

**Re: the issue of Head Covering - O. S. Asaolu ([asaolu@yahoo.com](mailto:asaolu@yahoo.com)), Lagos, Nigeria.** {Sept 23, 2019}  
(Response to David Miller's article [DM] - Apologetics Press)

This is an examination of statements and claims in DM's article which surmises that head covering was a societal custom that the Corinthians were instructed to obey. His position is that "the Corinthian Christians were admonished to conform to the cultural practice" of the heathen populace during Christian worship. DM labored to posit that a woman does not have to cover her head today while praying/worshipping but he evaded discussing whether a man may now cover his head while praying! The text in light blue color are quoted from his slides and replied to below. Kindly consult various translations e.g. [www.biblehub.com](http://www.biblehub.com)

**DM wrote:** "1 Sam 1:12-13 - May indicate Hannah wasn't veiled"

*1 Samuel 1:12-13 And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken.*

**Reply:** this is conjecture as it assumes head covering always connote face covering, these are not necessarily the same thing. The scriptures distinguish between the head and the face on numerous occasions e.g.

- i. Man without hair on head is noted from man without head on head but on the face (moustache & beard) – Lev 13:40ff
- ii. Jezebel painted her face and attired her head -2 Kg 9:30
- iii. When you fast, anoint your head, and wash your face -Mt 6:17

*2 Samuel 15:30 And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.*

The covered heads of David's group (see also Esther 6:12, Jer 14:3-4) signify '**shamefacedness and sobriety**' (which is expected of women in the church -1 Tim 2:9.) It does not imply that their faces were covered since David was recognized amidst the company by a companion who spoke with him on Ahitophel's defection. It wasn't that their faces were totally covered making them stumble or miss their way for not seeing the path.

**DM wrote:** "Clues that may indicate context is cultural"

1. [No Bible command to wear a veil/covering](#)

**Reply:** Use of 'MAY INDICATE' shows he engages in speculation or subjective guesswork. 1 Cor 11:4-5, 13 are direct statements instructing a man to be uncovered and a woman to have her head covered in NT worship.

There were commands in the OT on head covering for Levites/High Priest (Exo 29:4-9, Lev 8:6-13; 21:10). Aside requiring Levites and the high priest to wear bonnets/crown on their head, God stated in Eze 44:20 "*They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair grow long but are to carefully trim their hair*" NKJV.

Also, it was enjoined upon Hebrew women to ordinarily appear before a priest with covered heads and if necessary it was the priest that would uncover her head *or release her hair* (Num 5:16-18).

**DM wrote:** "If God did command head covering upon us, where are the details we need to obey those requirements -veil specs, material, etc.?"

**Reply:** God left the specifications to our discretion just as when he said "*go ye into the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" The 'go' was generic i.e. mode/means of transport and preaching but what to

preach is specified i.e. the gospel. Similarly, the material, make, colour, length of what veils is not spelt out for us, we only know it is 'head covering' not mere 'face covering'; it should cover a woman's head primarily to conceal her adorned hair while a man's head should not be covered. "Veiled" in 1 Cor 11 is not necessarily as 'the veil' that Moses used to **cover his face** (Exo 33-34, 2 Cor3) nor a mask but is simply to cover the head.

**DM wrote:** 2. "The disgrace of a shaven head, if it was not from God, it must be from society (culture)."

**Reply:** The shame of a shaven head for a woman or of long/dressed hair for a man is **from nature** (1 Cor 11: 6, 13-15) which is God's natural order of things not merely Corinthian society as posited. In the OT, shaving off one's head is a **humbling experience** that signifies **purification** (Lev 14:8, Num 6:18; 8:7, Deut 21:12, Acts 18:18; 21:24) or **humiliation** (1 Chro 19:4, Isa 7:20) or both (Job 1:20)

Even in modern western society, a typical woman/wife hardly shaves her head. Most of those who do are either a tomboy, peculiar showbiz personality, bereaved or suffering hair-loss from chemotherapy or some ailment. It is not the norm or usual thing.

Paul never mentioned anything about temple prostitutes which DM is reading INTO the text. He **asserted** without concrete proof that it was a local matter peculiar to Corinth because he posits 'an uncovered woman was viewed with shame in that society.' His line of reasoning will reduce women's silence to a local issue peculiar to Corinth since Paul equally wrote: *'it is a shame for women to speak in the church'* -14:35b. Such study approach discountenances the instruction to Timothy at Ephesus. DM fails to realize that the shame was inherent in nature and affirmed by inspiration in both the OT & NT; females do not present worshippers to God in His sanctuary or lead as priests in a religious assembly consisting of men and women.

**DM wrote:** 3. "The use of the word 'Ought'; a less forceful word than 'must'"

**Reply:** 'Ought' refers to what should be; an appropriate and expected thing which is not only lawful and expedient but which is invariably needed or required!

Below are samples of how Luke and Paul use the word in some passages...

*Luke 11:42 But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these **ought** ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

*Luke 12:12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye **ought** to say.*

*Luke 18:1 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men **ought** always to pray, and not to faint;*

*Romans 15:1 We then that are strong **ought** to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.*

*1 Corinthians 8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he **ought** to know.*

*Hebrews 2:1 Therefore we **ought** to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*

The import of 'ought' in the above passages is akin to that in 1 Cor 11:7, 10. When that which OUGHT to be is NOT then something is amiss; when it is a deliberate neglect or infraction then it amounts to sin -James 4:17.

4. **DM quoted James Coffman:** "The word custom as used in 1 Corinthians 11:16 clearly identifies the subject under consideration in this paragraph as the customs of the times, and not as an apostolic treatise (formal doctrinal teaching) on what either men or women should wear."

**Reply:** The verse states: *'But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.'*

- i. Paul is addressing whosoever would contend or contest the **inspired instructions** he had just given on head covering.
- ii. The apostle wrote that neither "we" (Jews or specifically himself and Sosthenes who authored the epistle [1 Cor 1:1, Acts 18:17]) "nor the churches of God" (other Christian assemblies) have such a custom as advocated by the contentious -a practice of *'a woman's head not covered and a man's head being covered during true worship under Christ.'*

Even if Judaism had such a custom whoever now seeks to be justified by Mosaic Law is severed from Christ and has fallen from grace.

DM and Coffman **assume** that the Jews and the churches have a custom of 'a woman's head being covered and a man's head not covered during worship.' Both posit that the apostle and the churches adopted this custom from society; only in the city of Corinth! However, Paul was reinforcing delivered ordinances or commandments he received from the Lord (1 Cor 11:1-2, 23) and was not advocating any custom about prayer/prophesying from pagan religions. Recall that Paul warns Christians against things *"which all are to perish with the using; after the commandments and doctrines of men ...the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."*

It is sufficient that it was established from the Old Covenant that men (at least Levites/priests) covered their heads while a woman who was otherwise covered could be uncovered when charged by a priest before the LORD. The point is Paul was not discussing any group's custom but had just stated a revelation that all NT worshippers should practice. Recall he stated a few paragraphs later that *"if any man think he is spiritual, let him acknowledge that **the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.**"*

**DM wrote:** 5. [Long hair is disgraceful for a man... in Corinth, not universally](#)

**Reply:** DM posits this was only so in Corinth or the nature of things in Corinth not everywhere. He alluded to Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist as men for who long hair was not shameful. It was rather convenient for DM to ignore that he also acknowledged these were men under the Nazarite vow. They were thus special cases or exceptions and not typical of the average or random male in Israel. It is the nature of men universally to ordinarily trim their hair and not groom/braid it as much as women grow and adorn theirs. Paul did not write: *"does not **your culture/society** teach you..."* rather he alluded to headship, order of creation, angels and nature to make his argument that women should be covered, not men during prayer or utterance of God's word. Neither Corinth nor another society is termed 'nature,' rather "nature" refers to 'God's natural order' which is generally universal/perpetual and not local/temporal. Can anyone show any other passage where nature allegedly refers to a city/society and not to normal course or divine arrangement? How should we understand the meaning of the word "nature" as used by Paul in the following passages?

*Romans 1:26-27 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against **nature**: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

*Romans 2:14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by **nature** the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves*

Romans 11:24 For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by **nature**, and wert grafted contrary to **nature** into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?

**DM wrote:** 6. [We are not told where they \(the women\) were praying and prophesying.](#)

**Reply:** Pray without ceasing somehow suggests pray everywhere. The place where the women are to function could not have been specified since they could do these in various locations e.g. at home or at a gathering of sisters only. Even in the whole assembly when a man leads prayer for the church, everyone prays along and says 'Amen.' Note that it was a few paragraphs later that Paul revealed the prohibition that women be silent and not public speakers in the assembly, when the whole church is gathered into one place. We do know the women could no longer prophesy in the whole church if it was supposed that they were doing so before.

### Conclusion

DM assumes Paul's directive on head covering was to Corinth alone and not intended for other Christians in other regions. That is a **fallacy**; Paul delivered a pattern of sound words; he taught the same principles in every church and intended that his epistle to Corinth or its teachings be circulated to all saints in every place or those who call on Jesus Christ as Lord (1 Cor 1:2). His instruction on propriety of dressing in worship, on head covering concerns EVERY man and EVERY WOMAN that prays not just Corinthians only. Neither rhetorical questions nor the phrase '*judge in yourselves*' imply a cultural issue. Such would have to be a general concept since cultures vary from place to place (Lk 12:57, Acts 13:46).

Paul addressed both a covering that conceals down/over (apokalupto vs 7) and a covering that can be cast/thrown around (peribolaion vs 16). If hair alone is THE covering as some posit then why did the apostle limit head covering only to a moment of prayer or speaking unto men to edification, exhortation and comfort? It is obvious that the inspired minister addresses a covering that a worshipper can put **on/off** while praying and put **off/on** at other times. Thus a woman who prays thrice daily is to be covered at least three times and possibly uncovered sometimes in a day. Vs 5-6 shows that a woman who is uncovered has hair on her head which should then be shaved off due to her refusal to cover. If 'hair' is the covering then a man would have to be shaved or bald to offer prayer. Even 'long hair' alone is NOT the covering contemplated because vs 6 would read "*For if the woman will not have long hair, let her hair be cut...*" That implies that a woman who is uncovered can never have long hair and is effectively banned from praying irrespective of whether it was due to illness or torture, etc. Why? Such a woman already has 'short or no hair' and the penalty for that is that she be shaved hence the hair will never grow long and it is not comely for her to pray to God in such state!

DM admits that the passage addresses two types of covering; [natural covering \(hair vs 14-15\)](#) and [artificial covering \(the veil vs 2-13\)](#). Yet he ends up positing that today, it doesn't really matter whether a Christian man or woman prays with either an artificial covering or no covering on the head. That unfortunately amounts to using modern western culture to make the word of God of none effect!

1 Cor 11 shows that

- i. **Man** is **the glory of God** and **should not be covered**. His head/hair is not to be concealed under the NT.
- ii. **Woman** is **the glory of man** and she **should be covered**. Is it the whole woman that ought to be covered? No, just her head; not even the whole head (for she won't be able to see and walk if her face is fully covered) but **her glory** which is the (long/adorned) hair on her head.
- iii. A woman who would NOT cover (the hair on) her head should be shaved or have that hair removed.