Headdress or Hairstyle? A Study of 1 Corinthians 11 and the Use of the Veil in Worship

Christie Goulart Chadwick[1]

Abstract: This article investigates whether Paul is recommending a veil for women in the context of worship, or whether he is discussing appropriate hairstyles for them. A closer look at the passage of 1 Corinthians 11:4–16 shows first of all that Paul is not discussing only women, but the appropriate attire for both men and women in light of what is proper and expected in the Greco-Roman society of his time. The absence of a word for "veil" in the original text points to the possibility of a discussion of hairstyles and not apparel for the head. Archaeological and textual evidence from this period supports this interpretation.

Keywords: Corinth; Veil; Worship; Gender; Modesty.

Véu ou Penteado? Um Estudo de 1 Coríntios 11 e o Uso do Véu na Adoração

Resumo: Este artigo analisa se Paulo está recomendando um véu para as mulheres no contexto da adoração, ou se ele está discutindo penteados apropriados para elas. Um olhar mais atento à passagem de 1 Coríntios 11:4–16 mostra, em primeiro lugar, que Paulo não está discutindo apenas as mulheres, mas a vestimenta e apresentação apropriada para homens e mulheres à luz do que é esperado na sociedade greco-romana de seu tempo. A ausência de uma palavra para "véu" no texto original aponta para a possibilidade de uma discussão sobre penteados e estilos de cabelo e não sobre uma vestimenta para a cabeça. Evidências arqueológicas e textuais desse período corroboram essa interpretação.

Palavras-chave: Corinto; Véu; Adoração; Gênero; Modéstia.

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[1] PhD in ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Archaeology, Andrews University, Michigan, (United States). Assistant Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Archaeology at the Adventist University of São Paulo UNASP, São Paulo, (Brazil). E-mail: christie.chadwick@acad.unasp.edu.br

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Introduction

1 Corinthians 11:4–16 contains many issues worthy of investigation, but this paper will focus on the apostle's concern with the headdress or hairstyle of the believers in Corinth. What is Paul referring to? Why is it wrong for men to worship with their heads covered? Why are women expected to do the opposite? Where do the customs he is trying to implement in Corinth come from? From a Jewish or a Greco-Roman background? What costume is he referring to headdress or hairstyle?

To answer these questions, the cultural-historical context of Corinth circa the first century AD will be considered, with some attention to the centuries preceding and following it. It is important to keep in mind that Corinth by the time of Paul is a Roman colony and not primarily a Greek city (THISELTON, 2000), so we will address mainly Roman cultural behavior in the first century, even though some mention will be made to Greek customs.

1 Corinthians 11: 4–16 (NASB)

> 4 Every man who has *something* on his head [κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων] while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. 5 But every woman who has her head uncovered [ἀκατακαλύπτῳ] while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. 6 For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. 7 For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. 8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; 9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. 10 Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and all things originate from God. 13 Judge for 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 one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

The Issues: what is Paul referring to?

There has been a lot of debate surrounding the meaning of this passage. This paper will present here some of the main interpretations in recent scholarship:

Paul is talking about the conduct of women

The more traditional view has been that the text refers mainly to women and their head coverings (MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 1980). Even though in verses 4, 7 and 14 Paul is talking about men, most commentators believe that the purpose of the text is to address a problem with the women in the congregation who were not wearing their veils properly. Take for instance this note from Conzelmann (1975, p. 184): "Strictly, Paul is speaking only of *appearance* at divine worship; this is an inspired act. The parallelism between vv. 4 and 5 expresses the fundamental equality of rights, although it is only the *women's* conduct that is at issue here."

What is implied is that the reference to men's behavior is only a step in setting the stage for talking about the problems they were having with the conduct of women (ROBERTSON, 1914, p. 229; HODGE, 1965).[2] Many scholars today disagree with this view as will be seen below.

One of the reasons scholars deny any connection between the passage and the conduct of men is the lack of understanding of a head covering for men. While the notion of a veil, or a head covering for women has been known, accepted and can even be witnessed to this day, many have failed to see the archaeological and textual evidence for men covering their heads during worship, and have even come to regard the possibility as hypothetical (THISELTON, 2000; MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 1980; OSTER, 1988; 1992).[3] Recent scholarship has picked up on the significance of verses 4, 7 and 14 and has taken them into account in their understanding of the passage, starting perhaps with the emphasis on the subject given by Murphy-O'Connor (1980) and now present in some of the works that came out after 1980 (THISELTON, 2000; OSTER, 1988; 1992; THOMPSON

[2] "There is no reason for supposing that men at Corinth had been making this mistake in the congregation. The conduct which would be improper for men is mentioned in order to give point to the censure on women, who in this matter had been acting as men"

[3] The above authors are the main critics of this position. Below are examples of authors who have defended it: Conzelmann (1975); Robertson (1914); Hodge (1965).

1988; GILL, 1990). According to Murphy-O'Connor "men figure equally prominently in this section, and neither grammar nor language distinguishes this reference from those concerned with women. The problem, therefore, involved both sexes" (MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 1980, p. 483).

Paul is talking about headdress for both men and women

The proponents of this view translate κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων as "with his head covered" (v. 4) and point to the opposite idea contained in verse 5, ἀκατακαλύπτῳ "[with her head] uncovered," as support for this translation. A lot of controversy surrounds the translating of the expression κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων, which literally means "having down from the head." The most common translations for the passage have interpreted it as meaning a head covering or a veil of some kind, but the term might be referring to long loose hair.

As mentioned earlier, one of the obstacles to understanding the passage's reference to men was the lack of understanding of the custom of a man covering his head, but a look at the archaeological record and the iconography of the period provides vast evidence for the practice. One of the greatest proponents of the view that Paul is referring to a head covering for men is Richard Oster (1988),[4] who points out the neglect of the texts and archaeology: "These conclusions[5] do not acknowledge the relevant Greek and Latin texts, as well as the archaeological data that depict ancient mores and sacred laws concerning men's devotional head apparel (1988, p. 484)".

Oster and others (OSTER, 1988; THOMPSON, 1988; GILL, 1990) have successfully shown that it was a common Roman practice for men to cover their head while worshiping or offering sacrifices. There is an etiological legend frequently used to describe the Roman custom of covering the head:

> "16 (22) They say that Aeneas, the son of Anchises and Venus, when he had landed in Italy, was intending to sacrifice to some one or other of the gods, and after praying was about to begin the sacrifice of the animal that had been prepared for the rite, when he caught sight of one of the Achaeans approaching at a distance — either Ulysses, when he was about to consult the oracle near Lake Avernus, or Diomed, when he came as an

[4] Supported by Thompson (1988); Gill (1990).

[5] The conclusions of other scholars who believe the text in 1 Cor 11:2–16 is not about men's behavior but only about women's, or that men ever covered their heads during worship.

> ally to Daunus. 2 And being vexed at the coincidence and wishing to avert as an evil omen the sight of an enemy that had appeared at the time of a sacrifice, he veiled himself and turned back; then, after the departure of the enemy, he washed his hands again and finished the sacrifice. 3 When the sacrifices turned out rather favourably, he was pleased at the coincidence and observed the same practice on the occasion of every prayer; and his posterity keep this also as one of the customary observances in connection with their sacrifices" (DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSO, *Antiquitates Romanae* 12.16).

Throughout Roman history, covering the head then appears as part of the procedure for the priest or sacrificant:

> The augur seated himself on his left hand, with his head covered, and holding in his right hand a curved staff without any knots (LIVY, *Ad Urbe Condita* 1.18).
>
> A triumphing general drives through the City in a gilded chariot, appareled in the splendid vestments of Jupiter Optimus Maximus After this he goes up to the Capitol; is he not to be seen there with capis and lituus ? Is it to be regarded as an indignity, if he with veiled head slay a victim, or from his place on the citadel take an augury? (LIVY, *Ad Urbe Condita* 10.7).

Examples also abound in the iconography revealed by archaeology, as these examples show. Here the head covering is the indication of worship or sacrifice:

Figure 1 – Octavian Augustus, known to posterity as the Emperor Augustus Caesar

Source: https://www.thoughtco.com/who-was-octavian-augustus-119600 (Access Date: March 19, 2023)

Figure 2 - Portrait head of the emperor Nero

Source: https://www.corinth-museum.gr/en/collection-item/portrait-of-the-emperor-nero/ (Access Date: August 15, 2023)

Here is the famous imperial procession from the *Ara Pacis Augustae*, an altar to peace commissioned by the Roman senate to celebrate the *pax romana* brought by Octavian Augustus' victories. This section depicts several men covering their heads, likely the *flamines*, priests to a state god or goddess:

Figure 3 - Procession Relief, Ara Pacis

Source: https://www.worldhistory.org/image/2109/procession-relief-ara-pacis/ (Access Date: June 23, 2023)

They also show it was a practice not only of men, but of women involved in worship as well: "Likewise, the small group of Vestal Virgins customarily covered their heads with a garment known as the *suffibulum* while performing their sacerdotal functions" (OSTER, 1988, p. 496). Below is an image from the *Ara Pacis* where you can see a group of Vestal Virgins with a covering over their heads:

Figure 4 - Vestal Virgin Frieze, Palermo

Source: https://siciliangodmother.com/2015/05/04/baths-and-curses-in-palermos-archaeological-museum/ (Access Date: October 11, 2023)

There has never been a question of the custom of women being veiled or wearing some sort of head cover during the Roman period. The practice was well attested, even though in somewhat different forms throughout the Greco-Roman world (CONZELMANN, 1975). It was undoubtedly a matter of propriety, and coming from Tarsus, Paul would be used to the practice, since according to Chrysostom the women there came out into the public completely veiled:

> And yet many of the customs still in force reveal in one way or another the sobriety and severity of deportment of those earlier days. Among these is the convention regarding feminine attire, a convention which prescribes that women should be so arrayed and should so deport themselves when in the street that nobody could see any part of them, neither of the face nor of the rest of the body, and that they themselves might not see anything off the road (DIO CHRYSOSTOM, The thirty third, or Tarsic discourse 48).

Philo (*De specialis legibus* III.56) also mentions the headdress of a woman as "a symbol of modesty", the context here being an accusation of adultery against her:

> And the priest shall take the barley and offer it to the woman, and shall take away from her the head-dress on her head, that she may be judged with her head bare, and deprived of the symbol of modesty, which all those women are accustomed to wear who are completely blameless.

Now, the custom seems to apply only to married women. Young unmarried girls were not expected to cover head or face (CONZELMANN, 1975; BASKIN, 1992). According to Rouselle though, Paul is here requiring that all women wear veils: "When Paul (1 Cor 11:10) urged all women to wear veils, his purpose was to signify that, regardless of their status under other laws they were untouchable for Christian men" (ROUSSELLE, 1992, p. 315). But the practice, even though common, was not always carried out this way, the hairstyle and headdress were also a matter of fashion (CONZELMANN, 1975). Plutarch refers to the custom as usual though not necessarily mandatory:

> it is more usual for women to go forth in public with their heads covered and men with their heads uncovered" (PLUTARCH, *Quaest. Rom.* 267 a–b).

There are portrayals of women wearing and at times not wearing a veil (THOMPSON, 1988; GILL, 1990), which perhaps indicates that the custom was falling into disuse in the western world about the time of Paul. Below are busts of Livia, wife of Octavian with and without a head cover:

Figure 5 - Livia Drusilla

Source: https://www.britannica.com/biography/Livia-Drusilla (Access Date: September 11, 2023);

Oster (1988) offers no explanation why Paul would have a problem with men in the church in Corinth covering their heads while praying or prophesying. He simply states that the Romans did cover their heads during certain rituals and worship, contrary to the idea put forward by other scholars that the practice was not attested. Gill (1990) believes that the covering of the head during worship and other pious acts was limited to certain men, like the priests and emperors, and therefore was a marker of status. He saw the problem in Corinth as certain men wanting to differentiate themselves from the rest of the church group by covering their heads while in worship, and Paul's reaction as an attempt to keep the equality: "As 'one of the bases of the Greco-Roman system was to link official titles of priesthood with social status on the one hand, and with civic magistracy on the other', Paul may be attempting to say that if certain men adopt the form of dress suitable for a select band of people at a religious act, then division would occur" (GILL, 1990).

I find it hard to believe that covering the heads of some men gave them any more status than they had before. It was not their covering their heads that gave the priests in Roman society status, it was their position. Covering their head was just something they did while worshiping. If this proposition were true, it would mean that any man, regardless of his position, that covered his head during festivals and sacrifices would automatically attain status.

Thompson (1988), who is also of the opinion that Paul is talking about headdress, proposes that "when Paul reminds Christian men to pray and prophesy with head uncovered, the recommendation fits the context of shunning the worship of idols" (THOMPSON, 1988). In other words, he is simply trying to make a distinction between the practices within the Christian church from the practices associated with idol worship. Why would Paul be so careful in making a distinction in the practices of men and give the opposite counsel in regard to women? As stated above, head covering for women can be witnessed for the Vestal Virgins during their pagan services, and if the passage is interpreted as dealing with the headdress of both men and women, Paul would be contradicting himself.

Also, there is enough evidence of the acceptable nature of women with an uncovered head and carefully bound hair, mostly from the archaeological record, where we find sculptures of upper-class women, with their head uncovered.

Figure 6 - Livia, wife of Octavian

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Livia (Access Date: June 23, 2023)

Figure 7 - Agrippina the younger, mother of Nero

Source: https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/history-and-civilisation/2021/03/roman-empress-agrippina-was-a-master-strategist-she-paid-the-price (Access Date: June 15, 2023)

Paul is talking about hairstyles for men and women

Proponents of this view start by translating the expression κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων (v. 4; lit. "having down from the head") as "having long hair," and state the absence of any specific word for "veil," "head cover," etc. as evidence for a discussion not on head covering for men and women but of hairstyles, in other words men should not have their hair long, and women should not wear their long hair unbound. This position does get a little complicated in verse 5 where the word ἀκατακαλύπτῳ means "uncovered," and is not likely to be translated "unbound hair" (THISELTON, 2000). But in regard to this, Hurley (1973) cites the LXX and the translation of ἀκατακαλύπτῳ for the Hebrew פָּרוּעַ) which means "let loose," "unbind," "neglect." [6] Others have suggested that the woman's own hair, when properly made up and fixed on top of the head, was what was covering her head (MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 1980).

There is plenty of evidence in the sources for how long hair on men was perceived during the time of Paul. The Roman custom for men was to wear the hair short, and it is true that other cultures, even the Greeks and Jews wore their hair longer than the Roman style, but the general idea depicted by the Roman sources is that long hair was seen as effeminate, and might have been perceived as a sign of male homosexuality.

Juvenal thus describes an honorable man:

> if your whole staff be incorruptible; if no long haired catamite sells your judgment; if your wife be blameless…then you may trace back your race to Picus (JUVENAL, Satires 8 apud MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 2002, p. 113).

A catamite was a boy kept for homosexual purposes, and is here described as having long hair as part of his attraction.

Hurley clarifies the subject further by separating mere long hair from hair that was long and either elaborately dressed or cared for as to create a closer similarity to a woman's hairdo:

[6] "7870 פרע," BDB 828. The noun form meaning "long hair of head, locks." "7869 פֶּרַע," BDB 828.

> Both Jewish and pagan texts manifest a close relation between length of hair and its arrangement; hair was grown long in order that it might be artistically decorated. The real issue was the way hair was dressed. The slightest exaggeration was interpreted as a sign of effeminacy; it hinted at sexual ambiguity (HURLEY, 1973, p. 487).

Philo further attacks the practice of homosexuality and mentions again the hairstyle as indication of it:

> Moreover, another evil, much greater than that which we have already mentioned, has made its way among and been let loose upon cities, namely, the love of boys, which formerly was accounted a great infamy even to be spoken of, but which sin is a subject of boasting not only to those who practice it, but even to those who suffer it, and who, being accustomed to bearing the affliction of being treated like women, waste away as to both their souls and bodies, not bearing about them a single spark of a manly character to be kindled into a flame, but having even the hair of their heads conspicuously curled and adorned (PHILO, *De specialibus legibus* 3.7.37).

Epictetus criticized a young man who came to him once, for his exaggerated concern with looks, even though the youth denied homosexuality, the philosopher states sexual ambiguity was implied by his manner of dress and grooming.

> A certain young man a rhetorician came to see Epictetus, with his hair dressed more carefully than was usual and his attire in an ornamental style; Come, what other appellations have you? Are you man or woman? "Man." Adorn yourself then as man, not as woman (EPICTETUS, *Discourses, On personal adornment*, 3).

Women could also be seen as crossing over the gender boundaries when they had their hair cut short:

> A woman with her hair closely clipped in the Spartan manner, boyish looking and wholly masculine (LUCIAN, *The Fugitives*, 27).
>
> [Megilla's head] shaved close, just like the manliest of Athletes (LUCIAN, *Dialogi meretici*, 5.3).

But for women, according to this reading of the text, the issue was not having short hair, but having their long hair unbound, and not properly made up on top of the head as was expected of respectable women. What message then did unbound hair

send? Unbound hair was never used by proper women in public, it was seen as immodest and improper, according to Cosgrove it "often had sexual connotations" (COSGROVE, 2005). Below are a few examples of contexts in which the hair is unbound:

> So burns the God, consuming in desire,
> And feeding in his breast a fruitless fire:
> Her well-turn'd neck he view'd (her neck was bare)
> And on her shoulders her dishevel'd hair;
> Oh were it comb'd, said he, with what a grace
> Wou'd every waving curl become her face! (OVID, *Met.* 1.477; 1.498).

Here the mention to combing her hair could be the insinuation of a desire to marry her, another indication of the hairstyle connection to the married status. Below is a passage written by Apuleius that demonstrates the unbinding of the hair as an enticing prelude to intercourse:

> When I felt cruel Cupids first arrow plunge into the depths of my heart, I vigorously stretched my own bow, and I am terribly afraid that the string is going to break from too much tension. But humour me even more: unloose your tresses and let them flow, and embrace me lovingly with your hair rippling like waves.' Without a moments delay she whipped away all the dinner dishes, stripped herself of all her clothes, and let down her hair. With joyous wantonness she beautifully transformed herself into the picture of Venus rising from the ocean waves (APULEIUS, *Metamorphoses* II.16–17).

The image he refers to, "Venus rising from the ocean waves" is a reference to a famous painting that, according to Athenaeus, was inspired in the following episode, which is also a very good example of the allurement of unbound hair:

> But Phryne was a really beautiful woman, even in those parts of her person which were not generally seen: on which account it was not easy to see her naked; for she used to wear a tunic which covered her whole person, and she never used the public baths. But on the solemn assembly of the Eleusinian festival, and on the feast of the Poseidonia, then she laid aside her garments in the sight of all the assembled Greeks, and having undone her hair, she went to bathe in the sea; and it was from her that Apelles took his picture of Aphrodite Anadyomene (ATHENAEUS, *Deipnosophists* 13.590).

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According to Cosgrove "the gesture of self-offering also seems to have sexual overtones" (COSGROVE, 2005) as she was offering herself naked to Poseidon. Below is an image of Aphrodite Anadyomene from a mural in Pompeii, inspired by the original painting by Apelles:

Figure 7 - Aphrodite Anadyomene

Source:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aphrodite_Anadyomene_from_Pompeii.jpg
(Access Date: November 28, 2023)

Unbound hair was also associated with freedom and wildness:

> It is grievous to have this head-dress on my head. Take it off, spread my tresses on my shoulders! Take me to the mountain: I mean to go to the wood, to the pinewood, where hounds that kill wild beasts tread, running close after the dappled deer! By the gods, how I want to shout to the hounds [220] and to let fly past my golden hair a javelin of Thessaly, to hold in my hand the sharp-pointed weapon! Dear luckless me, what have I done? [240] Where have I wandered from the path of good sense? I was mad, I fell by the stroke of some divinity. Oh, how unhappy I am. Nurse, cover my head up again. For I am ashamed of my words. [245] Go on, cover it: the tears stream down from my eyes and my gaze is turned to shame. For to be right in my mind is grievous pain, while this madness is an ill thing. Best is to perish in unconsciousness (EURIPIDES, *Hipp.* 198–202).

This does not mean that unbound hair had this connotation one hundred percent of the time, there are situations in which letting the hair down, or disheveling it, had a different meaning. Often when in mourning, or in danger women would unbind their

hair; when in a state of frenzy, or to show humility. Women would sometimes untie their hair in certain pagan worship rituals; warrior women are often portrayed with flowing hair and sorceresses with disheveled hair (EURIPIDES, *Hipp.* 198–202). Not all of these situations are necessarily negatively seen in Roman society, but none fit a Christian worship service, and Paul would certainly make sure no Christian woman was ever associated with some (i.e., sorcery, pagan worship, etc.). Paul compares unbound hair to short hair (vv. 5–6), so looking at the connotation of short hair in Roman society is another clue to the meaning of the passage. According to Greek and Roman sources short hair in women was associated with a desire to be comparable to men. Women athletes and lesbians had their hair short (MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 1980), as seen above. It has been suggested that cutting a woman's hair short was a punishment for adultery, but the passage often cited in Tacitus (TACITUS, *Germania* 19) refers to a custom of the Germanic tribes and not of the Romans. Cosgrove sites the shaving the head of a woman as a Jewish punishment for adultery (HURLEY, 1973), but does not cite any sources for it, and the punishment prescribed in the Old Testament is death. On the other hand, untying a woman's hair was part of the test of adultery described in Numbers 5:18–31, and could be seen in a Jewish community as a sign of an accused adulteress.

The reason therefore, for Paul's instruction was to maintain modesty and avoid any appearance of evil, or of a sexual message in one's appearance during the Christian service. This fits well both the Roman and Jewish cultural contexts and fits the context of the other Pauline epistles, where Paul is not concerned with form or ceremony, but with how the behavior of Christians affects others who are watching them—believers or not.

Conclusion: The Epistle in Light of the Sources

Even though there are many examples of Roman men covering their heads in worship, there is no logical reason for Paul to condemn a practice that in society is seen as pious and noble, and a practice that was sanctioned by God in His instructions concerning the apparel of the High Priest, who had a turban on his head when

ministering at the Temple. Paul does not set out to create a stark contrast between believers and non-believers, but to make sure believers represent the image of all that is good, pure, and noble. In his epistles he does seem to care about the general image of the church with the society at large (see for instance Philippians 2:14–15 and 4:8.)

The information from the sources concerning the perception of men with long or elaborate hair, and of women with unbound hair would concern Paul with regard to the image of the church. Homosexuality, even though a known practice of the Roman world, was still seen as inappropriate behavior even among the Romans, but more so to the practicing Christians and Jews who followed the moral precepts of the Old Testament which strictly condemn the practice. Here Paul would have had very strong reasons to intervene in anything that could bring that image to the church.

The context within the passage seems to fit better with the interpretation of long, unbound hair, otherwise Paul's statement in verse 15 that "women's hair is given to her as a covering" (NASB) would contradict his arguments to this point, while they strengthen the argument for the choice of hairstyle.

Figure 8 – Head with wrapped hair

Source: https://thecripplegate.com/addressing-the-dressing-v-hair-and-roman-culture/#_edn13 (Access Date: May 25, 2023)

Notice how this woman's hair is wrapped around her head; according to Murphy-O'Connor "A glance at illustrations of feminine hair arrangements of the period immediately reveals why Paul uses *peribolaion* here; long hair is frequently wrapped around the head in plaits. If nature "gave her long hair as a wrapper" (v. 15b), the woman was intended to wrap her hair around her head, and so it was not "fitting" for her to appear in public with her head "unbound," or, in Paul's language, "uncovered" (v. 13). (MURPHY-O'CONNOR, 1980, 489).

In verse 14 he also specifically speaks against men's long hair, bringing the argument around to the starting point and not introducing here a new element.

A third point can be made with the unity of the passage in mind; if Paul is talking about a veil or headdress, he has different reasons to address men and women. It has already been noted that this difference would make the counsel contradictory, but it also breaks the passage into two different problems: men are acting as pagans (or creating divisions) and women are behaving immodestly. In other words, he is dealing with more than one issue here: idol worship and modesty. But if Paul is referring to the hairstyle, then the issue is one and the same: modesty in dress.

Until a valid reason for the prohibition of head coverings for men is presented, the evidence and context just cited weigh more toward a prohibition of long hair for men and unbound hair for women.

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