

# The Literal Word

## 1 Corinthians

M.D. Treece

κατασχύνω	=I dishonor, disgrace.
κεφαλήν	-fem., acc., sing., of
κεφαλή	=head.

*Translation - And every man praying or prophesying having hair down his head disgraces his head.*

### Commentary

*Every man praying or prophesying having hair down his head.* He uses ἀνὴρ (male) instead of ἄνθρωπος (man) to emphasize the contrast to γυνή (woman). The temporal aspect of the participles προσευχόμενος and προφητεύων (while he is praying or prophesying) should be noted: That is, while he is in the closest intimacy with the Spirit of God. Man is the only being that stands in the presence of God ἀκατακλύπτω (uncovered) (vs. 5). That is because he is the only being created in His "image" and "likeness" (v.7, Gen. 1:26,27). The phrase does not specify "what" is "down his head" and it is conjecture and pure eisegesis to say "veil." Since "hair" is the subject, it should fill the ellipsis. It is unclear why men choose to disregard the main thrust of the Apostle's discourse. He is talking about the man having "long hair" (v. 14). It is a study in human nature to see how expositors and commentators constantly inject their views without regard to the central theme of the discussion. To supply κάλυμμα (veil) here is unwarranted. Κατακλύπτω should be translated as "covering" inasmuch as Paul tells us that "hair" is given instead of a "veil" (v. 15). There are better words which could have been used if "veil" had been intended. Paul could have used καταπετάσματος which was used as the *veil of tabernacle* (Heb. 6:19, 9:3), as the *veil of the temple* (Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45), or metaphorically of the *flesh of Jesus* (Heb. 10:20). He could have used κάλυμμα which was the *veil of Moses* (II Cor. 3:13-16). He evidently did not wish to say "veil" in this verse, or else he would have utilized περιβολαίου as he did in verse 15. W.E. Vine does not list κατακαλύπτω in his dictionary under "veil" (An Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, pg. 184), neither does Bullinger (A Critical Lexicon and Concordance, pg. 845).

There is no subject in the Bible so obviously violated with "supplied" words and varying views of what their custom must have been as this. The Apostle is obviously talking about "hair" hanging down his head.

*Disgraces his head.* We have just learned that "Christ is the head of man," so it is Christ that is disgraced. The capitals are arbitrary, and the minuscule sheds no light on the subject. In what theological sense would a man "disgrace" his physical head by the length of his hair? The disgrace happens because he is the "image and reflection of God" (v. 7), according to Arndt and Gingrich

# The Literal Word

## 1 Corinthians

M.D. Treece

(Lexicon, pg. 203). Simply, when God looks at man, which is in His image and likeness, He must be concerned about his appearance because it is His Own reflection He expects to see. It is incorrect to say that man is in the image and likeness of God in a moral sense, and not physically. The Apostle stated exactly the opposite in his discourse with the Athenian philosophers when the very subject was to determine what the appearance of God might be (Acts 17:25,29). He reasons with them that since we are the offspring of God, then God should look something like us.

5. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head, for that is even all one as if she were shaved.

πᾶσα δὲ γυνὴ προσευχομένη ἢ προφητεύουσα ἀκατακαλύπτῃ τῇ κεφαλῇ κατασχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς· ἓν γὰρ ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῇ ἐξυρμένῃ.

προσευχομένη	-pres., mid., part., nom., fem., sing., of
προσεύχομαι	= (dep.) I pray.
προφητεύουσα	-pres., act., part., nom., fem., sing., of
προφητεύω	= prophet.
ἀκατακαλύπτῃ	-adj., dat., sing., of
κατακαλύπτω	= I cover.
κατασχύνει	-pres., act., ind., 3rd., sing., of
κατασχύνω	= shame or disgrace.
ἐστὶν	-pres., act., ind., 3rd., sing., of
εἰμί	= I am.
ἐξυρμένῃ	-perf., pass., part., dat., fem., sing., of
ξυράω	= I shave.

*Translation - But every woman praying or prophesying having her head uncovered disgraces her head; for it is one and the same with the one shaved.*

### Commentary

*But every woman praying or prophesying.* The δὲ is adversative and πᾶσα (every) is emphatic. It should be noted here that chapters 11-14 comprise a unit that involves what is called the *sunerchomai*, or "gathering together" of the Church (v.17). This becomes important when we consider that Paul calls for silence on the part of the woman in some circumstances (14:34). In this verse we see that she is able to pray and even prophesy. We will consider this verse when we address that subject.



# The Literal Word

## 1 Corinthians

M.D. Treece

*Having her head uncovered.* The word ἀκατοκάλυπται is "uncovered." There is no specificity as to what the covering is here. To say "veil" would be to say more than is true to the text inasmuch as he uses a different word for "veil" in verse 15. There are two words used in this chapter which relate to the woman's head, neither of which is κάλυμμα (veil). We will discuss the περιβολαίου (mantle or veil) in verse 15; here it is κατα (down) and καλύπτω (cover or hide). κατά loses its prepositional aspect and has a perfective force in composition. Once again we are not left to speculate as to what is intended by "covering." It is her hair. That is the central theme of this discourse.

*Disgraces her head.* There is no reason to make "her head" her own since the point is the same as relating to Christ being the head of man (v. 3).

*One and the same with the one shaved.* This is literal of ἐν γάρ ἐστιν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ. There is still no need for imposing κάλυμμα (veil) or περιβολαίου. He explains in the next verse what is meant by this statement.

6. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

εἰ γὰρ οὐ κατακαλύπτεται γυνή, καὶ κειράσθω· εἰ δὲ αἰσχρὸν γυναικὶ τὸ κείρασθαι ἢ ξυράσθαι, κατακαλυπτέσθω.

κατακαλύπτεται	-pres., pass., ind., 3rd., sing., of
κατακαλύπτω	=I cover.
κειράσθω	-aor., mid., impv., 3rd., sing., of
κείρω	=I shear, cut.
αἰσχρὸν	-adj., nom., neut., sing., of
αἰσχροῦ	=ugly, shameful (first class condition).
γυναικὶ	-fem., dat., sing., of
γυνή	=woman.
κείρασθαι	-aor., pass., infin., of
κείρω	=cut.
ξυράσθαι	-pres., pass., infin., of
ξυράω	=I shave.
κατακαλυπτέσθω	-pres., pass., infin., of
κατακαλύπτω	=I cover.

*Translation - For if a woman is not covered, let her hair be cut; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved, let her be covered.*

# The Literal Word

## 1 Corinthians

### M.D. Treece

#### Commentary

*If a woman is not covered.* This has to do with the length of the hair and whether or not it is sufficient in length as to "cover."

*Let her hair be cut.* Any cutting alters the symbol of her subjection and changes her position in the order of creation. It is not a matter of her appearance before man that is critical, but the fact that God knows. The discussion is about when she is "praying or prophesying." There may be alterations made without the knowledge of people, but there is no blindness in deity. As has already been stated, "It is one and the same." He is saying that the amount is unimportant; it is the fact that she knows her heart as well as God.

*But if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved.* It is a condition of the first class which assumes it to be fact; in other words, it is a disgrace for her to do either one of these. The word *αἰσχρὸν* is "disgraceful, shameful, ugly or base." There are many who minimize the impact of *aiskron*, pointing to the fact that it does not say "sin." Who wants to take a chance on the fine line of how unfavorable such actions can be in the sight of God by determining the difference between disgrace and sin? There are two words used for the alterations which can be made to the hair; one is *κείρω* (to have one's hair cut) and the other is *ξυράω* (to have one's head shaved). Either one is "disgraceful," which proves what he means by "one and the same" (v.5). *κείρω* is used when Paul is said to have "shorn his head" (See Acts 18:19).

*Let her be covered.* The word *κατακαλύπτεσθαι* is a present passive imperative: "to be covered." The plea is for consistency. If she is going to be masculine, then cutting or shaving is the same. If she has a desire to fling aside the divine order of creation, it makes no difference whether her hair is "trimmed" or "shaved." It is God who is aware of her intention. The corresponding word for "shaved" in the Hebrew is *גָּלַל* (to be bald) (Gen. 41:14). Again, there is no need to read "veil" into the argument.

7. For 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.

ἀνὴρ μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κατακαλύπτεσθαι τὴν κεφαλὴν, εἰκὼν καὶ δόξα θεοῦ ὑπάρχων· ἡ γυνὴ δὲ δόξα ἀνδρός ἐστίν.

ὀφείλει	-pres., act., ind., 3rd., sing., of
ὀφείλω	=I owe, ought, obligated.
κατακαλύπτεσθαι	-pres., pass., infin., of
κατακαλύπτω	=I cover.
κεφαλὴν	-fem., ac., sing., of

# The Literal Word

## 1 Corinthians

M.D. Treece

φύσις	-noun, nom., fem., sing., of
φύσις	= nature.
διδάσκει	-pres., act., ind., 2nd., sing., of
διδάσκω	= I teach.
άνήρ	-masc., nom., sing., of
άνήρ	= man.
κομᾶ	-pres., act., subj., 3rd., sing., of
κομάω	= let one's hair grow long.
ἀτιμία	-noun, nom., fem., sing., of
ἀτιμία	= dishonor, disgrace.
ἐστίν	-pres., act., ind., 3rd., sing., of
εἰμί	= I am.

*Translation - Does not nature itself teach you that if a man lets his hair grow long, it is a dishonor to him?*

### Commentary

*Does not nature itself teach you.* The question expects an affirmative answer. Jamieson, Fausset, Brown says, "The fact that 'nature' has provided woman, and not man, with long hair proves that man was designed to be uncovered, and woman covered... 'Nature' is *God's will impressed on creation; when He is recognized, Nature's teachings are auxiliary to Revelation*" (A Commentary, vol. 3, pg. 315). All that needs to be considered on the matter of nature (φύσις) teaching us is to observe the average of baldness among men as compared to women.

*If a man lets his hair grow long, it is a disgrace to him.* The μὲν (on one hand) and δὲ (on the other) sequence is completed in the next verse. The present active subjunctive κομᾶ (let his hair grow long), used here only in the New Testament, is introduced by ἔαν, which forms a third class condition. The durative quality of the present indicative indicates continuing action. The word ἀτιμία is "dishonor" or "disgrace." It may be that the longer the hair, the more disgrace is indicated. There is no question that the entire subject is about long hair on men and short hair on women, and not about wearing a veil.

15. But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering.

γυνή δὲ ἐάν κομᾶ δόξα αὐτῇ ἐστίν; ὅτι ἡ κόμη ἀντὶ περιβολαίου δέδοται [αὐτῇ].



# The Literal Word 1 Corinthians

M.D. Treece

κομᾶ	-pres., act., subj., 3rd., sing., of
κομάω	=To have long hair.
ἀντὶ	-pres., gen., of
ἀντὶ	=instead of.
κόμη	-noun., nom., fem., sing., of
κόμη	=hair of a woman.
περιβολαίου	-noun, gen., neut., sing., of
περιβόλαιον	=covering, wrap, mantle.
δέδοται	-perf., pass., ind., 3rd., sing., of
διδώμι	=I give.

*Translation - But if a woman continues to grow long hair, it is a glory to her, because her hair has been given to her in place of a covering.*

## Commentary

*If a woman continues to grow long hair, it is a glory to her.* That which is true of the man in the preceding verse is the reverse for the woman here. The tense of the verb again denotes a continuing action: it is to "continue to be long." Whereas δόξα is "reflection" in verse 7, here it is better translated "glory." The same thing that brings disgrace to a man serves as a matter of elevation to the woman.

It matters little what the modern Church thinks of the lesson in this area. It must be considered valid; first, because it is the word of God, then, because extraordinary effort was made by the Apostle to establish its correctness. It must also be noted that he used every argument at his disposal to substantiate the matter, from "nature" to "angels" to "propriety," every theological tool at hand.

Because her hair has been given to her in place of a covering. The **οτι** is causal, explaining the reason why she should have long hair. **ἀντὶ** is better translated here "in place of" so says Arndt and Gingrich (Lexicon, pg. 73). This is the only time that περιβολαίου (veil) appears in the chapter. The insertion of παραβολαίου in places other than this verse changes the subject altogether. Even with the imposition of "veil" in previous verses, Paul corrects any idea that he is demanding a "cloth" be worn by the women in this verse. Her hair is the "covering" he expects. Her hair is a natural veil and any implication for another kind is corrected by this statement.

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

Εἰ δέ τις δοκεῖ φιλονεικος εἶναι, ἡμεῖς τοιαύτην συνήθειαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, οὐδὲ αἱ ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ

# Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11

By James Macleod

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gordon Fee states that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is a passage "full of notorious exegetical difficulties."<sup>1</sup> Other commentators echo similar views regarding this passage. Yet, one wonders if the passage is actually so difficult to understand, or if modern readers, with twenty-first-century sensibilities, are simply reluctant to accept what Paul is teaching regarding hair and covering. One key to understanding what this passage teaches is understanding the Greek behind the English words related to covering and hair. The following is a brief introduction to this Greek.

## Covering

One confusing feature of 11:2-16 for the English reader is that Paul uses three different Greek words for "covered" in the passage. In most instances, the word translated as "covered" or "uncovered" is the adjective κατακάλυπτος (*katakaluptos*), or the verbal form of the same word, κατακαλύπτω (*katakaluptō*). As Paul discusses the theology of covering in verses 5, 6, 7, and 13, he uses the Greek words κατακαλύπτω and ἀκατακάλυπτος. Through these verses, all instances of covering, except one, refer to women. In the case where a man is in focus, Paul uses the word in the negative sense, "a man indeed ought not to cover his head" (1 Cor 11:7).

## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

These two Greek cognates indicate a general state of being covered or veiled, without specifying how an individual accomplishes that state. Looking to the Old Testament for examples, in Isaiah, the angels κατακαλύπτω their faces with their wings (Is 6:2 LXX). Likewise, when Judah saw Tamar sitting veiled, he thought she was a harlot because she had κατακαλύπτω her face with a physical veil (θήριστρον) (Gen 38:15 LXX).<sup>2</sup> These are two instances of κατακαλύπτω with different methods of covering being used. Nonetheless, although κατακαλύπτω does not inherently indicate hair as the means of covering, Paul's overall discussion is closely tied to the concept of hair. In 11:6, he refers to an uncovered woman being shorn or shaven, and in 11:13-15, an uncovered woman is considered uncomely due to the differing nature of men's and women's hair. While Paul discusses the necessity for women to be covered, he is inextricably linking his theology with the issue of hair.

Other Greek translated as "covered," is actually not a word at all, but rather, the Greek phrase "κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων" (literally, "having down from the head"). Paul instructs the Corinthian Church in 11:4, indicating that men should have no type of covering that hangs down from their heads, including long hair, presumably. Treece believes that although this phrase does not specify what is "down from" the man's head, since Paul's topic is hair, hair should "fill the ellipsis".<sup>3</sup> However, one could argue that Paul intentionally leaves 'hair' out of this phrase because he is referring to more than just hair, but to any type of covering. At this point in the passage, the length of men's hair is not crucial to Paul's general argument on how the state of being covered or uncovered brings honor or shame to one's spiritual head. Nonetheless, Paul does address men's hair specifically later in the passage when he discusses the length of men's and women's hair based on nature (1 Cor 11:14-15).



## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

There is an example of Plutarch using the same phrase in his essays titled *Moraila* (*Morals*). Plutarch was a Greek historian who wrote during the late first and early second centuries AD; therefore, his usage of Greek is relevant to the New Testament. When he recounts the story of the Roman general Scipio arriving in Alexandria, Plutarch describes him as wearing a toga that covered his head (Plutarch, *Morals*, *Sayings of Romans*, Scipio the Younger, 13 [Babbitt]). Although "κεφαλῆς" is articular in this case, rather than anarthrous as it is in 11:4, the same basic phrase, "κατὰ (τῆς) κεφαλῆς ἔχων," is used to describe "covered." The use of the definite article in Greek is complex, but suffice it to say, the definite article is optional in most cases. Plutarch goes on to speak about Scipio, saying, "When he uncovered his head, they clapped their hands with a loud acclamation." The Greek narrative makes it clear that what is coming down from Scipio's head was a Roman garment, a toga. He was able to easily uncover his head by removing the garment so the surrounding people could see his face. This example confirms that "κατὰ (τῆς) κεφαλῆς ἔχων" is a general term for a person covering their head, and does not necessarily indicate that one's hair is the covering material.

## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

The final word used by Paul for a covering is περιβόλαιον (*periboleion*), a compound word literally meaning "to throw around." Unlike the other two words for covering, this word refers to an actual garment. Other passages in the Bible and writings from the Second Temple Period confirm that this word denotes an actual garment one would wear (Deut 22:12 LXX; Isa 50:3 LXX; Heb 1:12; En 14:20; Ep Arist 158).

In 11:15, Paul says that a woman's long hair is given to her "ἄντὶ περιβολαίου" (instead of a garment). The word ἄντὶ, which is translated as "for" in the King James Bible, is a word that speaks of one thing replacing or being equivalent to another thing. It can also mean a process of intervention. Jesus gave his life as a "ransom ἄντὶ many" (Matt 20:28). Here, through the process of giving his life, Jesus provides a ransom on behalf of many people. This definition doesn't fit the context of 11:15, yet, even so, it carries the idea of a replacement. Following his discussion on covering in a general sense, Paul is now addressing a physical vestment used as a covering. Paul clarifies that a woman's long hair is equivalent to a garment. If a woman has long hair, they do not need a garment to cover their head.

## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

### Hair

So, what does "long hair" indicate? There are three words in 11:2-16 associated with hair. The word for hair used in 11:15 is the noun κόμη (*komē*). A woman's κόμη is the covering that she has been given instead of a garment. This word appears to refer to a person's hair without specifying length. Nonetheless, in the texts that do use this word for women's hair, the context suggests that the hair is long (BDAG). 11:15 is the only place this word appears in the New Testament. However, the verb κομάω (*komaō*) used twice in 11:14-15 is the cognate of κόμη, and it does denote a person who lets their hair grow long. Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, uses this verb to describe the practice of those who take the Nazarite vow (Jos., Ant., 4, 72). The Nazarites would "suffer their hair to grow long, and use no wine, when they consecrate their hair." Josephus appears to be using the word κομάω to describe someone who does not cut their hair, as that was the requirement for Nazarites (Num 6:5; Judg 13:5). As the noun κόμη is closely related to its cognate κομάω in these two verses, Paul evidently believes uncut hair is a satisfactory covering for a woman, in place of a veil or garment.



## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

The other words related to hair are ξυράω (*xsuraw*), to shave, and κείρω (*keirō*), to shear or cut one's hair (1 Cor 11:5-6). Paul argues that if a woman is not covered, it is equivalent to her being shaved, and therefore, she should have her hair cut. However, since both of these hair conditions are shameful (shaved and cut), a woman should be covered. In contrast to 11:15, where long hair is associated with being covered, here in 11:5-6, cut hair is associated with being uncovered. These verses are talking about the condition of a woman's hair and their state of being covered or uncovered in a general sense. There is no need to insert a veil or a cloth garment into these verses, since the topic is hair, and by extension, spiritual covering and headship.<sup>4</sup>

## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

Taking these different Greek words into account, what can we conclude about this passage in 1 Corinthians 11 concerning hair and covering? The words for covering in most of the passage appear to be generic and do not indicate what the covering consists of. This is true until 11:15, where the word for covering indicates a garment or veil of some sort. However, in his conclusion of the matter, Paul states that the garment is not necessary if a woman has long hair. The long hair that Paul speaks of would appear to be uncut, as it is closely associated with the verbal form of the same word, whose basic definition means "to let one's hair grow long." Additionally, Josephus uses the word to speak of the Nazarites, people who allowed their hair to grow and did not cut it. The long hair here must be uncut, as it contrasts with the other two hair states referenced in 11:5-6, which involve shaving and cutting one's hair. It is not necessary for a woman with uncut hair to have a second covering when she prays, prophesies, or attends church.

## Hair And Covering in 1 Corinthians 11 (cont.)

### Endnotes:

1. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1987), 492.
2. Franco Montanari, in *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, ed. Madeleine Goh and Chad Schroeder (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015).
3. M. D. Treece, *1 Corinthians*, The New Literal Word (Shippensburg, PA: Treasure House, 1995), 247.
4. Treece, 249.