

Ritual No 3

The Covering of Sisters Heads During Prayer

There are only four worship rituals the faithful are commanded to observe during the Ecclesial Priesthood Age: baptism, memorial service, sisters' headcovering during prayer (or prophesying... a Spirit gift limited to the first two generations) and sisters' silence. Divinely appointed rituals are teaching tools. There is no benefit to simply performing the ritual without understanding or sincerity. Mere performance of any of these rituals is not equivalent to some sorcerer's formula for drawing off some greater benefit or power. Divine rituals display divine principles, in the same intentionally difficult communication pattern Yahweh has employed throughout scripture. Divine rituals are like the dreams and visions and dark sayings and shadows and reflections that shield the Creator from a casual, effortless, arrogantly curious approach by men. Approaching the divine presence, even His true thoughts presented in scripture, demands a meek, humble and crushed mind-set.

Therefore the worship rituals of each Priesthood Age are employed as subtle teaching tools. When properly understood their performance with understanding will work to further reshape the faithful into the image and likeness of our Heavenly Father, as intended at the beginning.

The great obstacle we face in performing these rituals, so that they project the intended principles of divine righteousness, is the flesh's overwhelming love for simplicity and convenience. Self accommodation is the default programming of human nature. This is evident in how the ritual applications of the previous Aaronic Priesthood Age were manipulated by Jewish believers. Divine rituals were expanded and contracted to satisfy the personal preferences of those within the body of believers. Jesus commented on how the Jewish elders *made the word of God of no effect through their tradition* (Mark 7:13) in the matter of willing one's goods to the Jewish treasury to avoid the financial burden of supporting their aging parents. Jesus also comments on the reversing of the significance of divine principles by presuming that swearing by the temple was insignificant compared to swearing by the gold of the temple. Swearing by the gift for the altar that bore a personal financial burden was incorrectly considered more significant than swearing by the altar it was offered upon. These enlightened in covenant relationship wanted to murder Jesus of Nazareth because of his Sabbath healings. They didn't understand the Sabbath ritual. When Christ's disciples were inappropriately condemned for harvesting & eating grain on a Sabbath Jesus corrected the Pharisees and explained: *The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath* (Mk.2:27). The enlightened understood Sabbath law as a burden and not a blessing. They considered it an in convenience and not a benefit. The religious leaders of God's people had improperly reversed the focus of these issues to themselves personally.

We enlightened Christadelphians suffer with the same cursed nature. Just as the enlightened Jews before us, it is our natural urge to oversimplify, to underestimate and unconsciously restructure our foundations to our personal convenience and benefit. Armed with this recognition we are better able to examine the intended principles being reflected in the divine rituals of the Ecclesial Age.

The Command to Cover

There are a variety of understandings within the brotherhood for the application of this ritual, ranging through dismissing it entirely, limiting its application to memorial service or Ecclesial gatherings to the sisters who cover their heads whenever they pray despite the environment. It is sometimes presumed that Paul's instructions concerning headcoverings to the Corinthians is an isolated, somewhat disjointed commentary with very little or even no support elsewhere in scripture. This understanding can only come from a very marginal and dismissive attitude to this supposedly isolated command. The poor translation that the King James Version offers for 1 Cor. 11:16 is presented as an excuse for this dismissive attitude: *But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.* If somehow we are satisfied that Paul's command and the validations he offers for that command can be somehow trivialized by this 17th century English then we must be desperately seeking an excuse to ignore this inconvenient and humbling divine ritual. Many other translations as well as the original Greek text reverse the emphasis completely.

1 Cor. 11:3-16 *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 his head covered, dishonoureth his head. ⁵ But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 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 shaven, let her be covered. 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. ⁸ For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. ⁹ Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. ¹⁰ For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. ¹¹ Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. ¹² For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. ¹³ Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? ¹⁴ Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto 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 seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.* (KJV)

Highlights of the Text

- The divine hierarchy is stated as God being the head of Christ who is the head of man who is the head of woman in a four stage progression.
- The headcovering is required during prayer or prophecy only. This highlights **direct** communication, bypassing the man who is the woman's divinely appointed head. Through prayer a woman directly addresses God through Christ. Through prophecy a sister could speak directly for God & Christ. Even though a sister no longer has the capability of prophesying in this latter part of the Ecclesial Age, she can certainly pray.
- The reasoning is that if a woman directly approaches God to either speak to Him (prayer) or for Him (prophecy) then she must cover her head so that she will not dishonor her head (man - who is the reflection of God, while woman is the reflection of man). A sister praying to God with head uncovered reflects the glory of the flesh (man is her 'head') in the face of God... *the woman is the glory of the man* (vs. 7)
- A woman's hair is given for a covering, but it is not the particular covering required for prayer, or it would not be demanded that she shave her head if she will not cover her head in prayer. That shaving would eliminate the supposed hair-as-an-acceptable-covering suggestion. That particular excuse would truly be a very desperate attempt to avoid the inconvenience of this divinely appointed ritual.
- A man must never cover his head in prayer, since his 'head' is Christ. It would not be shameful to reflect Christ to God through the uncovered head of a brother. Yet it would be shameful to reflect the head of man in the face of God through the prayer of a sister without her head covered.
- The sister's covering is described as having "power" (authority) on her head, as a recognition of the divine hierarchy despite the bypassing of her appointed head (man) when directly addressing (prayer) or speaking for Yahweh (prophesying).
- As previously noted, the last verse is translated in a misleading way in the King James Version. The original Greek words make it clear that Paul will allow no variation from the requirement of sisters covering their heads in prayer and prophesying. The headcoverings of sisters in prayer was of sufficient significance that no variations would be tolerated. Consider these translations:

Revised Standard Version: *If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize **no other practice**, nor do the churches of God.*

New American Standard: *But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have **no other practice**, nor have the churches of God.*

New Century Version: *Some people may still want to argue about this, but I would add **that neither we nor the churches of God have any other practice.***

New International Version: *If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we **have no other practice** nor do the churches of God.*

Impossible Memorial Service Limitation

Many who will accommodate the validity of headcoverings often limit the application of the ritual to the environment of an ecclesial gathering. This seems rather odd, since sisters were expressly forbidden to speak (pray or prophesy) during Ecclesial services. In Paul's reprimand of the Corinthians concerning their abuses of the Spirit gifts when they came together he made it clear that in addition to brethren restraining themselves while another prophesied or miraculously spoke in untrained languages the sisters were to be completely silent... *as in all churches of the saints, let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law* [1 Cor 14:33-34... although this is quoted from the KJV you can refer to RSV for the quote as it has been presented with this sentence and paragraph structure]. Since sisters were never allowed to pray or prophesy in the environment of the ecclesia it is completely impossible to **limit** the divinely required ritual of headcoverings during prayer at ecclesial gatherings. The command is stated quite clearly by Paul that **when** a sister prays or prophesies she **must** cover her head.

The Principles of the Ritual

Paul references several issues to validate the significance and principles displayed in this ritual. These divine principles are exhibited visually and obediently when practiced. Paul presents the theme as being a reflection of the divine hierarchy of authority. The covering of a sister's head is applied during direct communication, either addressing God in prayer or acting as a divine mouthpiece through prophecy. These actions both bypass the woman's divinely appointed head (the man). The sister's headcovering is defined as having authority (power) on her head during the prayer. This visually displays and obediently recognizes her acceptance of the authority between herself and God as she addresses Him directly or spoke directly for Him in prophecy. It also serves the purpose of shielding the glory of man before God.

Divine principles never change. Divine laws and rituals certainly do change. Principles never change. The same principles are displayed in different ways throughout the changing laws and rituals of each divinely appointed Priesthood Age. This offers us greater understanding of these rituals as the defining features of these principles become highlighted from different angles through changing rituals.... Just as moving light source will cast different shadows for the same object as the day progresses. The shadows may appear different at first, but they frame the same eternal principles. Therefore we should be able to trace the issues that Paul references throughout scripture to find validations and confirmations of these principles as they are applied in the ritual of sisters' headcoverings

Veiled Authority

The head, covered by the sister in prayer, is the seat of **authority** and **responsibility** in the context of how God created us. For example: under the law of Moses an offerer would bring an animal to the door of the tabernacle and place their hands on the head of the animal and then kill the animal. Then the priest would take over (Leviticus 1:4-5; 3:2; 8:14,18,22; Lev. 16:21 -Day of Atonement; Lev. 24:10-15; 2 Samuel 1:16; Joshua 2:19; Ezekiel 33:4). By placing his hands on the head of the animal before killing it, the offerer associates himself and his responsibility to God through the head of that sacrificial animal. The head is the seat of authority and responsibility in the divine construction. It is our mind that God wants. All our actions are the result of what we think. Ungodly society even accepts this understanding by referring to the person with the greatest authority and responsibility as the **head** of an organization.

The scriptural phrase "*his blood be upon his head*" validates this understanding that the head is the seat of authority and therefore bears responsibility.

In accordance with this relationship between authority and the head we see the highest political and ecclesiastical offices were confirmed by anointing the head of the newly appointed King or High Priest ... associating the head with this new level of authority and responsibility:

Leviticus 8:12 **And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.**

Exodus 29:6-7 **And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre. Then shalt thou take the anointing oil, and **pour it upon his head**, and anoint him.**

1 Samuel 10:1 Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and **poured it upon his head**, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?

2 Kings 9:3 Then take the box of oil, and **pour it on his head**, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.

These consistent scriptural applications confirm the understanding that the head should be understood as the seat of authority and responsibility. Covering or veiling that head indicates a veiling of the authority & responsibility of that head.

Headcovering issues were not new to a divine ritual application when the Ecclesial Age began. This issue (along with the parallel Paul makes of shaving the head being equivalent to **uncovering** it) is addressed in the Mosaic Law.

High Priest Headcovering

Another ritual consistent with this lesson is the headcovering of the High Priest. Aaron was not allowed to place his crown directly on his head. He was required to wear a turban on his head and then the golden crown would be placed over the turban. The crown was inscribed with **Holiness to Yahweh**. Just as the woman reflects the glory of her head (man) so the Mosaic High Priest reflected the glory of the greater High Priest (Jesus Christ). Therefore; his head should be covered, declaring that he is under the authority of another without displaying his own personal glory through an uncovered head as he communicates directly to God on behalf of the people and representing God in his High Priestly duties for the people.

Exodus 29:3 And thou shalt put the mitre upon his head, and put the holy crown upon the mitre.

Exodus 39:30- And they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of a signet, **HOLINESS TO THE LORD**. ³¹And they tied unto it a lace of blue, to fasten it on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Lev. 8:9 And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forehead, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses.

It was a command of God that the golden crown had to be placed on the headcovering (the mitre or turban) of the High Priest. This distinction is repeated three times. The Aaronic High Priest was under the authority of the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek who would not inherit his position by lineage and would never relinquish his office to another due to sickness or death.

Therefore, it is very reasonable that God would require a sister to approach him with her head covered...

1. To recognize the Divine righteousness in the order of creation. By covering her head in prayer a sister recognizes and accepts God's wisdom in this divine order. By daring to approach the Heavenly Father without veiling her head she declares her objection to the divine order, contradicting the Creator's righteousness. She also reflects the glory of her head (man) in the face of God. Since brethren reflect the glory of their head (Christ) they are required to **never** pray with covered heads. All three upwardly progressive hierarchy steps are recognized when a brother prays to Yahweh through Christ with an uncovered head.
2. To recognize and accept the righteousness of God's curse from Eden of being subject to the man. Genesis 3:16 ... *thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*. If a sister refuses to cover her head during a prayer she is declaring that God's Edenic judgment against woman was not right... just as the serpent testified to Eve about God's law concerning the tree.

Sisters are instructed to cover their heads when praying to validate the divine righteousness in the Creator's appointment as man being her head as well as the divine righteousness in the judgments against the female gender for the Edenic failure. It would be equivalent to the shame of shaving one's head if they will not veil their head in prayer. This is because it is a rejection of the divine order and a reflecting of the glory of man (the woman's head) in the face of God when she approaches Him directly. The unveiled head would be a declaration of the woman's independence from man (her divinely appointed head) as well as objecting to the legitimacy of the subjection imposed in Eden for the woman's part in the failure.... declaring God's righteousness to be false.

Uncovering the Suspected Adulterous Woman's Head

A wife suspected of adultery under the laws of God's Kingdom was specifically required to uncover her head when she came to stand before Yahweh in the Tabernacle. *And the priest shall set the woman before the LORD, and uncover the woman's head, and put the offering of memorial in her hands, which is the jealousy offering: and the priest shall have in his hand the bitter water that causeth the curse* (Num. 5:18). Correspondingly, the uncovering of the head of the woman as she stands directly before Yahweh is defined as a shameful thing by the Apostle Paul in his directions for headcoverings. *But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. 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 shaven, let her be covered* (1 Cor 11:5-6). The uncovered head when a woman directly approaching Yahweh is associated with shame. This is exactly the same relationship in both Mosaic Age Law and Ecclesial Age Law.

The Uncovered Head

The uncovered (shaved) head offers a consistent theme through scripture. There is a relationship between our hair and our deeds. Just as our deeds are the direct result of the thoughts of our mind, so our hair issues directly from our head. The removal of that hair indicated a removal of past deeds and a new beginning... whether good or bad. God's judgments on Judah for their ungodly deeds were portrayed in the three divisions of Ezekiel's hair when he shaved his head for this prophecy (Ezek.5).

- **The healed leper:** The recovered leper was required to ritually remove all their hair upon being cleansed and rejoining God's community. That former life as an excluded leper was finished. Therefore his or her hair was to be entirely removed and a new set of experiences and service was to begin Lev. 14:8-9
- **The Woman taken as a prisoner in war** that an Israeli wanted for his wife had to shave her head and cut her nails. Deut 21:10-12 her former life was over. She had to cut away the parts of her body that naturally extended out from her living body, reflecting the principle.
- **The Levites**, when they were offered to God instead of all the firstborn, had to shave their entire bodies for this ritual of acceptance. They had to eliminate the hair. Num 8:5-7. They offered themselves as a helper, a support network for the priesthood... similar to how Eve was offered to Adam at creation.
- **The nazirite** man or woman ended their vow by shaving the 'head of their separation' at the door of the tabernacle and then placing that hair as kindling on the fire that would consume their peace offering (Num 6:18). The hair represented their vow of separation, their deeds, while bound by the vow. This nazirite hair is interestingly linked to the High Priest in that the word translated *consecration* (*the head of their consecration*) is the same word (Hebrew: nezer) used to identify the crown of the High Priest: *put the holy crown (nezer) upon the mitre*. The lesson of the headcovering and the shaving of the hair of the nazirite define the same principles... along with a sister's headcovering during prayer.
- **Samson's** head was shaved and he lost the superhuman strength that God had supplied him. He was humbled, weakened and separated from Yahweh in the uncovering of his head. This is consistent with the principles displayed in the sisters headcovering during prayer in the Ecclesial Age.
- **Isaiah** prophesies that God would use the Assyrian army like a razor and shave the Israelites off the land (Is.7:20). Their hair represented their deeds and their own glory. The divinely appointed Assyrian barber would shave those ungodly deeds and shame them by uncovering the national head before their divine Judge. The uncovering of the head indicates a shame and unacceptable behavior... the mirror image to 1 Corinthians 11 where a sister is commanded to cover her head in prayer or shave it.
- When Hanun, the king of the Ammonites wanted to humiliate the messengers of King David, the shaving of half their beards was part of the humiliation (2 Sam 10:3-5).
- God directed Jerusalem to cut off its hair and throw it away as an act of humble repentance. Jer 7:29 **Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.**

In the same consistent line of reasoning, we see the sisters of the Ecclesial Age being instructed to either cover their heads in prayer or alternatively to shave their heads (1 Cor 11:5-6). It is interesting to note that Paul recognizes the humbling effect of a shaved head ... *if it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered*. The hair is described as being a personal glory (vs 15). That glory reflects honor on her head, which is the man (vs 5-9). However when a sister approaches God with an uncovered head she shines the glory of her head

(man) in the face of God (as the woman is the glory of man). This is highly disrespectful. It is equivalent to being shaven headed. By approaching God directly with an uncovered head a sister also ritually objects to the righteousness of God's curse that she be subject to the man. She ritually objects to the order of creation and the legitimacy of the Edenic curse by communicating directly to Yahweh through Christ with an uncovered head.

The sister prays to God, but through Christ. That only constitutes three of the hierarchy steps. It is the headcovering that adds the fourth hierarchy representation of the man. By praying with an uncovered head she removes that divinely appointed step and approaches the divine presence without recognizing her direct headship... disrespecting God's wisdom in the creational order and contradicting God's righteousness in commanding the subjugation of the woman to the man due to the failure in Eden.

These are not principles or lessons that can be isolated to an Ecclesial environment. These are principles between the sister and Yahweh. The foundational principles and specific headcovering and head-uncovering applications have been consistent from Mosaic Age law through Ecclesial Age law. A sister should cover her head in prayer **whenever** she prays.

Beware The Power of The Human Heart to Deceive in Matters of Convenience

All divine rituals from any age project one or more features of our Creator's righteousness. This is a foundational understanding that is always true without exception.

*If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize **no other practice**, nor do the churches of God (1 Cor. 11:16 RSV).*