls, or costly clothing, but with that which is proper for women professing godliness with good works.” Could this part not be “likewise” applied to the men also. Is it wrong for a woman to dress flashy with gold and jewelry, but ok for a man do dress flashy with gold jewelry? I think not.

In the same way, modesty in both men and women shows respect for God’s divine order. A woman dressed in very flashy or revealing clothes does not tell others that they love and respect their husband and their God. It sends a different message to those around us in our day to

day lives. While this applies in all locations, it can be distracting to others who should be focused on serving God and worshipping Him when this happens during the assembly. Modesty applies to both men and women and our response shows our respect or disrespect for God's Divine order.

As the judgment was left to those in Corinth as to determine what was and was not shameful in their culture, we must always be perceptive to how our dress, hairstyles, etc. appear to those outside of and inside of the church so that we make it a goal to comply with God's standard of modesty and that we do not bring reproach upon Christ and the church.

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