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The Biblical Headcovering: Scarf of Hidden Power

A Biblical, historical and practical examination of a
neglected aspect of Christian practice.

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A Biblical, historical and practical examination of a neglected aspect of Christian practice. A personal account. Written by a woman, for women, and reviewed by a half-dozen women.

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- “Your headcovering article is the absolute best I have ever read. ... My walk with the LORD has definitely been enhanced with the practice of Christian headcovering. Thank you for your testimony. May God bless your ministry.” (Mrs. C. in California)

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Head Coverings

² Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you. 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. ⁴ Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head. 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. 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. 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. ⁸ For man is not from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. ¹⁰ For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority* on *her* head, because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the LORD. ¹² For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.

¹³ Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? ¹⁵ But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given [to her] for a covering. ¹⁶ But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.

(Source: to view other versions of this passage online, visit <http://www.blueletterbible.org/>)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural collision

Can you imagine anything more antithetical to our culture than a woman wearing a headcovering as a symbol of submission? Independence, assertiveness training, feminism, women's rights – *these* are the objectives the modern woman has struggled to obtain, has demanded to be included in college courses, the workplace and the military, and has buttressed with massive political action. The majority of woman today can't imagine a woman CHOOSING to submit to her husband, a mere mortal who is full of weaknesses, and saying that she *likes* it. That's enough to make us splutter, gasp, and choke (at least inwardly). *What are you doing with that thing on your head? Take it off. This is unconscionable. Rude. We were united in working for these rights, remember? ALL women feel this way. Don't be the oddball woman who slips from the ranks and says, "No thanks" to all that progress. If you HAVE to do it, do it in the privacy of your own home. Just don't wear that symbol out in public. It's inflammatory!*

A headcovering? What in the world is it?

What *is* this thing called a headcovering that many godly women have worn for centuries and that some Christian women are beginning to wear today? Why do they wear it? Is it supposed to be worn at church, or all the time? Is her hair a covering, or is the New Testament headcovering worn over the hair? Is it an actual piece of fabric? Wasn't it just a cultural thing for back then? Isn't it legalistic to wear one? These questions are beginning to heave in the chests of many sobered Christian women as they view the hopeless carnage of broken homes in American, – including many churchgoing families.

Going down hard

I wear a headcovering daily, but it was not always so. I grew up in a mainline denominational church where I came to know that God loves me. I lived by grace and did whatever I thought grace dictated at the moment. Nothing was too tight, nothing was too specific. Good feelings were all around. Then, kicking and screaming, pinching and hollering and spitting, I went down over the matter of the daily headcovering. What follows is the input and thinking that made me draw such a conclusion.

Cultural naiveté vs. historical savvy

First of all, let's look at a couple of roadblocks to our correctly understanding this matter of covering the head. The first is a kind of cultural arrogance.

In the last 100 years, we as a culture have drifted far away from Scriptural norms, and we don't even realize it. Few people even *READ* history anymore. We've been invaded by secularism to such a degree that we don't even remember what we've lost. For one small example, it's been reported that a century ago (in 1902) there were only five divorce cases recorded in the entire U.S. We think that having over half of our nation's marriages end in divorce is normal, that it always has been this way. How much more of our culture is jaded like this? Is any of it normative?

In the end, we find that the only stable reference point in our turning world is Scripture, God's clear Word, revealed to us. God has seen to it that his scriptural norms have been consistently believed by a small remnant of people throughout history. We need to be highly suspicious of viewing reality from any other viewpoint, and *particularly* skittish about viewing it from our own narrow slice of time and culture.

Our current culture is guilty of "New-Yorkers'-pride," you know, those citizens of New York who hang maps of their beloved city upon their walls. These maps boast of a huge New York City that uses up the entire landscape with itself while the rest of the world (including the "smaller" regions like China, Russia, Africa and Europe) is represented as mere islands squeezed in around the edges. Apart from Scripture, we simply can't see straight. The idea that nobody today is doing it is no measure of anything. It's a moot point.

It might surprise you to know that just 100 years ago most all of the women, even in the major big mainline churches, wore headcoverings, scarves or hats to church. (More about that in the history section.)

Legalism

Besides cocking our head with a puzzled look that there is a history anywhere that might speak to the issue, we have another big roadblock to hurdle before we can arrive at a Biblically grounded objectivity. That is the accusation of legalism. For many, even to *consider* the matter causes red lights, bells, whistles and smoke to go off in their flesh. Let's wrestle with the subject of legalism¹. If we find that any part or all of the headcovering issue is a command, is it legalism to obey that command?

Do we not all agree that those who *DO* the word of God and not just believe it are the ones with real power and influence? After we visit with such people (or read about them in missionary biographies) we leave shaking our heads, because they remind us that there is more to life than acquiring things and saturating ourselves with amusements. In the past, God catapulted great obedient saints like these into high heavenly business! Not one of them would have described obedience as bondage. However, often today we find that when Christians seek to obey something with seriousness they hear the accusation, "Legalism!" These days, anything that doesn't feel free (or that doesn't allow us to have our own way) can be chalked up to legalism. It hasn't been so historically, but today obedience is crushingly being confused with legalism.

Let's take one last firm look at the difference. Legalism is a person's attempt to gain salvation through his or her own works. The Scriptures make it clear that we cannot gain salvation through our own works (Acts 4:12). Salvation is bought only through the shed blood of Christ, the Messiah (John 3:16 and 3:36).

Obedience is the grateful heart's *RESPONSE* to salvation. Humble servants of the LORD who want to obey are not trying to *earn* anything. Their hearts' desire is to look to Scripture, not for how much liberty they have or how much they can get away with, but to search it for that thing that is most pleasing to God. Many Scriptures emphasize obedience as a fit and proper response to so great a salvation. "He who loves me keeps my commandments" (John 14:23). "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and

¹ As one reader has noted, legalism is not a biblical term. It is freely thrown about these days, but we do not see it used or defined in the Scriptures.

remain faithful to Jesus”...”who obey God’s commandments *and* hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12 and 12:17b, emphasis added).

We must see that every obedience is a work of grace. We would have no desire to obey, or even bother with obedience, if we were not born again. Obedience by grace naturally follows salvation by grace.

But Adam’s race doesn’t like the word obedience. It steps on our toes. We go ballistic at any inference that we belong to or are accountable to anybody. Growing up in this day and age, we have a difficult time with any notion of submitting to anything if it causes us discomfort, cramps our style, or requires personal sacrifice. “You deserve a break today” is written all over the fabric of society. Any infringement on our space is intolerable. So we brand uncommon obedience with *legalism*. We tend to view the Bible as a book of suggestions. We don’t know how to process the word *commandments*. Our own single great commandment tends to be self-indulgence. I know the mentality well, for it is in my own heart.

My timid, scared personal journey into full-blown conviction

I believed in the headcovering for some twenty years prior to this recent further thinking, but only for wearing during a church service. It seemed pretty clear and straightforward from Scripture that the cultural/traditional arguments against wearing a headcovering didn’t hold weight. Rather, the two reasons for wearing one that are given in 1 Corinthians 11:7-10 are clearly **rooted in Creation**. Paul writes that the woman is to wear a headcovering (1) because she was created for the man and (2) because of the angels. Neither the order of creation nor the activity of angels is tied to culture; they are timeless realities.

When you look at the two Greek words used for hair and covering it becomes equally clear that the Apostle Paul is describing **an actual veil** for the woman’s covering, rather than just her hair. *Katakalupto* means to cover wholly, indicating some cloth hanging down that covers. *Peribolaion* comes from *peri* – perimeter – indicating the natural hair around the head.² The two Greek words that are translated “covering” in our English translations are not interchangeable.

² In 1 Corinthians 11:5-13, the Greek words are (per *Strong's Concordance*) #2619 *katakalupto* = “to cover down” in verses 6-7 and (negative) 5 and 13. A wholly different Greek word, #4018 *peribolaion* = “that which is thrown around,” is used in verse 15. Cf. Tom Shank, ...*Let Her Be Veiled: An in-depth study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*, edited by Tom Shank, 3rd edition (Kalispell, Montana: Torch Publications, Valley View Christian Fellowship, 1992), p. 19, 78-79. Also in Daniel Botkin, *The Validity and Value of the Woman’s Headcovering* (East Peoria, Illinois: Gates of Eden, 1995), p. 3-4.

Verse 6 indicates that the hair and the veil are two distinct layers of covering for a woman. The verse makes no sense if the hair is used as the only covering. Let's read the passage both ways:

1 Corinthians 11 verse 6: (*using the hair as the only covering*)

“If a woman does not cover her head [with her hair...resulting in baldness] she should have her hair cut off [her bald head cut further].”

1 Corinthians 11 verse 6: (*using a veil as an additional covering*)

“If a woman does not cover her head [with a cloth covering] she should have her hair cut off [also].”

The first rendering creates an absurdity. Let's do the same exercise with the verse about the man's hair:

1 Corinthians 11, verse 7:

“A man ought not to cover his head [with hair] since he is the image and glory of God.”

This would mean that all Christian men must make themselves bald continually for the rest of their lives!

Why does it dishonor man when a woman prays or prophesies with her head uncovered? It's because she's flaunting her glory in the presence of God. “If the long hair is the only covering, it has done nothing to cover the glory of MAN when she comes into God's presence just with long hair and no veiling.”³ We infer from 1 Corinthians 11:15 that long hair was Eve's only covering in the Garden. When sin came, the woman was uncovered and needed to put something additional on her head that represented her new relationship to her husband, as a symbol of her submission to his authority. Long hair is a woman's glory (verse 15) and that glory should be veiled when in the presence of God, just as the seraphim in Isaiah 6 covered their faces.⁴

It was not until fairly recently that the issue of **when to wear a headcovering** was reopened for me. The LORD began to prod me about being covered when praying, teaching and/or prophesying (1 Corinthians 11:5), which included times when I

³ Ross Ulrich, *The Doctrine of Headship; or, The Christian Woman's Veiling* (Leola, Pennsylvania: Charity Gospel Tape Ministry, 1992 July 26. See also Lance Lambert, *The Importance of Covering* (Richmond, Virginia: Christian Tape Ministry, 1991; chapter 8: “For the Sisters,” p. 161 ff.

⁴ Emanuel Esh, *The Principles Behind a Woman's Headcovering* (Leola, Pennsylvania: Charity Gospel Tape Ministry, 1998 September 27).

would be teaching while I was presenting workshops for other women at homeschool conventions. Taking a closer look at the Bible, I discovered that if a woman is to keep silent during the corporate assembly of believers (1 Corinthians 14:33-34), then the times when she would be praying and prophesying (speaking) had to be elsewhere during the week, while speaking to other women. At that point, I began putting on a headcovering at the door of the workshops and jerking it right off at the close of those sessions.

I further noted other things:

- (1) That the Greek term used is the present, active, imperative form, meaning “let her *continue* to be veiled” or “let her be being veiled.”
- (2) That the heading “*Instructions for Worship*” in 1 Corinthians 11, in my Bible, is in italics. It is only an editor’s addition to make neat divisions to the paragraphs (these headings are not “inspired”). I saw that when read in context, the majority of the section is instructions for general life. Only at the end does it specifically refer to behavior during worship services. The Scriptures are not contradictory; Paul explicitly states in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 that women are to remain silent during the corporate gathering. Apparently, the women’s praying and prophesying is occurring outside of the worship service.
- (3) That the instructions are given to all people, not just the Corinthians, and that they are for all time. “We have no other practice – nor do the churches of God” (verse 16).
- (4) That if one is to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), one must be wearing the veil all the time.

My curiosity was piqued. I was beginning to be uneasy about where I had drawn the line. But I still was not convinced. Since I had opportunity to meet many headcovered women from various walks of life in different states at homeschooling conventions, I took note of them and found them to be unusually peaceful and cheerful, holding hands with their husbands when they walked, etc. Then I decided to interview them, to ask each one if she had noticed any practical difference in her life since she began to wear a veil every day. I thought there just may be a mystery here that I was missing. This may be one of those areas where you “believe first and afterwards come to know” (John 6:69, KJV).

The stories I heard were jaw dropping. I’ll tell some of them along the way. I then saw clearly, both from Scripture and from confirming testimonies, that I was headed straight into the jaws of a conviction that I didn’t want to obey.

I wrestled with the LORD, but I found Him no stranger to wrestling. He's done it for centuries with the likes of you and me over a host of issues. Going down, I resisted. "You can't mean this, LORD. Other acts of obedience have been easy: be born again, read my Bible, pray, witness. This one is invasive, cumbersome; there is no relief from it. I can't do this every day for the rest of my life. It's hot; it's uncomfortable; it SHOWS! Everywhere I go there will be an encounter with someone. I'll always be spiritually 'on duty.' Never a rest. You can't mean this. You can't. Every day? It's overwhelming."

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At first it felt surreal, like I was living in a dream or hadn't really been wearing the headcovering the previous day. The LORD helped me by just saying "Take one day of obedience at a time (Matthew 6:34). Just do it today. You can manage that. Don't think about the future."

It was a hot summer, to boot. It continued to feel like the most costly and invasive of all obediences. I couldn't stand the feel of it on my head. It felt claustrophobic. I would long for the night when I could take it off. Then I would wake up to another day of having to wear it. I felt so ugly in it.

Then, to my further chagrin, I realized that a lot goes with it. All of a sudden, my entire wardrobe didn't fit with the style of the headcovering. Earrings and jewelry seemed out of place. Some dresses seemed too fancy now. I felt that my identity was in shambles.

Intermittently, I would secretly try on my old favorite pair of silver earrings to see if the holes had grown shut in my ears yet. When I did so, the LORD would calmly say to me in the mirror, "If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return" (Hebrews 11:15). Then I'd think: *He knows. He sees. Whither can I go from His presence?* (Psalm 139:7, King James Version). Happily, now I can say (after the passage of some time) that it all looks very different.

## II. SCRIPTURE – DIRECT INPUT

With cultural and “legalism” entanglements out of the way, let us now continue to examine the Scriptures themselves for insight.

### **Progressive Biblical testimony of covering**

There is a gentle, subtle, progressive revelation about covering throughout the Scriptures.<sup>5</sup> Adam and Eve had to be covered in the Garden – by God himself (Genesis 3:21). Rebekah, having been betrothed to Isaac, veiled herself before meeting him (Genesis 24:64-66) – the first mention of veiling in the Scriptures. Seraphs cover their faces and feet when in God’s presence (Isaiah 6:2). Moses wore a veil over his face after receiving the Ten Commandments.

We observe in Numbers 5:18 that a veil was part of a woman’s normal covering. Otherwise, how could she have had her head uncovered by the priest?

We see too that removing the veil was connected with shame.

- (1) Song of Songs 5:7: “The keepers of the walls took my veil away from me.”
- (2) Isaiah 47:1-2: “No more will you be called tender or delicate. Take millstones and grind flour; take off your veil.”

We gain insights from Scripture, not only from direct mandate, but from observation and inference as well. The steady presence of veiling throughout the Hebrew Scriptures calls out to us. But our contemporary environment (shopping malls, fast food restaurants, movies, etc.) doesn’t prompt us to think about these subtle spiritual realities. We have been far away from such ponderings.

### **Authority and submission**

The Bible speaks about the headcovering in the context of authority and submission. In a number of passages we see God’s government clearly presented. There is no confusion. God is the head, Christ follows. Then Christ is the head of the man and the man is head of the woman (1 Corinthians 11; Ephesians 5). What is so unusual about divine government is that it is voluntary! Its strength is that the subordinate person cheerfully steps into line and willingly bears the yoke of submission. Overlings who *demand* obedient submission, as they do in systems without God, kill the spirit of it. Napoleon once said, “Christ is the greatest of conquerors. All earthly men conquer by force; Christ alone conquerors by love.”

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<sup>5</sup> See the appendix for a fuller discussion of God’s principle of covering.

In God's economy, submission is the strongest of virtues. Christ Himself said that "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (John 8:28b). As we shall see later, one-third of the angels proved incapable of this kind of obedience. When a woman puts on a headcovering it's a picture, an outward visible symbol, of her agreement with God's order and government.

Strangely, even though the headcovering is a sign of a woman's submission to authority, in the same breath it is spoken of as "power upon her head" (1 Corinthians 11:10, KJV). In an odd sort of way, a supernatural way, submission equals power. When we are in a submitted state, sitting properly in God's chain of authority, when the celestial airways are clear and there is no moral static, then our prayers carry much weight and the angels can work in our behalf without encumbrance.<sup>6</sup>

Because submission is such an alarming concept in our culture, let's reflect a bit more to see how it is expressed practically.

When President George Washington's mother was asked concerning her son, "To what do you attribute his greatness?" she responded without hesitation: "To his habit of obedience." Submission (the heart attitude that facilitates obedience) is the evidence of self-control. As it is powerful for a man to show it, so too, habitual submission to God-given authority is one of the strongest virtues of a woman. As we have noted, Christ is the supreme example of submissiveness (John 8:28).

Of necessity, whenever two or more parties function together, one must have the place of authority and the other must have the place of submission in order to proceed without friction. There are two ways to do most anything. You cannot spin a steering wheel left and right at the same time. In marriage, we can either spend our life arguing in the parking lot or we can settle the driver and passenger roles, get in, and go somewhere.

Many marital issues don't require such severity of "all his will and none of mine." Some can be discussed pleasantly and a joint decision reached with mutual satisfaction. But there are many others – many others – that cannot be. A woman with a submissive spirit:

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<sup>6</sup> "If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable" (Proverbs 28:9). See also Zechariah 7:13, Hebrews 1:14, and 1 Peter 3:7.

- (1) Cultivates **contentment** with forgoing having her own way, placing decisions in an open hand,
- (2) Cultivates the **flexibility** to adapt swiftly to what the authority initiates,
- (3) Cultivates a **cheerful countenance**
  - while doing the very thing she would rather not do
  - while she is being deprived of the very thing she so desperately wants
  - when something is not being done “her way,” and
- (4) Is able to fully disclose her viewpoint and then **leave off any control** to see it come to pass.

By the way, submission does not mean “stuffing it” and saying nothing. Submission is about outcomes, not about input. Your husband vitally needs your perspective, intuitions, opinions. It’s about the spirit in which you say it. “Honey, I will submit to whatever you decide, but I have this caution about the direction in which we’re headed.” It’s when you demand action on the basis of your input that things go awry. It is then that we’re a long way away from “Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (1 Peter 3:6).<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, let’s look in general at the fruit of a controlling spirit. Then we’ll consider its effects on the husband.

When a controlling person seeks to micro-manage a peer’s life, she may initially obtain outward conformity, but she’ll lose the heart over the long haul. The person being controlled feels stripped of free will. He wants to get out of the controlling person’s sphere of influence. When the controller seeks to make the controlled person do things that his own personal convictions were not ready to carry out, requiring compliance ahead of readiness, it makes the controlled one look back negatively upon memories of the controller. He views times with the controller as a relational jail, always feeling the need to jockey to fulfill his/her expectations.

After a while, the *shoulds* and *oughts* heaped upon the controlled person become burdensome. Emotional exhaustion causes the controlled one to check out of the relationship. Instead of people finding quiet spiritual rejuvenation around a con-

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<sup>7</sup> Request Cross-Over’s *Resolving Marital Conflicts Happily* article for further discussion on fully voicing your opinion, appealing to authority, etc.

troller, the controlling person wears out both herself and others by having to pump up fleshly persuasions.

Instead, submission is depositing my concerns upon *God*, who will accomplish His perfect will for everyone involved, instead of at people's feet to force them to do as *I* think best.

So, not only do we submit to God's order because He created it that way, but because it works. It is the way to carry a peaceful heart through all of life.

I've had several women tell me that they needed the headcovering as a reminder because they were not, by nature, a very submissive person, but that others surely had an easier go of it. What's funny is that each woman thinks she is unique in this, when really it's the basic struggle for all of us!

Godly submission often requires us to give up that which we consider our "rights" – including foregoing the delicious but deadly privilege of retaliation. It may involve letting issues go and allowing the discussion to die – even when you know you're right, forfeiting the right to speak your conflicting opinion to an authority without invitation. It may mean just swallowing it.

A contentious spirit is defined in Webster's as simply "maintaining your side of the argument." It's having the last word. It is one quality in a woman that the Bible repeatedly speaks against. A gentle and quiet spirit is what is praised.<sup>8</sup>

However, there is a quietness that is sullen, a pout. What is DESIRED is a quietness that's cheerful. Abigail Smith, mother of John Quincy Adams, once said to a young woman, "I am a mortal enemy to anything but a cheerful countenance and a merry heart, which Solomon tells us, does good like a medicine. Cultivate, my dear, those lively spirits and that sweet innocence and contentedness that will rob the desert of its gloom, and cause the wilderness to blossom around you."

### **A matter of trust**

So, how can you die to your own will again and again and not go bankrupt emotionally? How does one possess the spiritual energy and endurance to carry out submission? The only way to submit habitually, to die to self, is to cultivate a secret intimacy with Christ (Psalm 91:1). One gains relational nourishment during

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<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 3, Proverbs 19:13b, 21: 9 and 19, and 27:15-16; 1 Timothy 2:11, Proverbs 31.

such relinquishments from Christ, by His nod of approval, His “well done,” His having done it before us, and our joining in His suffering (1 Peter 3:17).

We are to entrust ourselves to our faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19). Behind the scenes, it gets down to exchanging fear for faith, especially over the big issues: money, children, etc. “Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?” (Genesis 18:25b).

We mistakenly fear that it all depends on us. We forget that we had nothing to do with causing our own birth and that we are being swept along in the great stream of God’s sovereignty. There is much that God is administering alone, without our direct involvement. Think about it. If He hurled the worlds, can He not be trusted to work through our husbands when *He* is the one who declared that we should be submissive to them?

Without question the fear is real, and it comes in three packages.

- (1) **Fear of losing dominion** – doing things my way. If we’ll let go of this fear, we’ll develop flexibility and an agreeable, pleasant, engaging spirit that others will love to be around.
- (2) **Fear of losing our rights** – having things or experiences that we want. We need to trust that God will see to it that we get the experiences and things that He wants us to have. We won’t miss out on enjoying the *real* things, the enriching things that are of eternal value.
- (3) **Fear of losing our personality** – becoming nothing, as if I weren’t even there. But the fact remains that you *are* there, you’re just quiet. Somehow, that has a power to it.

Give your husband all the good input you want to give him, but when he doesn’t want it, stop. Do not give way to fear. Turn and give him deference in everything, in all his practical wishes for the home (Ephesians 5). View the “cross patches” with your husband as spiritual challenges. We can ask ourselves:

- Can I give on this issue with a cheerful countenance?
- How stubbornly did I resist?
- How much did I make him hear my disgruntled complaints or unsettledness before I placed my feet and hands in the direction of obedience?
- How much did I make him pay emotionally for asking this request of me?

- Did I treat his simple request [to come early, or to have a large spoon instead of a small one], too casually?

It has been my experience that donning a headcovering helps immeasurably with the spirit of doing these little deeds, and also with contrary discussions. Sometimes I have even placed my hand upon it, or pointed to it as I backed out of a discussion that would otherwise culminate in an argument with my husband. By it, I'm saying *I haven't changed my mind about what I really think, but I'll stop contending now, out of deference for Christ and deference for you.*

Putting on the headcovering is a symbol, but it *may* be a spiritual enabling as well. It reduces the friction and lines up the order of God's rule in this world, and the serpent may therefore find no ground in which to operate...no ground for making us want "to eat and devour one another" as usual (Galatians 5:15). This has been my experience. Not only does it reduce friction, it may well increase influence.

As one grows practiced in this voluntary, willful quietness, personal spiritual power is the reward. The way up is down.

## **Angels**

The Bible also speaks directly about the testimony the headcovering is to the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10). The Apostle Paul describes being a spectacle to the angelic hosts (1 Corinthians 4:9b). They watch us. In the church they see the manifold wisdom of God displayed (Ephesians 3:10). It is plausible to believe that the angels are keenly watching for His divine order to be expressed in His body of believers on earth.

No doubt the angels are acutely interested in the issue of rebellion and submission, since that is what split the hosts of heaven long, long ago. As noted in 1 Corinthians 11:10, they were meant to see it displayed in the church by the wearing of the headcovering. There is some thought, along these lines, that when sisters willingly say, by putting on the headcovering, "I'm in divine order; I'm under authority and I've chosen to take my place," it may further reprove the fallen angels. In addition, some of these heavenly beings – specifically the Nephilim (Genesis 6:4) – may be barred from tempting, harassing and deceiving these obedient women, since it was women that they targeted before, after the fall.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel Botkin, *The Validity and Value of the Woman's Headcovering* (East Peoria, Illinois: Gates of Eden, 1995), p. 11-14. Lambert (*The Importance of Covering*, p. 149-150) cites Ezekiel 28:14-16 in

This is speculation, but a conjecture worth considering. Satan works to keep us blind to little details of Biblical practice that may have far-reaching spiritual effects. Moral honor and respect – both by wives to husbands and by children to parents – has been taught by God from the beginning. Abandoning this principle has resulted in serious irreversible moral decay.

Consider this possibility: when the righteous angels check out their ministry missions they see that it's okay to involve a woman in a spiritual event when they can see that she is in submission. But when the veil is missing they may anxiously look at God and say, "What do I do?" The message is a confusing one to them. Angels operate by signs. Remember the blood on the doorposts? Angels may have been ordered to look especially for veils! This may explain why women who wear one often have abundant witnessing opportunities, as you will read in testimonies at the end of this article. Angels may usher people to us because they can spot us!

### **Angels and the veil**

*Consider this further thinking re: the veil and its relationship to angels, submitted to me by a faithful sister, Julie Almanrode, to share with you.*

1 Corinthians 11:8-10: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head." (NIV)

"For this reason" follows creational order. Likewise, the phrase "and because of the angels" also has something to do with creational order, because "and" is a conjunction.

In the book of Jude, verse 6 (Amplified Version): "And the angels who did not keep (care for, guard, and hold to) their positions of authority (own first place of power) but abandoned their own home (proper dwellings) these he has kept in darkness – bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day."

The veil is necessary in 1 Corinthians 11:10 because woman is under man.... But a woman needs a sign of authority because the angels did

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which the devil is called "the cherub that covereth" before he fell, or, literally, "the anointed cherub that covereth." Lucifer's job had to do with covering, something to do with the glory of God. Cf. Ross Ulrich, *The Doctrine of Headship*, audiotape.

not keep their first place of “authority,” but abandoned their proper dwelling place.

Where is the woman’s first place or position of authority and power? After man (Genesis 2:22-25).

Where is the proper dwelling place for the wife? In the home under man (Titus 2:4-5).

Thus, the wearing of a veil is a “sign” to all that a woman has accepted her proper position of power and authority under [her] man, Christ, and God. It is also a “sign” because of the fallen angels that she has not abandoned her home, her dwelling. Obviously, there were angels that abandoned or did not keep their position and fell. Out of proper position, they abandoned their proper dwellings and so are being kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

Women need to understand more fully what abandoning their husbands, children, and homes is in the eyes of God and His word. Christian women who refuse to accept their first position of power in the home under their husbands are living in darkness and will receive God’s judgment. They ultimately have abandoned their homes for church leadership, careers, and worldviews as they pass on the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil to their children. Women who truly understand and accept their creational role of authority and power in the home should be more than ready, willing and blessed to put on the “sign” for all – in this world and the spiritual world – to see. May we be challenged “because of the angels” to be obedient and wholehearted in standing firm where God is feeding us the fruit of everlasting life.

*[End of quote from Julie Almanrode.]*

### **Praying and prophesying**

“And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head” (1 Corinthians 11:5).

If a woman teaches or prays without a veil, she dishonors her husband and God’s governmental design. On the other hand, when her headcovering demonstrates that she is obedient to governmental arrangements, she releases Christ to pray and speak through her (1 Corinthians 11:10). There may be exceptional power in prayer, sensitivity to names and events while they happen, and a receiving of exact

words to minister precisely to a need while prophesying. Could this be part of what is meant by “power upon her head”?

1 Thessalonians 5:11 tells us to pray without ceasing. So here the headcovering can remind one of the need to pray. The headcovering becomes part of our personal tabernacle and part of how we honor God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). John and Charles Wesley and their many siblings knew that when their mother pulled her apron up over her head, they were not to disturb her – she was at the throne of God, even though she was sitting in the room in the midst of them. In fact, I've heard of a woman who places her long veil over the heads of herself and the woman praying with her whenever they were praying for someone, as a kind of tabernacle.

Finally, the presence of a headcovering convicts me of my lack of prayer.

### **Symbols and real things**

Surely, there's some connection between symbols and reality. A white flag is a universal signal of truce or surrender; the Red Cross emblem provides entrée into difficult situations around the world. The Nazis lifted the swastika; Russians were driven by hammer and sickle; gang members burn tattoos on their skin. Businesses brandish letterhead; politicians ride on images of donkeys and elephants. A policeman's badge allows him to stand in the middle of an intersection and not get hit.

Symbols represent realities and make them visible. Symbols ensure the endurance of unseen truths and define their boundaries. Their appearance amidst the forums of men throughout history is no accident. It is not surprising then that we see in Scripture the presence of five well-focused and deeply meaningful symbols in the sacraments instituted by the LORD, and in the Sabbath observance. These stand alone as symbols, but also are attended by spiritual realities whenever Christians involve themselves in them. This is not the notion of transubstantiation, where it is believed that the bread and the wine literally become the body and blood of Christ, but rather the spiritual reality of His taking renewed dominion in the soul through identification with the symbol.

The bread and the wine, the foot washing, the holy kiss and water baptism all fall within this category. God's promise in the rainbow and His use of the bronze serpent raised up in the wilderness (to show his healing power to all who looked

upon it) are two additional examples.<sup>10</sup> The headcovering may be one of them, as well. Each time one of these symbols is engaged in, things happen in the participants' hearts, and in onlookers' hearts, as well.

The principle and the symbol are joined inextricably. The symbols remind us of the eternal truths. Bread is simple, readily available. Foot washing can be done anywhere. So, too, a piece of fabric is within the reach of both rich and poor. A simple profundity. A foolish thing, confounding the wise.

| <b>SYMBOL</b> | <b>PRINCIPLE</b>           | <b>REFERENCE</b>                                                                              |
|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Baptism       | Cleansing from sin         | Mark 16:16,<br>Romans 6:3-6                                                                   |
| Communion     | Remembering Christ's death | Matthew 26:26-29<br>(also in Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19),<br>1 Corinthians 11:23-30            |
| Foot washing  | Humbly serving             | John 13:5-17,<br>Luke 7:44-47,<br>1 Timothy 5:9-10                                            |
| Holy kiss     | Fellowship                 | Romans 16:16, 1<br>Corinthians 16:20<br>(also in 2 Corinthians 13:12 and 1 Peter 5:14)        |
| Headcovering  | Headship/ God's government | 1 Corinthians 11:3-16                                                                         |
| Sabbath       | Divine rest                | Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20: 8-11, Isaiah 56:6-7, Isaiah 58:13-14, Mark 2:23-3:4, Hebrews 4:1-11 |

### **Symbol of covered glory**

By God's design, the symbol of glory on a woman is her long hair (1 Corinthians 11:15). People tend to find something unusual and disturbing about a bald woman

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 9:12-17; Numbers 21:4-9, John 3:14.

or a woman with a crew cut. Strange that they do not find this same thing objectionable when seen on a man. If her long hair weren't in itself a real glory for the woman, then it wouldn't be worth covering with a veil.

Now, the woman *has* a glory (her hair) and she *is* a glory, the glory of the man. Out of deference for Christ, in the worship service, man's glory must be covered. Hence the reason for the godly woman to refrain from asserting her presence in the sacred assembly, by remaining silent during the service and by covering her most glorious feature, her hair. Watchmen Nee said, "It is through the sisters that God's governmental system is to be displayed." One could imagine the angels anxiously peering down, seeing the beautiful ordered reality attended by the symbols, folding their hands, so to speak, and being greatly pleased.

In everyday life the headcovering is a flag that signals to God, "I desire grace from You so that I may live out the truth of the symbol in reality." It is a pledge to harmonize one's life with God's order. The yielded woman doesn't want to risk spoiling any portion of the picture by ignoring the symbol, or the reality.

In the spiritual realm, something happens in the home when the wife takes her place under the headship of her husband. Her submission brings him under conviction about his headship and a transforming wonder takes place. Such a demeanor gives man the release to rise up. Each time he looks at the symbol his wife wears, he is sobered by his own responsibilities. Her covering reminds him frequently of Christ's calling on him.

A godly woman's creative, unique and diverse gifts can arrange themselves around the man's, to support him. Many women are finding that they increasingly want to use their abilities this way, and feel greater respect for their husbands once they get covered.

### **Wilting beauty – faithful heart**

Initially, I was worried about the loss of external beauty for my husband. I had been taught that men like to have a gorgeous wife on their arm. I felt that I was far from that in the natural, so it took work. I wanted to be as lovely as possible for him.

But then I came to see that, via the headcovering, my husband gets to trade worldly beauty for something that he really desires more: spiritual security in his most vital earthly relationship. He comes to see that the inner beauty of his wife

charges him to greater fidelity and maturity in Christ. “The heart of her husband trusts in her” (Proverbs 31:11). The superficial titillation of physical beauty is replaced by heart rest, knowing that he won’t be challenged in his leadership in the home, and that external adornments won’t be tempting other men to flirt with his wife. With glorious assurance and stability he lives with his helpmate, and he rests.

Once I saw this principle portrayed graphically in a couple that was going through a divorce. The wife happened to be stunning in appearance, but also stunningly unfaithful. Her hair was a work of art. She traveled with a bottle of hair spray and a rat-tailed comb to frequently freshen up. Even on the way to court, the husband said, “Oh, but her hair, it was so beautiful.” Still clinging to external beauty, his heart cracked, for it had known no rest. He is likely to choose such a woman again, with the same results.

### **Positive dunce cap**

The symbol positively constrains us. By wearing the veil all the time, we are continually in a Biblically acceptable posture to pray. It helps us remain spiritually keen. We’re aware that at any time, in any place, we are publicly identified with Christ. I used to take whole days and weeks of vacation away from testifying of Christ. “I’m tired; I’ll just be a closet Christian,” I’d say.

As people notice, they expect something. They expect sanctification: someone set apart for God. The veiled woman has a great responsibility to the LORD to have her children obedient, but more importantly to have the right attitude herself in all her interchanges, including those with merchants and passersby.

If God is interested in sanctification [“Those He called, He also sanctified,” (Romans 8:30b)], would it not make sense that God would make his church *APPEAR* differently – set apart – with veiled woman and bearded men?<sup>11</sup> This way, the world could see right up front that they were dealing with a Christian? A point to ponder.

Does it not fit with another of God’s actions, that of giving His chosen people, the Jews, a chunk of terra firma called the land of Israel to identify them? Neon lights

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<sup>11</sup> We can infer from Scripture (though this is nothing about which to become dogmatic) that the LORD intends for men to have beards. Most of the Scriptural references pertain to the shame of a man’s not having one (Leviticus 19:27, 21:5, 2 Samuel 10:4-5, Isaiah 7:20, 15:2, and Jeremiah 48:37), but we read that Aaron had one (Psalm 133:2) and that those who mocked Christ plucked out his beard (Isaiah 50:6).

and red arrows couldn't have done it better. By this gift to Israel He says to the remainder of the world, "They're mine. Watch."

### **Now or when?**

The age at which we should don the symbol is a matter of some debate. Some feel it should be entered into when a young girl reaches puberty, as a rite of passage into womanhood. Others covet the protection associated with it for their younger daughters and feel that the earlier they begin wearing it habitually, the less adjustment they'll have to make. A young girl who chooses to be veiled may find this helpful as a symbol that she is under the authority of her father. Some believe that a woman who is unmarried or is a widow is in special need of this symbol of being under the protection of Christ and under His governmental "control." "Man is from woman" (1 Corinthians 11:12), so the term must refer to the woman in general, not specifically to her as a wife, because the man is not from "wife".

Some married women find themselves convicted to wear a covering but their husband says "NO!" One line of thinking in this situation is that this woman shouldn't wear a covering while her husband is opposed to her wearing it. People who hold this view refer to the scriptures about a husband or father who can annul the vow or pledge made by his wife or by the young woman still living in his house, and that he bears the iniquity if he annuls the commitment she had made (Numbers chapter 30).

A different line of thinking is that Paul told the church leaders that we should obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29). If the headcovering teaching is clear from Scripture, then we should obey it. If (as we believe) it is shameful for a woman to not have her head covered, the question becomes, "Should I act shamefully before God in order to obey my husband?"

We have found, however, in numerous incidents where the husband is resistant, if the wife starts manifesting a wonderfully submissive spirit (in their day to day life together), showing increased genuine reverence to her husband in other ways, this resistance melts away. A woman can appeal to her husband again at a later time. Or ask to be able to wear one just at home, at first.

This all leads to our need to study the Scriptures ourselves to correctly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15) and to ask God for wisdom for our individual actions (James 1:5). If you are a grown woman who is just now coming under a conviction about the headcovering, the time to wear it is whenever God lays it

upon your heart. As Christ said in a different context, “If any one chooses to do God’s will, he will find out” (John 7:17a).

### **Little symbols, big impacts**

The headcovering causes strong reactions. It might as well be a siren. Let’s face it, a headcovering doesn’t find its way atop a woman’s head by accident. There is deliberateness in putting it there. It is put there as an act of obedience.

It may seem incomprehensible to the natural mind that a simple piece of cloth put upon one’s head could be used as an instrument to display God’s authority to the angels and to the world. Likewise, it was incomprehensible that such a simple obedience as dipping in the Jordan could affect Naaman’s healing (II Kings 5:10), or that viewing the serpent staff of Moses would protect from snakebites.

Strange, isn’t it, that we could put a piece of fabric anywhere else on our body, around the neck, waist, wrist or ankle, and not get such strong reactions from others.

When one grown woman began to wear hers, her own mother did not allow her into her home for two years. Now, that’s a strong reaction.

There are strong reactions from men, too. In fact, after starting to wear mine, I noticed that men would demonstrate honor toward me that I had never experienced before. It was particularly noticeable that the most wayward and rebellious of men, hippies, long haired bikers, and other male strangers would tip their hats or would rush to open doors for me! Seeing this consistent response in apparently pagan men who did not know each other and who lived in different cities utterly floored me. There *must* be something to it, I thought. This is more than coincidence. Something is at work here that doesn’t meet the eye or the understanding.

Perhaps a man can’t help but respond to it spiritually, because God has placed such a response in his spirit. We are more governed by spiritual realities than we know.

### **Symbols – conclusion**

In our current free society we think nothing of casting off symbols, customs, and titles of respect. We arrogantly label even the best of them defunct, irrelevant. “Who needs some old dumb plaque with the Ten Commandments on it hanging on a courtroom wall?” “Who needs a wedding ceremony, anyway? Let’s elope.”

“Who needs marriage – we can live together.” “Child, you don’t need to call me Mrs. – just use my first name.” “Who needs a constitution? “They took away my veil” (Song of Songs 5:7).

God says the exact opposite. “Hold fast to the traditions that are from God” (Hebrews 4:14; see also Jeremiah 6:16: “ask for the ancient paths”). When the symbol goes, there goes the practice. Is it any wonder that Satan and his fallen angels so vehemently oppose the covering? As the testimonies at the end of this article indicate, many women have felt this opposition. The headcovering is a visible reminder of Satan’s real defeat in everyday affairs.

### **No other practice**

The last direct input we get from Scripture is, “If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice – nor do the churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:16).

By implication, this was a subject that drew contention even during Biblical times. Paul deals with the contention by cutting it off. He silences the accusation that this is only for the Corinthian church by including the phrase “nor do the churches of God.” In a similar passage (1 Corinthians 14:34) the Apostle says, “Let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the LORD’s command.” “If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored” (verse 38).

There is apostolic authority here. Paul is giving direction, not suggestion. Even if it were not a command, is there not some unction in us to fulfill a wish, a preference to the Savior of our souls? What if we married an Italian man and never cooked him Italian food? Our bridegroom is a King. Would we really want to displease him in the display of his government? Even if we didn’t know about the government connection, would we not want to wear the veil simply because God has asked us to? “If you love Me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

Paul says, “I did not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God to you” (Acts 20:27). What would cause him to hesitate? Might intimidation from disgruntled outspoken women? That is the very thing that causes preachers by the thousands today to remain silent on certain issues. Note the additional injunction at the end of Matthew 28:20: “Teach them to obey *EVERYTHING* I have commanded.” The little nuances of obedience carry great weight with God.

Look at what little He now asks of us, compared with Old Testament times. Such a small thing. His yoke is easy and His burden is light (Matthew 11:30). He has

wonderfully delivered us, as believers, from the large burden of having to haul large bulls into the temple for slaughter. Think of the mess of the blood. Think of the weight of the bulls. This headcovering thing is not too hard. His commands are not grievous. “This is the one [or, *the one thing*] I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and *TREMbles* at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

### III. THE VALIDATION OF HISTORY

The pictorial record and the record of the early church leaders (some, disciples of the apostles, and others only a generation or two removed from them) are a steady testimony of the consistent use of the headcovering in daily life.<sup>12</sup>

When it dawned on me that whole cultures could be blind in an area, it sent me scrambling through history. To begin with, I looked at the pictures and tapestries on the walls of my own home from the Renaissance and Reformation periods. Without exception, the women were depicted going about their daily lives with headcoverings. I was astonished. This detail had totally escaped me before.

That sent me rummaging through the encyclopedia. There it was again. The Puritan and Pilgrim women all wore one while working. Even later, the pioneers in the westward expansion were still wearing bonnets, both indoors and out. Pictures on the walls of the Roman catacombs show the early Christian women wearing one; the Samaritan woman was shown without one. Some old Bibles contain pictures replete with women in veils.

Interestingly, in those same drawings in the early catacombs Christ is depicted with short hair!<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising to find out that the modern rendering of Christ with long hair in books, artwork, and movies is a pictorial deception coming from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, king in the second century BC.

The abomination of desolation that was set up in the Temple was a statue of Zeus with Antiochus Epiphanes' face on it. It is his face, his image that the Jew-hating pagans tried to mold Jesus after. He had the same light brown, long wavy hair parted in the middle. The same classic Greek nose and eyes, the same closely cropped Greek beard, the same effeminate look. Why effeminate? Because Antiochus was a homosexual. All the thousands of pictures, drawings and sculptures of Jesus are really of Antiochus.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dwight Stubhar, "Can History Speak?," ...*Let Her Be Veiled: An In-depth Study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*, edited by Tom Shank, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Kalispell, Montana: Torch Publications, Valley View Christian Fellowship, 1992), p. 44-49. Also, David W. Bercot, *Common Sense: A New Approach to Understanding Scripture* (Tyler, Texas: Scroll Publishing Company, 1992), p. 60.

<sup>13</sup> Tom Shank, "The Veil in Early Christian Art," ...*Let Her Be Veiled: An In-depth Study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*, edited by Tom Shank, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Kalispell, Montana: Torch Publications, Valley View Christian Fellowship, 1992), p. 50-58.

<sup>14</sup> Rav Mikha'el, *How Biblical Judaism Became Christianity* (Reading, Pennsylvania: Rav Mikha'el Ministries, J&M Publishing Company, 1998), p. 16-17.

We know from early church history that the woman's headcovering became the norm in Antioch, Rome, and Africa.<sup>15</sup> The apostle Thomas took the practice of wearing the headcovering to India and the Christian women have been wearing the veil there ever since.<sup>16</sup> The practice continues to appear with many of the Chinese, Asian, African, and Eastern European Christians. Women there wear one today just by learning about it from the Scriptures, without having been taught about it.

In more recent history, there appears the Salvation Army bonnet in the 1700s and coverings amongst the early Methodists. Susanna Wesley wore one. Sabina Wurmbrand, the lately deceased wife of Richard Wurmbrand (founder of The Voice of the Martyrs) wore one, as do many others.

Why do brides wear a wedding veil? Is it not a vestigial remnant from an earlier practice? Where does the nurse's cap come from? And, of course, the nun's black veil?

Charles Finney said, referring to any devout Christian practice, "You will appear eccentric. Your obedience will challenge others."<sup>17</sup>

Consider this from the early Church leaders, who taught that "God is pleased to bless and answer the petitions of the women who takes her place in His divine order":

Thou who [desires] to be faithful to thy husband take care to please him alone. And, when thou art in the streets, cover thy head. For by such a covering thou wilt avoid being viewed by idle persons. Do not paint the face, which is God's workmanship. For there is no part of thee that wants ornament inasmuch as all things which God has made are very good. But the lascivious adorning of what is already good is an affront to the bounty of the Creator. Look downward when thou walkest abroad, veiling thyself as becomes women.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 624.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from Brother Mathew in Daniel Botkin, *The Validity and Value of the Woman's Headcovering* (East Peoria, Illinois: Gates of Eden, 1995), p. 8. How different the Biblical veil is from the Islamic one that is legislated for every woman in that culture, regardless of her heart attitude, and that covers nearly all of her head – including most of her face.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted from *Finney on Revival*, p. 111, in Daniel Botkin, *The Validity and Value of the Woman's Headcovering* (East Peoria, Illinois: Gates of Eden, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> From the *Apostolic Constitutions*, written between A.D. 200 and 315, quoted from *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, compiled by A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), Vol. III, p. 395, in Karen M. Johnson, *Headcoverings and the 20th Century* (Modesto, California: 3rd edition, 1994 September), p. 32-33.

Historically, the veiling accompanied modest deportment. At twilight the brazen adulterous woman of Proverbs is dressed like a prostitute; she is “loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home” (Proverbs 7:10-11).<sup>19</sup> The Talmud tells us that “A woman did not go out in public without covering her head” (Bereshit Rab 17 Ket. 72b).

Thus, the accumulation of this unconscious pictorial and written evidence gives us convincing historical understanding about women covering the head.

#### **IV. ADJUSTMENTS**

Wearing a veil is a new experience for most of us. It is only natural to expect a period of adjustment. Knowing something about the nature of these adjustments ahead of time makes the transition far less traumatic.

##### **Spiritual adjustments**

Of course, the first adjustment to be made is becoming spiritually convinced. Make time to pore over the verses, and to have fellowship with those who already wear one.

In my own case, I had to reprogram my thinking. I had to saturate my spirit with scriptures, tapes, and articles morning after morning to remind myself of the benefits and goals, and to undo the brainwashing and the strongholds of vanity. One article or booklet wasn't sufficient to hold me in steady obedience. I was wearing the covering long before it was a conviction. It was an experiment at first. It wasn't until about a month of wearing it that I experienced my first real joy.

Because I was still very shaky in the beginning, I left myself an escape hatch. I told myself that I would just try wearing one daily for a year and then at that time I would look back and re-evaluate. That helped me stay committed over the rough patch of transition. I knew that a one-day experiment is no test of anything. It would be like trying to be married for only one day. Only time can test the true nature of some realities.

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<sup>19</sup> A Roman catacombs drawing of the promiscuous Samaritan woman who met Christ at the well depicts her without a headcovering (Shank, ...*Let Her Be Veiled*, p. 56). The woman's headcovering is related to a larger picture of her being at home and being protected. A respectable woman was not found out on the streets at night (Song of Songs 3:1-3).

I believed that there was value in letting the circumstantial evidence accrue. Experience might lead to additional insights. The Scriptures were the door, the signage along the way, but I felt pretty sure, as with all spiritual things, that I had to actually travel the road to see the full manifestation of them. We have believed and then we come to know” (John 6:69). “Jesus learned obedience through the things he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). So, don’t wait to develop a full airtight conviction before beginning. Allow yourself the freedom to grow in understanding and rock-solid commitment. Perhaps wear it at home first, until you get accustomed to the feel of it and the look of it. Developing the practice at home can help you to be more confident wearing it out in public.

The very thought of it may seem “fever-pitch-overwhelming” until you take the first decisive obedient step. The Devil is very invested in seeing to it that you don’t move out in this area. As with the heart-pounding sweat one breaks into before becoming a Christian, so there is a real battle going on as you decide to adopt the headcovering practice. The mind will come up with a thousand reasons why you shouldn’t wear it. I suspect that our enemy will suggest these reasons, because if he can keep it off of the woman, he may have more access to controlling her responses to her husband. Expect a battle each morning for a while.

Soon afterwards one begins to see that covering the very thing that gives us glory – our hair – is choosing to cover our self-life so that Christ can be manifest through us. Wearing the covering strikes at the very core of the love of self, so expect the emotional whiplash to be acute.

### **Emotional adjustment**

Like a pilot navigating through a blinding storm who must trust his instruments, so you trust your compass, the Bible. Be unmoved in your spirit while your emotions are banking off the walls. When God’s Word says this is due north, but you feel like you’re headed south, simply believe and grip the wheel more firmly. Continue to steer north, for there is great reward on the other side of the storm.

The big emotional adjustment is mostly due to the assault on personal vanity. Good grooming is one thing, but often women are trapped in far more than that. The headcovering helps to conquer the vain streak in each of us.

What an embarrassment to discover vanity’s long undetected tentacles. In our culture, the preoccupation with clothes leads to preoccupation with what’s under

the clothes: worship of one's own physical appearance, and sidelong glimpses into mirrors on all four walls of athletic rooms to further indulge and satiate our appetites for more of ourselves. We end up worshipping and serving the beast rather than the Creator. Self-love is hell. Through the headcovering, God bulldozes deep into the root of self-worship that gains its foothold through vanity. By it there is relief from the ever-engulfing self.

The reason a woman pampers far beyond good clean grooming is the desire to set her face and hair in its optimum visual glory. Many work for years on achieving just the right look, the desired image, but find that they never quite achieve it. There is always one thing more. Just when you conquer the make-up, the face begins to sag, so it's off for a quick nip and tuck surgery.

Sometimes a woman likes the results of her worldly new look, but then finds that her friends and spouse do not. In the end, for whom is she really doing it? Is it not for herself? Or for other women? We especially see this trap with high school girls. The glory is for their own sakes: glory is not transferred on up to God, the glory stops with the person. When people look at the results of that kind of preening in one another, subconsciously they may think it's a selfish use of time and money. They may really view that person as unapproachable or haughty. The hairdo may evoke jealous feelings, especially among high schoolers.

Unfortunately, jealousy and despising often go hand in hand. If a woman feels she can't compete in the area of looks, she may end up despising others' looks. When, however, a godly woman chooses to dress simply, she stimulates far fewer evil emotions in others. When people look at a faithful, loyal, cheerful servant girl with a scarf on her head and a humble spirit to match it, no ill feelings are raised. There is nothing but sheer delight at being around such a person.

Because I had been so thoroughly taught by the world to puff my hair, and to curl, tint and cut it, I keenly felt the loss of doing all that. There was a kind of mourning and grieving as I was "coming out of Egypt" (Numbers 11:4-6). At moments I found myself desiring the fish, the cucumbers, the melons again! I had spent much energy cultivating the aesthetics of "what-clothes-look-good-together." I was expressing myself in every outfit. There was a slavery to working on beautifying myself. The headcovering strikes a deathblow to this lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Wonderfully, we find that life comes out of this death. The more we die to self, the more He will live in us.

When we look at a picture of Mother Teresa, what is our first thought? It is about her spiritual life, not about her beauty. There is no edifice to get past. We're right there at what's most important.

There is (at least or especially at first, before experiencing the blessings of wearing it) an element of mortification to putting on the headcovering. Each day it is humbling to tie it on. The very process feels humbling. Having to wear it is humbling. It's a daily restraint on our "old self" (Romans 6:6). I found myself hating to look in the mirror. It's ugly, I often thought; my hair is flat and unexciting. This looks aesthetically horrible. The death in the mirror was continual, unrelenting, total. I had no interest in having my picture taken. I realized it meant death to hopes of having what the world considers earthly beauty. Often I wanted to jerk it off. Through it all, however, there was a steady, kind whisper somewhere at the back of my spirit, "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2b). Deeper than the humility -- because of the humility -- is a joy and delight in obeying the LORD in this area. Then, wearing the daily headcovering is no embarrassment but is an assist in turning one's heart fully to Him who said that "If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38).

### **Coping strategies**

As you can see, my own emotional battle with donning the headcovering on a daily basis was severe and long lasting. I went down hard. You may have an easier go of it, because you may not have so far to fall as I did. I have shared it candidly, in the hope that it will spare you some anguish over a very good decision.

But for many there *IS* this traumatic adjustment in coping with the loss of personally perceived beauty. Some women feel that in the natural they are not beautiful at all, and have grown to depend upon excessive make-up, jewelry, and all sorts of hair gyrations to pull off any sense of beauty. Stripped of these crutches, they no longer feel attractive to their husband or to anyone else. Previously, they liked looking in the mirror to doll themselves up. Now they find it depressing to see themselves. They rush past the mirror, and maybe they downright weep. With her hair pulled back and flat, a woman may feel deflated indeed. Such lofty thoughts as "I look like a drowned rat" may often parade and jeer through the mind, coaxing you to return to Egypt. A period of some depression is natural. But rest assured:

given a little time, wearing a veil next year isn't going to feel like what it does today.

Here are some thoughts to help you stay stable through the adjustment. My chief advice is: don't linger on what you've lost, focus instead on what you are gaining-- growth in sweetness, a servant heart, people wanting to be with you for spiritual good.

1. Don't **focus** on what you've "lost." Cling to thoughts of what exceptionally godly women are like, to replace worldly mental images you may have been subconsciously imitating. Think about Mary, Lydia, Ruth, Anna and Esther in the Scriptures, or more contemporary women like Mother Teresa, or a consecrated nurse like Clara Barton who wore a cap while helping thousands of wounded in war. (What else did the nurse's cap signify but devotion to a life of service for others?) Cling to it just like a dieting woman might tape a picture of a slender woman to her refrigerator to help her not yield to the temptation of altogether abandoning the battle with gluttony. These images helped me across the gap until afterwards I could just be *ME*, obeying God. The Apostle Paul wrote that he lost nothing but rubbish (Philippians 3:7-9)--and look at how much he seemed to have given up!
2. Frequently look at the historical **pictures** of women in veils, to keep the conviction strong. There is such a graciousness and spiritual beauty in them that it will nurture you.
3. Say **Amen** to it. Don't look back. Do it. Rush headlong into ways to lose your life rather than preserve it. Cover your glory out of a deep desire to have others see Christ's glory, alone. Resolve it. Trust that eventually your emotions will follow. They will.

### **Social adjustments**

There will be social adjustments, of course. You'll have to get used to increased stares, for one. You'll draw attention. If a woman only wears a hat, there may be no adjustment at all, because the public is left to wonder, "Does she wear that hat for fashion or is this woman absorbed in some sort of spiritual life?" Because the message is so iffy, there is not the complete spiritual collision that brings the kind of testimony described in the results section at the end of this piece.

Wearing a true veil, one that covers most of the hair and is opaque (can't be seen through), on the other hand, may cause quite a commotion. Just by your presence,

there'll be spiritual activity happening in the minds and hearts of virtually everyone you encounter – from merchant to family member.

In the beginning, I thought “Yikes!” I’m not ready to meet my extended family with this on.” But we must trust that the timing of all the colliding is of Him. He will work things in others’ lives because we obey today. **Delaying our own obedience for fear of stepping on others’ toes never works the righteousness of God.** *Now* is the day of salvation. Obedience is always rendered in the active present tense. A delayed obedience will mean we miss some spiritual life that God intended for us to have in this short walk across time.

In the case of one family, a woman with four daughters alternated between wearing the covering and taking it off. After a while, her daughters asked, “Well, mother, are you convicted or not?!” They were eager for the verdict!

I thought, “How can I put this thing on, when I’m not even sure of it myself and I run into so-and-so downtown?” “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Proverbs 29:25). By God’s grace, I gulped, put it on, and went. Frankly, why should we even *care* what people think, if we are convinced that our behavior is pleasing to the LORD?

Your friends and family aren’t going to take this lying down. Your presence will visually remind them of spiritual realities, and some don’t want to be reminded. In some cases, you’ll even incur anger. One extended family member said to a veiled woman, “You aren’t actually going to *wear* that thing, are you!?” Another mockingly said, “You look just like a gypsy.” The more quiet and confident you are, the less room there’ll be for arguing. If you, however, are tenuous or unconvinced, it will be a free-for-all around your relatives. They’ll go after you like forks to a roast!

From strangers, you’ll get comments out of the blue. One fellow in a grocery store parking lot ran up to a veiled Christian woman and said “Sister, can’t you love me the way I am?” (It was apparent that he was homosexual.) She proceeded to tell him that she could love the sinner but not the sin. In a context of loving acceptance of the man, she explained that the Bible specifically says in the book of Romans that this behavior is at the end of a long line of rebellion against God’s order.

I had a similar experience in a parking lot on a very hot day. A woman came up to me out of nowhere and said, “If it’s this hot here, I sure don’t want to rot in Hell.” I told her she didn’t have to, that if she accepted the finished work of Christ she could be assured that very day. I told her the passages to look up in Scripture when she returned home. Then she inched closer and further confided in me with trembling, “I want to have God in my life, but I’m addicted to TV.” We stopped, held hands and prayed together right in the front door of the store! Now that’s a spiritual collision. I certainly was not having such bold encounters out of the blue without the covering.

Another veiled gal told me she had a friend who said, “Your life is so convicting, I had to go away from you for awhile!” How encouraging, to have your appearance spur others on to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)!

Several veiled women have told me of the phenomenon of having people stop right in the middle of a conversation about something totally different and inquire about the headcovering. It seems to work silently on people.

God will give you the appropriate words for each situation, because they’ll all be different. You might want to say, “The Bible says that this is a way I can show honor to my husband [my father; etc. -- the point is that it is submission to the man God has placed over me],” or “I wear this as a symbol of my submission to God’s order,” or “It’s to help me be more servant hearted.” But the LORD will give the fitting phrase, one that is alive, for every encounter. “Do not fear what to say” (Acts 18:9). Just as His power is on your head, He’ll be with your mouth!

### **Adjustment in modesty**

Once the covering is solidly on top of your head, and even more solidly in your heart, you’ll find He’ll use it to begin to effect other changes. He will give you a greater interest in modesty, both with your hair and with your clothes.

### **Modesty: hair style**

A godly woman considers two issues regarding her hair: its length, and the appropriate display of it.

Because there is so much spiritual life associated with the hair, the battle and temptation to cut it can be fierce when a woman chooses to grow it long to heed Scripture. That emotional battle goes away as she persists in her obedience.

When, on the other hand, a woman chooses to cut her hair short, she is sucked into a battle that never ends.

Often women who have just come from the beauty parlor remark, “I don’t like it. It’s just not right.” Again, in my own case, nearly every time I got my hair cut, I cried a little bit. I didn’t know it for years, but I now believe something is violated spiritually when a woman gets her hair cut too short. She feels it in her spirit, but tries to respond to it rationally by saying, “It just isn’t the right cut. The beautician didn’t do it right.”

Short hair often has a sharp, severe look to it (as does long hair with short sideburns). Is this look huggable, approachable? Or does it have a cold, distancing effect? In one elderly congregation that we attended, almost without exception the women’s hair was as short or shorter than the men’s. To offset the naked feeling, the women often wore large earrings.

One time my husband and I looked at a room of several thousand Christian women. Apparently, most of them had gone to the beauty parlor to employ someone to tamper with their hair. The money it represented in terms of cuts, perms, and hair coloring could make a significant dent in the national debt or feed a fair number of orphans. At a minimum of \$25 per visit, times 3,000 women, you’re looking at \$75,000 spent on vanity in just one small section of one city!

Uncovered styled hair needs a woman’s frequent attention. Often, women find themselves thinking about their hair the last thing at night and then again first thing in the morning – to say nothing of the frequent checking upon it all day, most every time they use the restroom. All that thought life is lost on futility. It takes freed-up thought life to continuously consider how to meet the needs of others. Instead, hair that’s never quite right eats up the modern woman with anxiety, and wasted time that could have been spent serving others.

Furthermore, since hair is a woman’s glory it will by implication attract attention to her, not only in a general way throughout the day but also in a more intense way, sexually. “The king is held captive by her tresses” (Song of Songs 7:5b). As men can testify, long luxurious locks of flowing hair are seductive in a woman. The wife’s wild mane of hair is one of the wonderful turn-ons of the marriage bed. Well-meaning women, perhaps innocent of the visual wiring of males as compared to the stronger relational wiring of females, are tempting other men by the public display of their glorious hair.

Your hair (your glory) is for your husband only. When it is kept for him alone, think of the increased security he feels in his heart.

Obedience in the area of the headcovering becomes the agent of spiritual blessing. There now dawns on the soul a shame at flirting, a shame over even having desired to turn other men's heads. We, in fact, enjoyed being a temptation to other men for our own pride's sake, because it felt so good to be desired. We see how naughty we've been. We see how our old *modus operandi* must go. With that comes freedom to be loyal, and an encouragement to be faithful to one's God-given authority [husband; father; husband-to-be].

Thus, following the Biblical mandate of growing your hair long and then covering it up means deliverance from slavery to hairstyles, and help to focus deeply upon God and His choice of one's mate for a lifetime. "The truth shall set you free" (John 8:32).

### **Modesty: clothes and jewelry**

Modesty goes with the veil. You know it instinctively. Spiritually. You just know: *Somehow, this outfit isn't suitable now. I'm sending two different messages.*

We need to look, again, at the fundamental view we have of ourselves. Are we an ornament or a servant? The more money and effort we spend on our outward appearance, the less of a servant's heart we have and the more of a serve-ME heart we have. Could that woman in high heels and ornate jewelry and a tight white shiny dress really roll up her sleeves and serve in an instant? Would the fingernail polish get damaged? Do the earrings scratch the young child embraced in a hug?

Endless preoccupation with ornamental details doesn't end up serving others. After all, do the neighbors really care? Someone said once, "Many people care more about their own headaches than if you die!" Does your eyeliner really affect the quality of someone else's life?

Consider the further bondage of excessive jewelry. I once noticed a woman sitting alone at a rodeo; on her hand was a super-large very expensive diamond ring. The entire evening she kept that hand out of sight, tucked under her legs, perhaps so that a stray strong-armed cowboy wouldn't notice and calculate how he might meet up with her behind the barn to steal it. Now that's slavery.

Being absorbed with increasing one's beauty is time-consuming. The headcovering results in a turning of one's time and energy to good works rather than chasing after articles to make one's self attractive. Deliverance from the preoccupation and expense of excessive make-up, jewelry, and clothes – including the chores of finding them, buying them, maintaining them, and arranging them – is a real emancipation. Now each time we pass the mirror, the scarf whispers, "Remember, born to serve!"

I wonder how many children go without breakfast 'cause mom is fixing her hair or picking out "the" outfit. Think of the ease of Mother Teresa's veil and her two habits. Wash one and don the other, every morning. Go pray. Then hit the streets to spend the day serving others.

Biblical clothing was instituted and worn to *cover* (Genesis 3). Our culture chooses clothing for what it will reveal. A friend's husband came home one evening and said, "I saw several more victims of the clothing shortage at the grocery store today!" Just take a trip to your nearest high school or college campus and note the preponderance of skin-tight tops on the women who are our future leaders, wives, and mothers. And note the very short skirts, screaming "easy access" to the men.

Pants. Ever stop to think how perfectly they outline a woman's rear end and crotch, and what trouble that causes men who are around the women who wear them? In most congregations, our brothers in Christ are likewise exposed to this tempting, distracting sight each week, during the service, where they can't help but see what's in the row ahead of them. Shorts and swimming suits are more of the same.

The strongest image of motherhood that we have is of a woman out by the front gate in a long flowing skirt and apron. That's the mother in the old-fashioned storybooks. If you really love this feminine image, and longed for such a mother yourself, then *BE* it yourself. Wear a modest dress each day.

One couple went in for marriage counseling. After the wife had paraded a long list of her husband's faults, the counselor turned to the husband and asked, "Now what do you wish your wife would do?" He didn't think twice. He answered, "Wear a dress." She nearly fell over. "You mean you're not going to tell him about how I rage with PMS and don't get the housework done!?" "Nope. I just want you to wear a dress." How many other men long for it? I'm convinced that men see differently than women. We do not see what they are seeing. God may

see differently, too. He never intended for his women to look like men. He calls it an *abomination* if women wear men's clothing – and vice versa (Deuteronomy 22:5, emphasis added).

We need to look as pleasant and feminine as possible for our loved ones. We should come forth with long hair that is clean and neatly covered, brushed teeth, and a sweet smelling body. A week's worth of long, flowing working dresses or skirts [in wonderful colors (shades that look particularly good on you)] should do it. Conquer it, get it done, and move on to serve.

## V. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Now let's address some practical issues of making a covering and wearing it. A note, first: there are different views on the headcovering style, particularly relating to the amount of hair that shows. Mennonite women generally do not let their hair hang down or show at all, and cover it with a netted cap. Others believe that the veil should drape but some hair shows at the bottom. Each woman needs to go to the LORD for what He would impress upon your own conscience on these specific points.

### Making it

One can spend a lot of time making headcoverings that don't "do" right. Here are some beginning pitfalls.

- 1) You can make **TOO MANY**. Having to make one to go with every outfit keeps you enslaved to fashion. Better to go with a few basic ones, each plain color going with several dresses. We only wear one. It is navy blue and it goes with everything.
- 2) You can pick scarves that are way **TOO FLAMBOYANT**, loud dashing colors, gypsy-like. The spiritual point is to draw less attention to yourself rather than more.
- 3) The fabrics and style you pick can be **TOO STIFF**, making sharp points come off your head in various places. The short three-cornered scarf is a particular culprit because visually the points come out of the sides of your head, giving you a harsh look.

I like a long smooth Greek line. To achieve it, you have to use a flowing fabric (silk is wonderful) and make your three-cornered scarf larger so that it will drape down your back. From a side silhouette, the line is graceful and feminine.

Ideal dimensions are 36" (long side) by 26" (on the short sides) and 20" down the middle.

Lest you gasp at the price of 100% silk: I found a beautiful solution by buying a silk blouse in a solid color at the thrift store for \$2.00, cutting it up and making a scarf. Voilà. Inexpensive, cool (it breathes), and nice soft silhouette lines are the result.

- 4) The headcovering can have **TOO MUCH BULK** of fabric to carry comfortably on the head. The semi-circle has this problem. Note how the triangle cuts out some of this excess fabric on the sides.

- 5) The headcovering can be **TOO SMALL AND SHEER/ SEE-THROUGH**, thus reducing it to an ornamental token rather than something that the angels and others can “read” as a symbol.

### **Wearing it**

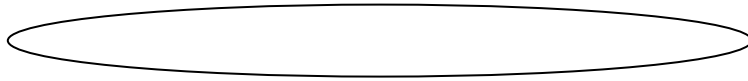
- 1) When you put it on, slide it back slightly from your hairline (so that you don't look like a bald eagle).
- 2) The hair can be drawn up and clipped on the sides to keep it neatly in place before putting on the covering. The covering can then be secured with additional outside clips. Some prefer to braid the hair underneath or put it in a ponytail (or up in a bun) before covering it.
- 3) Place the covering scarf on top of your head and then match the points under your chin to make sure they are even before switching them to the back to tie or snap at the base of your head.
- 4) Get small clips, the same color as the veil, so as not to draw attention to them.

There may be some physical adjustment to the *FEEL* of a headcovering, but lest you think this is insurmountable, think of the initial adjustment you had to overcome to wear a bra, eyeglasses, contact lenses, or braces. It can be done, and it is done, all the time. Our comfort level quickly returns.

For some, the biggest battle may be one of temperature. Your headcovering may feel uncomfortably hot in the summer. One gal told me she was feeling irritated with having to wear one on a hot day, when to her amazement, she overheard a nun passing by talking to a friend. The nun said, “It was so hot today, I had a little trouble deciding which veil to wear, so I ended up with my white one!” Was that God's providential timing or what!

Come to think of it, nuns have worn them all over the earth for centuries. Arabs wear them in the hottest of deserts. Women in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India are seen in full head coverings, despite the extreme heat of those places. No doubt Mary, the mother of Jesus, wore a headcovering daily, too.

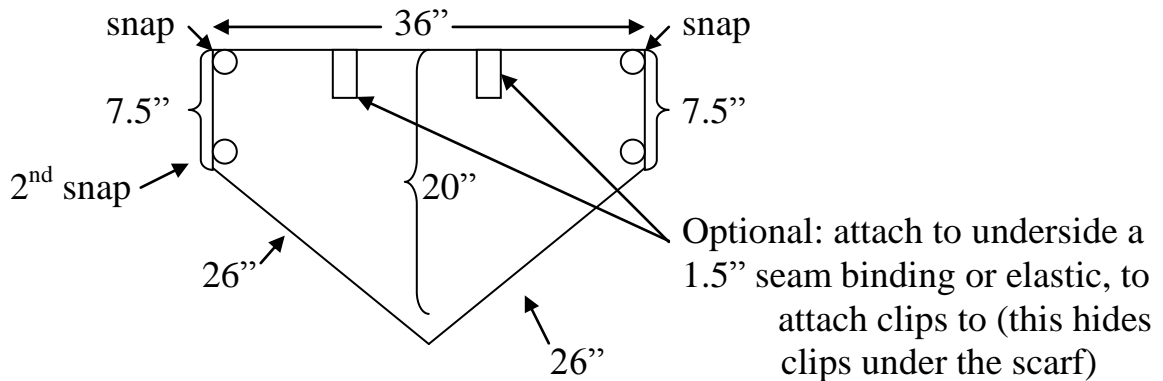
But for us weak ones, who splutter around like little female Winnie the Poohs with *whews* and *oh bothers* and *botherations*, an excellent solution for hot weather is to drench your scarf and wear it wet! You'll have your own instant personal air conditioner. You'll find you'll actually be happier with one on than without.



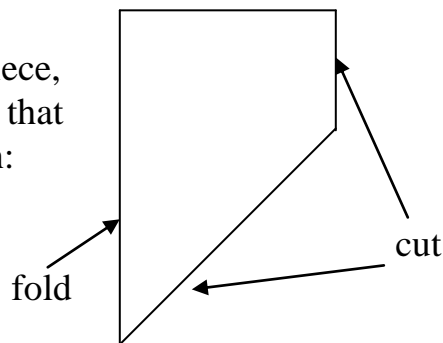
## A Lovely, Comfortable Headcovering Pattern

This headcovering eliminates a knot at the base of the neck, or the need to use a twistie, which sometimes pulls on you by the end of the day. Use pure silk to make is as light as possible and to stay cool in hot weather. Hem all sides. If remaking a thrift store silk blouse into a headcovering, cut your triangle from the back of the shirt, using the shirt's bottom hem as your straight side, putting the point up near the collar of the shirt. (Whack off the sleeves and arm holes first to flatten the fabric).

### Making it:

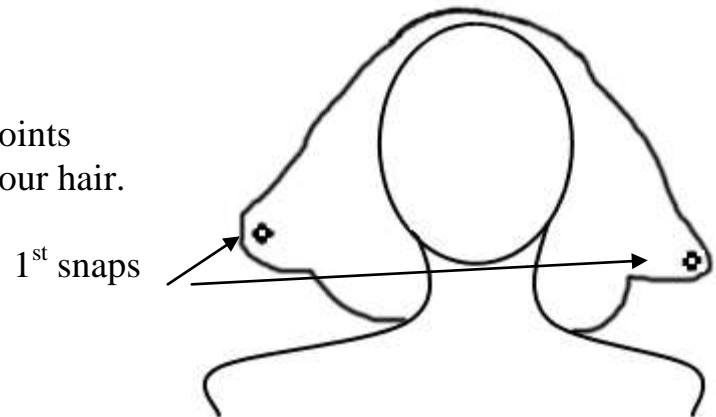


To make the above piece, cut it folded so that the sides match:

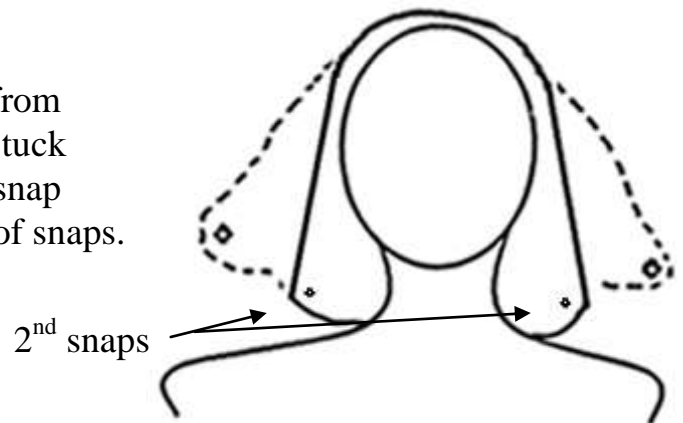


**Wearing it:**

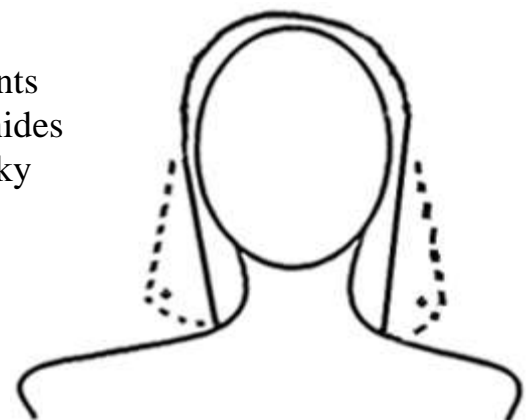
1. Clip it on. Then snap first two points at the base of your neck, under your hair.



2. Pull the short sides' points out away from your head as far as they will go, then tuck the points under your hair again and snap them together with your second pair of snaps.



3. The finished look is smooth with no sharp points sticking out anywhere. It covers beautifully, hides the clips, and is lighter weight without the bulky knot of a triangle at the base of the neck.





## **2. Increased witness**

Wearing a headcovering makes one very conscious of being Christ's representative on the earth. It curbs our usual impatient, selfish, got-to-go-after-things-and-goals-even-if-it-means-running-over-people-to-get-them attitude. We bear a public responsibility in season and out of season. As Watchman Nee said, "The headcovering is a small matter, but it constitutes a very great testimony."<sup>20</sup>

## **3. Persecution**

One must take seriously the possibility that the headcovering will make sitting ducks of us should persecution come. Still, isn't it better to be fully with the LORD, under His divine supernatural protection, than lukewarm under our own wits and wherewithal? God may choose to have His floodlight shine well upon us at that time. We'll be spotted anywhere. We must remember that He is LORD of the run-ins and that not a sparrow can fall without His consent. We have to make our peace with this possibility ahead of time, and yield all the fall-out to Him.

## **4. May help break some addictions**

One can't make promises in this area, but it stands to reason that if we have increased "insulation" from demonic forces via the headcovering, we may experience some real deliverance from chronic battles we haven't been able to get victory over for years. Look for subtle spiritual enabling in areas of personal struggle. Be alert for these wonderful changes. You may experience increased help in overcoming a grumpy countenance, undisciplined spending, time wasters, unforgiveness, gluttony, etc.

## **5. Subdued self**

Someone has said, "It took perhaps 40 days to get the Jews out of Egypt, but then it took 40 years to get Egypt out of the Jews." Praise God that it didn't take forty years for me, for I now truly prefer being covered. That can only be a work of God, given my initial resistance. Egypt has lost its luster. I feel released to have dropped out of the anxiety and self-focus of trinketry. One of the great saints said at the close of his life, "So much of life was just licking the earth."

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<sup>20</sup> Watchman Nee, *Love One Another* (Richmond, Virginia: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1975), excerpted with permission in *...Let Her Be Veiled: An in-depth study of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16*, edited by Tom Shank, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Kalispell, Montana: Torch Publications, Valley View Christian Fellowship, 1992), p. 37-40.

The other day I saw a mail order catalog and was struck with the haughty, proud, hardened, rebellious, near nude look of the models. That is where the other road takes us.

## **6. More peaceful marriage**

I have felt real help in my marriage via the headcovering. When I am prone to rip it off for aesthetic or comfort reasons, I cling to its value in warding off contention. I would rather have the peace than the aesthetics any day.

On occasion, I've seen it change my husband more than it has changed me. I've seen it change his heart and back him off from a dogged stand. We are both less prone to get ensnared in a contentious argument. It's like the headcovering is the referee scarf between us as we both submit to our loving Heavenly Father. Several times I've even noticed that when my husband was irritated with me over some previously contested area between us, I didn't even get bothered! I had such peace in my heart.

## **7. Unexpected respect**

Many women told me they noticed an immediate difference in respect from men who were complete strangers: men jumping to open doors, going out of the way to lift heavy things, and answering questions conscientiously! On the other hand, they experienced anger from worldly women who had worked a lifetime to avoid heading in the same direction! Overall, though, there tends to be increased respect from both sexes. Who would ever guess that a little piece of fabric would work such an effect?

Let me share a story of my own to demonstrate. One evening, I had to go to a secular banquet of elderly people with my husband – to a place where I expected we might be the only Christians. I put the headcovering on and felt utterly dowdy. I sighed in front of the mirror, saying, “LORD, I used to enjoy dressing up for evening occasions. It was a “high”, for me, a little earthly excitement to see how pretty I could make myself. But now, LORD, I'm dressing for you out of sheer obedience. How you could consider this in any way beautiful is beyond me. You must surely define beauty differently.” I was emotionally flat, discouraged, down. I had no idea that God was noticing my depression and thinking, “Well, I'll show you a thing or two before the night is over!”

Later my eight-year-old daughter (also wearing a covering) and I had parked the car and walked to the banquet hall where we would meet my husband coming from work. Out of the blue, an elderly gentleman and his wife stopped us and exclaimed to my daughter, “You look beautiful with that scarf on your head. It looks so pretty with your dress.”

We walked on and entered the dining hall. Immediately, it seemed, everyone stopped drinking their wine, turned, and stared at us like we had just come from Mars. When they found their composure again, they continued their socializing, but we noticed that they sneaked long stares at us. After dinner, tripping and stumbling over their own curiosity, they swarmed us. One woman finally asked the question for the others. “Why do you wear those scarves on your heads?” We replied that we had learned about it from reading the Bible, and that I was wearing it to help me be sweeter to my husband. To which she replied (because she had eaten dinner next to my husband), “Well, I don’t know *WHO* is sweeter, you or your husband!” At the same time, in the background another woman said with delight to my husband, “Wherever did you find her [for a wife]!” We had full vigorous, satisfying conversation all evening and in the end, some of them came around to say good-bye several times! I had never received so many compliments in one evening in my life. Here I had worried that we would be shunned and rejected. Instead, we found ourselves the center of attention.

Just an aside here. I think we see this very principle played out in the choosing of Esther by King Xerxes. We read in Esther 2:13-15 that in preparation for meeting the king, each concubine was allowed to take anything she wanted with her from the harem to the King’s palace (presumably something to ornament herself), but Esther emptied herself of any will of her own and entered into submission: “she asked for nothing other than what Hegai, the King’s eunuch who was in charge of the harem, suggested.” And the result? “Esther won the favor of everyone who saw her” (Esther 2:15b). Wearing the unseen gown of submission, she became the queen of the ball.

God alone draws people to us for his own purposes. We mistakenly have been conditioned to think that we draw people by our vanity, which is an experience that most everyone finds exhausting and full of insecurity. God alone bonds.

Another phenomenon that I have experienced is that the headcovering many times shows you the true spirit of a person the minute you meet them. I realized that I

had in the past accustomed myself to knowing people sentimentally, not spiritually. Sometimes it took years to discover that they were, in fact, spiritually cold, underneath their warm relational ways. I had been blind to their spiritual hostilities. The upside is that now, there is no wasted time finding out!

## VII. CONCLUSION

After several months of wearing the headcovering, I was in town one day, and took it off to re-tie it. In so doing, one of the strings broke. Having no other way to keep it on, I tossed it in the back seat and said, “Oh well, I’ll have to finish my errands without one.” To my surprise, I soon experienced three things: (1) I felt unprotected; men eyed me as visual prey again. (2) Nobody opened doors for me. No doubt, I had subconsciously grown accustomed to such preferential treatment, because I immediately felt the absence of it. And, (3) I didn’t have the joy of being more than myself, of publicly and visually identifying myself with my Savior.

**To review**, this is what I’ve observed comes with the donning of the veil.

- 1) It places us under God’s special protection.
- 2) It creates spontaneous witness opportunities, because of its constant visual presence.
- 3) It frees up time and decision making stress over clothing and fashion.
- 4) It deals a deathblow to a dangerously rooted self-life that gets a toehold in women through vanity.
- 5) It releases unexpected respect and honor, from others, which we thought comes by decorating ourselves but find instead comes by humbling ourselves.
- 6) It shifts the focus of life to good deeds, helping women become servers rather than serve-ME's.
- 7) And finally, in and through it all, it brings pain...the good pain of the suffering of self-denial.

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## **Consider your present sufferings and count it all joy (James 1:2)**

We are given a glory and then are asked to live without that glory. To toss one's hair freely in the wind and position it just so with barrettes, to calculate how it might increase our beauty, gives us delight. But we are asked to go without that delight. Loss of that glory is, for us, a real death. One feels it as the covering goes on: the futility of even having hair, only to experience the discomfort of keeping it covered, is a type of dying. One despondently wonders why we were given the glory if no one but our husbands is ever to see it. The point is that the possibility of displaying it remains. Daily choosing the humility over the display is a continual affirmation of our love of God – and of *HIS* love for us, because His path of submission will lead us to an eternal glory that far outweighs the earthly course of denial (Romans 8:18).

To cover up something that is not a real glory in the first place is meaningless. It is no sacrifice. “Shall I render to God that which costs me nothing?” (2 Samuel 24:24). To give up one's hair is only the first mincing step toward martyrdom, the giving up of one's whole body. The bodies and hair of the martyrs could scarcely have been called beautiful as they were buried alive and charred and flayed and digested in raw lion saliva. Here indeed is covered glory. Generation after generation, this treasure of carrying the gospel in our frail human earthly vessels has ignited rage.

As we tug and pull at the covering and are occasionally irritated by it, let its presence remind us that it is this very willingness – yes, even eagerness – for submission to our LORD that confounds the demons. We do willingly what the fallen angels would not.

## ADDENDUM

# God's Principle of Covering

### A look at its implications for the woman's veiling

Like a parent covering up all of his beloved children for the night, so God covers His most special treasures, as we see throughout Scripture. It is instructive to take note of what God covers up, and why. Sometimes He uses *layers* of coverings. Peering into this mystery may add greater depth to the understanding of the particular covering of women set forth in 1 Corinthians 11.

In the beginning of God's Word we see that Adam and Eve's covering of themselves with fig leaves was apparently not adequate. God comes down immediately and does it right: He slaughters an animal and covers them with a full covering of an animal's skin and fur (Genesis 3:7, 21).

It is interesting to note that, besides establishing the theological principle that there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood, God was zealous to GET Adam and Eve COVERED. Apparently, it would not do for the faces of angels to see these two uncovered after they had sinned. It would not do for Adam and Eve and all their children to see each other uncovered, and it would not do for God to co-exist with this uncovering, given the fallen spiritual condition of His kingdom. This covering by God was not casual. It was done with the fervor of perfection. It was resolute.

We gather from 1 Corinthians 11:15 that God gave a special covering to the woman, to Eve: a natural covering of long hair. He did not so cover the man. This was the first layer of covering upon the woman. We read later in the Word of women having long hair and a second covering, a veil. The veil is consistently present in Old Testament accounts, and is spoken of rather matter-of-factly, and often in terms of the shame of its absence on a woman (Genesis 24:65; Numbers 5:18; Isaiah 47:1-2). Since we are never told when the headcovering was introduced, some have speculated that the long hair was given at Creation, whereas the second covering of the veil was given at the time of the Fall.

Scriptures contain all the information we need, but they are not a compendium of all of God's conversations with people. For instance, we can gather from reading in the book of Job (38:31-32) that the ancients knew the names of the constella-

tions. We can infer from this that God taught the ancients astronomy and that they passed down that knowledge. Likewise, God's response to the different sacrifices offered by Cain and Abel indicates that God had communicated instructions earlier that were not recorded in Scriptures. Because we know that God is just, we must assume that both brothers knew what would constitute an acceptable sacrifice. The emphasis in this written account seems to be only upon results. So, too, it is likely that instructions concerning the veil were passed down from Eve, so that women throughout early history knew what pleased God in that respect.

Since the patriarchs had such long life spans, it is probable that they engaged in much intergenerational spiritual discourse. Adam was still alive when Noah's father was born. So, it is fair to assume that God's people knew clearly, in those early days, much that we only grasp at in an effort to reconstruct. When God walked with Adam in the cool of the day, they talked!

From the Genesis account (the covering of both Adam and Eve, and the further covering of Eve alone), we can infer that God covered *deliberately*. He initiated the whole idea. It was a serious act to Him, to set in motion sobering principles of modesty and divine government. These coverings, reverently heeded and obeyed, were to promote peace in the heart and in his kingdom.

We see in another account that God uses the idea of covering in a further way, for protection. "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty...and under His wings you will find refuge" (Psalm 91:1, 4b). Here we see a draped wing graciously placed over us, and although it is dark beneath the sheaf of feathers, one finds warmth and feels the throb of God's very heartbeat. The protection is broad, completely overshadowing us. And at the same time that we are covered by protection, we are also experiencing close nurture.

The LORD furthers the image later, when He speaks to Jerusalem: "How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings" (Luke 13:34b). One can just picture the image of bloused feathers and all the happy protected chirping and chattering going on beneath. One can see this image expanding into the robust Jewish hugs and kisses and gesticulations of fully freed-up emotional lives because the banner of the Great "I AM" is draped over all the house of Israel!

One wonders whether a woman's veiling does not afford the same spiritual protection of an emancipated emotional life. God covers her that she might be freed to walk the streets, shielded from adulterous eyes, and sheltered at home from excessive demonic interference and harassment. Surely such profound imagery of the LORD's wing is not to be lost upon us in the matter of the veiling. God's coverings, no doubt, have layers of meaning, layers of effects, too, not all of which may be known to us now, and layers of influence extending both from and to ourselves. Are we doing ourselves any favor to spurn such a divine provision?

Then we see God use the notion of covering to hide His glories, even in the giving of His most precious gift of salvation. Note the way it is disseminated: first through a baby laid in a manger, and then spoken through the likes of you and me. "We have this treasure in jars of clay" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Gleaming, glorious salvation is hauled about from village to village in earthen vessels, covered up in lumpy-lump us, in the inconsistent, sinful, backbiting, greedy, lustful creatures that we are. Consider all the ways God *could have* handed out salvation, once He had paid for it so dearly. He could have offered it in the sky, trailing in words behind a blimp as a large ad...or invite us to pluck salvation tokens off from rainbows, someday, to cash in later at the pearly gates. He could have offered it with loud trumpet fanfares while dropping it off of His white horse as He gallops past. But, no, instead He uses inept, two-dimensional us.

He hides the resounding, shattering, breathtaking gift of salvation in matter of fact discourse between humans. We ineptly stagger at making a humble plea to each other to take care of one's soul by a heart transaction one cannot even *see* happening! He lets the feeble Melpitus Glee Club, as it were, render to us Handel's great oratorio, "Messiah," allowing a weak rendition to do the work of enticing us to believe that it is sung better, in all its glory, somewhere else. So the gift of salvation passes from my poor mouth to your receptive ears and somehow gets the job done because of the power of the Message. In the end, when we see saved souls from every tribe and nation at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 5:9, 19:9), we'll wonder how it all could have happened in such an inefficient way. We'll find out then, that it was a covered glory.

We see that a principle of covering is that it enhances the gift. Perhaps that's where we got the tradition of wrapping gifts. Cover the item first with a box, then with paper. Multiple coverings, undone layer by layer, build anticipation and delight.

God covers and hides even Himself. Plodding in on a donkey, a seeming ho-hum merchant, entering the city to make the greatest purchase of all time, selling His own covered up, hidden soul of perfection for all the wormy, bitter souls of men.

And sometime before His donkey ride, He made another transaction, “taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in *appearance* as a man” (Philippians 2:7-8, emphasis added). In other words, He covered His glory with flesh. Divinity was squashed and stuffed into a human skin. The result? The understatement of all time: “He humbled Himself” (Philippians 2:8). Jesus is the best example of veiled glory.

The way the whole world knew about Christ's voluntary subjection was through His APPEARANCE. He put on flesh. Totally covered up, the last vestige of glory light was extinguished. He put a lid on His divinity and settled down inside the darkened jar, the clay pot. “The courts of everlasting day now in mortal clay,” as an old hymn writer so beautifully put it.

He turned from grasping after the glory of God in any form, by not allowing Himself to enhance Himself. He “did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing” (Philippians 2:6-7).

Do we dare turn from such a sublime thought to examine our own crusty hearts for even some desire for a moderate humiliation? Can we not with a hopeful heart duck under the covering? Withdraw from seeking to enhance ourselves, by our hair? Refrain from puffing it, arranging it, fixing it, grasping for yet a better “look”? Hold back our hands from running after vanity, and settle into deep peace. Enter into the yoke of the only truly humbled One, to learn of Him. Does not our appearance, via the veil, help establish and make it so? If Christ Himself chose **appearance** as an avenue for His message, the way *we* appear may be far more important than we know.

In Isaiah 53:2 we read: “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His APPEARANCE that we should desire Him. Like one from whom men hide their faces.” Yoked with such a Being, does it not seem odd to be trafficking in efforts of self-aggrandizement?

See, too, how God covered and hid yet one more glory, His tabernacle, in the wilderness (Exodus 6:8-19). From that, we may draw further inspiration to don the headcovering ourselves.

Why go to such work to erect all that proud, grand, gold structure of the tabernacle, only to cover it all up? Not with one covering, but with four? First, there was the four-colored woven covering with the cherubim design, which was then covered by a layer of goat's hair. Following that was the ram's skin covering, and finally the outer covering of hides. There is great theological symbolism in the choice of the types of coverings, to be sure, each of them showing some aspect of Christ, but aside from that, the concept of multiple coverings, alone, is enough to make one stop and ponder. We note that the presence of these four layers must have hid it all quite thoroughly. These coverings didn't get up there by accident. The scope and detail of them belie a great spiritual weight attending them.

Parts of this wilderness tabernacle must have been a bit of a puzzle to the Israelites. Tie down a real glory on the earth, and then cover it all up? Make it a real glory, complete with a mercy seat where God of very God, in fact, shall sit. But so absorb the Israelites with the sweat and strain of putting it up and taking it down again, and transporting it on their brawny backs, that they never really see the whole thing. Just think: the Israelites never saw a full-color glossy aerial view of the tabernacle, neatly tucked into Bible history books. Setting it up, the Levites' faces were flat up against the golden pillars – too close to see. Now let's erect a Holy of Holies. Yes, that's right, and then command that no one shall see it but the high priest, and he only once a year. Maybe some asked, *Why bother? Why do it, if virtually no one is to ever see it?* It wasn't until the curtain was rent in the outer court of the temple after Christ's death that the fuller story was declared (Matthew 27:1). The covering was vitally important.

In the meantime, it looked to all the heathen, every last one of them as far as the eye could see, that the Israelites trooped around aimlessly, halted, gathered under a dull tent of skins, and then trooped around some more. And who knows for what? The Holy of Holies was totally lost on the heathen. They had no idea. As unthinkable to them that man would ever walk on the moon, was the idea that God would ever walk on the earth. Yet that penetrating, riveting event was going on day after day in the wilderness, right under their outstretched noses.

God so blessed the principle of covering that He waited for His tabernacle to be covered completely before His glory would come down in a pillar of cloud and settle upon it, the mark of His satisfaction. He rewarded the diligence the men demonstrated in applying the coverings by showing up with His life-giving presence only after it was done.

Comparing this tabernacle covering to a woman's headcovering is again rich with implications. Her hair is a real glory. But it gets covered up. So be it. The LORD may settle upon her in a new way.

So the concept of covering is carried forth into eternity with the Feast of Tabernacles: God's people getting under the covering (Leviticus 23:42-43). Erecting booths in their vineyards and on their balconies now, on earth, and later celebrating in some way in Heaven, as a picture that the LORD once tabernacled among men. We come under His covering because He once covered Himself in ours.

Apparently, the LORD's choice for earth is *covered* glory. For Heaven, it is *revealed* glory. [On earth, we turn the other cheek, because He roars forth from Heaven saying, "vengeance is Mine" (Deuteronomy 32:35; Romans 12:19).] On earth, He opened not His mouth, like a lamb before his shearers is silent (Isaiah 53:7). In Heaven, full declaration and disclosure.

Is there not a lesson in this mystery that we do well to heed? Might the woman's veil store up some more glory that releases praise at some other time?

In summary, we see that God uses the covering to:

- 1) express His government,
- 2) depict the full measure of His protection, and
- 3) contain and suppress His glories while on earth so that they might gather sufficient combustion to break out for all eternity.

Do we not, as women, impoverish ourselves by not getting under the covering that God has so graciously laid out upon the bureau of time for us? Oh, that we might cover up, not only in veil but also in heart, and partake with gladness of all that He has for us.

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