

# The Validity and Value of the Woman's Head covering

By Dr. Daniel Botkin

## I CORINTHIANS II:2-16

"Now I am praising you because [as you say] you have kept me in your remembrance in all things and at present still do have me in your thinking, even as also you are holding fast to those things which were delivered to me to be handed down to you, which I also delivered to you to be passed on to succeeding generations. Moreover, I desire you to know that the head of every man is the Messiah, and the woman's head is the man, and the head of the Messiah is Yahweh the Father. Every man while praying or prophesying [giving out the word of God in the public assembly, which word he received by divine revelation] having a shawl hanging down over his head dishonors his head. But every woman while praying or prophesying with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for this would be one and the same thing as if she had her head shaved. For, assuming that a woman is uncovered, let her also cut her hair close. But since it is dishonorable for a woman to be shaven or have her hair cropped close, let her put a shawl down over her head. For, indeed, a male individual is morally obligated not to cover his head in that manner since he is so constituted as to be the derived image and glory of God. But the woman is the glory of a man. For a man is not out of a woman as a source, but a woman out of a man. Assuredly, a man was not created for the sake of the woman, but a woman for the sake of the man. On this account the woman is under moral obligation to be having a sign of [the man's] authority [over her] on her head because of the angels.

Nevertheless, neither is a woman [complete] apart from a man, nor a man [complete] apart from a woman in Yahweh, for even as the woman came out of the man as a source, thus also does the man owe his existence to the intermediate agency of the woman. But all things are out of God as a source. Come to a decision among yourselves. Is it seemly or fitting for a woman to be engaged in prayer to God not wearing the shawl hanging down over her head? Does not the innate sense of propriety itself based upon the Objective difference in the constitution of things [the difference between the male and the female] teach you that if indeed a man allows his hair to grow long, it is a disgrace to him, but if a woman allows her hair to grow long, it is her glory? Because her head of hair has been given to her for a permanent covering [answering in character to but not a substitute for the shawl]. If, as is the case, anyone presumes to be cantankerous [about the moral obligation of a woman to wear a head covering when engaged in public prayer in the assembly], as for us, we do not have such a custom [namely, that of a woman praying with uncovered head], neither do the assemblies of God."

## INTRODUCTION

D. L. Moody once mentioned an old minister who said that "the cries of neglected texts were always sounding in his ears, asking why he did not show how important they were."<sup>2</sup> For a number of years, this text concerning the woman's head covering has been sounding in my ears, asking why I do not show how important it is.

I realize that most Bible-believers consider head covering one of the least important commandments, and perhaps they are right. There are certainly many things that are more vital to our faith than head coverings. However, the subject requires attention because it is a practice that is ignored by all but a small minority of women. Merle Ruth, a Mennonite writing about the subject, points out that "a practice, once it becomes neglected, ought to receive more attention than it otherwise would, and this is obviously a neglected practice."<sup>3</sup> It is for this very reason that we should closely examine what the Bible actually teaches about this neglected, forgotten custom.

The prophet Jeremiah was commanded "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jer.1:10). I do not want to tear down people who hold erroneous views about the head

covering. However, as a teacher whom God has set in the Body, it is my duty to root out, to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down the erroneous view, themselves, because erroneous views rob God's people of potential blessings. In New Testament terminology, this is called "casting down imaginations" or "destroying speculations." (2 Cor.10:5 KJV/NASB).

In the first part of this paper, I must "cast down" by exposing the inadequacies of some opinions believers typically have about the woman's head covering. This must be done to establish the validity of the practice for believers today. Then I want "to build and to plant" by presenting a sound, Biblical understanding of the subject to establish the value of the practice. It is my prayer that both the validity and the value of the head covering will be planted in the hearts and minds of readers, and thereby build up the Body of Messiah.

## PART I: VALIDITY OF THE HEAD COVERING SOME TYPICAL RESPONSES

Whenever the issue of the woman's head covering is brought up, people often dismiss the practice in one of several ways. There are some who simply ignore the subject because, they say, there are different ways to interpret the passage. Others avoid further discussion by saying that the head covering Paul refers to is just the hair itself, and not a scarf or shawl worn over the hair. Many others insist that these instructions about head covering applied only to the congregation in Corinth, and that the reasons for the head covering were due to some local, cultural customs of the First Century that are irrelevant to Twentieth Century believers. Some people dismiss the subject by saying that God is concerned with what is in the heart, and the head covering is merely an unimportant outward symbol. Finally, there are some women who do not wear a head covering simply because no other women in their congregation do it, and they fear they might project a "holier-than-thou" image by wearing a head covering in a bareheaded congregation.

Let us now examine each of these five responses in detail, honestly and objectively.

### RESPONSE #1: IGNORING THE SUBJECT

Those who say there are different ways to interpret 1 Corinthians 11 are right. Different people interpret this passage in different ways. There are different ways to interpret almost any passage of Scripture. However, this does not mean we should ignore a subject, especially when fifteen verses (half a chapter) are devoted to giving detailed explanations and instructions about a practice. A passage of instruction this lengthy should not be neglected by God's people simply because there are different ways to interpret it.

Paul felt it was important enough to write about, and the Holy Spirit felt it was important enough to preserve as Scripture for the instruction of future generations, including ours. When people interpret Biblical instruction differently, the response most pleasing to God is not to ignore it, but to seek the correct interpretation, and then humbly respond in cheerful obedience to the will of our Heavenly Father.

### RESPONSE #2: THE WOMAN'S HAIR AS A "COVERING"

Those who say that the only covering a woman needs is her hair base their conclusion on a statement near the end of the passage: "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory for her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (va.15).

There are three proofs that the hair cannot be the only covering Paul refers to, and certainly not the covering he refers to earlier in the passage.

### PROOF A: TWO GREEK WORDS

First, the Greek word translated "covering" in this verse is peribolaion, a word that is different from and unrelated to katakalupto, the "covering" spoken of in all the previous verses. If Paul had meant that the hair is the only covering a woman needs, he would have used the word katakalupto – the term he uses all six times that the "covering" is mentioned in the preceding verses. But Paul does not write "her hair is given her for a katakalupto." He uses a totally different word, peribolaion, when he tells us the hair is a "covering." Paul switches to another term for a reason: He wants to make sure we do not confuse the woman's natural covering, her hair (peribolaion), with the scarf or shawl (katakalupto) which she willingly places on her head. This fact becomes even more apparent when we look at the meanings and uses of these two different Greek words.

Katakalupto, the word that refers to the covering a woman places on her head, is composed of the prefix kata- ("down") and kalupto ("cover"). This is exactly what a scarf or shawl does – it hangs down from the top of the head and covers the woman's hair.

Peribolaion, the word that refers to the woman's hair as a natural "covering," uses the prefix peri- ("around," as in our English word perimeter). The long hair functions as a frame that flows around the perimeter or border of the woman's face.

The word peribolaion appears only twice in the New Testament, but it appears twelve times in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible which was used and quoted by New Testament writers. It is significant that the word peribolaion is used in Deut.22:12 to refer to the tallit, the four-cornered, fringed cloak worn by men. Paul was familiar with the Greek Septuagint, and most certainly was aware of the use of peribolaion to refer to the tallit. So when Paul writes that the woman's long hair is given to her anti (literally, -instead of) peribolaion, he is telling us this: the woman is given long hair to flow around her head and shoulders instead of the peribolaion/tallit, the four-cornered, fringed cloak that men are commanded to wear.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Paul is not saying in 1 Cor.11:15 that the hair is the only covering a woman needs. On the contrary, he is saying that the hair is not a substitute for the katakalupto (scarf or shawl), but it is given to the woman to wear instead of the peribolaion/tallit.

This verse also points out that God uses the woman's naturally long hair to show that He expects the woman to cover her head with a scarf or shawl, and He uses the man's absence of long hair to show that the man should not be covered with a scarf or shawl hanging down over his head like a woman.<sup>5</sup> This is why Paul appeals to nature in the preceding verse ("Does not even nature itself teach you?"). As Mennonite writer Ruth explains it, "When obedient to the dictates of nature, the man with his short hair appears uncovered the woman with her long hair appears covered. By this arrangement, God has shown what He expects."<sup>6</sup>

## PROOF B: CUTTING OFF THE HAIR

A second proof that the hair is not the only covering a woman needs is found in the statement Paul makes in verse six: "For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off." If Paul meant that the woman's only head covering were the hair itself, this verse would be saying, "If a woman does not have hair on her head, let her also have her hair cut off." It is linguistically impossible to say that the woman's head covering is nothing more than her hair. If the hair were the only "covering," then an "uncovered" woman would be a woman who already had her "hair cut off." An already hairless woman cannot be commanded to have her hair cut off. It would be like saying, "Let the bald man get a haircut" or "Let the beardless man shave his beard."

What verse six means is this: if the woman refuses to wear a scarf or shawl, she should also remove the natural covering, her hair. In other words, she should wear both coverings or none at all. Watchman Nee comments on this verse with these strong words:

"Today people keep neither of these two commands of the Bible. If a sister will not cover her hair but shears or shaves it, she may yet be reckoned as hearkening to the words of the Bible. But today woman neither shaves nor covers her hair -- a double disobedience.<sup>7</sup>

### PROOF C: BIBLICAL AND TALMUDIC EVIDENCE

One final proof which shows that the head covering is more than the hair is the fact that women did, indeed, wear scarves or shawls on their heads in Biblical times. The Encyclopedia Judaica tells us that "the general custom was to appear in public, and in the presence of strange men, with covered hair."<sup>8</sup> We know from both the Bible and the Talmud that this is true. In Numbers 5:18, we are told that a woman suspected of being unfaithful to her husband was to have her head uncovered by the priest.<sup>9</sup> This tells us that a woman's normal clothing in Biblical times included a head covering, for how else could the priest "uncover the woman's head"? We see from this passage that a woman's uncovered head marks her as one suspected of being unfaithful to her husband. Today's modern culture may attach no meaning at all to an uncovered head, but from a Biblical viewpoint, it represents suspicion of unfaithfulness. This is why Paul says, "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?" (1Cor.11:13). Paul expects the answer to be obvious (at least to those familiar with the meaning of an uncovered head). The woman with an uncovered head, Paul says, "disgraces her head [i.e., her husband]" (rs.5).

The Talmud makes several references to the woman's head covering, thereby validating its existence. We know that a woman did not go out in public without covering her head (Bereshit Rab.17; Ket.72b). Some devout women, believing that "wives' hair is always covered" (Nash. Ned.30b), wore head coverings in their homes as well as in public (Yoma 47a; Lev. R.20:11).

So important was the head covering that some rabbis said that blessings should not be uttered in the presence of a bareheaded woman (Ber.24a). According to the Talmud, a man could divorce his wife for "going into public with uncovered head" (Kethubah 7.6). Of course I do not agree that this is grounds for divorce; I quote it simply to show the existence and the importance of the woman's head covering in the past.

### RESPONSE #3: FIRST CENTURY CORINTHIAN CUSTOM

Because the head covering is not mentioned in any other New Testament epistle, some say that the only women who needed to cover their heads were those in Corinth, perhaps due to some local to the Corinthians, but also to "all who in every place call upon the name of Yahshua HaMoshiakh" (1 Cor.1:2). Furthermore, he ends the passage on head coverings with these words: "But if one is inclined to be contentious, we [i.e., we Apostles] have no other practice, nor have the churches [plural] of God" (1Cor.11:16)." In other words, it was a universal custom in all the congregations, and not even open to dispute. If someone wanted to be contentious, Paul wrote, arguing about it was not allowed. It was a non-negotiable custom that all believers in all places were expected to practice. The reason head covering is not mentioned in any other epistle is because correction was not needed in the other congregations. It was only the women in Corinth who refused to follow the Apostles' instructions about covering the head.

Some believers today will admit that head coverings were worn not only in Corinth, but in all congregations, when Paul wrote his epistle. But, they say, the reason had to do with time, not place -- it was just a First Century custom. For some reason unknown to us, it was considered improper for a woman to be bareheaded. But since society thinks nothing of bareheaded women today, they say, it is no longer important. It was only important then, because it was the custom of that time.

The above reasoning is flawed for a very simple reason: it overlooks the fact that the Bible plainly states the two reasons for the head covering, and neither of these reasons is restricted to First Century cultural customs. The

Bible tells us that one reason for the head covering is to demonstrate the divine order of authority and submission that God has decreed (va.3). The other reason is -because of the angels' (va.10). Both of these reasons (which will be discussed later) have to do with eternal principles, and are not limited to some First Century cultural custom that Messianics have imagined. God's order of authority and the actions of angels are not things that only First Century believers needed to be concerned with. Both of these are as valid today as ever.

When the Bible clearly states the reasons for a practice, it is presumptuous to ignore those reasons, and then excuse oneself from obedience by theorizing and imagining reasons that are not even suggested in the text. R. C. Sproul, in his book Knowing Scripture, discusses this common error that people make when they assume Paul's instructions were due to some First Century Corinthian custom:

What is wrong with this kind of speculation? The basic problem here is that our reconstructed knowledge of first-century Corinth has led us to supply Paul with a rationale that is foreign to the one he gives himself. In a word, we are not only putting words into the apostle's mouth, but we are ignoring words that are there. If Paul merely told women in Corinth to cover their heads and gave no rationale for such instruction, we would be strongly inclined to supply it via our cultural knowledge. In this case, however, Paul provides a rationale which is based on an appeal to creation, not to the custom of Corinthian harlots. We must be careful not to let our zeal knowledge of the culture obscure what is actually said. To subordinate Paul's stated reason to our speculatively conceived reason is to slander the apostle and turn exegesis into eisegesis."<sup>12</sup>

#### RESPONSE #4: OUTWARD SYMBOLS AND INWARD REALITIES

We know from Matthew chapter 23 that many Pharisees of the New Testament period emphasized only outward holiness and neglected inward holiness. Many Messianics, in their attempt to avoid making the same mistake, make the opposite mistake – they emphasize only inward holiness and neglect outward holiness. The head covering, they say, is just one of those outward symbols that only Pharisaical hypocrites are concerned about.

A passage often quoted to dismiss head covering and other matters of outward appearance is 1 Samuel 16:7b: "...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.'

Those who so quote from this verse conveniently omit and ignore the first part of the verse, which shows us what it actually means. The context of the passage makes it clear that the Lord is not saying "dress any way you please." These words about man's looking on the outward appearance were spoken to Samuel because he was impressed by the height and good looks of Jesse's oldest son, Eliab. Samuel thought that Eliab was surely the one he was to anoint as king. "But Yahweh said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him" (1Sam. 16:7a). Then it was that the Lord spoke about man's looking on the outward appearance.

Yahweh is not saying in 1 Samuel 16:7b that He does not care what we wear. He is simply saying that when He decides to anoint someone for a task, He does not base His choice on the height, weight, or physical beauty of the person. He looks at the heart, not the body.

Wearing a head covering is only one of many Biblical practices that could be called outward, symbolic acts. Many of these acts can be done by insincere believers or even by unbelievers. As a result, there are, unfortunately, some people who emphasize only outward symbols and ignore the more important inward realities that those symbols represent. But the abuse of a Biblical practice by hypocrites does not negate or lessen its value and importance for sincere believers. Insincere believers, hypocrites, and even unbelievers

sometimes get baptized or take Messiah's Supper, yet very few Messianics suggest that these Biblical practices be abandoned by sincere believers. Likewise, the wearing of the head covering should not be abandoned simply because it is an outward symbolic act that may be done by hypocrites.

#### RESPONSE #5: "NOBODY ELSE DOES IT"

Some women agree that wearing a head covering is a valid Biblical practice, but they refuse to do it because no other women in their congregation do it. They fear they will draw attention to themselves and project a "holier-than-thou" image if they wear a head covering in a bareheaded congregation.

Our motive for obeying any of the Lord's commands should be to please our Heavenly Father, of course. Our motive should never be "to be seen of men." But if we begin to obey a commandment that is neglected by our peers, our action will often draw attention upon us, whether we want it or not. It is unavoidable. Regardless of the purity of our motives, there will always be carnal people who misjudge us and accuse us of trying to project a "holier-than-thou" image.

Those women who do not wear a head covering only because "nobody else does it" may think they are being humble and spiritual by refusing to draw attention to themselves. The sad truth is that preserving their reputation among their peers is more important to them than obeying the will of God. They fear that carnal people will misunderstand them and consider them eccentric. The great Nineteenth Century evangelist Charles Finney tells us what to expect if we want to be truly spiritual:

"You will be called eccentric; probably you will deserve it. Probably you will really be eccentric. I never knew a person who was filled with the Spirit that was not called eccentric. And the reason is that such people are unlike other folk. There is therefore the best reasons why such persons should appear eccentric. They act under different influences, take different views, are moved by different motives, led by a different spirit. How often I have heard the remark respecting such-and-such persons: "He is a good man – but he is rather eccentric." I have sometimes asked for the particulars; in what does his eccentricity exist? ! hear the catalogue, and it amounts to this, that he is spiritual. Make up your mind for this, to be "eccentric."<sup>3</sup>

#### PART II: THE VALUE OF THE HEAD COVERING

When I visited India in 1988, I noticed that all the Christian women wore head coverings. I asked my Indian friend, Brother Mathew, if the women covered their heads because of what the Bible said or because of some local, cultural custom. Brother Mathew assured me that it had nothing at all to do with Indian culture.

"When the Apostle Thomas brought the gospel to India in the First Century, he taught that the woman's head should be covered," my friend explained, "and they have been doing it ever since. Pastors in India never need to tell the women to cover their heads. The women know the Bible tells them to do it, so they do it."

Western culture has not been as insulated as rural Indian culture has, and, as a result, women in western culture have not continued this Biblical practice as their Indian sisters have.

Many Americans think of India's culture as male-dominated and repressive toward women. That may be true among the Hindus and Moslems, but it is certainly not what I saw among the Christians of India. It is true that leadership, decision-making, and teaching the congregation are functions limited to men; however, women are quite active in other areas of public ministry. During meetings women are free to openly pray, worship, praise, prophesy, testify, and even to read a passage of Scripture and give a brief comment on it. The women of India do these things with godly fear and trembling, often with tears streaming down their faces – and always with their heads covered, of course. They seem to possess a genuine freedom and authority in the spirit that is

noticeably absent in most congregations in America, a land that supposedly offers women more "freedom" via the feminist movement.

I believe this freedom and authority that the Indian sisters enjoy is directly related to the issue of head covering. Simply putting a piece of cloth on one's head will not impart spirituality, of course. But understanding and appreciating the significance and value of the act, and what it proclaims, will result in a newfound freedom and authority for the woman of God.

The key to seeing and appreciating the value of the head covering is simply understanding the two reasons the Bible gives for wearing it. As mentioned earlier, the two reasons are 1) to demonstrate God's order of authority (va.3) and 2) "because of the angels" (vs.10). When these two concepts are properly understood, wearing the head covering will not be viewed as some legalistic bondage, but as a doorway into glorious liberty. It will be viewed not as something to oppress women, but as something that gives women the freedom and privilege to rightfully move into their Yahweh-given place of authority in the Body. Furthermore, the use of the head covering will be seen as something that affects angelic and demonic activity when the woman believes in the spiritual realities the head covering represents.

### THE ORDER OF AUTHORITY IN GOD'S GOVERNMENT

God's order of authority is clearly stated in 1 Cor.11:3. God is the head of Messiah, Messiah is the head of man, and man is the head of woman. As a divine being, Messiah is not inferior to Yahweh, yet He declared Himself to be under Yahweh's authority (Jn.5:19,30;14:28). In the same way, woman is not inferior to man as a human being, yet the Scriptures declare here to be under man's authority in the government of God.

The Heavenly Father and the Son have different roles. These roles require the Son's submission to the Father's authority. Likewise, man and woman have different roles, and these roles require woman's submission to man's authority. We can also say that man and Messiah have different roles, and these roles require man's submission to Messiah's authority.

Woman is expected to submit to man's authority, just as man is expected to submit to Messiah's authority, and Messiah is expected to submit to Yahweh's authority. These are the respective positions of authority and submission that Yahweh has assigned to Messiah, man, and woman. Yahweh Himself has decreed this arrangement, and we dare not argue against it. To defy Yahweh's decree is to defy Yahweh Himself.

But what does the structure of God's, government have to do with head covering? What is the connection? The Bible says that the head covering serves as "a symbol of authority" on the woman's head (1Cor.11:10). By willingly wearing a scarf or shawl on her head as a sign of her submission to man, the woman is manifesting God's government on earth. She is declaring that she humbly accepts God's appointed position for her in the Body, just as the Messiah humbly accepted His appointed position under Yahweh's authority.

Symbolic acts which man decrees may be of little or no value, but symbolic acts that God decrees are more than mere symbolic acts. God has decreed that believers identify with the Messiah's death and Resurrection by means of baptism in visible, tangible water. He has decreed that believers 'show the Lord's death' (1 Cor.11:26) by means of the visible, tangible bread and cup. He has decreed that man wear a tallit with fringes to serve as a visible, tangible reminder of man's devotion to the commandments. In a similar way, He has decreed that woman wear a head covering to serve as a visible, tangible declaration of God's authority on earth.

Head covering is a matter of far more importance than one individual woman's submission to her husband. The head covering demonstrates not only woman's submission to man's authority; it serves as a visible declaration to all the universe of God's entire system of authority! God has not called upon Messiah or man to wear a head

covering to demonstrate His divine arrangement of government. He assigns this privilege only to the woman. 'God calls upon the sisters to show this arrangement,' Watchman Nee writes. "It is through the sisters that God's governmental system is to be displayed."<sup>14</sup>

When the woman of God sees this glorious reality, accepts her God-given position, and perceives the head covering as a privilege, she can begin to exercise true spiritual authority in the Body. The head covering first functions as a symbol of man's authority over her; after it is accepted as that, it then serves as a symbol of her own authority in the spiritual realm.

The head covering is similar to a policeman's badge. There is no real power in the badge itself, but the government that issues the badge will back up the authority of the policeman when he wears the badge as he is commanded to do. This analogy can be confirmed by the Bible's description of the head covering as exousia ("symbol of authority," 1 Cor. 11:10). One Greek lexicon defines exousia as "token of control."<sup>15</sup> Another defines it as "means of exercising power."<sup>16</sup>

When the woman of God understands these marvelous truths, she will not view the head covering as an annoying inconvenience or legalistic bondage. She will wear it as a badge of her God-given authority, and it will truly become an effective 'token of control' and a 'means of exercising power' in the spiritual realm as she joyfully moves forward, praying and prophesying with power and authority.

### "BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS"

The second major reason for the head covering, "because of the angels," is very closely related to the first, God's order of authority. The two reasons are tied together in 1 Cor. 11:10: "For this reason [i.e., because of the roles of man and woman discussed in the verses right before this verse] the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels." In other words, the head covering shows that the woman is submitted to man's authority, and it is important that this token or badge of authority be seen by the angels, both the unfallen angels [the "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14)] and the fallen angels [those that are "chained in darkness" (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6) as well as those presently operating as demonic powers].

Those who do not take the Scriptures seriously may be amused by the idea that the presence or absence of a piece of cloth can affect angelic and demonic activity. After all, if angels and demons are real, do they really need to see a head covering to tell them the woman is submitted to authority? Don't they already know such things?

Even unfallen angels are not omniscient; there are many things they do not know. The Bible tells us that the good news of the Messiah contains "things into which angels long to look" (1 Pet. 1:12). "The secret things belong unto Yahweh our God," Moses tells us, "but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). As it is with man, so it is with angels. There are "secret things" which God has not revealed to angels, and other things which He has revealed to them. God has decided that He will show the angels and demons His authority, and the woman's submission to His authority, by means of a visible, tangible covering on the woman's head.

To the natural mind, a piece of cloth on a woman's head may seem to be a weak, foolish instrument for imparting divine revelation of God's authority to angelic and demonic beings. But the Bible tells us that God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27). Readers of the New Testament may recall that when "handkerchiefs or aprons" which Paul had touched were brought to the sick and the possessed, "the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out" (Ac. 19:12). This passage confirms the fact that a piece of cloth can, indeed, be used as an instrument to display God's authority to evil spirits, and affect what happens in the spiritual realm, which in turn affects what takes place in the physical realm.

We do not need to understand all the mechanics of exactly how and why God's ways work, in order to walk in them, just as we do not need to understand all the mechanics of how and why a car works in order to drive it. If the car works, and we drive it according to the rules of the road, we can expect to reach our destination. God's ways work, and if we walk in them, we can expect results.

What results can we expect to take place when God's authority is displayed to the angels, fallen and unfallen, by means of the woman's head covering? We will first look at the effect on the unfallen angels, and then the effect on the fallen.

### EFFECT ON THE UNFALLEN ANGELS

Hebrews 1:14 describes angels as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." We see in both the Old Testament and the New Testament that angels have a very active and vital role in ministering to God's people. In the Bible we see angels bringing messages of prophecy, hope, encouragement, deliverance, instruction, rebuke, and warning to people. We also see them directly intervening and acting on behalf of God's people by smiting the enemies of God, both physical (people) and spiritual (demonic powers). Angels are normally not seen by those to whom they minister, but occasionally they appear. The Bible informs us that angelic visitors are not always recognized as angels when they appear to people. "Some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb 13:1).

Why is it important for ministering angels to see the woman's head covering? "For this reason," Paul tells us, referring back to the passage about God's order of authority and submission. In other words, when the angels are "sent forth to minister," the covering on the head of the woman tells the angels that this woman is submitted to God's delegated authority, and that she is therefore in a position to receive ministry from the ministering spirits.

People may ask, "Why do angels need to see a head covering? Can't God simply tell them that the woman is submitted?" God could certainly tell the angels this if He wanted to, but He has decided that someone else should tell them. He has instructed the woman herself to tell the angels, by wearing a head covering.

When the angels see the head covering, it serves as a token or badge of the woman's God-given authority. In effect, it functions as a signal flag which tells the angels that they are now under God's orders to move and act on behalf of this woman, because she is under God's delegated authority.

The woman who covers her head in obedience to Yahweh should expect to receive more angelic ministry than she would receive without a head covering. As she prays, prophesies, and testifies, she should expect angels to move and act in conjunction with her prayers, prophesying, and testifying. The woman who does not cover her head deprives herself of blessings that could be hers through the ministry of angels.

### EFFECT ON THE FALLEN ANGELS

To understand the effect of the woman's head covering on fallen angels, we must consider the relationship of the first woman, Eve, with the first fallen angel, Satan.<sup>17</sup> Both the Old and New Testaments tell us that through the serpent, Eve was deceived by this fallen angel (Gen.3:13; 1 Tim.2:14).

What was it that made the woman vulnerable to deception? It was simply the fact that she was acting independently from, rather than in submission to, the man's authority. Had she remained under the man's authority, the deception would not have taken place, for we are told that . "Adam was not deceived" (1 Tim.2:14).

The head covering is now God's ordained means of showing the fallen angels that a woman is under man's authority. The sight of a visible covering on a woman's head announces to the fallen angels that this woman, unlike Eve, is not going to act independently from man's authority. The head covering tells the fallen angels that

this woman is in her rightful position of authority, and she is not in a position (as Eve was) to be tempted and harassed and deceived as easily as an uncovered woman would be.

Therefore, the woman who covers her head in obedience to Yahweh should expect a greater degree of freedom from demonic temptation, harassment, and deception. Of course there will always be temptations of the flesh, harassment from people, and the possibility of self-deception. But temptation, harassment, and deception of a demonic nature will be much less of a threat (and perhaps no threat at all) to a woman who covers her head in obedience to Yahweh. Ignoring the Bible's instructions about the head covering invites unnecessary trouble from fallen angels, just as heeding the instructions invites ministry from unfallen angels.

In addition to the fallen angels who actively tempt, harass, and deceive, there are other fallen angels who are bound in "chains of darkness" in Tartarus, awaiting the Judgment (2 Pet.2:4). These are "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 6).

Since ancient times, there have been serious students of the Scriptures who believe that these fallen angels "left their own habitation" by entering the physical realm and impregnating women, who then gave birth to a race of giants.<sup>18</sup> These fallen angels are believed to be the "sons of God" (called "angels of God" in the Alexandrian Septuagint) spoken of in Gen.6:4:

There were Nephilim ["fallen ones"] in the earth in those days: and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children unto them, the same became mighty men [Septuagint, gigantes, "giants"] which were of old, men of renown."

Jude confirms this when he writes that Sodom and Gomorrah followed the example of these fallen angels "in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh" (Jude 7). In other words, the sin of these fallen angels, like the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, was some form of sexual perversion, going after "strange flesh" that was prohibited to them.

Just as the Virgin Miriam (Mary) was impregnated by the Holy Spirit and gave birth to the Messiah, so these women were impregnated by unholy spirits and gave birth to a race of evil giants.<sup>19</sup> The Book of Enoch tells us that after the giants perished in the Flood, God decreed that their disembodied spirits were to remain upon the earth as evil spirits, which would "rise up against the sons of men and against women, for they proceeded from them" (En.15:10). According to Enoch, these particular demons (disembodied spirits of giants) seem to target women more than men, "for they proceeded from them [women]." The head covering would seem to be a very effective means of dealing with these particular spirits, since it is women that they target.

Because the sin of those angels in Tartarus was deserting their God-appointed place in order to have illicit relationships with women, the woman's head covering is of great significance, for it says that the woman is in her God-appointed place. The head covering reminds all fallen angels that woman's appointed place is with man, not with angels. By covering her head, the woman declares to the angels that she submits to man's authority, and therefore, she will not submit to the authority of any fallen angel.

In addition, every woman with a covered head gives a silent but powerful testimony against those angels who are now bound in Tartarus. The head covering testifies that in the Body of Messiah, woman is under man's authority, man is under Messiah's authority, and Messiah is under God's authority. The testimony of the woman's covered head puts the fallen angels to shame, and vindicates God's righteous judgment against them. Thus the head covering declares not only God's order of authority, but also God's righteous judgment against those who would leave their God-appointed place and rebel against God's order of authority. Watchman Nee perceived the importance of this truth:

This is a most excellent testimony to the angels, to the fallen and to the unfallen ones. No wonder Satan persistently opposes the matter of head covering. It really puts him to shame. We are doing what he has failed to do. What God did not receive from angels, He now has from the church."<sup>20</sup>

## A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

In 1987 my wife suffered for several months from a chronic illness that doctors could not cure or diagnose. The main symptom was extreme difficulty breathing, accompanied by rasping deep inside the chest. There were also occasional flu-like symptoms, such as severe vomiting. She was given different kinds of medication, but none helped. She was tested for tuberculosis and other diseases, but no explanation could be found. Thinking that Perhaps she was allergic to something in the house, we moved. The symptoms still continued. Since the doctors could not cure or diagnose the illness, we simply continued to pray for healing as we had been doing all along.

For some reason, it occurred to me that our unanswered prayer might somehow be connected to the fact that my wife did not wear a head covering. I cannot recall how or why this thought occurred to me, but it made a strong enough impression on me that I said something to my wife about it. I suggested that perhaps we would have better results if she covered her head when we prayed together each day.

My wife's response was polite but typical: "How could that make any difference?" The idea that wearing a piece of cloth on her head might bring about healing seemed foolish to her. I gently reminded her that dipping seven times in the Jordan River to heal leprosy seemed like a foolish idea to Naaman, but when he did it, he was healed (2 Ki.5). I mentioned other Biblical examples of seemingly foolish actions that brought about the blessings of God. I explained that things which we do in the physical realm affect what happens in the unseen spiritual realm in ways we cannot understand.

"I can't guarantee that it will make any difference," I said. "But it certainly isn't going to hurt anything. What have we got to lose?"

In submission to my authority, she began wearing a scarf each day as we prayed together. Within a matter of days, we noticed that the rasping sound had disappeared, and her breathing returned to normal again. As of this writing (1995), the illness has never returned, and I do not expect it to.

This sickness, which physicians could neither diagnose nor treat, left of its own accord when my wife covered her head. Is this mere coincidence, or did the head covering really make a difference? Of course there is no way to prove whether or not wearing a piece of cloth was what made the disease depart. But we know that when pieces of cloth were brought from Paul, "diseases departed" and "evil spirits went out" (Ac.19:12). There is no reason to believe that God cannot bring similar results from a cloth on a woman's head when it is worn in faith and in submission to God's delegated authority.

## LOSS AND RECOVERY OF THE HEAD COVERING AND WHAT IT REPRESENTS

Satan works to keep God's people blind to the validity and value of Biblical practices, especially those which weaken him the most. Throughout history, Satan has used carnal men to convince the Body of Messiah to abandon one Scriptural custom after another. Near the end of the First Century, the Apostle John saw the Messiah standing outside the Church, knocking at the door (Rev.3:20). As the Bride of Messiah became more preoccupied with her own concerns in each successive generation, she gradually ceased experiencing the presence of her Bridegroom.

In every generation since then, there have been godly members of the Body who have mourned the loss of this glorious presence, and sought to recover it. In the process of seeking the Bridegroom, the Bride has been harassed, wounded, and robbed of valuable practices, including the wearing of a scarf or shawl on the woman's head. All this is beautifully illustrated in the prophetic Song of Solomon (5:2-7), as the Bride laments the suffering and loss she experienced during her sad search for her Beloved in the night:

I was asleep, but my heart was awake.  
A voice! My Beloved was knocking, saying,  
"Open to Me, My sister, My love,  
My dove, My undefiled:  
For My head is drenched with dew,  
My locks with the damp of the night."  
I have taken off my dress,  
How can I put it on again?  
I have washed my feet,  
How can I dirty them again?  
My Beloved extended His hand through the opening,  
And my feelings were aroused for Him.  
I arose to open to my Beloved,  
And my hands dripped with myrrh,  
And my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh,  
Upon the handles of the lock.  
I opened to my Beloved,  
But my Beloved had withdrawn Himself, and was gone!  
My heart went out to Him as He spoke.  
I sought Him, but I could not find Him;  
I called Him, but He gave me no answer.  
The watchmen who go about the city found me,  
They struck me and wounded me;  
The keepers of the walls took away my shawl from me.

The unfaithful watchmen are carnal-minded religious leaders who have taken the shawl off women's heads by telling them that wearing a head covering is irrelevant today. This error has unnecessarily exposed the Bride of Messiah to suffering and harassment ("They struck me and wounded me") that could be reduced or eliminated by wearing the head covering and believing in everything it stands for.

The abandonment of this practice has weakened all that it represents in the spiritual realm – the woman's submission to God's delegated authority, the woman's authority in prayer and prophecy, the woman's right to receive ministry from angels, the woman's protection from demonic powers, the display of God's government and His righteous judgment against all who rebel.

It is time for the woman of God to dress for battle and declare war on the enemy. The woman's "uniform" is "modest apparel" (1 Tim.2:9), including a head covering that shows her "rank" in God's army. Then, fully dressed for battle and with faith in the Captain of the Lord's host, let her rightfully move into her place of authority as a holy woman of God.

#### ADDENDA: QUESTIONS ABOUT SPECIFICS

Head covering often raises questions that demand more specific answers. At what age should a woman be expected to wear a head covering? Should the head covering be of any particular size or shape? Should the head covering be worn only during prayer and worship, or at other times as well?

Among "Plain People" (Amish, Mennonites, Hutterites, et. al.), the elders of each community make these kinds of decisions, and they claim it gives each community a sense of identity and belonging, similar, perhaps, to the way ancient Israelites identified with whatever tribe they belonged to.<sup>21</sup> If a woman belongs to a *congregation*

that has no specific guidelines for the head covering, and she feels unsure about specifics, she can ask her husband, since it is his authority she is under, or the elders of her congregation if she is unmarried.

The Bible does not give specific details about the size or shape of the head covering; however, the Greek word *katakalypto* tells us that it should be something which "hangs down over" the head. Headbands and decorative bows do not fit the Bible's definition of a head covering. I have seen women wear things that were little more than glorified barrettes, and then claim they were covering their heads.

The question of whether or not the head covering needs to be worn any time other than during prayer and congregational meetings is sometimes debated. The Significance and importance of everything the head covering represents should be taken into consideration when deciding this matter. In addition, anything we can learn from history about when and where women covered their heads in Biblical times should also be given serious thought. The purpose of this study is not to dwell on specific details such as these. My purpose has been to establish the validity and value of wearing the head covering. If readers have seen the validity and value of the custom, and want to reclaim it, I trust *Yahweh* will give wisdom and discernment in deciding on the specifics.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> From Kenneth S. Wuest, The New Testament An Expanded Translation (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans' Publ. Co., 1961).

<sup>2</sup> William Moody, Life of D. L. Moody (New York/Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900), 493.

<sup>3</sup> Merle Ruth, The Significance of the Christian woman's Veiling (Harrisburg, VA: Christian Life Publications), 3.

<sup>4</sup> When *peribolaion* refers to a literal garment actually worn by someone in the Septuagint, it is always men who wear a *peribolaion*, with one exception. In Ezekiel 13:21 (Alexandrian LXX), the daughters of Israel who prophesy out of their own hearts are rebuked for wearing *peribolaion* (tallits, perhaps?), and *Yahweh* says, "I will tear your *peribolaion* and will rescue my people out of your hand."

<sup>5</sup> Does Paul teach that men should not wear anything at all on their heads? On the surface, 1Cor.11:4 and 7, in some English translations, seem to indicate that a man should be bareheaded: "Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, dishonors his head" and "a man ought not to have his head covered" (NASB). If we use these verses to rule out even men's hats and *Kippot* (Jewish scullcaps), we have two problems. First, this view does not harmonize with what the Bible says about the subject elsewhere. For example, the garments *Yahweh* commanded priests to wear included turbans for the head (Ex.28:40), and two times the High Priest was told "do not uncover your head" (Lev. 10:6; 21:10). In addition, we see King David and his men all praying with covered heads, and the Lord answering their prayer (2 Sam.15:30f; 17:14). Secondly, the Greek *katakalypto* describes something that "hangs down over" the head, which does not sound at all like a *kippah* or man's hat. Paul is not condemning *kippot* or hats; he is saying that a man should not wear "a shawl hanging down over his head" (rs.4, Wuest trans.) like a woman. A male should not cover his head "in that manner," (rs.7, Wuest trans.), i.e., like a woman. Paul is simply reinforcing Deut. 22:5: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto *Yahweh* thy *God*."

<sup>6</sup> Ruth, 12f.

<sup>7</sup> Watchman Nee, Love One Another (Richmond, VA: Christian Fellowship Publ.), 94.

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 8 (Jerusalem: Keter House Ltd., 1971), 6.

<sup>9</sup> These instructions to uncover the head of a woman suspected of adultery in Numbers 5 are immediately followed by the instructions for taking a Nazarite vow to separate oneself unto *Yahweh* in Numbers 6. The Nazarite was not to cut his/her hair until the end of the vow, at which time the hair was to be shorn (Num.6:18). It is interesting that this pattern in Numbers – a woman with an uncovered head, followed by instructions that include cutting off the hair – is repeated in 1Cor.11:6: "For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have

her hair cut off." Could Paul have been suggesting a Nazarite vow for a woman who has uncovered her head and disgraced her husband, as a means of reaffirming her faithfulness?

IO Ruth points out the inconsistency of believers who dismiss the head covering as merely a Corinthian custom, yet continue to take the Messiah's Supper, a custom discussed in the second half of the same chapter: "They would not think of arguing that Communion was meant to be observed only by the Corinthian Christians of that day. But how can one generalize the latter part of the chapter, giving it universal application for all churches of all times and then limit the first part to a particular church for a particular period? It simply cannot honestly be done."

If one prefers to translate "no other practice" (NASB/NIV) as "no such custom" (KJV), the conclusion is the same. The NASB/NIV translation means we have "no other practice" than that described above, i.e., head coverings on women. The KJV "no such custom" means the congregations had no custom of allowing people to be contentious about the subject. Both translations leave us with the same conclusion: the subject is not open to debate.

12 R. C. Sproul, Knowing Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1977), 110.

13 Charles Finney, Finney on Revival (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publ.), 111.

14 Nee, 89.

15 Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1973), Greek Dictionary #1849.

16 F. W. Gingrich, Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 75.

17 Both Christians and Jews identify Satan as the first fallen angel. In Christian theology he is identified before his fall as the angel Lucifer (Isa.14:12-15). In Jewish theology he is called Samael (Pirque de R. Eliezer, ch.13).

18 Among those of ancient times who held this view were Josephus, Justin Martyr, Methodius, and the Ante-Nicene Fathers. (For references, see Dake's Annotated Reference Bible, p.63, fn.3f.) The Book of Enoch also teaches this (ch. 6f, 15, 105). For a more detailed article on this subject, see Benjamin Botkin, "Where Have All the Giants Gone?" Petah Tikvah 12.2 (April-June 1994): 33-35.

19 The hope of the fallen angels in impregnating women seems to have been to prevent the coming of "the Seed of the woman" (i.e., Messiah) by eventually corrupting the bloodline of the entire human race. Since these angels are now bound in Tartarus, and the Messiah has come, there is no need to expect more giants from unholy unions as in the past. However, there is a fascinating account of similar demonic visitations to a Hindu woman of India in our own time. As a young girl, this woman had been dedicated to a god that was supposedly able to satisfy the sexual appetites of over 16,000 "wives" at the same time. After this girl grew up and married, she and her husband tried to have a baby. But every time she conceived, she would soon afterwards be visited by the god to whom she had been dedicated, and she would then miscarry. A description of what took place is described by the Christian pastor who knew her: "The deity used to visit her during her sleep and performed with her as a husband to his wife. She could feel the body of this person as oily when he embraced her, and his color was dark blue. He even left the male residue within her body" [Rev. K.M. Mathew, A Mysterious New Race On Earth (Coppell, TX: Everyone Crusade, 1988), 12]. After several such visitations and subsequent miscarriages, the young couple listened to the pastor, threw out all their idols, and became Christians. Soon after, the woman conceived, and one night the demon-god came to her door again. This time, however, he could not enter the house, became miserable, and left, never to return again. Nine months later, the woman gave birth to a beautiful daughter. Other young women in the village who had been having the same kinds of visitations and subsequent miscarriages also forsook their idols when they heard about this.

20 Nee, 92.

21 For information on the clothing of Plain People, see Stephen Scott, Why Do They Dress That Way? (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1986). This excellent book includes a chapter that powerfully and convincingly answers objections that people have to plain dress.