

Exegesis of 1 Cor. 11:1-16

This is one of the most perplexing passages from Paul's pen and gives proof to Peter's assertion that Paul's letters contain "some things hard to be understood," 2 Peter 3:16.

We will be applying four hermeneutical principles (Bible Study Prerequisites, BSP) that will be very helpful as we search for the truth in these verses. Please refer to Chapter 1 for detail explanations of each of these prerequisites. They are: 1) BSP #5, We must make our decisions based on the most and/or best evidence, 2) BSP #8, The words are to be understood literally unless there is contextual evidence to prove otherwise, 3) BSP #9, Plain and simple passages will be used to explain the difficult, figurative ones and 4) BSP #10, Ockham's Razor.

The Context

When trying to ascertain the truth of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, one of the most consistent mistakes made is to assume that the instructions in verses 3-16 are limited to the worship service (or public assembly), or to praying (speaking *to* God) and/or prophesying (speaking *for* God) in public. Please recognize that there is absolutely no contextual evidence to support either assumption. Read the entire previous paragraph starting in chapter 10 verse 23. This whole discussion has nothing to do with the worship service nor actions limited to being performed in public, except that prophesying is normally done with someone listening, i.e. prophesying is seldom done alone, for oneself. Now read each verse slowly, starting at 10:23 and specify at what point the instructions are limited to actions in the worship service. I give the ASV text here for your convenience, starting at chapter 10 verse 23:

23 ¶ All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify. 24 Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good. 25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles [a market or meat market. -cb], eat, asking no question for conscience' sake, 26 for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 27 If one of them that believe not biddeth you to a feast, and ye are disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience' sake. 28 But if any man say unto you, This hath been offered in sacrifice, eat not, for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: 29 conscience, I say, not thine own, but the other's; for why is my liberty judged by another conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give no occasions of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: [general guideline or instructions for worship? -cb] 33 even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of the many, that they may be saved. [general guideline or instructions for worship? -cb]

¶ 1 Cor. 11: 1 Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ. [general guideline or instructions for worship? -cb] 2 Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. [general guideline or instructions for worship? -cb] 3 But 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. [general guideline or instructions for worship? -cb] 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. [general guideline or instructions for worship? -cb] 5 But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. 6 For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. 7 For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: 9 for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: 10 for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. 13 Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

As you can see there is no contextual evidence to specify a particular location or a specific situation of application in any of these verses.

The context of this entire passage does not limit these instructions to any particular location or situation, therefore, we cannot. We need some contextual evidence to say that the applicability of these instructions is limited to any location or situation. Without this

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evidence we must conclude that verses 3-16 are general guidelines (as is the previous paragraph) and therefore are intended to apply anywhere and at any time where praying and/or prophesying is appropriate.

This point cannot be overemphasized. It has important implications in understanding every verse of our passage. If it be said that these instructions are limited to the worship service there must be evidence to support that assertion. What evidence can be offered? Understanding these verses as general instructions presents us with fewer, and no insurmountable, difficulties. Because of this Ockham's Razor demands that we consider this option first. If it indeed presents fewer difficulties than any other possibility it is probably the correct one. Please consider this whole presentation before concluding otherwise.

If we assume that this subject is confined to the public worship service we are presented with several difficulties. It is obvious that anyone can pray in silence, to himself. This is not possible when you prophesy. When you prophesy you are speaking for God (sometimes foretelling the future). To speak *for* God to yourself, makes no sense. But even if you can think of some very unusual circumstance where speaking *for* God to yourself is possible, it certainly cannot be limited to that circumstance. Therefore if this context (1 Corinthians 11:3-16) is limited to the worship and the physical head is the subject then it condones women speaking, i.e. prophesying, in worship service (when their head is covered) which is a violation of Paul's instructions just three chapters later, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. This contradiction prohibits limiting this passage to activities in the worship service. Therefore, for any who believe in verbal inspiration, our context cannot be limited to the worship service.

Another difficulty is all the unusual suppositions needed to make sense out of these instructions if confined to the worship service. 1) the *head* is literal, implying that the covering/vail/veil is also literal. 2) Verse 3 is only tangential, if that, to the understanding of this passage. 3) We must know the physical "head covering" customs at the time in Corinth to properly understand Paul's message here, which a practical impossibility for most (if not all) Christians. The necessity of knowing the head-covering customs of Corinth also implies that the scriptures, though correct, are not complete, needing the historical knowledge of ancient Corinthian customs in order to understand this passage. But the inspired scriptures say they are complete, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3. And finally, 4) Sometimes the word *head* is taken literally, sometimes figuratively and deciding when to do either is difficult, if not impossible, and sometimes arbitrary.

All these difficulties are eliminated if this passage is not limited to the worship service and verse 3 is used as the key to interpret the entire passage. This implies that all nine times the word *head* is used it should be taken figuratively as defined in verse 3.

Some who have thought this entire passage has to do only with praying and prophesying in the worship service, reach this conclusion because of the contrast of verses 2 and verse 17. But this contrast is the very evidence that speaks for a different context, not the same. Look closely at the two verses:

2 Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. 3 But 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.

17 ¶ But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it.

Contrasts between the two verses:

<u>Verse 2</u>	<u>Verse 17</u>
1) I praise you ...	I praise you not
2) ---	"But" showing a contrast to the previous subject
3) ---	"In the following charge..." implies a new subject
4) verse 3 starts "But I want ..."	verse 18 starts "for <i>first</i> of all ..." not second, third or next
5) Starts a new paragraph in:	Starts a new paragraph
a) UBS Greek N.T., third edition	a) UBS Greek N.T., third edition
b) Eberhard Nestle, 1898 edition	b) Eberhard Nestle, 1898 edition
c) Berry's Interlinear from the <i>Textus Receptus</i>	c) Berry's Interlinear from the <i>Textus Receptus</i>
d) Marshall's Interlinear	d) Marshall's Interlinear
e) Brown & Comfort Interlinear	e) Brown & Comfort Interlinear

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f) Mounce & Mounce Interlinear
g) Translations: ASV, NASB,
NIV, RSV, WEY, KJV, etc.

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Similarities between the two verses:

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- 2) ---
- 3) ---

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Looking at the contrasts in detail. 1) Verse 2 mentions an action to be praised, verse 17 the opposite, i.e. not praised. It seems unlikely that this difference could be thought of implying that the two subjects were the same, or that the instructions should be thought of as applying under the same conditions, i.e. when you "come together," verse 18. Your first reaction would probably be just the opposite. Only some definitive evidence would warrant a dismissal of this common sense deduction.

2) Verse 17 starts off with "but." This usually implies a contrast or exception to the previous subject, not a continuation of the same subject, nor the continuation of the conditions governing the previous subject. This sentence construction would hardly allow for a continuation of the same conditions to carry over from the previous subject, much less the imposing of the current conditions of, *when you assemble*, backward to the previous subject. This unrealistic, counterintuitive backward imposition can only be accepted when there is strong clear contextual evidence. Our support here seems to be much less than that.

3) "In the following charge..." implies new information on a new subject. The following instructions apply to the new subject under new conditions to be stated in the following sentences. There is no exception to this general rule without clear contextual evidence, which is lacking here.

4) Verse 18 starts with "For *first* of all when you come together in assembly". That is a very strange comment if, indeed, that same condition covered the previous subject in verses 2-16. I would think that maybe Paul would say something like a) "as I said before so say I now again," Galatians 1:9, or b) "continue in the practices just mentioned and ...," 2 Thessalonians 3:4, or "In addition ..." or "to continue my comments ..." or any number of like saying. We sometimes forget that the Bible is not only correct and complete but also the very best choice of words possible to aid our understanding. All these thoughts argues against the idea that the "in the assembly" context of verses 17-34 should also apply to verses 2-16.

5) A new paragraph. Why so much detail on this point? Yes, it is true that the original Greek did not have paragraph divisions, they were added by men. But when there is so much evidence that a new paragraph starts at verse 17 we must give some recognition to that fact. A new paragraph, by definition, implies a new subject, not a continuation of some part of the previous one. Of course it is possible that in a particular case a new paragraph would, indeed, continue the general ideas of the subject from the previous paragraph. But this is only true with supporting contextual evidence. The total agreement as to the location of the new paragraph and the total lack of evidence to support a carryover of subject into the next paragraph cannot be ignored. Two things make this particular claim of a carryover even more unreasonable, a) The general subject is not what is claimed for the carryover, but only the circumstances, i.e. the location of where the instructions apply, and b) the carryover is not forward from verses 2-16 to the next paragraph verses 17-34, but the reverse. Where is there a parallel example of successive paragraph where the second paragraph implies a carryover of circumstances, not subject, *backwards* to the preceding one? Where is the contextual evidence to support this claim?

6) Finally and most difficult to harmonize with the idea of limiting the application of verses 2-16 to the worship service is verse 3.

But 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.

Is this verse limited to the worship or is this a general statement true at all times and in every situation? This is obviously a general statement. How then do we justify limiting the verse before and the verses after to the worship service when there is absolutely no contextual evidence to support such a conclusion.

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This evidence is conclusive, unless you conclude that Paul's message in 2 Cor. 1:13 does not apply to his earlier message of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

Veil/Vail or Covering in verses 2-16

Should the Greek words in our passage be translated by the English word "veil/vail" or would "cover" be the better choice? Does it really make any difference? We conclude that using the English word "cover" for our translations is to be preferred for the following reasons (see Appendix A for further details):

- 1) Every authority allows this translation,
- 2) The majority of the authorities (11 of the 14) list "cover" first,
- 3) The "normal" Greek word for *veil* is *καλυμμα* or *καταπετασμα*. Not the Greek words used in our passage.
See The Englishman's Concordance of the New Testament, p.938 (under *veil*). The word *καταπετασμα* is used only six times in the New Testament and all six times it refers, literally or figuratively, to the veil/veil that separates the holy place from the Most Holy Place in the temple.
The English word *vail* appears 4 times, only in the KJV. All four times it translates the Greek word *καλυμμα*.
The English "*veil*" appears 16 times in the ASV. Eleven times it translates either *καλυμμα* or *καταπετασμα*, the other five times it translates our words in 1 Corinthians 11:5-13.
English word *veil* appears 7 times in the NIV. All 7 times it translates a form of the Greek word *καλυμμα*.
- 4) The first act of head covering is mentioned in v.4 and no one translates it as "veiled," the last act of head covering is in v. 15, and all 5 translations and two of the three interlinears translate the word as "cover." Based on what evidence can we decide that at the beginning of the context and at the end of the context the words are best translated "cover" but in the middle of the context we could best use "vail" as our translation?
- 5) The preponderance of the evidence (see details in Appendix A) supports "cover" as the better translation of our Greek words.

We do not contend that "veil" is a mistranslation, only that it is a misleading translation. If some would contend that *veil* is the preferred translation and conclude that a physical head *veiling* is the meaning of the passages we must point out that the word *veil* (in the ASV) is also used to refer to the huge curtain that separates (or hides, or covers) the Most Holy Place in the temple, Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45, Heb. 6:19, Heb. 9:3. It is also used figuratively to cover the understanding of the Jews, 2 Cor. 3:14, 15, 16 and in Hebrews 10:20 to represent the body of Christ.

So, even if, contrary to the preponderance of evidence, the word *veil* is used as the translation of our Greek words in 1 Corinthians 11, it does little to support the idea that in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 the literal head is to be covered. For even the Greek word *καλυμμα*, usually translated *vail*, is used figuratively meaning that which prevents a thing from being understood, 2 Corinthians 3:13-16, see BDAG and Thayer's lexicon. Please refer to the Appendix A for the detail evidence to support these conclusions.

Exegesis of the Text

As Paul introduces this new subject of head covering in chapter 11 verse 3, he defines the headship of man, woman and Christ. Paul is here giving figurative meanings to the word *head*. In verses 4-16 we must decide which definition of the word *head* applies. Should we use the figurative definition given by Paul in verse 3, some other figurative meaning other than the one given in verse 3, or use the literal meaning as "the physical part of the anatomy which houses the brain." Remembering that any figurative meaning must be justified by the context, if we can just agree on this concept, understanding the rest of the passage will be infinitely easier.

Restructuring verses 3 through 10 (ASV) of our text, leaving out *only* the verse numbers, we have:

"But 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. Every man praying or prophesying, having his *head* covered, dishonoreth his *head*. But every woman praying or prophesying with her *head* unveiled dishonoreth her *head*;

- **for** it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven.
- **For** if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled.
- **For** a man indeed ought not to have his *head* veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

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- **For** the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man:
- **for** neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man:
- **for this cause** (or because of this) ought the woman to have [a sign of] authority on her *head*, because of the angels.”

This reconstruction shows clearly that verses 6 through 10 are only further explanations of verses 4 and 5 because each verse/sentence begins with *for*. This *for* implies that what follows is only a further explanation of, or reason for, a preceding idea. This implies the main idea of Paul's teaching is contained in verses 3-5 and the rest of the passage is an explanation and logical justification for that teaching.

In effect, this is but a long complex parable. Here Paul uses the social custom of physical head coverings (long or short hair, veiled or shaven head) to make a spiritual application. If Jesus had spoken these words in Matthew 7 we would probably have little difficulty understanding them.

The positions I hope to prove in the following pages are:

- 1) All nine times the word **head** is used in our passage it should be understood in the figurative sense given in verse 3.
- 2) The three words added to verse 10, "a sign of," in both the ASV and NIV are unwarranted, unnecessary and misleading.
- 3) All references to hair (long or short) or to the physical head (shaven or veiled) is predicated on the general customs of the day in Corinth and are not intended to be instructions for Christians to follow today.
- 4) The words in verse 16 "we have no such custom" are the literal translation of the Greek and need no alteration or modification to be understood correctly. The custom referred to is the one mentioned in the previous verses regarding shaven or veiled physical head.
- 5) Because of the detail explanation of this passage, but also because of the last sentence of verse 15, it is plain that this passage holds no instructions for Christian women today to wear something on their physical head while worshipping or praying.

The Text

Let us begin our study with verse 3. Paul is here establishing the headship for man, woman and Christ:

Man's head is Christ;
Woman's head is man;
Christ's head is God.

Paul is here defining the word **head** figuratively. When man's **head** is referred to, it figuratively identifies Christ, not that part of the anatomy which houses the man's brain. When woman's **head** is referred to, it figuratively identifies man, not that part of the anatomy which houses her brain. If this is not true why is it here? Remember God doesn't use "filler" when writing the Bible. Why bother to give these definitions here, if Paul did not intend for this idea to be used in the following verses?

This figurative use of the word **head** must be used if we are to understand this passage. The word **head** is used 9 times in these verses. Should any of these usages be considered literal? If we once consider the physical head as a meaning, then we will have no end of difficulty in determining when the literal head should be used and when the figurative head should be used. There seems to be no contextual evidence to distinguish between these two meaning. This leaves only guesswork to help our understanding. This is hardly a proper hermeneutical method.

Each time after verse 3 when the word **head** is used it is preceded by the possessive personal pronoun *his* or *her*, indicating whose head is being talked about. This possessive pronoun in English is very important. It identifies the head under discussion and clearly helps us in understanding that the meaning here is figurative, corresponding to the definitions given in verse 3. But is this point weakened by the fact that the pronoun is not in the Greek in each of the six occurrences in verses 4-10? Please see Appendix C for a detail discussion.

Of course *his* head is always Christ. *Her* head always refers to *man*, but which man? Since this is a general description with no qualifiers other than the possessive pronoun, it must be understood as referring to any man that can be considered "hers." That would include husband, brothers, father, elders, preachers, priests, close friends or anyone with whom she has a close and mutually respectful relationship. All such men must be put aside (covered) when praying or prophesying.

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If, indeed, Paul ever did intend for the word *head* to be used figuratively it would certainly be in the very next verse following the definition established in verse 3, that is, in verse 4.

Verse 4. *Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head.*

The phrase *his head* is used twice in this verse. Since each time it has two possible meanings, we therefore have four possible understandings of this verse:

Option 1: Every man praying or prophesying, having his physical head covered, dishonoreth his physical head.

Option 2: Every man praying or prophesying, having his physical head covered, dishonoreth his figurative head (Christ).

Option 3: Every man praying or prophesying, having his figurative head (Christ) covered, dishonoreth his physical head.

Option 4: Every man praying or prophesying, having his figurative head (Christ) covered, dishonoreth his figurative head (Christ).

Options 2 and 3. Let us first consider options 2 and 3 together. If either of these options is true the word *head* is used both literally and figuratively in the same sentence (verse 4). Is this possible? Without very strong evidence to the contrary this type of analysis is highly irregular, if not totally untenable. You certainly can, of course, think of a case where this *is* proper. For instance, "As I put my hat on my head, I headed out!" The word *head* is used both literally and figuratively in the same sentence. But the context makes this clear. Putting on a hat makes it clear that the hat is being put on my literal (physical) head. But when used as a verb "*headed* out" it is clear that the word *head* is used figuratively meaning to leave or to go "out." The reason we can understand this example is that we have sufficient contextual evidence to know that the word *head* is being used both literally and figuratively.

Do we have this same type contextual evidence for understanding *his head* in verse 4. If in this verse we should understand the word *head* in both the literal and figurative senses, we must have some way to identify which *head* is literal and which is figurative. Peter tells us in 2 Peter 1:3 that we are given everything we need for life and Godliness. Since obeying God while praying or prophesying is part of Godliness we have all the details of how to do that correctly. Since we have no evidence of how to distinguish the literal and figurative uses of the word *head* in this verse it is most difficult to conclude that *head* is, in reality, used in two senses in this verse. If it be thought that this evidence is insufficient to discard both options 2 and 3 as our understanding of this verse, then which is correct, option 2 or option 3? You must choose because only one option is correct, the other is wrong. What rational procedure will justify your choice?

Also consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" This tells us that the scriptures will completely equip us for **every** good work. Since praying and prophesying are both good works the scriptures will **completely** equip us for correctly performing these acts of worship, whether publicly or privately. Because we have no scriptural evidence telling how to distinguish the two uses of the word *head* (which one is physical and which is figurative) in verse 4, we cannot conclude that the word *head* is used in two senses. If either of these two uses had been *his own head*, or *my head* or *this head of mine* then we might justify thinking the physical head is implied. I wonder why the Holy Spirit chose not to use any of these phrases, or any other, to clarify the expression. Maybe because He (the Holy Spirit) thought it was clear as written.

Some have said that a reference to the woman's physical head at the end of verse 5 is justification for understanding the use of the word *head* in verse 4 as being the physical head. This position necessitates that several questions be answered:

1) Which usage? The *head* that is uncovered or the *head* that is dishonored. What evidence is offered to make that distinction? Whatever evidence that can be given to support the first *head* as literal can also be given to support the idea that the second *head* also as literal. If someone thinks that, yes, both words should be literal we will discuss that under option 1, below.

2) Why does the reference to woman's head in verse 5 justify understanding *his* head as physical in verse 4? It is very unusual, to say the least, for a definition of a word to be given AFTER its use rather than before. Can you imagine our confusion if verse 3 was not inserted until after v.16?

3) The only reference to man's physical head is in verse 14. We only know that verse 14 is referring to the physical head because the context gives us "nature herself teach us ... if a man wears long hair..." The absence of this kind of contextual evidence in the other

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verses is telling. What principle of hermeneutics justifies interpreting the word *head* in verse 4 as literal because there is a reference to man's literal head in verse 14. Notice it is a *reference* to man's head, not the use of the word *head* itself. In verse 3 only the actual word *head* is defined. This does not imply that there can be no reference to the physical head, only that when the word *head* is used it should be understood as figuratively, unless there is contextual evidence to the contrary.

With no contextual evidence to justify using the word *head* in two senses in this one sentence we must reject options 2 and 3 as the possible understanding of verse 4.

Option 1: Every man praying or prophesying, having his physical head covered, dishonoreth his physical head. This option says both times the word *head* is used, in verse 4, it should be understood literally as the physical part of the anatomy that houses the brain. This is highly unlikely for these reasons:

- 1) We have verse 3 defining the word figuratively.
- 2) This interpretation implies that there are times when praying is dishonorable because of a physical condition (head uncovered) rather than the content of the prayer or the attitude of the prayer. This seems incompatible with overall message of the New Testament regarding spirituality versus ritualism and formalism.
- 3) How can covering one's physical head while praying dishonor one's physical head? Is it even possible to "dishonor" one's physical head? What does that mean? The word "dishonor" is usually applied to a person, not a part of the body. What does it really mean to dishonor a part of the body? Can we dishonor a hand, or a foot or a leg? If so, how? And to what end? How do we make amends for this dishonoring? There are so many questions about this option that Ockham's Razor would prohibit this interpretation.

If some say the second use is figurative, meaning "self" then: firstly, this option would be included in the discussion of option 2 and 3, above. Secondly, consider that of the 52 verses in the New Testament (Appendix B) that use the word *head* only 11 use the word figuratively, and none use it to represent *self*. Thirdly, how is it that if the man's physical head is covered it is a dishonor to him, but a woman's physical head being uncovered is a dishonor to her? If we are only using the word *head* in a physical sense (either literal head or the whole person, i.e. self), why the difference for each sex? By not considering the figurative meanings given in verse 3, this understanding seems meaninglessly arbitrary and therefore must be rejected.

- 4) This seems so liturgical and contrary to worshipping in Spirit and Truth as we are directed to do. It is plain from several passages in Hebrews that the Old Testament rituals of dress and forms in worship were discontinued. Are we now to assume that in this one case we must cover or uncover our physical heads while praying? This seems so contrary to Paul's instructions concerning prayer in other places. Compare these scriptures which give no indication of head covering:

Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit **on all occasions** with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

1 Th 5:17-18 (ASV) = pray without ceasing; **in everything give thanks**: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward. (NIV) = pray continually; **give thanks in all circumstances**, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

2 Th 1:11 With this in mind, **we constantly pray for you**, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. Ti 2:8 I desire therefore that the **men pray in every place**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath....

Also consider all the hundreds of verses that talk about prayer. None of these many passages states, implies or even hints at the possibility that anything physical or outward in any way limits, alters, degrades or diminishes the effectiveness of our prayers. Throughout the New Testament only our attitude (spiritual, pure, reverent, humble, faithful and honest) has an effect on the our prayers. We can't let this one difficult, figurative passage add a physical, outward condition (head covering) as a constraint to the effectiveness of our prayers **unless** the evidence is very clear, strong and undeniable. It is unwise, if not totally untenable, to do otherwise.

Since there is no evidence from other scriptures that supports the idea that it is important what is on your physical head during prayer, we can only conclude that it is not important. If a physical head covering was important the Holy Spirit, knowing our mental weaknesses, would certainly have at least one simple, clear passage saying that.

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5) Consider the practical application of this possibility. If a farmer (in the old days) was out plowing, walking behind a mule, with a protective hat on and his mind was on spiritual things and he wanted to pray, this interpretation would require him to remove his hat before he could pray. Is this a reasonable conclusion from what Paul is saying here?

How about a motorcyclist who had an accident and was laying injured with his helmet on. Must he remove his helmet before he could pray? What about if his injuries prohibited him from removing that helmet, would his prayers not be heard or would his prayers dishonor his physical head, whatever that may mean?

Soldiers in combat pose another problem for this interpretation. While in his fox hole with incoming fire and helmet on, could he not pray? If he prays, would his prayers be heard or would they bring dishonor on his head?

Our last example is a man in the hospital with a head wound which required bandaging. Would he be unable to pray until all the "covering" was removed. Since the bandages constitutes a head covering would his prayers not be heard or would they bring dishonor to someone? The only alternatives are a) it is OK to pray with bandages covering the head, it's only a "proper" covering that is forbidden. Then try to define "proper" without being completely arbitrary, or b) a man can pray with his head covered unless he is in church, but from evidence presented so far we know that this idea has no basis in scripture, logic or common sense.

6) Lastly, this option implies that there are some times when a person *should not* pray. Based on scripture, logic and common sense I cannot accept this conclusion, can you?.

With just a little effort I am sure that you can think of many other reasons why option 1 (Every man praying or prophesying, having his physical head covered, dishonoreth his physical head.) would be totally untenable. We therefore reject option 1 as a possible understanding for verse 4.

If these reasons are deemed insufficient to conclude that option 1 is totally untenable then there must be stronger, better or more evidence to support the idea that option 1 is correct.

Since options 1, 2 and 3 are rejected, that leaves only option 4 to consider. At least this option agrees with the principles of Ockham's Razor since it requires no additional ideas, theories or conjectures. Because verse 4 immediately follows the figurative definitions of verse 3, it is the simplest interpretation. It is also the most reasonable in that in this context it simply means a man should not "cover" Christ when he prays or prophesies. In other words we should not ignore or try to bypass Christ, but we must use Christ or pray through him, knowing that He is at God's right hand interceding for us as we pray or prophesy. Please read Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25, and 1 John 2:1.

On the other hand if we do cover Christ it is a dishonor to him because we are ignoring his intercession now and the sacrifices He has made/is making for all of us. Dishonoring Christ by ignoring him during prayer is the simplest meaning and is perfectly understandable.

Verse 5. ***But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven.***

Please notice the verse begins with "But." This implies some kind of contrast with the previous thought in verse 4. The man must have his head uncovered, in contrast the woman must have her head covered. This thought is harmonious with the idea of understanding the word ***head*** in both verses 4 and 5 in the same way, i.e. figuratively. We have the same four possibilities for understanding this verse as we did with verse 4:

Option 1: Every woman praying or prophesying, having her physical head uncovered, dishonoreth her physical head.

Option 2: Every woman praying or prophesying, having her physical head uncovered, dishonoreth her figurative head (Christ).

Option 3: Every woman praying or prophesying, having her figurative head (Christ) uncovered, dishonoreth her physical head.

Option 4: Every woman praying or prophesying, having her figurative head (Christ) uncovered, dishonoreth her figurative head (Christ).

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Again we have the same four options for our interpretation as we did in verse 4, and the exact same answers can be given here for options 2 and 3 as was given for verse 4, previously. For option 1 the logic is the same but the examples must be different because *her head* must be covered instead of uncovered as with the man. Understanding both usages of the word *head* literally (option 1) seems very unreasonable for the same reasons as given above for verse 4. Please reread the comments for option 1 given for verse 4 making the necessary changes that the woman's head *must to be covered* instead of *must be uncovered* for the man and giving different examples for the woman wanting to pray but is unable to until she *finds some covering for her head*, i.e. when she is driving, or doing housework, or at work in the office, or many other times when she is "bareheaded."

If these reasons are deemed insufficient to conclude that option 1 is totally untenable then there must be stronger, better or more evidence to support the idea that option 1 is correct.

Option 4, where both usages of the word *head* mean *man*, i.e. *her man* (including husbands, fathers, brothers, elders, and preachers but not limited to them). Verse 5 does give us more information regarding *her head* than verse 4 gave us regarding *his head*. We have the additional phrase "*for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven.*" When considering option 4, we must also consider this last phrase.

Contrary to the man's instructions, a woman must **cover** her *head* (man) when she prays or prophesies. That is, she must "bypass" him and go directly to God through Christ just like the man does. If she does not do this it is a dishonor to the man, implying that he is trying to usurp a divine position or that she is incorrectly putting him in that position. You may ask "Which man?" It seems that any man is implied. In other words, any man whom the woman respects or honors, or who has influence over her could be referred to as *her man* in this context and should be covered, bypassed, or ignored when she prays or prophesies. The last phrase of verse 5 begins with "*for,*" explaining how or why this is true. It is the same kind of shame that accrues to "her man" when she is punished publicly or "marked" by the shaving of her head for immodesty or immorality. "Her" man would likewise be dishonored by any action on her part which was contrary to social customs. This is even true in our society today. If a woman is known to dress inappropriately, all the men who are close to her (father, brother, husband, etc.) would, by her actions, be dishonored. This observation from society is used to make the spiritual point that a woman should cover her figurative *head*, man, while praying. The generality of the use of word "man" implies that this instruction should be followed by all women, i.e. all women must cover all men, who might otherwise influence her to the point of interference, as she prays or prophesies.

Verse 6. *For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled.*

This sentence starts with the word *for*. This means that this verse is explaining the previous thought. It is just a repeating of the idea of verse 5 for emphasis, giving more evidence for the conclusion that the woman should cover her head, i.e. man, when she prays. Paul uses the common customs of the day to add weight to or to illustrate his position. If this well known custom (having her head shorn or shaven) is shameful, indecent, and dishonorable (to whom?) then it helps his listeners to understand why her *head* being uncovered in prayer would also dishonor or shame her *head*. Paul is simply using the well known customs of the day to illustrate why it is important for a woman to cover her figurative *head* (man) in the spiritual activity of praying and prophesying.

Verse 7-9. *For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: 9 for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man:*

Paul now returns to subject of the man's head covering. The word *head* occurs only once in these verses. Verses 7, 8 and 9 all begin with a *for*, continuing the explanation for the positive statements made in verse 4. This fact calls for the consistent rendering of the word *head* figuratively as in the previous verses. Giving it a literal meaning here would be totally without evidence, call for ignoring of the introductory word *for*, and require more speculation as to the practical application of this verse.

Verse 7 says that the man should not cover Christ because the man is the glory of God, in that he is the reflection of God because he was made in the image of God. Woman is the glory or reflection of man because she came *from* man in the beginning. She is also the glory of man "because in her, the preeminence and authority of her husband are conspicuous." Thayer, p. 156.

(Glory: "reflection" - TDNT, V2, p.237; "the image and reflection of God" BAG, p. 257; man "whose function of government reflects the majesty of the divine ruler." Thayer, p.156)

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Verses 8 and 9 just give additional evidence to the spiritual hierarchy among man, woman and Christ as originally given in verse 3. These verses are just saying again, for different reasons, that a man should not cover Christ, yet a woman should cover man, when praying or prophesying.

Verses 7-9 give us three reasons for the man's headship over the woman **a) *but the woman is the glory of the man.* b) *For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man:* c) *for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: 10. for this cause ought the woman to have [a sign of] authority on her head, because of the angels.***

I think the biggest problem with this verse is the added words "a sign of." These words are not in the Greek and that is why they are in italics in the ASV and the NASB. When any English words are added to the translation it is usually done to "help" our understanding, but in this case these words make the verse say something that it was not intended to say. By just examining the words written by Paul, who was guided by the Holy Spirit, we can get the clear meaning. Remember, the words mean what they say, no more and no less.

The literal rendering of the Greek simply says "Because of this [or for this reason] ought the woman authority to have on/over/upon her head, on account (or because) of the angels." Putting the sentence into English word order we have "because of this, the woman ought to have authority on/over/upon her head, because of the angels"

If we note "For this reason" or "Because of this" it helps us a lot to understand this verse. The previous verse is the reason for what follows this expression. Paul had just given 3 reasons for the spiritual hierarchy established in verse 3, i.e. woman, man, Christ, God. Because of this clear expression that man is *head* of woman, it is necessary to express a clear exception to this general rule, i.e. the woman *ought to have* enough authority over the man to set him aside (or cover him) during prayer or prophesy.

We must note the Greek preposition $\epsilon\pi\iota$, translated "on" in the phrase "on her head," is also translated *over* when talking about authority (see Thayer, p. 231, d., BDAG p. 365, $\epsilon\pi\iota$, a), as in: Matt. 24:45, Acts 8:27 12:20; Rom. 9:5; Eph. 4:6. In these verses the translations of $\epsilon\pi\iota$ (epi) is *over*. Thayer also gives *upon* as the translation of $\epsilon\pi\iota$ in 1 Corinthians 11:10 at the end of examples under c. on page 231, also see BDAG p. 363, $\epsilon\pi\iota$, a. If this is true we would have "***for this cause ought the woman to have authority on/over/upon ($\epsilon\pi\iota$) her head, because of the angels.***" This would then say that the woman ought to have authority over the man!! Does this contradict all we have said about the authority of the man? Remember context must be the determining factor when answering that question. What authority does this passage allow or even specify that the woman could, *should* or even must have over the man? Only that authority which allows, yea even directs her to put him aside, or "cover" him while praying or prophesying.

This understanding of the passage gives support to the concept that all nine times the word **head** is used in our passage it should be understood in the figurative sense defined in verse 3.

I repeat for emphasis, if this conclusion is rejected because of insufficient evidence then any alternative view must have more or better evidence else God is supporting truth with less evidence than a false alternative.

Those who add the words "a sign of" before the word *authority* and assume the word *head* refers to her physical head usually conclude that the veil is a sign of submission. It seems difficult if not impossible to make the words "sign of authority" to mean "sign of submission!" A sign of authority is like the badge of a policeman. He who wears the badge, legitimately, has the authority. Any sign of authority ascribes authority to the person who legally displays the sign. All this confusion arises because some want to use the word *head* literally instead of figuratively and they don't want her to have actual authority so they throw in the words "a sign of" hoping to solve the problem. In reality these additional words only add to the confusion. If we would just take the words that Paul wrote and use them as he specified in verse 3, all the confusion and uncertainty melts away. This is a perfect example of why Ockham's razor is so valuable.

The end of verse 10 says: "because of the angels." That the woman must also have authority on (or over) her head (man), in the sense specified, is a perfect example to the angels. The angels certainly need this example of recognizing or obeying authority because many of them failed to observe their proper authority and fell from the grace of God. Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4.

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Verse 11. *Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord.*

The first word in the Greek is “nevertheless” or “however.” Paul hastens to add the next two verses to prevent anyone from deciding that because of the authority issue just explained, that men and women should be independent and separate *in the Lord*. “However,” even though verses 3-10 are true, we must remember that “in the Lord,” as Christians, men and women are not independent. “In the Lord” they are intended to work together as fellow Christians or “as one,” if husband and wife. As implied by the previous paragraph in our text (verses 3-10) both men and women appear before God equally, praying to, or prophesying for, directly to God through Christ.

Verse 12. *for as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God.*

This implies that men and women are dependent on each other, i.e. woman was originally from the side of man (Adam), now all men are born of woman. This is a further comment on the previous statement in verse 11 as indicated by the word “For.”

Verse 13. *Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled? 14. Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*

Paul now returns to the previous subject, giving different reasons for his conclusions about head coverings during prayer and prophesying. Even nature teaches this same principle: a woman having her head covered (with long hair) and a man’s head is uncovered (having “short” hair, relative to the woman’s). Therefore nature itself teaches that a woman should cover her head (man) and a man should not cover his head (Christ). This teaching is applied to the activities of praying or prophesying with the figurative meaning for the word *head*.

Please notice the last phrase *"for her hair is given her for a covering."* This last phrase should end for all time the idea that these verses teach that a woman today should wear some type of head covering when praying. Paul here says very simply and plainly that the woman's long hair is given to her for any necessary covering of her physical head, ... no cloth needed!! All of this repetition and detail is just to strengthen his previous conclusion that a woman should pray directly to God through Christ, bypassing “her man” who might otherwise want to inappropriately influence her praying or prophesying. This strengthens the position of woman in relationship to God and puts her on an equal footing with the man as she stands before her God in prayer, in spite of her submission to him in other circumstances.

Verse 16. *But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

Remember, the words mean what they say! Try to understand them based on the actual words, not what you think they should say. Never add words to make the meaning match your desires. What does the word “custom” refer to?

We have seen that the overall message in these fourteen verses is fourfold:

- 1) The spiritual hierarchy of: God, Christ, man, woman,
- 2) To show the limitations of this hierarchy, both men and women pray directly to God through Christ.
- 3) The woman has enough control over *her* head to bypass the man while praying or prophesying.
- 4) These first three points are supported by several references to various literal head coverings.

What part or parts of the verses 2-16 are to be considered a custom? Certainly not the established spiritual hierarchy of God, Christ, man, woman. If not his idea, then what? Shall we consider the idea that man should pray through Christ, not bypassing him, as a “custom”? I certainly hope not, for this is taught so clearly in several passages as a doctrine not as a custom. What about the idea that woman should “bypass” *her* man and pray directly to God through Christ, should that be thought of as a custom? I pray that we will all agree that this idea also is clearly taught as a doctrine not as a custom. What then can be considered as a custom?

Everything said about hair (long or short), physical head covering (veiled or shaven) is probably what Paul meant when he used the word “custom” in verse 16. He plainly says that the church has no such custom, i.e. these ideas are not to be part of the Christian

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practice or worship. He is not condemning these practices but simply saying that they are not part of the Christian obligation and are delegated to the realm of custom.

Summary

Of course, it is not expected that these conclusions will be accepted by everyone. But please remember that if these explanations are not correct, then there must be better logical and/or scriptural evidence to support any alternate explanation, or else God is supporting a true position with less evidence than a false alternative.

As you consider the ideas presented here please note: they are logically consistent with the context of the passage, they do not violate any principle of hermeneutics and they do not violate any other Christian principle or doctrine. The conclusions reached here imply that these verses teach a simple lesson that is applicable to all people for all time: that all men should pray through Christ (not ignoring or “covering” him), that woman should recognize man as her *head* but she has enough authority over him to put him aside when praying or prophesying, standing equal with man as she prays directly to God through Christ. The final implication is that the customs referred to by Paul to illustrate the spiritual lessons taught are not binding “in the church.”

Lastly, using the figurative meanings of the word *head* instead of the literal meanings we would have the following paraphrase of our passage:

But 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. 4 Every man praying or prophesying, having Christ covered, dishonoreth Christ. 5 But every woman praying or prophesying with her man uncovered dishonoreth her man; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. 6 For if a woman [’s head, i.e. man] is not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her [man] be covered. 7 For a man indeed ought not to have Christ covered, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. 8 For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: 9 for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: 10 for this cause ought the woman to have [this] authority over her man, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God. 13 Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God [with her man] uncovered? 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. 16 But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

All I ask is that you thoughtfully and prayerfully consider all this evidence, in context; realizing that one day you will face God to explain your decision to accept or reject these conclusions.

Appendix A “Veil/Vail” or “Covering”

A study of the key words in this passage is very instructive. These words give us insight into the major ideas Paul wanted to convey. Studying the Greek words which are translated *cover* and/or *veil* (*vail*) helps us to determine how to understand the overall passage of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

What we want to determine is whether or not the actual meaning of the words supports our interpretation of this passage. Do these words refer to a veil/vail (usually understood to mean some kind of cloth used to cover the physical head and/or face) or do they refer to *any* type of covering, not just a veil?

One of the difficulties is that in America today the English word *veil* has a definite meaning. It usually means something used to cover the face, as with a bride at her wedding or a widow in mourning at her husband's funeral. So if *veil* is used in translating our Greek words we get this specific mental image, which may be misleading.

On the other hand if our Greek words are translated using the more general word *cover*, it is much easier to understand a more general covering and it is easier to accept the meaning of covering the figurative head of the person who is praying or prophesying. Therefore it is important to know which of these meanings (veil or cover) is to be preferred.

Looking at the Greek words and the translations of five English versions we have:

Versions: Greek	KJV	RSV	ASV <i>something</i>	NASB	NIV
v. 4 κατα κεφαλης εχων <i>down his head having</i>	covered	covered	covered	on his head	covered
v. 5 ακατακαλυπτω (from ακατακαλυπτος)	uncovered	unveiled	unveiled	uncovered	uncovered
v. 6a κατακαλυπτεται (from κατακαλυπτω)	not covered	will not veil	not veiled	does not cover	does not cover
v. 6b κατακαλυπτεσθω (from κατακαλυπτω)	be covered	ware a veil	be veiled	let her cover	should cover
v. 7 κατακαλυπτεσθαι (from κατακαλυπτω)	not to cover	not to cover	not ... veiled	not ... covered	not to cover
v. 13 ακατακαλυπτων (from ακατακαλυπτος)	uncovered	uncovered	unveiled	uncovered	uncovered
v. 15 περιβολαιου	a cover	a covering	a covering	a covering	a covering

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) is a revision of the ASV. Note that the various forms of “veil” are changed to various forms of “cover.” On the other hand the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), not listed above, changed from “not to cover” to “not to have his head veiled” in verse 7 and from “uncovered” to “unveiled” in verse 13, leaving v. 15 translated as “a covering.”

Interlinears:

Berry (c. 1897)	Marshall (c. 1958)	Brown/Comfort (c. 1990)	Mounce/Mounce (2008)
v. 4 [anything] on [his] head	down over [his] head having [anything]	(same as Marshall)	with head covered
v. 5 uncovered	unveiled	uncovered	her head uncovered
v. 6a be not covered	is not veiled	is not covered	will not cover
v. 6b let her be covered	let her be veiled	let her be covered	she should cover her head
v. 7 to have covered	to be veiled	to be covered	should not cover his head
v. 13 uncovered	unveiled	uncovered	with her head uncovered
v. 15 a covering	a veil	a covering	a covering

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Notice that only the RSV and Marshall’s interlinear use *veil* as a translation for our Greek words. Also not that Berry’s Interlinear gives “cover” as the meaning in all seven instances. But in his lexicon (see below) he gives “veil” for the meaning of our Greek words. I have no suggested explanation for this apparent discrepancy.

The five Greek words that are translated *cover* or *veil* in verses 5-13, listed above, are from two lexical Greek words: ακατακαλυπτος and κατακαλυπτω. The Greek word used in v. 15 is περιβολαιου from the lexical word περιβολαιον.

Checking our standard lexicons we have:

Thayer’s:

- ακατακαλυπτος - not covered, unveiled
- κατακαλυπτω - to cover up, to veil or cover one’s self, one’s head
- περιβολαιον - a covering thrown around, a wrapper; in the N.T. 1. a mantle* Heb. 1:12
- 2. a veil [A.V. a covering]

BDAG, third edition:

- ακατακαλυπτον - uncovered, ... with uncovered head, 1 Cor. 11:5. Concisely γυναικα ακατακαλυπτον a woman without head covering, v. 13
- κατακαλυπτω - cover, veil
- περιβολαιον - “that which is thrown around”: an article of apparel that covers much of the body, covering, wrap, cloak, robe. something like a cloak or mantle* ...Heb. 1:12. ...a covering 1 Cor. 11:15.

T.D.N.T., v. 3, p.561, 2.:

In his commentary on this passage he defines the word κατακαλυπτω as “uncovered.”

Liddell & Scott, p. 47, 893:

- ακατακαλυπτος - uncovered, LXX Lev. 13:45, 1 Cor. 11:5,13
- κατακαλυπτω - cover up
- περιβολαιον - (outside the N.T.) “wrapper, that which is thrown around, covering, corpse-clothes; N.T. woman’s headgear, 1 Cor. 11:15”

Berry’s Lexicon (compare this to his interlinear where he consistently uses “cover” for these Greek words!):

- ακατακαλυπτος - unveiled
- κατακαλυπτω - to wear a veil
- περιβολαιον - a mantle*, a veil

An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by Vine, p.252:

- κατακαλυπτω - to cover up, in the middle voice, to cover one’s self, is used in 1 Cor. 11:6, 7 (R.V., “veiled”). *Note:* In 1 Cor. 11:4, “having his head covered” is, literally, having (something) down the head.’
- περιβολαιου - literally denotes something thrown around; hence a veil, covering or a mantle* around the body, a vesture.

* Webster’s New world Dictionary, mantle: a loose sleeveless cloak or cape: sometimes used figuratively, an allusion to royal robes of state, as symbol of authority or responsibility.

Summary:

We, therefore, conclude that using the English word “cover” in our context is to be preferred for the following reasons:

- 1) Every authority allows this translation,
- 2) The majority of the authorities (12 of the 15) list “cover” first,
- 3) The “normal” Greek word for *veil* is καλυμμα (noun form of the verb καλυπτω) or καταπετασμα. Not the Greek words used in our passage.

See The Englishman’s Concordance of the New Testament, p.938 (under *veil*). The word καταπετασμα is used only six times in the New Testament and all six times it refers, literally or figuratively, to the veil/veil that separates the holy place from the Most Holy Place in the temple.

The English word *vail* appears in the KJV only 4 times. All four times it translates the Greek word καλυμμα.

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The English “*veil*” appears 16 times in the ASV. Eleven times it translates either *καλυμμα* or *καταπετασμα* the other five times it translates our words in 1 Corinthians 11:5-13.

English word *veil* appears 7 times in the NIV. All 7 times it translates a form of the Greek word *καλυμμα*.

- 4) The first act of head covering is mentioned in v.4 and no one translates it as “veiled,” the last act of head covering is in v. 15, and all 5 translations and three of the four interlinears translate the word as “cover.” Based on what evidence can we decide that at the beginning of the context and at the end of the context the words are best translated “cover” but in the middle of the context we could best use “vail” as our translation?
- 5) The preponderance of the above evidence supports “cover” as the better translation of our Greek words.

We do not contend that “veil” is a mistranslation, only that it is a misleading translation. If some would contend that *veil* is the preferred translation and conclude that a physical head *veiling* is the meaning of the passages we must point out that the word *veil* (in the ASV) is also used to refer to the huge curtain that separates (or hides, or covers) the Most Holy Place in the temple, Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45, Heb. 6:19, Heb. 9:3. It is also used figuratively to cover the understanding of the Jews, 2 Cor. 3:14, 15, 16 and in Hebrews 10:20 to represent the body of Christ.

So, even if, contrary to the preponderance of evidence, the word *veil* is used as the translation of the Greek words in our passage, it does little to support the idea that in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 is talking about vailing/veiling the literal head. For even the Greek word *καλυμμα*, usually translated *vail* is used figuratively meaning that which prevents a thing from being understood, 2 Corinthians 3:13-16, Thayer's lexicon.

Only the context can determine the meaning of our words in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16. The Context plainly says in v. 3 “the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” This sentence introduces the subject and establishes the context for our study.

Appendix A
“Veil/Vail” or “Covering”

Appendix B
All scriptures using *head*

Mt 5:36 And do not swear by your **head**, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

Mt 6:17 But when you fast, put oil on your **head** and wash your face,

Mt 8:20 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his **head**."

Mt 10:25 It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the **head** of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

Mt 10:30 And even the very hairs of your **head** are all numbered.

Mt 14:8 Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the **head** of John the Baptist."

Mt 14:11 His **head** was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.

Mt 26:7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his **head** as he was reclining at the table.

Mt 27:29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his **head**. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said.

Mt 27:30 They spat on him, and took the staff and struck him on the **head** again and again.

Mt 27:37 Above his **head** they placed the written charge against him: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mr 6:24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The **head** of John the Baptist," she answered.

Mr 6:25 At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the **head** of John the Baptist on a platter."

Mr 6:27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's **head**. The man went, beheaded John in the prison,

Mr 6:28 and brought back his **head** on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother.

Mr 12:4 Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the **head** and treated him shamefully.

Mr 14:3 While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his **head**.

Mr 15:19 Again and again they struck him on the **head** with a staff and spat on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

Lu 7:46 You did not put oil on my **head**, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

Lu 9:58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his **head**."

Lu 12:7 Indeed, the very hairs of your **head** are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. -- Lu 21:18 But not a hair of your **head** will perish.

Joh 13:9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my **head** as well!"

Joh 19:2 The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his **head**. They clothed him in a purple robe

Joh 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his **head** and gave up his spirit.

Joh 20:7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' **head**. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.

Joh 20:12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the **head** and the other at the foot.

Ac 27:15 The ship was caught by the storm and could not **head** into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along.

Ac 27:34 Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his **head**."

Ro 12:20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his **head**."

1Co 11:3 Now I want you to realise that the **head** of every man is Christ, and the **head** of the woman is man, and the **head** of Christ is God.

1Co 11:4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his **head** covered dishonours his **head**.

1Co 11:5 And every woman who prays or prophesies with her **head** uncovered dishonours her **head**—it is just as though her **head** were shaved.

1Co 11:6 If a woman does not cover her **head**, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her **head**.

1Co 11:7 A man ought not to cover his **head**, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

1Co 11:10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her **head**.

1Co 11:13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her **head** uncovered?

1Co 12:21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the **head** cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

Eph 1:10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one **head**, even Christ.

Eph 1:22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be **head** over everything for the church,

Eph 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the **Head**, that is, Christ.

Eph 5:23 For the husband is the **head** of the wife as Christ is the **head** of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.

Col 1:18 And he is the **head** of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Col 2:10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the **Head** over every power and authority.

Col 2:19 He has lost connection with the **Head**, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

2Ti 4:5 But you, keep your **head** in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Re 1:14 His **head** and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

Appendix B
All scriptures using *head*

- Re 10:1 Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his [head](#); his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.
- Re 12:1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her [head](#).
- Re 13:1 And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each [head](#) a blasphemous name.
- Re 14:14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his [head](#) and a sharp sickle in his hand.
- Re 19:12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his [head](#) are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no-one knows but he himself.

The Greek:

Should the English possessive pronoun accompany the noun "head"?

The complete context in the Greek:

- 3 θελω δε υμας ειδεναι οτι παντος ανδρος η κεφαλη ο χριστος εστιν κεφαλη δε γυναικος ο ανηρ κεφαλη δε χριστου ο θεος
4 πας ανηρ προσευχομενος η προφητευων κατα κεφαλης εχων καταισχυνει την κεφαλην αυτου
5 πασα δε γυνη προσευχομενη η προφητευουσα ακατακαλυπτω τη κεφαλη καταισχυνει την κεφαλην εαυτης εν γαρ εστιν και το αυτο τη εξυρημενη
6 ει γαρ ου κατακαλυπτεται γυνη και κειρασθω ει δε αισχρον γυναικι το κειρασθαι η ξυρασθαι κατακαλυπτεσθω
7 ανηρ μεν γαρ ουκ οφειλει κατακαλυπτεσθαι την κεφαλην εικων και δοξα θεου υπαρχων γυνη δε δοξα ανδρος εστιν
8 ου γαρ εστιν ανηρ εκ γυναικος αλλα γυνη εξ ανδρος
9 και γαρ ουκ εκτισθη ανηρ δια την γυναικα αλλα γυνη δια τον ανδρα
10 δια τουτο οφειλει η γυνη εξουσιαν εχειν επι της κεφαλης δια τους αγγελους
11 πλην ουτε ανηρ χωρις γυναικος ουτε γυνη χωρις ανδρος εν κυριω
12 ωσπερ γαρ η γυνη εκ του ανδρος ουτως και ο ανηρ δια της γυναικος τα δε παντα εκ του θεου
13 εν υμιν αυτοις κρινατε πρεπον εστιν γυναικα ακατακαλυπτων τω θεω προσευχεσθαι
14 η ουδε αυτη η φυσικη διδασκει υμας οτι ανηρ μεν εαν κομα ατιμια αυτω εστιν
15 γυνη δε εαν κομα δοξα αυτη εστιν οτι η κομη αντι περιβολαιου δεδοται
16 ει δε τις δοκει φιλονεικος ειναι ημεις τοιαυτην συνθηειαν ουκ εχομεν ουδε αι εκκλησιαι του θεου

Only those verses using the word "head" (Greek: κεφαλη)

- 3 ... ανδρος η κεφαλη ο χριστος εστιν
κεφαλη δε γυναικος ο ανηρ
κεφαλη δε χριστου ο θεος
- 4 πας ανηρ προσευχομενος η προφητευων κατα κεφαλης εχων καταισχυνει την κεφαλην αυτου
- 5 πασα δε γυνη προσευχομενη η προφητευουσα ακατακαλυπτω τη κεφαλη καταισχυνει
την κεφαλην εαυτης εν γαρ εστιν και το αυτο τη εξυρημενη
- 7 ανηρ μεν γαρ ουκ οφειλει κατακαλυπτεσθαι την κεφαλην εικων και δοξα θεου υπαρχων γυνη δε δοξα ανδρος εστιν
- 10 δια τουτο οφειλει η γυνη εξουσιαν εχειν επι της κεφαλης δια τους αγγελους

Please note that in the six occurrences of our word after verse 3;

- Two occurrences have the possessive pronoun accompanying the noun, i.e., the second occurrence in both verses 4 and 5.
- Two other occurrences use the genitive case which, in our context, require the presence of the possessive pronoun in English, i.e., the first occurrence in verse 4 and the one occurrence in verse 10.
- In the other two occurrences, the first occurrence in verse 5 and the usage in verse 7, I leave it to the integrity of the reader to determine by the context; whose, or which, or what head is being inferred, not forgetting the ASV, KJV, NIV, and RSV translations all give the possessive pronoun accompanying the noun (head) as their translation.

All this proves beyond a reasonable doubt that all six usages, to be properly understood in English, should have the possessive pronoun (his/her) accompanying the noun (head).

Appendix D Image/glory of God

Ge 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
Ge 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man.
2Co 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

ASV -- The glory of God or God's glory

Ps 19:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork.
Pr 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.
Joh 11:4 But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.
Joh 11:40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldst see the glory of God?
Ac 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,
Ro 3:23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;
Ro 5:2 through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
Ro 15:7 Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God.
1Co 10:31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.
1Co 11:7 For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.
2Co 1:20 For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the glory of God through us.
2Co 4:6 Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
2Co 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the grace, being multiplied through the many, may cause the thanksgiving to abound unto the glory of God.
Php 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Re 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.
Re 21:11 having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal:
Re 21:23 And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.

NIV -- The glory of God or God's glory

Ps 19:1 *For the director of music. A psalm of David.* The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Pr 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings.
Joh 11:4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." *****
Joh 11:40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"
Ac 7:55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. *****
Ro 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
Ro 5:2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.
1Co 10:31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.
1Co 11:7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.
2Co 1:20 For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.
2Co 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.
2Co 4:15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.
Php 2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Heb 1:3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. *****
Re 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no-one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.
Re 21:11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.
Re 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.