

The WORLD TOMORROW

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HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG
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Dear Friend:

We continually receive letters asking: "Should a woman wear a covering on her head in church?"

Some churches require women to wear veils or hats in church. They claim I Corinthians 11:1-16 as supposed scriptural proof. They quote verse 6 specifically: "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered."

Other churches use this same scripture as support for their doctrine that women should never cut their hair.

Modernists contend that whatever Paul taught the Corinthian Church is not for us today anyway -- and they proceed to do as they please.

What is the truth?

Some contend Paul required women to wear veils because it was the custom of the day for women to wear veils in public places of worship. This is NOT true! Let's get our facts straight.

Smith's Dictionary of the Bible article "Veil" gives us the answer. "In ancient times, the veil was adopted only in exceptional cases, either as an article of ornamental dress . . . or by betrothed maidens in the presence of their husbands, especially at the time of the wedding . . . or by women of loose character for purposes of concealment (Gen. 38:14). But generally speaking, women both married and unmarried appeared in public with their faces exposed, both among the Jews . . . and among the Egyptians and Assyrians, as proved by the invariable absence of the veil in the sculpture and paintings of these peoples."

It was not customary for women to wear veils in Paul's day. It is interesting to note that the fallen church pictured in Revelation 17, the fountain-head of harlotry, commands its women to wear coverings over shaven heads in their religious orders.

What Paul taught is this: as man is the head of woman, it is improper for men to have a covering in a religious service as a symbol of subjection (I Cor. 11:4). The only exception was long hair in the Nazarite vow, a token of subjection to God for a special time (Num. 6:5). Men are otherwise commanded: "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" (verse 14). Men wearing long hair, a fad with the younger generation, are effeminate and no effeminate man shall inherit God's Kingdom! But what about a woman? "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her HAIR is given her for a covering" (verse 15).

Notice! Paul, under inspiration, speaks of LONG HAIR as the "covering," or veil. The Greek word for "covering" in verse 15 means "veil." See the margin of the King James Version. So the covering is not some hat, or piece of cloth.

Paul does not say that women must wear something over their hair. Instead, he says: "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that . . . if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering."

Because "long hair" is mentioned, some are afraid to cut their hair at all. The text doesn't read uncut hair; it reads only "long hair." Long hair is an indication that a woman is willing to be in subjection to a man, and that she acknowledges the special need for protection by angels -- beyond the ordinary protection which angels give to men (verse 10). Hair, cut long enough to look feminine and honorable, is appropriate. About shoulder length, or longer, is a satisfactory standard. If a woman wears her hair so short that it looks like a man's, then she ought to be shorn or shaven -- the symbol of a fallen woman.

To be "shorn" (verse 6) means to be closely clipped. Some small sects contend that any cutting of hair means to be shorn. This is untrue. Properly cut long hair is not shorn hair. There is no Bible command anywhere against cutting hair within the length which looks feminine and honorable.

Many women today are, however, wearing their hair too short. They are not allowing their hair to be "a covering" (verse 15). It is a woman's long hair that is her covering -- not some piece of cloth to hide a mannish, modern hair-do!

LETTER ANSWERING DEPARTMENT