

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN'S VEILING.

I greet you in Jesus name this evening. It is a privilege and a blessing to meet with people who do not need to sort of manufacture the holiness of life that we profess but are those who are blessed with having it implanted in our bosoms as a new nature, may it continue not only to be a part of our worship but also of our life.

For the message this evening turn with me to the first book of Corinthians, Chapter 11. We would like to look at the ordinance of the Christian Woman's Veiling this evening. I am thankful that we do not need to look at this in order to decide whether we will practice it or not or in order to shore up something failing among us. We look at subjects like this because we believe that they are part of the Bible teaching about Christian practice.

We are certainly not introducing anything new this evening, however our goal is to strengthen what we have and embrace and practice as God's people. We know that this ordinance is practiced by our sisters but we understand that its principle is just as important for us as brethren. This ordinance is neglected and rejected by much of professing Christianity around us and yet we continue to preach and practice it, and do so without apology to those who may be contentious as Paul says some would be. I would like to read the passages at this time. This is the sole New Testament passage that outlines this ordinance at least clearly for us, there are other scriptures that refer to it and the principles that it is in accord with.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. ²Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. ³But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. ⁵But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. ⁶For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame

for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. ⁷For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. ⁸For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. ⁹Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. ¹⁰For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. ¹¹Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. ¹²For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. ¹³Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? ¹⁴Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? ¹⁵But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. ¹⁶But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.”

We would like to divide the message into three areas this evening as we consider the subject of the Christian Woman’s Veiling.

1] First I would like to point you to some basic truths that help us to understand this ordinance and see the principles that it rests on, we will note a few and I am sure you can add more to this. These verses are not complicated, this ordinance is not difficult to understand when we simply take the scriptures as they are given to us with an open mind and study them and analyse them. Lifting out these basic truths helps us to see the practical truths in them that grow from them.

- The first basic truth I would mention is that it is very apparent here that our God is a God of order, there is order in the godhead.

We know that there is order in the work of God, we see it in creation, and it is a detailed order in the Book of Genesis account. It also has a plan of order for mankind and if we do not fit into God’s plan for order, the orderly arrangement that God has for us, we can rightfully ask ourselves the question: “Are we really His people and is this God of order our God if I refuse to take my place in His order?”

In [2 Thessalonians 3:6](#) the Apostle Paul instructs the Church that: *“Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”*

We believe that the order of our God is reflected in the order that He has for us as His people, and for mankind as a whole.

- Second basic truth I would point to in this passage is that the Christian life is a life of worship.

As Christians our worship is not just brief periods in life’s daily or weekly routine but no, our honour for God is constant, that is why we believe that this ordinance should be practised right early and daily, at all times. In [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#) we are called to pray without ceasing and this ordinance of the Christian Woman’s Veiling does also relate to women praying. I can remember as a boy growing up, a certain family that was relating to our congregation here at Mountain View for a while, that yes, they did understand at least to a point the Christian Woman’s Veiling teaching, but in its application they wanted to apply it only to times of prayer. I found it interesting as a small boy to observe just this family, there were a number of grown daughters, coming to the meeting house and sitting down and you always knew just the sequence that these women would practice, they would come and sit down, they would open their purse, get out this square of white material and lay it on their lap, if you were not too hasty in kneeling and closing your eyes for prayer when prayer was called for, why you would see them quickly laying this cloth on top of their hair but only for prayer. I found it interesting as a boy one time our family was invited to their house for an evening meal, we went and sure enough they had this cloth on their laps when they sat down and when they went to ask the blessing well quickly they laid it on top of their head. Well that was their application. Why do not we do that? Why do our sisters not just cover their heads for times of obvious prayer? One reason is this basic truth; The Christian life is a life of worship, not just periods of worship.

- Another truth that stands out in this passage is that this ordinance is a Church ordinance.

Yes, it is practised by individuals but its application is directed and regulated by the Church. Paul was writing in verse 2 to brethren, not just to individuals who may honour this teaching but to brethren, meaning the whole church fellowship or congregation. In verse 16 he mentions the churches have this custom. This ordinance is a Church ordinance. It is not an area in which every man can do that which is right in his own eyes (*Deuteronomy 12:8*) and follow fully God's plan. Understanding this will promote unity and uniformity in its application among us. We are glad to be a part of a church that does give some direction to us in the application of this ordinance.

I'd like to read what our statement of rules and discipline has to say about this ordinance. We go to number five on *The Ordinances; The Christian Woman's Veiling*, it reads like this:

“We recognise divine order of headship as it is taught in [1 Corinthians 11: 1-16](#), [1 Timothy 2:12](#), [1 Corinthians 14:34-38](#). Every sister shall wear an appropriate veiling at all times for a constant testimony that she accepts her position as a Christian woman. The hair shall not be cut and shall be free from currently worldly hair arrangements which do not express a spirit of meekness and sobriety. We believe that it is the properly veiled head which is the sign of the Christian woman in God's divine order.” (*And then continues on to describe the veiling pattern/type agreed upon by the Fellowship. Editor.*)

That is a bit of direction that the church has given us in practical way on the teaching here in one Corinthians 11, we are glad for that and we will refer to that a bit more as we go through the message.

- Another truth that stands out in this passage or a basic truth is that God is the foundation for solid human relationships.

In verse three this seems quite apparent: “*I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man and the head of Christ is God*” God is the foundation for solid human relationships, not man, not love, not the veiling, but God, and naturally when we think of foundations we think of starting from the

earth and building upward. But spiritually when we think of foundations we start in heaven and build downwards. Now it is important to understand that this is a sequence of order in relationships not a sequence of importance or privilege. We believe that man and woman have equal importance or privilege in their standing with God but the sequence of this order is as the scripture gives it here, Christ, man and woman.

- Another truth that this passage holds before us is that God's headship plan is for all people.

Did you notice how often in verses three and four and five the word "every" is used. Verse 3 - *I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ*, Verse 4 - *every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonours his head*, Verse 5 - *every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head*. Just as God has one salvation plan for all people we understand that God has one headship plan for all people too. This ordinance, this practice is not just a Mennonite practice, it is a Bible practice, a part of Christian living, practical Christianity everywhere. Yes, it is God's will for Mennonites but we believe that it is God's will for all people of every culture, and for each generation. This plan we believe is as unchanging as God Himself. We apply and take that very literally when we read the gospel to others, share with others. Even on foreign mission fields, we say where individuals respond to the gospel there the scriptures apply just as well as they apply here at home. We expect those who are converted will practice this ordinance and will be a part of the Church and Church practice as we know it, but this plan does not change with generations either. Therefore, wherever it is practised it should not decline with the generations, therefore we believe that as we look forward in time, if time continues or God allows it to continue, that we would expect that our children and our grandchildren, should God grant us time and great grandchildren, that they would continue to practice this ordinance as we know it today. For many people, yes even many professing Christians, history has not proved that it has been an unchanging conviction and practice.

- This passage points us to the truth that woman's hair is a glory to her only if it is covered.

In verse 15 it says very clearly that if a woman has long hair it is a glory to her. She has long hair it is a glory to her, but verse six says that that long hair is not a glory unless it is covered; *“If a woman be not covered let her also be shorn but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered”*

I have heard an objection raised already by some individuals that the Bible teaches that if long hair is a glory to the woman, why veil it? Well this same passage answers that very clearly for us; Yes, long hair is a glory to her if it is veiled, because she is fitting into God's plan and veiling that glory. Isn't it amazing how many women, especially in society around us, have rejected the Bible teaching on the veiling and the veiling practice and have gone on to shear their hair. While they are rejecting God's headship or veiling plan they are moving into what God says is a realm of shame; Yes it is a shame if long hair is unveiled but here in verse 6: *“- if she be not covered let her also be shorn.”* Isn't it amazing how even ungodly individuals, those who disobey God and knowingly disobey Him, walk in the very way God said they will, they refuse to take God's way but really God is gone before and said what way they will take if they reject Him.

- We notice the truth in this passage also that man bears the greater responsibility for this ordinance.

It is evident in verse 3 that man stands between Christ and woman in God's order of headship. First, man is dishonoured if woman does not practice this and second God is dishonoured, that comes out clearly in verse 5. Now this does not excuse our sisters from practicing it. I suggest our sisters should do it with all conviction that they would practice this even if some man would fail around them. We are thankful that God has blessed as with many homes where both husband and wife have conviction for this practice and we want it to be so that woman is not excused when man fails in any area in relating to this ordinance. However we do understand scripture to teach that we as brethren bear the greater responsibility in this.

- Finally this passage makes it clear that both the men and women find honour in the practice of this ordinance.

It seems to come out clearly in verses 4 and 5 where it talks about the honour and the dishonour if we reject it, it implies there is an honour for those who follow God. Certainly God can not honour me if I do not honour Him. [1 Samuel 2:30](#): *“Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”*

We ought to be sensing that in our practical obedience, not only in this area but other areas also, that there is a peace and a rest that is brought when we honour God. God gives that to those who follow His plan, those who live in obedience.

Verse 10 reminds us that heaven's blessings rests on the faithful practice of this ordinance. Angels are ministering spirits who attend to those who faithfully keep it, carry it out. This practice is not a disgrace to our sisters nor is it a disgrace to us as brethren that our wives wear the headship veiling as they do, we do not need to be ashamed as brethren to be seen in public with a sister so clothed. It is an honour.

2] In the second area of the message I would like to point to a few of would I would call Bible truths, maybe I should say Bible untruths, and mention just a few of the arguments that are raised against the literal practice of this ordinance. We will not mention many of them as it is not our intention to raise contention among us, as Paul says in Verse 16: *“...that some seem to be contentious”* But we do need to reckon with those around us with whom we discuss this ordinance sometimes.

- One of the objections that comes up sometimes is that this teaching was for the church at Corinth, that Paul was really not intending or God was really not intending that this be for the Church of our day and generation. Well if you read [1Corinthians 1:2](#) in the introduction to the book Paul addresses this book:

“Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be saints*, *with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*, both theirs and ours:”

Not just every place but every generation. I think it is interesting that the second half of this 1st chapter (*regarding communion*) is widely embraced by Christianity around us and few of them would say that the second half of this passage on communion was only for Paul's day. Why then would we say the first part of this chapter related only to that day or generation.

- Another objection that is raised sometimes is that the hair is the covering.

God has given woman her hair for a covering and that is the covering that God is talking about here. Verse 15 says that: ... *her* hair is given her for a covering,” - not to be THE covering but to BE covered, for a covering, for a covering to be placed upon. Verse 6 mentions very clearly that if the hair is the covering what would there be to shear if she is uncovered, if the hair is removed. Well I think we need not question very long whether the hair is the covering or not that Paul is writing about. The hair is what God intended should be covered or veiled.

- Another objection that we hear some time, even among our own people in discussing the practice of this ordinance here, is that the veiling is the sign of the woman in God's order.

But in this passage verses 5 and 6 remind us that the covered head is the sign of the woman in God's order. Why do we as a Church give some direction relating to the size of the veiling? Why; it is for this very reason, if it is just to be a symbol of a woman in God's order, if the veiling is the sign then a patch of very small dimension would do, but we understand the Bible teaches for the woman to cover her head is the sign of a woman in subjection, not the veiling, not the material veiling. Yes the veiling is a sign that our women are in subjection to divine order but the sign is the covered head not the veiling itself.

- Another objection that comes up sometimes from those around us is that this ordinance is unfair to women.

Some say: “You require your sisters to appear odd and out of step with society and fashion.” I would raise this question to counter that; “Is it unfair for one to be marked as part of the family of God?” Should I be concerned about being out of step with the world if I or my wife or my daughters practice this ordinance? Not at all. That is a privilege, that is a privilege, not the only privilege we have but a very outstanding one. I would suggest that if there is anything that is unfair in the practice of this ordinance it is if we as brethren consider that our sisters bear the sole responsibility for our identity as God's people. I think we as brethren should be careful about that, that we are not careless or casual in our appearance. We could fit right in with the clean cut man of the world and no one would know us but we expect our sisters to be identified as a separate people. Some-time ago I was driving on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and stopped at one of the places along the way to use the facilities there, to take some of the children in. In the entry there was a man who gave me a verbal greeting as I passed him, I recognised him there but did not recognise at all who he was and moved on from him. When I came out why to my surprise this man was standing beside a woman who had a veiling on, I was disappointed that I did not recognise him as a brother, but there were good indications that he may have been when I saw him with his wife. He was wearing a two tone casual jacket, nothing on his head, I thought him to be a respectable man of the world, but when I saw the woman with him, who I assumed to be his wife, she was wearing a veiling, that was to be commended. I would suggest brethren that that is unfair if we do that and appear that way in public.

3] Now moving on to the third area of the message to be a bit more practical. I would entitle this the beauty of the truths of this ordinance.

God was not intending to bring us His people at all into bondage by the requirements that He has set forth for us, God not only has a plan for order but God has a plan for beauty and for something wonderful in His plan for us.

- There is the beauty of order in the practice. In this practice and when men and women take their place in God's order, their God-given place, there is a beauty that comes forth in harmony in human relationships that is not found outside of that order.

We look at things around us in nature that are beautiful often; one of the most apparent is the rainbow. Why is a rainbow beautiful anyway? Is it just because the colours are bright sometimes? Well that is part of it, but the main reason that the rainbow is beautiful is that the colours are in order. I have seen children colouring books, young children colouring a rainbow different colours but it was not nearly as beautiful as the rainbow in the sky for two reasons, one is the colouring abilities weren't developed too well yet, but the primary reason is that that young child did not get the colours in order.

I think that illustrates some of the beauty of God's order, it is beautiful because in this order men and women, God's people, blend with and complement each other when they follow God's plan. Outside of this order there is going to be disunity and lack of harmony in human relationships, the holiness is evident when we follow God's plan in this ordinance, [Psalm 96:9](#) talks about the beauty of holiness, that is beautiful in the godhead expression it is beautiful when His people display that in their lives.

[1 Timothy 2:8-10](#) is one of the scriptures that the rules and discipline mention supporting this wonderful teaching: *"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."*

Now we understand that the apparel that adorns our sisters includes the Christian Woman's Veiling. Verse 10 Paul says: *"...which becometh women professing godliness"* Now it would be interesting to find how Strong's defines that word becometh, something comely or beautiful, that which becometh women professing godliness and beauty and holiness. Holiness is God's character expressed in our lives as we follow God's plan, walk in His way.

- There is beauty in this ordinance because I would suggest because it is an ordinance on constant display.

Out of the seven Christian ordinances that we recognise and observe, none of the others are given the prominent place in daily life and walk as this ordinance of the Christian Woman's Veiling, in fact most of them we are quite guarded and reserved about the practice of. Take the practice of the holy kiss. Here this evening we shared that brethren among brethren and sisters among sisters, but if we would meet as brethren in the world at a business place or sisters in the grocery store we usually do not share the Christian salutation, Why? Well not because we are ashamed of it but because of our consciousness that we do not want to cast our pearls before swine. Some who may observe our practice of the ordinances and do not understand it may dishonour God in this practice because of their lack of understanding. But God must have seen a special beauty in this ordinance in that He has designed that it be given such a prominent and visible place in its practice.

Which flowers sisters do you give the centrepiece of the table to at times? It won't be dry and dormant ones that you bring out for all to see but the blooming and beautiful ones that you put out, that you give a prominent place to in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father which is in heaven. (*Matthew 5:16*)

Now certainly the Christian Woman's Veiling is not found under good works but it possibly is one of them but others will be aware of it as they observe our lives our homes, especially our sisters.

- Fourthly I would point you to the beauty of uniformity of the practice of this ordinance.

In [1Corinthians 14:33](#) Paul wrote about the discord of disunity, he says: "*Our God is not the author of confusion.....*" We thank God today for the uniformity in the practice of this ordinance that we have among us as a church. I can remember back to the beginning days or years of our church group and there was quite a bit of variation among us, especially among our sisters in this practice. The uniformity, the unity that we know today did not come without effort and it will not be maintained without effort either, that is one

of the reasons the church has given us some practical guidelines in the area in helping us applying practices, not only to help us to practice it but to bring uniformity in our practice and application. Looking backward from where we are today because of our varied background we can possibly see quite a bit of diversity in the practice. I think as we look forward and consider moving forward together as a church we ought to envision our growing uniformity in the practice and the practical application of this ordinance. If we are going to make changes in our application of this we should be making changes toward the accepted patterns and practice among us. We do not recommend a lot of changing, especially hasty changing, there is certainly some variety and varied application among us relating to the areas of our background and personal convictions, some of that the standard can make room for, but if we are going to make changes most of those changes should be toward the practice that is embraced among us as a uniform brotherhood.

- There is a beauty in this ordinance when women are in character with what this ordinance summarises in principle.

Our sisters are known to be godly women, women in submission and subjection, marked by a meek and quiet spirit, known that you are shame-faced and sober. (*1 Timothy 2:9 See Footnote*) So our sisters who are this in character stand out among the women of our generation and we thank God for that and we want it to continue to be this way. The application of this ordinance becomes distasteful and causes disdain as others observe it if there is not that character in our sisters to match what is displayed in obedience to God's plan. We are thankful that it is often so and we want it to continue to be that way.

- The beauty in this ordinance is also when men take their place in God's redeemed headship.

First of all honouring Christ as their head, secondly filling their role in the home and the family as God intended, leading the family and administrating in the church. Giving honour to our sister, the wife as the weaker vessel. A great deal of loving and caring in the family and at home sharing in the workload, being considerate of the weak-

nesses that our sisters may have, that we are not expecting or requiring our sisters to take the heavier part of home life and leading the family. We do not send our sisters out, as some do, to do the witnessing on the street in town, in the community, they may go along with us sometimes, but we agree that when men take their place in God ordered leadership our sisters will support the brethren in these areas, not be leading the brethren or expected to go out and bear the load of responsibility for this. We understand that the sister's faithfulness in her role depends heavily on us brethren being faithful in our role.

- Finally I suggest that there is beauty in this ordinance because of the beauty of God's place and plan for each one of His children.

Maybe we should have mentioned this first, the beauty of God's place and plan for each one of His children. God has a place in His will for you as an individual; God has a place in His church for each of us individually. God has a place in headship order for each of us. God has a place in service for each of us. This God ordained place and plan is beautiful and satisfying as we see it unfolding in time, but anything in time will pale or flee when we consider the beauty of God's place and plan for us individually in eternity.

We do not fully understand that or know it but we look forward to that unfolding glory and beauty. We understand that to be in or reach what God has for us in the future it is important that we find and keep what God has for us in His place and plan here in time now.

May God help us to be a people who not only honour God in obedience but display the beauty and glory of God in living out this ordinance. Yes, even in something as practical as honouring His plan for the headship veiling among us as the people.

*BRO. SIMEON RUDOLPH,
MOUNTAIN VIEW MENNONITE CHURCH, PA.*

Footnote: 1 Timothy 2:9 shamefacedness: Strong's Greek 127 through the idea of *downcast* eyes); *bashfulness*, i.e. (towards men), *modesty* or (towards God) *awe*: - reverence, shamefacedness.