



Conducted by
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“ARISING from the recent question on head covering and uncovering could you please elaborate on the differences between *katakephal echo* in verse 4 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11; *peribolaion* in verse 15 and *katakalupto* in the other verses. I agree that this passage is binding today, but it appears to me that *katakalupto* was used to take away from the glory of a woman's hair by covering it. Since in Britain a woman's hat is normally used to add to the glory of a woman's head and quite often the less beautiful the woman the more elaborate the hat becomes, is not this acting against the original intention on covering of women? Is not the practice of the Roman Church in requiring black headscarves more scriptural?”

I can, of course, lay no claim whatsoever to scholarship, but Young's Analytical Concordance certainly bears out the questioner's statements concerning the original Greek words, and indeed shows a whole wide spectrum of shades of meaning given to the usage in the Old and New Testaments with reference to “cover,” “covering” and “covered.”

The primary reason

The question correctly highlights the fact that women are required to cover their heads for more reasons than one, and that the attractive quality of a woman's hair constitutes a further reason for it to be covered. In my previous answer on this subject I tried to show that Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11 was based on the premises that there are important and inherent differences between man and woman, and that these differences were both creational and natural. On account of the creational differences alone a man must uncover his head and a woman cover her head, or else dishonour their respective heads. Verse 7: “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.” Verses 3-5: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head . . .” Verse 10: “For this cause [this is the fundamental reason] ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels” (marginal note: “a covering in sign that she is under the power of her husband”).

Thus this question of status or rank between God, Christ, man and woman is the primary and basic reason for the injunction concerning the covering and uncovering of the head when praying or prophesying. We might call this reason a creational one.

The secondary reason

In extending his argument, however, in Verse 13 Paul introduces us to what might be described as a secondary reason or purpose for the injunction, and appeals to nature itself for support. He even invites us to think the matter out for ourselves. "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered. Doth not nature itself teach, that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

Paul here calls attention to the natural difference between a man's hair and a woman's hair, and there is certainly an important difference. We see a lot these days of males trying to emulate the female as far as the length of hair is concerned and it is very often difficult to distinguish men from women; but Paul says such a thing is shameful and against nature itself. God purposely gave woman, not man, tresses to be a natural covering for her head and also an adornment—a glory unto her. This may be the reason why women, unlike men, rarely suffer from baldness. It may be that the reason why God did this was that the long hair of the woman would act as a permanent and perpetual reminder to all that woman, because of her subordinate creational status to man, required a covering for her head, albeit a natural one. All glory must be rendered to God, and this is especially so in prayer and worship. A woman's hair is her glory, and so propriety would seem to demand that she cover her glory in public prayer and worship. Her glorious head of hair (it would be glorious if left to grow and not regularly cropped) would require to be covered and so preclude the possibility of its causing any distraction from the worship of God to others. This is what our questioner means, and the employment of *katakalypto*, meaning "to cover fully," would certainly seem to bear this out. This word is used in verses 6 and 7. *Peribolaion* is used in Verse 15 and means "something cast around." *Katakephal echo* is used in Verse 4, and means "to have on the head." In 1 Timothy 2:9 we find that brodered hair militates against modesty and perhaps illustrates the point at issue.

The former reason we called a "creational" one—this reason we might describe as a "natural" one.

If it should be thought that because a woman's hair was given her for a covering of her head then it follows that she does not require to cover her head, let us remind ourselves that a woman's hair is her natural covering and Paul is not speaking of a natural covering in verse 5 but of steps the woman must take to see that she covers her head when she prays or prophesies. She must cover her head (v.5) and she must cover her hair (v.13)—covering her head because she is subject to man, and covering her hair because it is a glory.

In Numbers 5:18 in the matter of the "trial of jealousy" we read, "And the priest shall set the woman before the Lord and uncover the woman's head . . ." Surely we do not imagine that the priest employed a razor in the process of uncovering the woman's head: he merely took aside the garment covering her head.

The kind of covering

The latter portion of the question regarding the type, size and colour of the garment used in the covering of the head and hair is one upon which it is difficult to comment, and almost certainly impossible to legislate, in view of the absence of any guidance on these matters in the New Testament.

However, when we remember the employment of *katakalypto*, which means to "cover fully," and recall that in Paul's time and clime the women wore veils and shawls as head coverings, then we have a great deal of support for the suggestion of the questioner that the black headscarf as used in the Roman Church would be "more scriptural," or rather, more in keeping with the spirit of the apostolic injunction. A coloured feather or slip of ribbon would certainly not appear to qualify as head coverings, and while I am sure it is true that most sisters would not try to replace the glory of their hair by wearing an equally glorious hat it is doubtless true to say that the common "headsquare" (so popular for general wear by women during and after the last war) constitutes by far the most ideally suitable garment for covering the head in public worship. The colour need not necessarily be black, providing modesty and propriety were observed—modesty need not be equated with blacks and greys.

(Please continue to send in questions—to James R. Gardiner, 88 Davidson Terrace, Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland).