

PREFACE TO THIS MATERIAL

On September 4, 2000 an article from Rick Cutter entitled, “*Is it Really a Sin for a Woman to Cut Her Hair?*” was emailed en masse to a great number of Christians. Hundreds of people received this article either directly from Rick, or indirectly as it was passed on from hand to hand.

I believe Rick Cutter’s position constitutes false doctrine and is dangerous. This present study does three things:

FIRST: Rick’s article is presented so the reader can read for himself Rick’s position. The article contained in this PDF file was downloaded off Rick’s web site and contains essentially the very same article he emailed en masse. The major difference between the emailed-spam-article and the web-article is the pictures Rick added to enhance the web-article. No apology is offered for presenting Rick’s article here. His original spam-article was not copyrighted and at the time this web-article was downloaded it was not copyrighted either. His article stands exactly as he wrote it and presented it on the world-wide-web. It has not been tampered with.

SECOND: My reply to Rick’s article follows. Please note: The page numbers which my reply references may not correspond with Rick’s web-enhanced article. For example, a reference is made to Rick’s statement, “*It is the dishonesty of this latter position that many have unfortunately lowered themselves to.*” This originally appeared on page 6 of Rick’s article when it was printed off on my computer. I gave the reference as “p. 6.” By the time Rick added pictures to his web-article this quotation now finds itself on page 8. If the reader wishes to find the exact quotations referenced in my review, the Adobe “Search” feature should be used to search for Rick’s quotation(s).

THIRD: After reviewing Rick’s article, two articles which correspond to the subject of the head and its covering (1 Cor 11:2-16) are presented. The first of these articles is a simple sermon on the subject and the second article are notes prepared for the Preachers’ Study conducted at the 21st Street congregation in Oklahoma City in December, 2000.

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Is it *Really* a Sin for a Woman to Cut Her Hair?



Question: Which woman has long hair? It might surprise you how some people will answer.

Some of you might be surprised to learn that there are Christians who believe it's sinful for a woman to trim her hair. I once heard a preacher publicly *demand* that any woman who had cut her hair in *any way* – even if she merely trimmed off her dead-ends – should step forward and confess her sins at once before the congregation. Some have even gone so far as to suggest *that all women who trim their hair* - and don't repent - can expect to spend eternity in hell.

Of course, we're not interested in opinions, we're interested in Truth. Truth is found in God's word. So let's find out what it says.

The 2 Main Views of the "Hair Question"

Some people are surprised to learn that there are in fact many different Christian views on the so called "Hair Question." Regardless of the many views, in this article I'd like to focus on the 2 main viewpoints (the only New Testament

account of this subject in I Corinthians 11:1-16 – if you aren't familiar with it, please read this passage before continuing this article):

- The "**UNCUT HAIR**" position: *It is sinful for a Christian woman to cut her hair*
- The "**LONG HAIR**" position: It is NOT sinful for a woman to *cut her hair, provided it remains long after cutting*

Most people I have discussed this issue with appear to be sincere in their beliefs, regardless of which position they take. There is no question that most are honest individuals who simply believe what they believe for varying reasons. *However, only one of these views can be correct.* Either the Bible says it *is* sinful for a woman to cut her hair, or the Bible does *not*. Either a woman must have long hair (or otherwise be appropriately covered while praying or teaching the Word), or she must not.

As seekers of the Truth, we must never lose sight of the fact that Christ demands that we search for Truth, not for arguments to support our traditional views or popular positions. We should never forget that what *people* think or feel about this subject is not very important. The only thing important is *what the Bible says*.

Much of the Disagreement is Over ONE Word - *koma*

Almost all the disagreement between these 2 positions boils down to a single passage of Scripture found in I Corinthians 11:14-15. In fact, the major disagreement is actually over the meaning of a single Greek word, *koma*.

"Long Hair" proponents believe *koma* (from which *koma* is derived) means exactly what it says in the vast majority of translations: "to have long hair" – no more and no less. "Uncut Hair" proponents take a different view. They believe it means "to let the hair grow," or, "to have uncut hair."

Here is I Corinthians 11:14-15 with the Greek word *koma* inserted into the text:

I Corinthians 11:14-15 (New American Standard Version) :

"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair [koma] it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair [koma], it is a glory to her? For her *hair* is given to her instead of a covering."

Take a moment and compare this with your favorite Bible translation. Maybe your favorite version is the King James Version. You'll find that it says the same basic thing. Perhaps it's the New International Version. It too agrees. Or maybe you prefer the American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, or the New King James version. It doesn't matter. These translators all agree that *koma* should be translated as "has long hair." Not "uncut hair", not "growing hair", not "long growing hair", not anything else. Just "long hair." Period. No more and no less.

We are going to show in a few moments that the experts – for all intents and purposes – have *unanimously* agreed on both the literal definition of *koma* AND how it should be translated into English. This means that the "Uncut Hair" position is in direct opposition to the vast body of Biblical experts.

A Closer look at the "Uncut Hair" Position

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, there are many Christians who insist it is sinful for a woman to cut or trim her hair at all. These are the "Uncut Hair" advocates. While being typically honest and sincere individuals, these Christians generally believe that *koma* means literally "to let the hair grow." This is how they would literally translate this passage:

I Corinthians 11:14-15 (UNCUT HAIR Position):

"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man [lets his hair grow], it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman [lets her hair grow], it is a glory to her? For her *growing hair* is given to her instead of a covering."

This position – the "Uncut Hair" position - holds that since a woman must "let her hair grow," she may not cut it at all or she has sinned. Furthermore, since "growing hair" is what is glorious for a woman, then length of hair is totally unimportant. In fact, a Christian woman may be totally bald while worshipping God so far as this position is concerned.

In a moment I will show how grossly inconsistent this view is with plain Biblical teaching. "Uncut Hair" proponents also make the incredulous claim that a woman with hair 5 feet long could be considered to have "short hair," while a woman standing next to her with hair 1 inch long could be considered to have "long

hair." This is because – according to this position - length is unimportant. But we are going to show that, according to the Bible, length is *very* important.

A Closer look at the "Long Hair" Position

On the other hand, the "Long Hair" advocates insist that it is *not at all* sinful for a woman to cut her hair. That's because it is entirely possible for a woman to have long hair and still trim or even cut it from time to time. They believe that *koma* means exactly what it says: literally "to have long hair" – just as the experts have translated it. Take another look at I Corinthians 11:14-15:

I Corinthians 11:14-15 (New American Standard Version) :

"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair [*koma*] it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair [*koma*], it is a glory to her? For her *hair* is given to her instead of a covering."

Because "has long hair" is the literal translation for *koma*, that's exactly what "Long Hair" advocates believe. They believe that a woman *must have long hair and only long hair - not uncut hair. They believe it is sinful to add to God's word by inserting added or hidden meanings into this simple verse – in other words, to suggest that a woman must not cut her hair.*

In other words, "long" means "long," not "uncut." For example, someone might look at a rope and exclaim: "That's a long rope." Does that mean it's an uncut rope? Likewise, just because we might say that a cable, thread, chord, measuring tape, board, or someone's hair is long, never do we mean it is uncut. It is understood in the English language that when something is called "long" it does not necessarily have to be "uncut."

For example, someone might look at a rope that is 100 feet long and say: "That's a long rope." Suppose 1 millimeter were trimmed off the end. Now we have a rope that is 99 feet and almost 12 inches long. Is it suddenly a short rope just because it was trimmed?

Likewise, when the Bible says a woman should have "long hair" it doesn't mean "uncut hair." A woman with long hair is in complete compliance with the Scriptures if she trims or cuts her long hair, provided it remains long after cutting. And since long hair is provided only "instead of a covering" (or "instead of an artificial covering"), in the absence of long hair she must appropriately cover her head while in the act of praying or teaching God's Word.

On the next 2 pages are listed every single Greek Lexicon, Bible Dictionary, and Bible Translation I had access to while writing this article.

How The Experts have DEFINED ***komao***

F. Wilbur Gingrich's Greek Lexicon

To wear long hair

H.G. Liddell & R. Scott's Greek Lexicon

To let the hair grow long

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

To let the hair grow, have long hair

Walter Bauer's Greek Lexicon

To let one's hair grow long

The New Analytical Greek Lexicon (Wesley J. Perschbacher)

To have long hair, wear the hair long

The New Strong's Guide to Bible Words (James Strong)

To wear long hair

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words

To let the hair grow long, to wear long hair

Word Study Greek-English New Testament (Paul R. McReynolds)

To wear long hair

The New Greek-English Interlinear N.T. (R. K. Brown & Philip W. Comfort)

To wear long hair

The NKJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament (Farstad, Hodges,..)

To wear long hair

New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible

To wear long hair

Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible (Robert Young)

To have long hair

How the Experts have TRANSLATED **koma**

(I Corinthians 11:14-15)

American Standard Version

Have long hair

Cambridge Basic English

Has long hair

Darby Version

Have long hair

King James Version

Have long hair

New American Standard Version

Has long hair

New International Version

Has long hair

New King James Version

Has long hair

New Living Translation

Have long hair

New Revised Standard Version

Wears long hair

Revised Standard Version

Has long hair

The Living Bible

Long hair

Weymouth's New Testament

Has long hair

Young's Literal Translation

Have long hair

Why Are We Making this *Simple Subject so Difficult?*

You don't have to be a genius to perceive that all these major translators are in complete harmony on how the Greek word *koma* should be literally translated. *In every single case they have chosen to translate "koma" as "has (have, etc) long hair."*

With the Bible so plain and all the Greek experts in complete harmony, why is there so much difficulty understanding this simple subject among Christians? Why do some continue to insist that it is a sin for a woman to cut her hair? The Bible doesn't say it. The experts don't say it. Why then do we say it?

Why can't people simply accept the plain teachings found in the Bible? After all, we *do* when it comes to Baptism, Communion, Calvinistic doctrines, moral living, and a host of other Bible subjects. If we can accept what the Bible clearly says on these subjects, why do we have such trouble doing it when it comes to the Hair Question?

This is not a difficult issue. The Bible simply says that a woman *must have LONG HAIR*. It does not say she must "let the hair grow," it does not say she must "have uncut hair," it does not say she must "have continually growing hair," and it does not say she must have "uncut, long hair" – or any other variation someone might choose to come up with. *According to practically every professional Greek translator of the English language, Paul was teaching an incredibly simple concept: A woman must have LONG HAIR, and a man must not. Period.*

Here's the obvious point. It is entirely possible for a woman to have long hair that has been cut, and it is perfectly possible for a woman to have short hair that has not been cut. As you can see, whether or not a woman has cut her hair is *not* an issue with Paul. The only issue is whether or not she has *long hair*. Again, let me repeat. According to the experts, *Paul did NOT say that a woman could not cut her hair. He said that a woman should have "long hair" or be otherwise appropriately covered while praying or teaching God's Word. To add to God's word is sin.*

"But *koma* Really Doesn't Mean 'Have Long Hair'"

Of course, all these obvious facts leave "Uncut Hair" advocates in a difficult position. Either they must admit that the Bible translators and Bible experts – who have typically spent their adult lives studying Biblical Greek – are *almost unanimously* wrong, or they must somehow convince the rest of us that "long hair" really means something else. It is the dishonesty of this latter position that many have unfortunately lowered themselves to.

I have actually heard individuals try to explain to me that *koma* means "to let the hair grow" but "long hair" was the only way it could be translated properly into English. Therefore – "long hair" is accurately translated – it just means "uncut hair" or "perpetually growing hair".

Frankly, I have rarely heard more irrationality in my entire life. If "to let the hair grow" were the proper definition of *koma*, why wasn't it translated that way – by anyone? If *koma* means "uncut hair" why wasn't it translated that way – by anyone? Very simply because it doesn't mean either of those things. It means to

have "long hair" and nothing more or less. (If you don't believe this, take another look at the previous 2 pages).

"Uncut Hair" advocates should at least have the decency to admit they don't believe the translators translated *koma* correctly. To suggest that "long hair" actually means "uncut hair" is simply incorrect, if not dishonest and deceitful. Even children understand that a person can have "long cut hair" and "short uncut hair." To incorrectly and foolishly handle the Word of Truth will lead to our destruction (II Timothy 2:15; II Peter 3:15-16).

Yes, experts can be wrong. But how often have you found passages of Scripture that *all reputable English translators got wrong*? Is it possible? Yes. Is it likely? You be the judge. Bear in mind that these translators had no trouble thinking independently when it came to more difficult passages to translate. But this is not a difficult passage. At least, they didn't seem to think so. After all, they all essentially agreed on how it should be translated.

What baffles me is how that many Christians seem to be so rock-solid sure about ignoring these experts, so confident to oppose them, so cool and self-assured - and so vehemently opposed to those who would accept the literal translation of this text. Frankly, I fail to see the reason for this unfounded and dangerous self-assurance.

Why Do Some Christians Insist that all these Experts are Wrong?

Of course, many Christians are certain they are correct in ignoring the literal translations of the vast body of Greek experts. They have their reasons. The Greek word *koma* means, they say, "to let the hair grow." Where do they get this definition? From a popular Greek lexicographer by the name of Thayer (see Thayer's definition of *koma* on page 4). They extract the first half of Thayer's definition and ignore the second part. They also ignore all the other experts I've just enumerated.

But why do many incorrectly use Thayer's definition and ignore all the other experts? That's a very good question. The answer, I believe, is that Thayer became immensely popular in several conservative churches among leaders of past generations, much like the King James Version has become popular in many conservative modern churches. As a result, many students of the Bible have Thayer as their only choice when it comes to understanding the meaning of Biblical Greek words. *This fact, along with the total ignoring of the second part of*

Thayer's definition for koma, is what the entire position of the "Uncut Hair" doctrine has been erroneously founded upon for decades.

Therefore, because Thayer's definition of *koma* begins with the words "to let the hair grow," some will say that a woman must not cut her hair, since when she cuts her hair she is not "letting it grow." Again, here's how they would translate I Corinthians 11:14-15:

I Corinthians 11: 14-15 (Uncut Hair Position):

"Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man lets his hair grow, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman lets her hair grow it is her glory? For *growing hair* is given to her as a covering."

Once again, here is their main argument: How can a woman cut her hair and still let it grow at the same time? Since a woman cannot cut her hair and at the same time "let it grow", then she is not permitted to cut her hair at all – or so they say.

But there are several major problems with this reasoning, as you are about to see.

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Problem #1: "To Let the Hair Grow" is Not the Definition of *koma*

Obviously, the first problem is that "to let the hair grow" is not the correct definition of the word *koma* – just as I have abundantly shown already. *No* reputable English translator agrees with this definition, nor apparently do any of the Greek lexicographers. Take another look at the experts I have listed and their literal definitions of *koma* on pages 4 & 5.

What many people apparently don't realize is that even if Thayer was the *only* Greek lexicographer out there, we still could not Scripturally come to the "Uncut Hair" conclusion that so many have been brought up to believe is true.

Let's explain. Here's how Thayer defined *koma* (p. 354 of his Greek-English Lexicon, definition # 2863):

"To let the hair grow, have long hair."

First of all, notice how subtly and almost imperceptibly many have omitted the second part of Thayer's definition: "have long hair." Please understand that

Thayer's definition is NOT: "to let the hair grow" but it is: "to let the hair grow, have long hair." In other words, the *full* meaning of Thayer's definition is clearly "to let the hair grow long," just as the vast majority of Greek experts have literally defined *koma*.

Yet Christians today have omitted the words "long hair" from Thayer's definition, leaving them with a strange definition that, as we are about to find out, makes no sense whatsoever when translated literally, and does not harmonize with the passage of I Corinthians 11:1-16 whatsoever. We are about to find out why *none of the experts could have properly translated koma as "to let the hair grow."*

Problem #2: Even if "to let the hair grow" were the Correct Definition, it Renders a Nonsensical Translation.

What some have conveniently overlooked is that even if their incorrect understanding of Thayer's definition *were* correct - "to let the hair grow" – the resulting English translation would be totally nonsensical and absurd. Again, here's how they would translate it:

Uncut Hair Position:

"Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man lets his hair grow, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman lets her hair grow it is her glory? For *growing hair* is given to her instead of a covering."

Take a close look at this passage with this incorrect rendering of *koma* inserted. It becomes readily apparent why no sensible translation could translate *koma* this way. Why? *Because this means a man is sinning any time he lets his hair grow – an impossible thing for him to prevent from happening! The truth is, a living person cannot keep his or her hair from growing, regardless of whether we are talking about a man or a woman.*

In fact, scientists tell us that even after a person is deceased, their hair continues to grow for a certain period of time. What this means is that – while both men and women can certainly "let their hair grow" with no problem – it is impossible for either a man or a woman to keep their hair *from* growing - short of unnatural and drastic action (surgery, etc). Thus "to let the hair grow" is an absurd definition that no reputable Bible scholar on the planet has chosen for *koma*.

For example, right now - while you are reading this article – your hair is growing. Suppose you decided to cut your hair. Would that somehow stop your hair from

growing, just because it is being cut? Obviously not. Your hair would continue to grow - before, during, and after you cut your hair. *Therefore, while it is certainly possible for a woman to let her hair grow, it is nonsensical to suggest that a man could keep his hair from growing. Thus it becomes obvious why no reputable Bible translator chose to translate koma as "to let the hair grow."*

Any Man who Believes *koma* means "to let the hair grow" is living in perpetual sin!

Perhaps some men who read this article will still insist that *koma* literally means "to let the hair grow" instead of "to let the hair grow long" or "to have long hair." Such men should understand that if they are right, this means they are currently and habitually living in a state of sin - because their hair is *always* growing. Remember, if a woman must let her hair grow, then a man must **not** let his hair grow **at all** or he is sinning.

The very fact that this is a nonsensical conclusion proves it is not the proper definition of *koma*. *No wonder all the experts, including Thayer, defined koma to essentially mean "to have long hair" or "to wear the hair long."* And in a moment we are about to find out that this is not the only problem one encounters if they take the "Uncut Hair" position. This is just the beginning...

"But Doesn't *koma* Imply "continual growth?"

Some have made the ostensibly cerebral argument that the Greek word *koma* carries with it by necessity the concept of "continual growth" - since *koma* is a verb used in the present tense. Thus, they will say, a woman's hair must be continually growing. She cannot cut her hair because when she does, she interrupts that continual growth.

On the surface, this argument sounds convincing. There is, however, a major inherent flaw. It is this: Any time you have the concept of perpetual and continual growth included in the definition of *koma*, I Corinthians 11:14-15 immediately becomes an impossible command for man to obey. *Any time*. In other words, it is entirely possible for a woman to *keep* her hair growing perpetually. It is impossible, however, for any man to reasonably keep his hair *from* growing perpetually. Therefore, it is illogical for the concept of perpetual growth of a woman's (without ever cutting) to be attached to *koma*. The only exception would perhaps be if the perpetual growth occurred *until* the hair became long, but this too may be a stretch for the definition.

If you don't believe this, construct your own definition for *koma*. Then plug it in to verses 14 and 15 of I Corinthians 11 – for **both** the man and the woman. You will find that no other literal definition for *koma* works except that which was used by practically every reputable translator on earth.

Instead of coming to the proper conclusion that a woman must continually have *long* hair, they have come to the conclusion that a woman must continually have *growing* (and thus uncut) hair. In so doing they have purposefully omitted a key word from the definition: "long."

More Scriptural Problems Caused by an Incorrect Interpretation of I Corinthians 11:14-15

I suppose most people who tout the "Uncut Hair" position believe it is the safest. "How can God condemn us if we aren't even cutting our hair at all?" a woman might ask. "Isn't that 'long enough' for God?"

Such Christians have forgotten what Jesus said in Matthew 15:1-11. Here Jesus clearly explained that when people decide to modify God's word – *even if they make it more strict* – they are also taking away from the Word somewhere else. In other words, although it may seem quite spiritual and righteous to demand more of oneself and others than God's Word has required, ultimately it causes other parts of God's Word to be modified as well. Perhaps this is the reason why God has *strictly forbidden* the act of either adding to or subtracting from His Word.

But what about those who believe it is sinful for a woman to cut her hair in any way? How are they causing other parts of God's word to be negatively affected? Here are some of the *other* Scriptural problems caused by changing the simple word *koma* to mean "to have growing [uncut] hair" instead of its true meaning: "to have long hair":

I Corinthians 11:6 is totally ignored. One of the most glaring discrepancies of Scripture caused by the "Uncut Hair" position is its total ignoring and

disobeying of I Corinthians 11:6. In this passage the Bible makes it crystal clear that it is a *dishonor* to a woman's spiritual 'Heads' - God, Christ, and man - when she prays or teaches the Word, if she has not appropriately covered her own physical head.

The Bible could not be plainer than when it says: "it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair shaved or shorn" (verse 6). Yet "Uncut Hair" proponents believe a shaven-headed woman who has decided never to cut her hair again is perfectly Scriptural when she worships God. The Bible says: "it is a shame." Those who hold the "Uncut Hair" position say "it is not." A glaring and blatant discrepancy.

Basically, "Uncut Hair" proponents do their best to completely ignore I Corinthians 11:6, for obvious reasons. But how do they explain this discrepancy? They insist that "growing hair" is what is glorious for a woman, not "long hair." Therefore, if "growing hair" is what is glorious for a woman, then that means even if she is bald, she is not sinning so long as she has committed her life to "letting her hair grow." This is in spite of the fact that the Bible clearly states that for a woman to be shorn or shaved - while praying or prophesying - it is sin - regardless of whether or not she is "letting it grow."

Some time ago I asked a proponent of the "Uncut Hair" position to explain how he got around this plain verse. He explained to me that if a woman enters the church today without any hair (or with short hair), such is an exceptional case, and I Corinthians 11 is not dealing with exceptions. For example, it's like wondering if a person who got hit by a car while crossing the road to be baptized was still saved. The argument is that since getting hit by a car is an exceptional case, and not a common situation, we have to assume that God accepts the person's motives and saves the person.

Likewise, they argue, bringing up the case of a woman with a bald or shaved head is an exceptional case that Paul was not dealing with in I Corinthians 11. In other words, as long as a shaved woman is trying to let her hair grow, God will understand. After all, she couldn't help the fact she's bald after she new better. She now *intends* to have long hair, and this intention makes her heart right with God. Basically what they are saying is this: "I Corinthians 11:6 is meaningless and shouldn't have been put in the Bible in the first place."

There are several disturbing problems with this dangerous ignoring of plain passages of Scripture. First, cases of women with short hair in the church are really *not* as exceptional as people would like us to believe.

But the real problem with this reasoning is that Paul mentioned the exception specifically when he stated that short/shaved hair on a woman was unacceptable for Christian women (I Corinthians 11:6). Remember, it was doubtlessly just as

uncommon for women to be bald or shorn in early Christian assemblies as it is now. Yet Paul specifically pointed to this so-called "exceptional" case and said that it was *still* shameful and that Christian women must *still* have a literal covering for their heads. *In spite of whether this was an exceptional case or not!*

When Paul specifically addresses the exceptional case, can we ignore it? For example, if the Bible had specifically said "anyone getting hit by a truck on their way to being baptized will be lost", isn't that what we would believe and teach? Likewise, when Paul directly references the "exceptional" case of a woman with short/shaved hair and says it is a disgrace, we cannot ignore it even if we think it is an "exception." To ignore the "exception" is to ignore the Word of God. Because the Word of God has specifically stated what to do in the event of the exception.

Of course, Paul was actually making an incredibly simple observation that was common in nature. He pointed out that it was shameful for women to be shaved bald, but glorious for them to have long hair. This is quite obvious to any general observer of societies world-wide. It was a general fact of nature and society then, just as it is today. In fact, women who have been taken captive during wartime down through the centuries have often been shaved to symbolize shame (remember, the Bible said that such a condition was shameful for a woman). After all, what normal woman would desire to be shaved? What normal woman would not feel ashamed? Is this natural? Does not *nature* teach us that it is glorious for a woman to have long hair, and shameful for her to be shaved or have short hair? Yet the "Uncut Hair" advocates ignore this incredibly obvious point.

For example, how many women make a choice to shave their heads because it makes them look better, or more "glorious?" On the other hand, how many women grow their hair long because they look better, or more glorious? Furthermore, recent studies have been conducted that have shown that men typically prefer longer hair on women because it looks better – it looks "more glorious."

This was the simple point Paul was making, a lesson that merely observing the nature of men and women revealed: that shaved heads were shameful and long hair was glorious on women. But the "Uncut Hair" position has to concede that "growing hair" rather than "long hair" is glorious on a woman, and therefore a shaved head could actually be "glorious" – a clear contradiction of the Scripture found in I Corinthians 11:6. What a clear case of how that when we add to God's word in one place, we also end up taking away from it elsewhere.

Paul is plainly speaking of a literal, visible covering in I Corinthians 11. In other words, just as there is a literal cup (11:23-29), so there is a literal covering. And in both cases, what is literal is symbolic of something spiritual.

Sadly, churches actually encourages women with short hair to continue to sin by worshipping God with their heads not properly covered.

Paul could have used several Greek words to denote "cut" hair, but he did not. Here's a simple question: If Paul really did not want women to cut their hair at all, why didn't he simply say it outright, so that the translators could have translated it clearly as: "Do not cut your hair"? That would have ended this debate once and for all.

After all, there are plain, simple Greek words Paul could have used to denote the concept of not cutting the hair. For example, *apokopto*, "to cut off" (Mark 9:43,45; John 18:10,26; Acts 27:32); or how about *aphaireo*, "to take away, remove, cut off" (Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50; Matthew 26:51). Yet nowhere in I Corinthians 11 can these words be found. Why didn't Paul use these words? Why didn't he give the simple command to women: "Do not cut your hair"? Why did he instead use a word – *koma* - that translators have essentially unanimously agreed should be translated as "have long hair" instead of "have uncut hair"? It would have been so easy for Paul to have said "uncut hair", but he did not. He said "long hair." Was Paul trying to purposefully mislead the experts and translators so that Bible readers would erroneously believe that a woman should have long hair instead of uncut hair?

It's seems strange that Paul - a man who had little trouble expressing himself in clear terms when it came to women speakers in the Church, one cup for the Communion table, Church discipline, moral living, and a whole host of other issues - chose to suddenly become extremely vague and use inappropriately chosen, ambiguous words when he was trying to command women not to cut their hair! Especially when you consider that no where else in the New Testament is this subject discussed than I Corinthians 11. Could it be that he was never trying to teach the concept of "Uncut Hair" in the first place?

Think about it. If Paul were trying to admonish women to have *long hair* – as he obviously was – there is probably no better Greek word he could have employed than the one he *did* use – *koma*.

"Uncut Hair" proponents have to make the covering spiritual instead of literal. If this were true, then something spiritual (the covering) represents something else spiritual (the headship). Was this really what Paul had in mind? Once again we see a strange Biblical conclusion required if the "Uncut Hair" position is correct

God often makes physical acts or objects to represent something abstract and spiritual. The purpose is to remind us of essential spiritual facts. For example, baptism is a physical act that represents the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6:1-5). In the Communion, the cup is a physical object that represents the New Testament. Likewise, in the Communion the Bread represents the Body of Christ. This is the general Biblical pattern: something physical is used to illustrate or to be a reminder of something spiritual or abstract.

We do this in our own societies as well. For instance, at weddings men and women often exchange rings. These physical little objects are symbols of a spouse's unbroken circle of love for his or her mate.

In the same way, the literal covering of a woman's head has spiritual significance. It represents her submission to her spiritual Heads. One should be able to immediately recognize – at a glance - whether or not a woman is demonstrating this submission. Either she has an appropriate literal, physical covering on her head or she does not. It is ludicrous to assume that one woman could be bald or shorn and be considered covered (because she had determined never cut her hair again) while the next woman could have hair dragging the ground, but because she had trimmed it she was *not* covered. The covering is literal, not spiritual or abstract. Any other position leads to nonsensical conclusions.



Which of these 2 women has long hair? Although an obvious question, many who have been misled on this subject have difficulty with it. "It depends" they will say. "If the woman on the left has trimmed her hair and the woman on the right just became a Christian vowing never to cut her hair again, the woman on the right has long hair, and the woman on the left does not!" Make sense? This exposes one of the several glaring discrepancies with the "Uncut Hair" position.

Questions People Will Ask

Regardless of the plain Bible teaching about the "Hair Question," still some people will tirelessly defend the traditional view that a woman who cuts her hair is outright sinning. Even though it is sin to call sin what God has not called sin, many will insist that women who trim their hair, even if the hair remains long, are sinning – even though the Bible nowhere states this.

Here are some of the more common attacks people will launch against the "Long Hair" position:

"You say that a woman must have 'long hair.' Well, how long is 'long?'"

This is by far the most common question I hear, and perhaps the most ridiculous.

There is something that people who use this "argument" need to understand. It is not an argument. If God said "long" then that's exactly what He meant. To suggest that just because God did not tell us exactly how long "long" is means He could not have said "long hair" is a corner any honest Bible student does not want to find themselves backed into. I'll show why in a moment.

It amazes me that those who can't seem to understand how long "long hair" is on women, sure don't seem to have a problem understanding how short "short hair" is supposed to be on men. Remember, both are subjective. In other words, God has not given an exact definition of length for either case.

To give another example, God has commanded that women be modest in their dress habits. Well, how long must a woman's dress be before it's modest? Just how long is a "long dress?" Does the fact that God did not specify the length required for modesty mean that He could not have given such a command in the first place? Or does it mean that women must have the longest dresses that nature will allow?

Yet many people will argue that if it's true that women must have "long hair" and not "uncut hair," then "how long is long?" It's as though they are saying: "Teaching this doctrine will cause confusion in the Church. One person will say 'long' in 6 inches, the next will say 12 inches, and the next will say 5 feet! Which is correct?"

Plainly, we're worrying about the wrong things. Instead of being concerned about what God's word is *literally* saying and being sure we are teaching it accurately, we're worried about how others will carry out God's commands. That's perhaps a noble thing to be concerned about, but isn't it God who left a certain area of subjectivity here?

Just as God has clearly left us a subjective command (in the case of men when they were asked to "not have long hair") – He has also left an area of subjectivity for women, who have been asked to "have long hair" or to be otherwise covered while praying/teaching. Does this mean God has left us all with confusing commands to follow? Does it mean that men must go out and shave their heads bald just to make sure they are in compliance, just as some people demand that women *not* trim their hair at all to make sure their hair is in compliance with God's word? This is absurd.

Just as with any area of subjectivity that God has left for his people, it is up to the individual Christian - in spite of how some preachers and teachers would like to mandate it for them - to decide what is right in the eyes of God with respect to the length of hair. And then on the Day of Judgment each individual will have a chance to explain their reasoning to God. There is hair that can clearly be

called "short" by the vast majority of sincere people. And there's hair that could be called "long" by the vast majority of sincere people. And then there's hair that is in the "gray area" so to speak – hair that could be called "short, long hair" or "long, short hair." Regardless, God has asked women to "have long hair" and men "not to have long hair." What He has *not* asked women to do is to have "uncut hair."

Yet the same people who don't approve of God's subjectivity with regards to the length of a Christian's hair, have no problems understanding subjectivity when it comes to immodest dress, gluttony, giving on the First Day of the Week, and many other Biblical topics. In all these cases, God has purposefully left areas of "liberty" within which Christians may legally operate. For example, how many bites can you take before you're a glutton? 100? 200? How short must a woman's dress be before being immodest? At the ankles? At the knees? Higher? How much should I give to the Church treasury out of my income? 10%? 11%? 15%? And, how long is long hair? 18 inches? 24 inches? Why didn't God just run off a long list of specific commands like He did under the Law of Moses? After all, that's the way many Christians would like to see it today, but that's sure not the way God chose to make the "Law of Grace."

Under the Christian dispensation, God has often left us with the responsibility of choosing, out of love and obedience for Him, to make the right decisions without having to be told like children every minor detail which should be obvious to sincere people anyway. What ever happened to good old common sense? Does not God expect us to use it?

The very fact that this is the most common "argument" I hear tells me a lot about the "Uncut Hair" position. It tells me that there is not much substance to it, or a better "argument" would be used.

"Show me how a woman can cut her hair and still let it grow." This is one of the most common arguments made by "Uncut Hair" proponents. But there are several glaring problems with this pseudo-reasoning.

First of all – as has already been abundantly pointed out – it is impossible for a person to keep one's hair from growing without resorting to impractical, ridiculous extremes. This is because a person's hair is growing *perpetually* throughout a person's life. As stated before, even after a person dies, his/her hair continues to grow for a period of time. Therefore, it is not only possible for a woman to cut her hair while letting it grow, it is obviously impossible for her to keep it from growing regardless of whether she cuts it or not.

Those who ask the above question don't want to ask this one: "Show me how a man can keep his hair from growing at all." Remember, "Uncut Hair" advocates assume that it is righteous for a woman to simply let her hair grow without cutting it, even if she has *short* hair. However, if that is true, then a man cannot let his hair grow at all - at any time - or he is sinning.

Of course, as stated before, this incoherent reasoning stems from an incorrect understanding of Thayer's definition of *koma*. The proper meaning of Thayer's definition is "to let the hair grow long" not "to let the hair grow."

So if the question above is rephrased: "Show me how a woman can cut her hair and still let it grow long," then the answer becomes clear and obvious. It is entirely possible for a woman to cut her hair and still keep it long.

Finally, it amazes me how that "Uncut Hair" believers have no problems with women perming their hair, using hot blow dryers on their hair, using hot curling irons on their hair, dying their hair (which causes it to break off) or employing other techniques which often damage hair and cause it to break off. This seems to me to be grossly inconsistent. Is it ok to "break off the hair" so long as we just don't "trim it off?" Is it ok to "chemically burn off" the hair? Are these techniques perfectly acceptable, while trimming off dead-ends is gross sin? Is this not hypocritical? Yet many Christian women who claim to profess that trimming the hair is sin seem to have no problem with some of these other procedures of "keeping the hair from growing."

"When a woman cuts her hair, isn't she cutting her 'glory?'" In other words, if a woman's *hair* is her glory, then isn't a woman cutting what is glorious to her whenever she cuts her hair? "Therefore, isn't it sinful for a woman to cut her hair?" some will ask.

The problem with this argument is obvious: It makes the assumption that "hair" is a woman's glory. But this is NOT true. "Hair" alone is not a woman's glory. Neither is "growing hair" a woman's glory. LONG HAIR is a woman's glory. Remember, the Bible clearly stated that shaved or sheared hair on a woman's head was shameful, not glorious (I Corinthians 11:4-7). Therefore, just any style of hair on a woman is NOT glorious – even if the hair is growing. Only LONG HAIR is glorious on a woman, just as the Bible plainly states – in *all* the reputable translations.

Therefore the above question should be rephrased: "When a woman cuts her *long hair* (and it does not *remain* long afterwards), isn't she cutting her glory?" The answer is: *Yes!*

(By the way, the same women who seem to think it is wrong to trim the hair because they are "cutting off their glory," don't seem to have a problem with bundling up their hair and almost completely hiding "their glory" when they pray or teach God's Word. I wonder, is this *demonstrating* their glory, or is it *hiding* their glory? This becomes even more of a question when one realizes that the Greek word for "covering" in I Corinthians 11:4-7 means "to let the hair hang down from the head," not "to pile it up into a tiny bun on top of the head" as we see so commonly among the "Uncut Hair" advocates today.)

"Isn't a woman supposed to let her hair grow 'as long as nature will allow?'" Of course, this concept is found absolutely nowhere in the Scriptures. Once again, the Scriptures teach (I Corinthians 11:14-15):

American Standard Version:

"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering."

Notice closely the above passage. It does not say that a woman must let her hair grow "as long as nature will allow," nor does it say that a man must keep his hair "as short as nature will allow." It simply says that a woman must have long hair, and that a man must not have long hair. Adding to God's Word is dangerous.

But doesn't "shorn" (I Corinthians 11: 6) mean "trimmed?" Thus is Paul condemning the trimming of a woman's hair? Ironically, it is just the opposite. The word "shorn" as used in I Corinthians 11:6 means "sheared," not "trimmed" as some erroneously believe.

Therefore, instead of Paul condemning the act of a woman trimming her hair, *he actually leaves trimming as a Scriptural option. The very verse that is used to prove it is wrong for a woman to trim her hair, proves the exact opposite.* Take a close look at verse 6 (ASV):

verse 6: "For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head."

The phrase "cut off" (used twice in this verse) does not mean "to cut a little," or "to trim" as many erroneously believe. It means to cut completely off - much like a sheep is sheared. Even Thayer defines the Greek word as "to shear: as a

sheep" and specifically with regards to I Corinthians 11:6: "shearing or cutting short the hair of the head." *It does not mean "to trim"!*

In other words, it's been correctly translated by the translators. But to translate it as "trim" or "cut a little bit" would be a grossly incorrect and a dishonest use of God's word. The honest Bible Student must admit that trimming of the hair is clearly not scripturally condemned in this verse. Instead, this verse has been carefully worded so as NOT to condemn the trimming of a woman's hair, consistent with the translation of "long hair" in verses 14 and 15.

Remember what the Bible says in verses 14 and 15? It says that LONG HAIR is given to a woman "instead of a covering." Clearly, an artificial covering is *not* needed when long hair is present – it is only required when long hair is *not* present on the woman (and she is in the act of praying or teaching the word of God). After all, the Bible is very clear (verse 6) that it is a shame for a woman to pray or prophesy when her head is shorn or shaved and not otherwise appropriately covered.

Aren't those who advocate "cut hair" on women introducing opinions that cause disputes in the Church, forbidden by Paul in Romans 14:1?! I find it interesting that anyone would categorize the teachings of Paul in I Corinthians 11:1-16 as "opinions." Yet some do - at least, on the surface. The truth is, they consider everybody else's views as "opinions." Their views, naturally, are "Truth."

The fact is, these verses are not opinions, they are doctrine. That is why Paul commanded that these principles were to be observed in all the Churches of the saints (I Corinthians 11:16).

"If a woman 'lets her hair grow' [without cutting it] she will end up having long hair anyway. What's wrong with that?" Of course, nothing.

As long as a woman's hair remains long she is in Scriptural compliance, regardless if she personally chooses to cut her hair or not. Unfortunately, those who promote "uncut hair" on a woman take this much farther than the Scriptures allow. They teach that it is perfectly allowable for a woman to have short hair – even shorter than a man's hair – provided she has confessed her sins and has determined never to cut her hair again. But this is entirely unscriptural according to I Corinthians 11:6.

While it is perfectly acceptable for a woman to NOT cut her hair - provided it remains long - it is *unscriptural* for a woman to pray or teach with hair that is not long or is not Scripturally covered.

"But how can women with short hair [e.g., due to chemotherapy] be properly covered?" someone will ask. Obviously, long hair is provided *instead of* a covering (v 14-15). But sometimes a woman's hair is *not* long. If a woman must be covered, and long hair is given to her instead of a covering, then of course she needs to have some sort of "covering" if she doesn't have long hair. Otherwise, we violate the Scriptures which plainly teach that it is a shame for a woman to worship if she is shorn or shaven (in other words, to have a head which is "uncovered"). Furthermore, we find ourselves trying to explain the dilemma of how a bald headed woman can be considered covered, while a man whose hair is visibly longer, is not.

What kind of a covering should be used in the absence of long hair? One clue is given by reading the Revised Standard Version, which uses the word "veil" instead of "covering." Actually, I believe this is a more generic word than merely "veil." In other words, in the absence of long hair, while praying or teaching God's word, any sufficient *artificial* covering (scarfs, veils, artificial hair) is acceptable, provided it hangs down from the head in a veil-like fashion, much like naturally long hair on a woman does. Nor does an artificial covering excuse a woman from a sincere attempt to grow her hair long just because she can substitute an artificial covering in the absence of long hair.

"But what about the Nazarite vow in Numbers 6:5? Isn't this a Biblical definition for 'long hair', proving that when the Bible uses the phrase 'long hair' it really means 'uncut hair'?" It is a fairly popular assumption that the Nazarite vow (of Numbers 6:5) is directly connected to 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 and therefore should be utilized to help us understand 1 Corinthians 11, particularly the meaning of "long hair" in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15. (Similar arguments are made using Ezekiel 44:20, but the same reasoning below applies to both passages).

For example, some people will contend that since the Nazarite vow of the Law of Moses directed the Nazarite vow-maker to "never put a razor to his head", then therefore a woman in the New Testament Church should "never put a razor to her head" either. In other words, the Nazarite vow-maker had uncut hair; therefore the Christian woman should also have "uncut" hair.

Others have suggested that since *koma* is the Greek word used in Numbers 6:5 (found in the Septuagint as translated around 250 B. C. by Greek-Hebrew scholars) - and since *koma* is the very same Greek word used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15 - then a Christian woman should also have uncut hair since the Nazarite vow-maker was required to have uncut hair.

However, many Christians have difficulties making such connections to 1 Corinthians 11. First, Paul makes absolutely no connection between his instructions on the head-covering in 1 Corinthians 11 and the Old Testament Nazarite vow of Numbers 6:5. The connection between these 2 passages is human, not divine. Paul wrote hundreds of years later, in a totally different dispensation, and on an entirely different topic. Because no connection was made by Paul - or any other New Testament writer - between a Jewish man's Nazarite vow and a Christian woman's responsibility regarding her "head-covering", it is Scripturally impermissible for us to make this connection either.

Furthermore, some have suggested that since the same Greek word (*koma*) was used in Numbers 6:5 and in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15, then "long hair" in Corinthians implies "uncut hair" as indicated in Numbers. Of course, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, not Greek, and *koma* is a human translation, not the original divine wording (by the way, to suggest that since Jesus used the Septuagint that He approved of every translated passage in it is no different than saying that since we use the KJV we agree with the translation of every passage in the KJV). However, there is no reason to believe the Septuagint translators were incorrect in translating the word *koma* in Numbers 6:5. Even if they were correct, there remain certain problems with this line of reasoning.

The Old Testament writer of Numbers 6:5 was careful to stipulate that not only should the Nazarite vow-maker's hair be "uncut", but he should also have "long hair" (*koma*). Note that the inspired writer was careful to stipulate *both* conditions. If the writer had said that the Nazarite vow-maker's hair should be uncut only, we would not necessarily conclude that it must be long. Or, if the writer had indicated that the vow-maker's hair should be long, we would not necessarily conclude that he could not cut it. However, since both long and uncut were stipulated, that's what we conclude the Nazarite vow-maker must do.

Likewise, since Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 stipulated a woman must have long hair but did not specify her to have uncut hair, we cannot draw conclusions or make assumptions that go beyond what is specifically written. Long does not mean uncut, any more than uncut means long. This is not the way language is used in Greek or English. A woman might have long, cut hair - she might also have short, uncut hair. However, 1 Corinthians 11 plainly states that a woman's head must be covered while praying / teaching, and that long hair is that natural

covering. In the absence of long hair, she must still have her head appropriately covered. A bald or sheared head of hair is disgraceful (1 Corinthians 11:6). To merely have uncut hair that is not necessarily long is not complying with Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11.

It is improper to form a connection between 1 Corinthians 11 and Numbers 6:5. I believe it causes the meaning of 1 Corinthians 11 to be altered in a manner not intended by Paul. Paul could have easily, simply, and tersely stated that a woman's hair must be "uncut" - but he was careful not to do so. Therefore, we must also be careful not to do so. Remember, we must not add to or take away from the word of God. To do either is to sin. We cannot call sin what God has not called sin. And we will certainly answer to God for making heretics out of those who are intent on to preserving the unaltered accuracy of His word

Should Differences about the "Hair Question" Divide the Church?

I believe the answer to this question is a resounding "NO!" Christ hates division among His people (John 17:11; Romans 17:18; I Corinthians 1:10; Titus 3:10). We will always have differences of viewpoints on various issues, especially complex ones. Complex or not, Christ expects us to handle our disagreements in a respectful, kind, Christian, and non-divisive manner. The Bible is clear that even if we have the Truth, we must "speak the Truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). In other words, how we teach the Truth is just as important as having the Truth itself. Peter commanded Christians to "...be ready to answer...with gentleness and respect..." (I Peter 3:15).

Hopefully, through the process of continued education, Christians will continue to improve their understanding of this important subject.

Let's Practice What We Preach!

It is inappropriate to teach others to take the Bible literally and not add or subtract from it, while we completely ignore the literal reading of I Corinthians 11:14-15, ignoring not only how *all* the reputable translators translated this passage but also how most of if not all the Greek lexicographers defined *koma*.

Instead, Christians must practice and teach the simple, literal, and unaltered truth of God's word: men *should not* have long hair, and women *should* have long hair (or have their heads appropriately covered while praying or teaching the Word) – exactly as the Bible says. Anything more or less is incorrect. And the Bible has strictly warned us against adding to or taking away from the Word of God (I Corinthians 4:6; Deuteronomy 2:3-4; Revelation 22:18-19; II Timothy 3:17).

The question is: Are we going to accept God's simple truth, or are we going to continue to defend traditional Church teaching? Are we going to value Tradition over Truth? Are we going to defend personal positions rather than plain Biblical passages in their unaltered state?

11 Reasons I Cannot Accept the "Uncut Hair" Doctrine

1) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because the *vast* majority of Bible translation experts disagree with this doctrine. The experts have all but unanimously agreed that "have long hair" is the proper literal definition of *koma* in I Corinthians 11:14-15. Since "long" plainly does not mean "uncut," then to teach the "Uncut Hair" position is clearly Unscriptural.

2) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because the *vast* majority of Greek dictionaries and Bible scholars do not agree with this doctrine. The widespread preponderance of Greek and Biblical scholars appear to be in total disagreement with "Uncut Hair" as the meaning of I Corinthians 11:14-15. In practically every case, they have *literally* defined *koma* as "to have / to wear long hair". Since "having or wearing long hair" does not mean "having or wearing uncut hair," I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" position.

3) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because "to let the hair grow" renders a senseless meaning for I Corinthians 11:14-15. If it is a

glory for a woman to "let her hair grow" then it is a shame for a man to "let his hair grow," therefore this is an impossible command for men to keep because they can't keep their hair from growing. Consequently, "to let the hair grow" is not the proper translation for "long hair" in I Corinthians 11:14-15. That's perhaps why no reputable translator has translated *koma* as "to let the hair grow." They have all translated it as "to have long hair."

4) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because I cannot accept the teaching that *length of hair* is irrelevant. Every prominent English translation of I Corinthians 11:14-15 has put *primary* (not secondary) emphasis on "long." The vast majority of Greek lexicographers and Bible scholars have also indicated it should be translated "to have / to wear long hair." *Obviously, since long means length, length is important!* Therefore to say length is unimportant is to blatantly ignore God's Word, which says the opposite.

5) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because I will never agree that a woman with hair 5 feet long has *shorter* hair than a woman with hair 1 inch long. "Uncut Hair" proponents will argue that 5 feet can be short while 1 inch can be long. To them, many women throughout our Churches with short hair have *longer* hair than many women who choose to trim their hair occasionally, but still have long hair. This is because they believe that if a woman does not cut their hair, she automatically has long hair. This is visibly absurd. Therefore I cannot accept this logic.

6) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because it disagrees with I Corinthians 11:6 which plainly teaches it is a shame for a woman to be shaven or to have short hair while worshiping God. The "Uncut Hair" position believes exactly the opposite - that it is *not* shameful for a woman to have shaved, shorn, or short hair while worshiping God. This is because they believe the only thing important is for a woman to have "uncut hair" regardless of its length. Therefore, I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because it is absolutely and diametrically opposed to I Corinthians 11:6.

7) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because its strongest arguments are weak. The primary argument used by "Uncut Hair" proponents against the "Long Hair" position is to ask "How long is

long?" But it was God Who said "long hair" in I Corinthians 11:14-15, not man. Because they cannot comprehend exactly what "long hair" means, they assume this could not be what God said. Yet they agree that God did not specify a length of hair on men. He just instructed them to have "short hair". They insist it was perfectly *acceptable* for God to *not* specify length of hair on men, but *unacceptable* for God to *not* specify length of hair on women. Such is clearly a hypocritical and inconsistent argument and exposes the total lack of logic behind the "Uncut Hair" position.

8) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because the Bible never condemned the trimming or cutting of a woman's hair, and the "Uncut Hair" doctrine does. I Corinthians 11:6 clearly teaches it is a shame for a woman to have her hair shaved or sheared ("sheared" means to cut very short). However, the Bible plainly does NOT teach it is shameful for a woman to cut or trim her hair, provided her hair remains long. The Bible only condemns the shaving or cutting short of a woman's hair. However, the "Uncut Hair" doctrine teaches the opposite. It teaches that even to trim the hair is sinful for women under any circumstances. Therefore, because the "Uncut Hair" doctrine condemns what the Bible does not, I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine.

9) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because all Christians are forbidden to add or subtract from God's Word. To say that it is sinful for women to trim their hair is adding to God's Word because the Bible nowhere says that. Conversely, to say that it is *acceptable* for women to pray / teach the Word with shaved / sheared hair is subtracting from God's word. Therefore the "Uncut Hair" position both adds to and takes away from God's Word. Thus I cannot accept the doctrine of "Uncut Hair."

10) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because I cannot accept tradition over Truth. The "Uncut Hair" doctrine is a traditional teaching that has been passed down from generation to generation since perhaps the 1800s. However, all Christians are commanded to hold God's Word as the final authority over all other practices or teachings, including traditional teachings (Matthew 15:1-9). Although many Christians defend certain Church doctrines merely because their families or favorite preachers believe them, I cannot. That's because the "Uncut Hair" tradition is in obvious opposition to the Word of God. And to value tradition over Truth is sin.

11) I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine because it apparently was not believed – or even heard of – by early Christians. If early Christians did not practice it, this is powerful evidence that the doctrine was not taught by the inspired apostles. Therefore I cannot accept the "Uncut Hair" doctrine.

[To find out what early Christian writers had to say about the Hair Question, click here.](#)

Revised: 10-25-2000, 9-11-2000, 5-29-99, 6-1-99, 6-5-99, 6-24-99, 8-6-99, 8-14-99, 8-18-99, 10-29-99, 2-17-2000, 3-4-2000, 4-14-2000 by Rick Cutter. All materials herein are copyrighted and may be reproduced for non-commercial use only, unless permission granted by author. All rights reserved.

YES, IT REALLY *IS* A SIN FOR A WOMAN TO CUT HER HAIR!

(A Review of Rick Cutter's Article)

By George Battey

On September 4, 2000, an article from Rick Cutter, entitled "*Is it Really a Sin for a Woman to Cut Her Hair?*" was emailed en masse to a great number of Christians. Hundreds of people received this article either directly from Rick, or indirectly as it was passed on from hand to hand. The article is unappreciated for the following reasons:

- **It teaches false doctrine that will lead people into sin.**
- **It was sent out by spamming on the Internet – an unethical, perhaps even illegal practice.**
- **It uses unnecessary, inflammatory language:**
 - 1) “‘Uncut Hair’ proponents also make the *incredulous [sic] claim* that a woman with hair 5 feet long could be considered to have ‘short hair’“ (p. 2).
 - 2) “*Because ‘long hair’ is the literal translation for koma, that’s exactly what ‘long hair’ advocates believe* [i.e., Rick calls his position the ‘long hair advocate’ position] ... *They believe it is sinful to add to God’s Word by inserting added or hidden meanings into this simple verse*” (p. 3) [implying that “uncut hair” people do not believe it is sinful to add to God’s Word].
 - 3) “It is the *dishonesty* of this latter position that many have unfortunately lowered themselves to” (p. 6).
 - 4) “Frankly, I have rarely heard more *nonsense in my entire life*” (p. 6).
 - 5) “‘Uncut Hair’ advocates should at least have the *honesty* to admit they don’t believe the translators” (p. 6).
 - 6) “To suggest that ‘long hair’ actually means ‘uncut hair’ is *dishonest and deceitful*” (p. 6).
 - 7) “*Even children understand ...*” (p. 6).
 - 8) “*When we play these games with God’s Word ...*” (p. 6).
 - 9) “What baffles me is how that many Christians seem to be *so rock-solid sure about ignoring these experts, so confident to oppose them, so cool and self-assured*. Frankly, I fail to see the reason for this unfounded and dangerous *self-assurance*” (p. 7).

The examples of this type of language are too numerous to continue, but enough are presented here to show the inflammatory nature of Rick's article. Yet, after writing in this way, Rick pleads that any response should be done with a proper attitude. He praises some who have "disagreed agreeably" (second en masse letter sent out by Rick, Sept. 9, 2000).

- **It raises more questions than it answers.**

- 1) How long is long (the subjective problem)?
- 2) Why must a woman "put forth a sincere effort to grow her hair long rather than substituting an artificial veil indefinitely" as Rick argues on page 18?
- 3) Is "growing" hair part of any lexicographer's definition of the Greek word κομᾶω?
- 4) Does the tense of the verb κομᾶω have any bearing on the issue of whether a woman may cut her hair?
- 5) What part does Numbers 6:5 play in helping us understand what it means to "let the hair grow long"?
- 6) When Samson's hair began to grow (Judges 16:22), was he "keeping on letting his hair grow," even though it was short in length?
- 7) Does the Bible say "LONG hair was given her for a covering" as Rick says, or does it say "her hair was given for a covering" (1 Corinthians 11:15)? What significance might this have on the subject?
- 8) When men look at a rope and say, "That is a long rope," is "a long rope" the same as something that grows?
- 9) If a child is instructed to "keep leaving the rope alone" and then trims off the end of the rope, did he act as he was instructed?
- 10) In the Greek is "have long hair" one word or more than one word? If it is one word, what kind of word – a verb or a noun? If a verb, does that describe something a person does, or does it describe the length of an object?

There are more questions raised than these, but these will suffice to demonstrate that Rick's article falls far short in dealing with the subject at hand. As mentioned already, his article raises more questions than it answers.

- **It makes several illogical and irrational statements.**

- 1) "Today, the 'uncut hair' doctrine is unquestionably one of the most emphasized doctrines of the church. It is taught nationally and internationally, and is so embedded in the one-cup ranks that any preacher found to believe otherwise will almost certainly be ostracized and siphoned of financial support. Local teachers who disagree with the 'uncut hair' doctrine are usually sought out and forbidden to teach their 'false doctrine.' Many are simply encouraged to leave congregations when their belief is exposed. Other teachers are demoted from their

congregational teaching schedules” (preface to the article, second paragraph).

- 2) “... it is impossible for either a man or a woman to keep their hair from growing” (p. 9).
- 3) “Any Man who believes koma means ‘to let the hair grow’ is living in perpetual sin!” (p. 9).
- 4) “Remember, if a woman must let her hair grow, then a man must not let his hair grow at all or he is sinning” (p. 9).

The list could go on and on. All of these statements are illogical and irrational. The statement about preachers being “ostracized and siphoned of financial support” is unfounded. Let Rick give names and specific incidences of when any these actions have happened.

- **It misrepresents what the lexicographers said about the verb κομᾶω.**

The injustice to Thayer is the most obvious example here. First, Rick leads us to believe that Thayer did not say κομᾶω means “let the hair grow” when that is exactly what he did say. Second, Rick accuses brethren of never quoting all of what Thayer wrote. However, our brethren have published tracts on this subject which do give Thayer’s full definition (cf. “*Honor and Glory, Shame and Dishonor,*” Richard Bunner, p. 7; “*Let Her Be Covered,*” Don King, p. 9). No one is trying to deceive or be dishonest here. As Brother Richard Bunner pointed out, brethren may be wrong, or they may be ignorant, but to charge them with dishonesty and deceitfulness is unfair.

- **It continuously treats a verb as though it were a noun.**

That is, throughout Rick’s article he speaks of a woman’s covering as being “long hair” (adjective + noun), whereas the New Testament speaks of “wearing” or “growing” long hair (verb – describing action).

- **It completely ignores the significance of the present tense of the Greek language.**

If any sister in the church is looking for justification to trim or cut her hair, this article by Rick provides comfort in knowing that she is not alone in her thoughts and desires, but it provides absolutely no proof that trimming and cutting are acceptable with God!

We now enter upon a critical examination of what Rick Cutter wrote, in order to demonstrate its fallacy and its danger.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GREEK PRESENT TENSE

[Credit should be given to Greg Jordan for having brought to my attention the significance of the present tense in the subjunctive mood (1999).]

We are about to discuss technicalities of the Greek language. Many complain that “all this technical Greek stuff is confusing.” They argue, “If we have to know Greek to understand the Bible, then there is no hope of any of us being saved.” The problem with this reasoning is that it fails to understand that somebody has to know Greek or we *would* all be lost! The New Testament was not written in English, but Greek. Somebody has to know about Greek to translate it so the rest of mankind can understand and be saved. This is where those educated in the Greek language come into play. Not everyone in the church needs to learn Greek, but someone does, or else we will indeed be lost! The following information is essential if one really wants to know why “uncut hair advocates” take the position that it is sinful for women to trim the hair even a little.

There are three verbs in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 that are of importance in this study.

- 1) **κατακαλυπτέσθω** (“*let her be covered*” – v6) – **present tense**, passive voice, imperative mood, 3rd person, singular of κατακάλυπτω.
- 2) **ὀφείλει** (“*ought she*” – v10) – **present tense**, active voice, indicative mood, 3rd person, singular of ὀφείλω.
- 3) **κομῆ** (“*s/he may have long hair*” – vv14-15) – **present tense**, active voice, subjunctive mood, 3rd person, singular of κομῶ.

Notice that each of these verbs is in the present tense. The significance of this cannot be overemphasized in this study. The primary significance of the present tense is that it stresses continuous action. Dana and Mantey write, “The progressive force of the present tense should always be considered as primary, especially with reference to the potential moods ...” (p. 181). Notice “especially with reference to the potential moods.” This refers to the imperative and subjunctive moods above.

By way of explanation, verbs have “mood.” There are several “moods” in the Greek language that indicate the relation of the verb to reality.

- 1) **The “indicative mood”** - means the action is actually taking place. For example: “Jack sees Spot.” This is action that is actually occurring. In 1 Corinthians 11:10, “she ought to have a symbol of authority on her head,” the word “ought” is indicative. This means that right now the woman is actually in need of a symbol of authority.

- 2) **The “subjunctive mood”** - means the action is not actually taking place, but is potential. For example: “If Jack sees Spot, he will kill him.” The action of “seeing Spot” is not actually occurring but is potential. This is why the Greek grammars call the “subjunctive mood” a “potential mood.” In 1 Corinthians 11:15, “if she has long hair,” the verb is subjunctive. The action is not actually occurring at the time of writing, but is potential. Whether the action ever will be performed will depend upon what the woman does - hence the word “if.”

- 3) **The “imperative mood”** - means the action is not actually taking place but is potential. This mood is used for commands, hence the name “imperative” - it is “imperative” or necessary that the action be performed. For example: “Kill Spot.” The action of “killing Spot” is not actually happening, but it is potential and is given in the form of a command. In 1 Corinthians 11:6, “let her be covered,” the action is not actually occurring but is potential. This is a command. Whether this action will ever occur depends upon whether the woman chooses to obey or not.

So, because the Greek words κατακαλυπτέσθω (“*let her be covered*”) and κομᾶ (“*s/he may have long hair*”) are in potential moods and in the present tense, the “progressive force” is being emphasized. Literally translated, verse 6 says, “But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, *let her keep on being covered.*” Literally, verse 15 is saying, “But if a woman *keeps on growing long hair*, it is a glory to her.” If one does not like the word “growing,” then it would be, “But if a woman *keeps on having long hair*, it is a glory to her.” (More about this word “growing” in a moment.) For emphasis’ sake, let it also be noticed that verse 14 literally says, “If a man *keeps on growing long hair*, it is a dishonor to him.”

In the indicative mood the point is still the same: continuous action is being stressed, though not so strongly as in the “potential moods” (i.e., the imperative and subjunctive). Literally, verse 10 is saying, “For this reason the woman *keeps on oughting* (i.e., “keeps on needing”) to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels.”

The present tense of these verbs points to something a woman continues to do – around the clock. Verbs describe action. The woman must keep on doing what? The apostle said she must keep on “growing her hair long.” If she must “keep on” doing this, when can she stop and have it cut or trimmed? Rick Cutter did not tell us. In fact, Rick treats these verbs as if they were nouns. He tells us in his article that “long hair” (an adjective + noun) is the covering, but that is not the whole story. Actually the Bible says “her hair is given to her for a covering,” and the divine qualification is that it must be hair that “keeps on growing long” (present tense, subjunctive mood). The Christian woman is told to do something (verb) with her hair. What is she supposed to *do*? She is to “let it keep on growing long!” (1 Corinthians 11:15). When reading that, remember this is a command of the Lord Himself: “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Dana and Mantey are not alone in saying the present tense stresses continuous action. Perschbacher writes the following under “Subjunctive Mood: Present Tense” [i.e., the tense and mood of κομῆ (“s/he may have long hair”) in 1 Corinthians 11:14-15]: “The tense does not indicate the time of the action, past or present, but the kind of action. The aorist tense refers to punctiliar or undefined action, whereas the present tense refers to stative, durative, or repeated (iterative) action” (p. 340). He makes a similar observation under the “Imperative Mood: Present Tense” [i.e., the tense and mood of κατακαλυπτέσθω (“let her be covered”) in 1 Corinthians 11:6]: “The present tense denotes progressive, iterative, or stative action, rather than temporal action” (p. 357). Robertson writes under the heading of “Subjunctive”: “The rarity of the present subjunctive (and optative, of course) has already been commented upon. The aorist is used as a matter of course here *unless durative action is to be expressed* ... The subjunctive is very common indeed but not in the present tense” (p. 889, emphasis mine - GB). Under “Imperative” he writes: “The present imperative was found to be regularly durative” (p. 890).

Perschbacher gives examples of the present subjunctive to help us see what is meant by the continuous nature of the present tense. In Galatians 5:25, the Bible reads, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” This verse contains both the subjunctive and imperative moods in the present tense. Literally it means, “If we *keep on living* in the Spirit, let us also *keep on walking* in the Spirit.” Is there any time when a person can stop “walking in the Spirit” and still be saved? Of course not. Again, Romans 15:6 says, “that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Literally, the present tense is saying to us, “that you may with one mind and one mouth *keep on glorifying* the God and Father.” Is there any time a Christian may stop glorifying God – even momentarily? Of course not. One more example: the Lord Himself says, “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise” (Luke 6:31). Literally, “Just as you want men to *keep on doing* to you, you also *keep on doing* to them.” Is there ever a time when we may momentarily stop treating people right? Of course not.

The point should be obvious by now. When the Lord says a Christian woman should “keep on being covered” (1 Corinthians 11:6), that she should “keep on oughting to have a symbol of authority on her head” (verse 10), and that she should “keep on growing her hair long” (verse 15), there is never a time when she may momentarily stop growing her hair. Her hair (noun) is a covering and she is supposed to keep on doing something with that hair – “keep on growing it long.”

Rick objects. He writes, “If ‘to let the hair grow’ were the proper definition of *koma*, why wasn’t it translated that way – by anyone?” (p. 6). Perhaps Rick himself should answer these questions: (a) If Luke 6:31 means, “Just as you want men to *keep on doing* to you, you also *keep on doing* to them,” then why was it not translated that way – by anyone? If 1 John 3:10 means, “Whoever has been born of God does not *keep on sinning*, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot *keep on sinning*,” then why was it not translated that way – by anyone? If Matthew 5:28 means, “whoever *keeps on looking* at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” why was it not translated that way – by anyone? The list is endless. Why translators translated

passages the way they did will have to be taken up with the translators themselves. However, that does not remove the fact that the present tense stresses continuous, linear, durative action. The woman is to “keep on letting her hair grow long” (1 Corinthians 11:15), and this is a command of the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Jim Crouch makes the following pertinent point:

Lexicographers do not delineate the meanings of verbs in all tenses and moods. They present the basic definition of the word and then show how it is used within various contexts. That is why Thayer or Liddell or Gingrich can say that the meaning of KOMAO is, “to have or wear long hair.” Rick, and others, can say, “But it does not say to continually grow long hair.” True. That is because this is emphasized by the tense and mood of the verb-it is not inherent in the verb’s definition. I believe this an [sic] important point to stress. Many people are unwittingly led down the wrong road in their use of Greek lexicons because (1) they do not know how to use them properly, and (2) though they may come up with a proper definition, they do not know how to properly apply that definition to a specific context because they know nothing about Greek grammar. This is especially true in respect to Greek verbs. (Personal letter to me – GB – Sept. 18, 2000).

“HOW THE EXPERTS HAVE DEFINED KOMA”

Rick lists twelve experts in his paper who define the Greek word κομάω. None of these experts helps Rick’s cause. They all define κομάω as either “to wear the hair long” or “to have long hair” or “to let the hair grow long” or “to let the hair grow” (Thayer).

Rick tries his best to convince us that Thayer does not say “let the hair grow.” He writes, “No reputable English translator agrees with this definition [i.e., the “uncut hair” position that κομάω should be translated “let the hair grow”], nor apparently do any of the Greek lexicographers” (p. 8). This is false. Thayer does define the word, “let the hair grow.” We have eyes. We can see for ourselves that a reputable scholar *does* translate the verb, “let the hair grow.” In fact, Rick’s list of “experts” contains no fewer than four “experts” who say either, “let the hair grow” or “let the hair grow long.” How can our brother miss this point? When we add to this the significance of the present tense, we have “*keep on letting the hair grow*,” or “*keep on letting the hair grow long*.” The “uncut hair” position is completely “untouched” by his list of experts. In fact, they all agree with the “uncut hair” position exactly.

To Rick’s list of “experts,” there are others who should be added:

- 1) Souter – “κομάω, I wear the hair long, I allow the hair to grow long” (p. 137).
- 2) Pickering – “κομάω, to let the hair grow long, to abound with hair; to have long hair” (p. 760).
- 3) Louw & Nida – “κομάω: to wear long hair as part of one’s attire – ‘to have long hair, to appear with long hair, to wear long hair,’ ... In a number of languages it may be necessary to translate κομάω as ‘to let one’s hair grow long’ or ‘not to cut one’s hair.’” (p. 527).

Notice carefully the last thing Louw & Nida say – “not to cut one’s hair.” Louw & Nida designed their lexicon to be used by translators and are consulted regularly by the United Bible Society for guidance. If “to let one’s hair grow long” did not even remotely carry with it the idea of “not to cut one’s hair,” then why suggest this possible translation? Obviously the idea is not as foreign to the text as some think. Unfortunately for Rick’s position, there are scholars who take the position that “to let one’s hair grow long” means “not to cut one’s hair.” Furthermore, the present tense of the verbs in 1 Corinthians 11 points to continuous growth.

Aaron Risener makes the following observation:

It seems to me we can use this verse to prove the covering of verse 15 is uncut hair without ever grabbing a lexicon. Paul says, “For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head” (1 Cor. 11:6, NAS). Paul is speaking of a case where a woman is not covering her head, but she, at this point, is not shorn or shaved either (he says she might as well be, but she wasn’t ... she was merely without a covering). That implies that the woman had something less than the covering, but something more than “shorn or shaven.” Since we know the covering is her hair (v. 15), Paul seems to be describing a situation common, unfortunately, to many of our sisters today: trimmed or shortened hair. She may not be shaven or shorn, but she’s not covered. (Personal letter to me – GB – Sept. 19, 2000).

QUESTIONS PEOPLE WILL ASK

Rick anticipates objections, and he tries to “head ‘em off at the pass.” Let us examine just a few.

1) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“You say that a woman must have “long hair.” Well, how long is “long?”“ This is by far the most common question I hear, and the most ridiculous” (p. 14).

Labeling this question as “the most ridiculous” argument that can be made is designed to cause us all to shy away from this question. After all, none of us wants to be guilty of making “the most ridiculous argument” known to Rick Cutter! But the label of “ridiculous” does not answer the question: How long is long? This is a valid question, and one which Rick cannot answer. It is left in the field of subjectivism.

Rick continues to be plagued with the basic problem of not being able to distinguish between nouns and verbs. The Bible does not say “long hair is given her for a covering.” That is Rick’s concoction. The Lord says, “hair is given her for a covering.” What kind of hair covers the woman? Hair that “keeps on growing long” (present tense, subjunctive mood – stressing durative, linear, continuous action).

According to Rick’s argument everything is subjective. The man subjectively decides how short to wear his hair, and the woman subjectively decides how long to wear hers; and on Judgment Day the Lord will decide if they were doing things well enough. Rick has God giving a command (a) to show respect for authoritative heads, (b) that affects one’s prayer life, and (c) that involves eternal principles laid down since creation; but he draws the unwarranted conclusion that God leaves the entire matter subjective, leaving it up to each person to decide whether or not he has complied. This is false. God does not leave the matter in the realm of subjective decision based solely on a person’s judgment.

Women are to “keep on letting their hair grow long” (1 Corinthians 11:15) – continuously (present tense, subjunctive mood). When God told the Nazarites to “let your hair keep on growing (long)” (Hebrew and English – Numbers 6:5), He meant, “no razor shall come upon his head.” Is that not plain enough? The Septuagint has God saying that the Nazarites must “keep on nourishing the hair of the head.” The noun κόμην (used in 1 Corinthians 11:15) is also used here. The meaning is the same – “no razor shall come upon his head.” The Scriptures seem to anticipate false teaching. It is as though God knew someone would come along some day and argue that “keep on letting the hair grow long” does not mean “do not cut the hair.” So, to prevent any misunderstandings, God recorded Numbers 6:5 so there would be no doubt as to what He expected.

Men, on the other hand, are not to “keep on letting their hair grow long” (1 Corinthians 11:14) – continuously (present tense, subjunctive mood). They are to interfere with the process of growth. They are to get a haircut on a regular basis. This command is not as subjective as Rick makes it appear.

God clearly says that if a woman is not going to cover herself (i.e., continue to grow her hair long), she might as well be “shorn or shaved” (1 Corinthians 11:5-6). What does this necessarily imply about the man then? Since he is not to be covered, it must be inferred that he might as well be consistent and be “shorn or shaved.” What one (the woman) must do to be consistent, the other (the man) must also do to be consistent. When men begin to look like sheep at the end of winter, it is time to go get sheared or shaved. For emphasis, we say again, this command is not as subjective as Rick makes it appear.

2) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“Paul could have used several Greek words to denote “cut” hair, but he did not. Here’s a simple question: If Paul really did not want women to cut their hair at all, why didn’t he simply say it outright, so that the translators could have translated it clearly as: “Do not cut your hair”? That would have ended this debate once and for all. ... Why did he instead use a word – koma - that translators have essentially unanimously agreed should be translated as “long hair” instead of “uncut hair”? It would have been so easy for Paul to have said “uncut hair”, but he did not. He said “long hair.”

First, the translators have not “essentially unanimously agreed” that κομᾶ “should be translated as ‘long hair.’” Translators know the difference between adjectives, nouns, and verbs. The Greek word κομᾶ is a verb and the translators translated it correctly. They translated it as “have long hair” (a verb describing action). The “debate” is between Rick himself (who adds adjectives and nouns to the Word of God) and the Holy Spirit (who uses a verb denoting action). Who is the one guilty of adding to the Scriptures? As already pointed out, the verb κομᾶ, in its present tense, subjunctive mood, literally means “keep on growing the hair.” The Holy Spirit said what He meant and meant what He said. The Spirit wanted Christian women to grow their hair continuously – linear, continuous action – and that is exactly the wording He chose.

Second, Louw & Nida do explain to translators that, “In a number of languages it may be necessary to translate κομᾶω as ‘to let one’s hair grow long’ or ‘not to cut one’s hair’” (p. 527). That is as clear as anyone could want.

Here is a most pertinent question: Why did the Holy Spirit not use an adjective and noun as Rick teaches? For example, why did the Spirit not have “μακρὰ θρίξ” or “μακρὰ κόμη”? Either of these two constructions would have carried with them the idea of “long hair as measured by a ruler.” The point is, the Spirit could have chosen the wording necessary to teach what our brother is teaching, but HE DID NOT. We may not add

adjectives and nouns in place of verbs as we choose. We may add nothing to the Word of God (Galatians 1:8-9).

3) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“Finally, it amazes me how that ‘Uncut Hair’ believers have no problems with women perming their hair, using hot blow dryers on their hair, using hot curling irons on their hair, dying their hair (which causes it to break off) or employing other techniques which often damage hair and cause it to break off. This seems to me to be grossly inconsistent. Is it ok to ‘break off the hair’ so long as we just don’t ‘trim it off?’ Is it ok to ‘chemically burn off’ the hair? Are these techniques perfectly acceptable, while trimming off dead-ends is gross sin? Is this not hypocritical? Yet many Christian women who claim to profess that trimming the hair is sin seem to have no problem with some of these other procedures of ‘keeping the hair from growing.’” (pp. 15-16).

All Rick does here is point out an inconsistency in how people live their lives. He does not disprove anything about the need to “keep on letting the hair grow long” (present tense, subjunctive mood). Many of us agree with Rick on this point: It is inconsistent on the part of any Christian woman to remove her hair with chemicals or hot curling irons and then pride herself in the fact that she never uses shears (1 Corinthians 11:6) on her hair. Some of us “uncut hair” believers do “have problems” with this behavior.

4) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“‘When a woman cuts her hair, isn’t she cutting her ‘glory?’” ... The problem with this argument is obvious: It makes the assumption that ‘hair’ is a woman’s glory. But this is NOT true. ‘Hair’ alone is not a woman’s glory. Neither is ‘growing hair’ a woman’s glory. LONG HAIR is a woman’s glory.” (p. 16).

Rick is actually confusing verbs with nouns here. This is somewhat difficult to see and explain, but here is an illustration that may clarify what is happening:

In 1 Timothy 2:12, the Scriptures say, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” In the English, the four words “to have authority over” all come from one single Greek word αὐθεντεῖν. In other words, there are two things a woman is not allowed to do: (a) she may not teach (i.e., in public) and (b) she may not “have authority over” (one verb here) a man. Sunday School advocates borrow the word “over” from this verb to reconstruct the sentence and make it say: (a) a woman may not teach “over a man” and (b) she may not have authority “over a man.” It is wrong and inexcusable to take the word “over” and place it wherever it seems convenient because the word “over” is not a free-standing word that may be moved

around. Sunday School people are treating “over” as though it were a preposition that can be moved around, whereas it is actually part of the definition of the verb.

Rick inadvertently does the same type of thing here. He writes that “LONG HAIR is a woman’s glory.” Actually, in the Greek, “long hair” is part of a verb. In the English the three words “has long hair” all come from one single Greek word κομᾶ. This is a verb that describes action. Action is something a person *does*. There is something a woman *does* that is a glory to her. That is, if a woman “keeps on growing her hair,” it is a glory. This is something she *does* that brings glory to her. But in the same way that Sunday School advocates dissect the verb αὐθεντεῖν in 1 Timothy 2:12, Rick dissects the verb κομᾶ. He borrows “long hair” – originally embedded in the verb – and essentially re-labels it a noun phrase. Now he says that “long hair” (an adjective + a noun) is what is a glory to the woman. In other words, when Rick is finished with the verse, the glory to a woman is not something she is doing (verb) but rather an object (noun) she is possessing.

If “LONG HAIR is a woman’s glory” (as Rick contends), then some women are in trouble because their hair will never grow “long” by Rick’s definition. Try as they might, some sisters in the church just have hair that will not grow “long” when the tape measure is the standard.

God is not so much concerned about something (noun) a woman possesses. He is concerned about what women *do*. When women “keep on letting their hair grow,” that is something they *do*. When God uses verbs, He is showing us that what women do is more important than what they possess (nouns). Thus, when a woman makes a confession or is baptized, if she allows her hair to “keep on growing” (present tense, subjunctive mood), it does not matter how much hair (noun) she possesses. God punished Samson for allowing his hair to be cut off (Judges 16:19); but when he began to grow it again (Judges 16:22), God accepted him. God was more concerned with what Samson was doing (verb) than with what he was possessing (noun).

In summary, the English Bible may leave the impression that “long hair” (an adjective + a noun) is a woman’s glory. But in the Greek, the glory is an action performed by the woman (a verb) – she must do something to receive glory from God – she must “keep on growing her hair.” Her “hair is given to her for a covering” (1 Corinthians 11:15). But she must *do* something with that hair – “keep on growing it.”

5) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“Clearly, an artificial covering is not needed when long hair is present - it is only required when long hair is not present on the woman (and she is in the act of praying or teaching the Word of God). After all, the Bible is very clear (verse 6) that it is a shame for a woman to pray or prophesy when her head is shorn or shaved and not otherwise appropriately covered” (p. 17).

Rick assumes the “artificial veil” position that has been argued and debated for years. There is plenty of material that has been published to demonstrate soundly that the “hair is given to a woman for (ἀντί - “in place of, instead of, for the purpose of”) a covering” (1 Corinthians 11:15). But the woman must *do* something (verb) with that hair in order for it to serve the place of a covering – she must “keep on growing it.”

First Corinthians 11:6 teaches that a woman must “keep on being covered” and if she does not, she should be consistent and be shorn or shaved. Since the covering is the hair (verse 15), it means she must “keep on being covered by hair that keeps on growing.” If she does not, she should be consistent and be shorn or shaved.

Rick completely misses the point and says, “No ... she should not be shorn or shaved. The woman in verse 6 is already shorn or shaved and because she is already that way, she should cover herself with an artificial veil.” Read 1 Corinthians 11:6 for yourself. See with your own eyes. Read what Rick writes above. He is saying the woman is already shorn or shaved and should then be covered. The Bible says just the opposite. The Bible says if she is not covered, let her then be shorn or shaved. This is a serious mistake on Rick’s part.

6) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“But how can women with short hair [e.g., due to chemotherapy] be properly covered?” someone will ask. Obviously, long hair is provided instead of a covering (v 14-15). But sometimes a woman’s hair is not long. If a woman must be covered, and long hair is given to her instead of a covering, then of course she needs to have some sort of ‘covering’ if she doesn’t have long hair. Otherwise, we violate the Scriptures which plainly teach that it is a shame for a woman to worship if she is shorn or shaven (in other words, to have a head which is ‘uncovered’). Furthermore, we find ourselves trying to explain the dilemma of how a bald headed woman can be considered covered, while a man whose hair is visibly longer, is not” (p. 17-18).

Again, Rick makes the mistake of assuming the idea that long hair, as measured by a ruler, is the covering of verse 15; however, the Bible does not make this statement. Hair that “keeps on growing” is a glory to the woman and is given to her for a covering (1 Corinthians 11:15).

When a woman loses her hair due to chemotherapy, if she does not interfere, her hair will begin to grow again. Notice again what the Bible says about Samson’s hair, “However, the hair of his head *began to grow again* after it had been shaven” (Judges 16:22). In other words, Samson’s hair began to “keep on growing again” after it was shaven off. God accepted this from Samson, who was to be a Nazarite from birth. We know He accepted Samson again because the Scriptures tell us so (Judges 16:28-30; Hebrews 11:32).

7) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“It is hypocritical to teach others to take the Bible literally and not add or subtract from it, while we completely ignore the literal reading of I Corinthians 11:14-15, ignoring not only how all the reputable translators translated this passage but also how most of if not all the Greek lexicographers defined koma” (p. 19).

We agree that nothing should be added to the Word of God nor deleted from it. But who is the guilty one in this case? Who is *adding* artificial veils into the church when the Scriptures clearly teach that hair that “keeps on growing” is given as a covering? Who is *taking away* the force of the Greek present tense – continuous, linear, durative action?

We are merely contending for what the passage literally says: “If a woman keeps on growing her hair long, it is a glory to her, for her hair is given to her for a covering.” That is what the passage literally says. It agrees with the Greek grammars, and it agrees with all the Greek lexicographers.

8) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“I cannot accept the ‘Uncut Hair’ doctrine because I will never agree that a woman with hair 5 feet long has shorter hair than a woman with hair 1 inch long.” (p. 20).

Look at this statement carefully: “I will never agree ...” Who is being dogmatic? Who has closed his mind? Who is being unreasonable? Who is “*going to defend personal positions rather than plain Biblical passages in their unaltered state*” (Rick, p. 19)?

“Uncut hair advocates” are not asking anyone to agree that five feet is shorter than one inch. A “straw man” has been erected and attacked, but the point is missed entirely. The Bible says that the woman’s hair must “keep on growing long.” If a person’s head has been shaved (cf. Samson – Judges 16:19), yet his hair begins “to grow again after it has been shaved” (Judges 16:22), God will accept that because that is all He is asking. He is merely asking for hair that “keeps on growing” to be on a woman’s head to serve for a covering (1 Corinthians 11:15). Nothing more, but nothing less either.

9) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“I cannot accept the ‘Uncut Hair’ doctrine because its strongest arguments are weak.” (p. 21).

The strongest argument for “keep on letting the hair grow long” is a literal translation of the present tense, subjunctive mood. Dana and Mantey say the durative, linear, continuous sense is stronger in the subjunctive mood than the indicative mood. This is

not a weak argument. It is an argument that Rick apparently never considered and that he cannot successfully overthrow.

If the continuous, linear, durative force of the present tense can be overthrown, then all the grammars are wrong and all the passages that teach us to “keep on glorifying the Father” (Romans 15:6) are wrong. All the passages that tell us to “keep on walking in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25) are wrong. All the passages that teach us to “keep on doing righteousness” (1 John 3:7) are wrong. It is a completely futile effort to resist the Word of God. The Lord says, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

10) [Rick writes in his paper:](#)

“I cannot accept the ‘Uncut Hair’ doctrine because I cannot accept tradition over Truth.” (p. 21).

Rick needs to be careful here, for there are divine traditions as well as human traditions. The Apostle Paul praised brethren because they “kept the traditions” as they were delivered (1 Corinthians 11:2). Sometimes tradition *is* truth! We must be careful not to “throw the baby out with the bathwater” so to speak. It is God who says, “keep on growing the hair long” (1 Corinthians 11:15).

CONCLUSION

Rick has written as though the brotherhood is intolerant of anyone who would disagree over the hair and the veil. He writes:

“Today, the ‘uncut hair’ doctrine is unquestionably one of the most emphasized doctrines of the church. It is taught nationally and internationally, and is so embedded in the one-cup ranks that any preacher found to believe otherwise will almost certainly be ostracized and siphoned of financial support. Local teachers who disagree with the ‘uncut hair’ doctrine are usually sought out and forbidden to teach their ‘false doctrine.’ Many are simply encouraged to leave congregations when their belief is exposed. Other teachers are demoted from their congregational teaching schedules.” (preface to the article, second paragraph).

This does not describe our brotherhood. Maybe Rick is writing of his own experience. We have had some differences on this issue among us for many years, and to my knowledge, I know of no one who was ever disciplined solely as a result of these

differences. But when men begin to push their unscriptural beliefs onto a congregation, they should expect opposition. If the unscriptural beliefs continue to be advocated, the opposition by those who disagree will increase. If a man makes himself contentious and a heretic, he may well find himself disciplined, not merely because he has different views from others but because he makes himself divisive and contentious and disturbs the “peace in Israel” (Galatians 6:16).

The position that a Christian woman must allow her hair to “keep on growing” is based upon the Scriptures themselves, without any addition or subtraction. The idea of continual growth, without trimming of any kind, comes not only from the definition of the verb κομᾶω, but also from its syntactical usage, the immediate context of the passage at hand, and the overall context of the entire Bible. Our brother is wrong in his conclusions: (a) that a woman may trim her hair so long as she still thinks it is long, and (b) that an artificial veil is needed by some women who have extremely short hair. A wise man once said, “*A person can be honestly mistaken, but when he is shown the truth, he either stops being mistaken, or he stops being honest.*”

Rick’s article was sent out en masse in an unethical way – perhaps even illegally. And it is indeed false doctrine. This article was sent out to the email accounts of minor children. Think of this: It was sent, unsolicited and against the wishes of many godly parents, to children who are presently being taught the opposite of what Rick is trying to advocate. Rick has the right to disagree with people over any issue he wishes, but he has absolutely no right to try to indoctrinate minor children against the wishes of their parents. This is an unconscionable act on his part. One day, if Rick is blessed to have children of his own, perhaps he will understand the seriousness of what he has done.

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“IF A WOMAN HAVE LONG HAIR”

(by George Battey)

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (NKJV)

2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.

8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man.

9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

13 Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?

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

16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

There are several popular ideas about this passage:

- a) These teachings were meant **only for the first century**.
- b) This passage is dealing **only with church services** (artificial veil).

- c) *This passage applies today and in everyday situations.*

DOES THE PASSAGE APPLY TODAY?

Let's begin with the first idea. *Does this passage apply today in any sense?* I believe that it does because all thru the passage that Paul is using "timeless" arguments that will apply to all churches throughout all ages.

- a) *He doesn't use arguments based on local customs.*
- b) *He doesn't use arguments based on 1st century customs. Example:*
- V3 – based on the divine order of authority.
 - Vv7-9 – because of the divine order of creation.
 - V10 – because of the angels.
 - Vv13-15 – because the natural sense of right and wrong.

Nothing in the entire context indicates we are dealing with some local, 1st century custom that would pass away with time.

We have a tendency to label difficult passages it as simply a 1st century, unnecessary, out-of-date practice and then we go on and do whatever we wanted to do in the first place.

This is not treating the text fairly.

IS THIS TEXT DEALING WITH A WORSHIP SERVICE?

Q: *Is this text dealing with a worship service?* This is the approach of many and here is the result of such reasoning:

- a) *If this passage deals only with worship services, then covering the head is something a woman would have to do only an hour per week.*

- b) *Again: If this deals only with worship services, it must be dealing with an artificial veil that can be put on and taken off and it has nothing to do with long hair.*

The problem is that nothing in this passage ***necessarily implies*** a worship service. Remember, there is a difference between an ***inference*** and a ***necessary inference***.

Inference - *drawing a conclusion which may or may not be true.*

Necessary inference - *an inescapable conclusion which you are forced to admit.*

To say that 1 Cor 11:2-16 is dealing with a worship service is merely an inference. It is not necessary to make this inference. In fact, there is good reason to believe that this does not deal exclusively with a worship service:

1 Corinthians 11:5 (NKJV)

*5 But every woman who **prays** or **prophesies** with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.*

A woman can certainly pray during a worship service, but this very epistle forbids her from prophesying (teaching) in a worship service:

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NKJV)

34 Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.

35 And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

ARGUMENT: Paul speaks of the communion later in the chapter. He must be speaking of a worship service in the beginning of the chapter.

R: Just because half of the chapter speaks about a worship service does not mean the entire chapter is speaking about a worship service.

For example: Just because part of a book speaks of a worship services does not mean the entire book is speaking of such.

SUMMARY

Here, then, is what we know:

- a) *This chapter is not limited to the 1st century -- it speaks to us today!*
- b) *This chapter is not speaking of just a worship service -- it speaks about our every-day lives as Christians.*
- c) *This chapter tells us how our prayers can be hindered!*

This is a very practical and needed study. If you want God to hear your prayers, you need to listen to what this chapter says.

- *If you want to pray for forgiveness ... you better listen to this!*
- *If you want help during sickness ...*
- *If you want divine protection ...*
- *If you want God to accept you as a faithful child ...*

PREFACE: This study is meant for us all to learn from and to grow together in our service toward God. Not to embarrass anyone or anger anyone.

There's no denying that this passage is controversial, but it's not controversial because it's so difficult.

- *It's controversial because it interferes with our own pet theories.*
- *Because it interferes with our living standards.*

But we have nothing to gain by shutting our eyes to the truth.

John 8:32 (NKJV)

*32 "And you shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free.**"*

VERSE 2

11:2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.

First, before Paul delivers the teaching on the hair and its covering, he found something to praise the brethren about ... an excellent example we would do well to follow -- sincere praise (not flattery).

Second, these brethren were praised because they were keeping the “*traditions*” that had been handed down to them. These were *divine traditions* handed down by inspiration thru the Holy Spirit.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 (NKJV)

*15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the **traditions** which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*

These divine traditions were mandatory and Paul praised these brethren for keeping them like they were suppose to.

VERSE 3

11:3 But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

“Head” – meaning “*spiritual leader.*” This describes the order of authority recognized by heaven since the beginning of time:

God
Christ
Man
Woman

Paul is going to build his case upon this divine order of authority. It is a serious mistake, then, to assume that Paul is teaching simply about local customs.

1) [God is the head \(spiritual leader\) of Christ.](#) God answers to no one.

John 14:28 (NKJV)

28 "... If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.

1 Corinthians 15:27 (NKJV)

27 ... "[God] has put all things under [Jesus] feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He [i.e. God] who put all things under Him [i.e. Jesus] is **excepted**.

Everything in the universe has been placed under the authority of Jesus, but there's an exception: ***God the Father is not under Jesus authority!***

2) [Christ is the head \(spiritual leader\) of man.](#)

This is evident from that last passage we read, but also:

Matthew 28:18 (NKJV)

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

So Jesus has all authority over everyone in the world. Even those who do not acknowledge Him as Lord are still under His authority and will one day answer for not having submitted to His authority.

Jesus has authority, not only over every **man**, but over every **woman** and every **child**. Jesus administers His authority over women and children thru human agency:

- *Over Women, Jesus administers His authority thru men.*
- *Over children, Jesus administers His authority thru parents.*

3) Man is the head (spiritual leader) of woman.

Just as children sometimes rebel against the idea of parental authority, women sometimes rebel against the idea of masculine authority, yet this is exactly the order of divine authority given in the scriptures:

Ephesians 5:22-24 (NKJV)

22 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

23 *For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.*

24 *Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

1 Timothy 2:11-14 (NKJV)

11 *Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.*

12 *And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.*

13 *For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

14 *And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.*

More passages could be given, but this demonstrates the point adequately.

VERSES 4-5

11:4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

11:5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.

First, let's look at this word "***prophesying***." This bothers a lot of people, because we know the miraculous age ended when the NT was completed (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

prophesy (προφητεύω) – (a) foretell, (b) forthtell.

In every sense of that definition, I am prophesying to you right now -- *not miraculously, but rather, naturally.*

W. E. Vine:

“In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, compare the significant change in 2 Pet. 2:1. The difference is that whereas the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the scriptures.” (p. 221).

Thus, early Christians prophesied miraculously without studying. We do the same thing they did, only we must study first.

Second, notice the two uses of the word “head” in verses 4-5.

Every man praying or prophesying (teaching) with his head (i.e., literal, physical head) covered: He dishonors his head (i.e., spiritual head of authority - Christ).

Every woman praying or prophesying (teaching) with her head (i.e., literal, physical head) uncovered: She dishonors her head (i.e., spiritual head of authority - man).

This is very important! God is the avenger of those who refuse to show respect to those in authority over them.

- *Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses (Num. 12:10).*
- *Korah, Dathan, and Abiram dishonored Moses (Num. 16:24-33).*
- *Young men made fun of Elijah the prophet (2 Kings 2:23-24).*
- *Paul discovered he had spoken disrespectfully to the High Priest (Acts 23:5).*

We need to learn a lesson from all this. It is a very serious thing to dishonor your head of authority. God is not going to let disrespect pass unnoticed.

Whether you think it’s disrespectful or not, the Holy Spirit said it is a dishonor to your head of authority:

- a) *If the man prays or teaches with his physical head **covered**, or*
- b) *If the woman prays or teaches with her physical head **uncovered!***

This is equivalent to:

- *Not standing when the bride walks down the aisle.*
- *Not saluting when a Five Star General walks into the room.*
- *Not giving up your seat to your elder.*

God considers this covering very seriously and He considers it disrespectful to heads of authority when the *head of man is covered* and the *head of woman is uncovered*.

COVERED WITH WHAT?

What is the covering that the man must not have and the woman must have?

- a) *Whatever it is, if a man has this covering on his physical head, he brings shame and dishonor upon himself because he shames and dishonors his head of authority.*
- b) *On the other hand, if a woman has this covering on her physical head, she brings glory to herself because she honors her head of authority.*

Is there any covering mentioned in this entire passage that brings shame on the man if he has it, and glory on the woman if she has it?

1 Corinthians 11:14-15 (NKJV)

*14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has **long hair**, it is a **dishonor** to him?*

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

Q: What shames and dishonors a man if he has it on his physical head?

A: Long hair!

Q: What gives glory to a woman if she has it on her physical head?

A: Long hair!

“have long hair” (κομάω) – a verb – describes action. Though three words in English, the Greek has only one verb. It is defined as follows:

- 1) Thayer: “to let the hair **grow**, have long hair” (p. 354).
- 2) Souter: “I wear the hair long, I allow the hair to **grow** long” (p. 137).
- 3) Pickering: “to let the hair **grow** long, to abound with hair; to have long hair” (p. 760).
- 4) Bullinger: “to let the hair **grow** long, wear long hair”
- 5) Liddell & Scott: “to let the hair **grow** long” (via, Rick)
- 6) Arndt & Gingrich: “to let one’s hair **grow** long” (p. 443).
- 7) Rienecker: “to have long hair, to let one’s hair **grow** long” (p. 424)
- 8) W. E. Vine: “to let the hair **grow** long, to wear long hair” (p. 189).
- 9) Louw & Nida: “to wear long hair as part of one’s attire – ‘to have long hair, to appear with long hair, to wear long hair,’ ... **In a number of languages it may be necessary to translate κομάω as ‘to let one’s hair grow long’ or ‘not to cut one’s hair.’**” (p. 527).

Here are 9 Lexicons that all use the “grow” as part of the definition of κομάω. In addition, Louw & Nida say it means, “not to cut one’s hair.” Louw & Nida are regularly consulted by the United Bible Society for guidance.

VERBS

A VERB: κομάω is a verb. Verbs describe action.

- *God is not so much concerned about something (noun) a woman possesses.*
- *He is concerned about what women do.*

When women “*keep on letting their hair grow,*” that is something they *do*. When God uses verbs, He is showing us that what women do is more important than what they possess (nouns).

- 1) *Thus, when a woman makes a confession or is baptized, if she allows her hair to “keep on growing,” it does not matter how much hair (noun) she possesses.*
- 2) *God punished Samson for allowing his hair to be cut off (Judges 16:19); but when he began to grow it again (Judges 16:22), God accepted him. God was more concerned with what Samson was doing (verb) than with what he was possessing (noun).*

The English Bible may leave the impression that “long hair” is a woman’s glory – as if length were primary. But in the Greek, the glory is an action performed by the woman (a verb) – she must do something to receive glory from God – she must “keep on growing her hair.”

Her “hair is given to her for a covering” (v15). But she must *do* something with that hair – “keep on growing it.”

Present tense, subjunctive mood – stressing linear action. Literally: “***If a woman keeps on growing her hair long, it is a glory to her.***”

Illustrating Bible passages:

- Mt. 5:28: “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery” – i.e. “keeps on looking”
- Lk. 6:31: “just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them” – i.e. “you keep on doing to them.”

APPLICATION: The point is, 1 Cor. 11:15 is literally saying, “*If a woman keeps on growing her hair long, it is a glory to her.*” She must “keep on” “continually” doing this. She may not momentarily stop and get some of it cut off.

ARGUMENT: “If continuous growth is part of the definition of **κομᾶω**, then it immediately becomes impossible for a man to obey God – for his hair is continually growing and he cannot stop it. Even after he dies his hair will continue to grow for a while.”

Matthew 13:30 (NKJV)

30 **‘Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’** “

ILL: Suppose the servants reason: “The tares are always growing. It is impossible to keep it from growing. Even if I mow the tares every day, it’s impossible to keep them from growing.”

Would the servants be obedient if they mow the tares – even a little?

- 1) **Men are not to “have long hair.”** They must not “let their hair grow.” They must get their hair cut.
- 2) **Women are to “have long hair.”** They must “let their hair grow.” What does this mean?

Numbers 6:5 (NKJV)

5 **‘All the days of the vow of his separation *no razor shall come upon his head*; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. Then *he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow*.**

NOTE: “*Let the locks of the hair grow*” = “*no razor shall come upon his head*.”

WHY?

Q: Why must a man cut his hair and a woman must not cut her hair?

A: Because the hair is the covering under consideration.

1 Corinthians 11:15 (NKJV)

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

The hair is the covering given by God to the woman. She is to let that hair grow, which means to “not touch it with a razor” (Num 6:5).

FURTHER PROOF

Let me emphasize this point with some more passages.

Ezekiel 44:20 (NKJV)

*20 “[The priests] shall neither shave their heads nor **let their hair grow long**; but they shall keep their hair well trimmed.*

This passage demonstrates three possibilities:

- a) *Shave the head*
- b) *Trim the hair*
- c) *Let the hair grow long*

These priests could not “let their hair grow long.” What did they have to do to keep it from growing long? ***They trimmed it!***

PERSONAL SIDE NOTE

I want to belabor this point just a bit. Some people act like they just can’t get it.

Jodie goes to the library and frequently she has a little group of women and girls standing around admiring her long hair. They stand there in awe and ask the question, “How did

you get your hair so long?” Jodie tells them, “I don’t cut it.” Then the most amazing thing happens:

- *these people who have short hair*
- *these people who are amazed at Jodie’s long hair*
- *these people who don’t know how she got her hair so long*
- *these people who have to ask, “How did you get your hair so long?”*

All of a sudden they’re experts giving out free advice. They tell her, “If you’ll trim the ends a little, it will grow longer.”

That amazes me!

- a) *These women and girls, who have hair as short as space aliens, are now telling my daughter, who can sit on her hair, how to have long hair.*
- b) *They’re trying to tell my daughter that the secret to long hair is a pair of scissors!*

That defies logic! I’m here to tell you (and the Bible will back me up):

- *The secret to short hair is scissors and razors.*
- *The secret to long hair is, “let the hair grow.”*

VERSE 6

11:6 For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.

A woman who is not going to be covered might as well be “shorn” or “shaved.”

- **sheared** -- *done with shears (two cutting edges). When a sheep is sheared, he has some wool, but not much.*

- **shaved** -- done with a razor (one cutting edge). When one is shaved, there is no hair remaining.

Q: How do we know it's shameful to uncover the head? It doesn't appear to be shameful today.

R: It's shameful because God said so – right here!

VERSE 7

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

The rules for the man are just the opposite: He is to uncover his head -- cut his hair off.

Q: How short must it be cut – just a fraction of an inch?

V4 specifically says:

“Every man praying or prophesying having something down from his head, shames his head.” (4 πᾶς ἀνὴρ προσευχόμενος ἢ προφητεύων κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων κατασχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ.)

Since the hair is the covering under consideration (v15), when the hair of a man gets long enough **to hang down from the head** – it's shameful.

VERSES 8-9

11:8 For man is not from woman, but woman from man.

11:9 Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.

The order of authority is reflected in the order of creation. Here are the facts:

- a) *Woman came forth from the man.*
- b) *Woman was created for the man.*
- c) *Thus, man is naturally her head of authority and she ought to acknowledge this by covering her head with long, uncut hair.*

NOTE: Paul is building his case, not on 1st century customs, but on the order of creation itself!

VERSE 10

11:10 For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Believe it or not, this is the most difficult passage in the entire text.

It's easy to see that a woman ought to be covered and it's easy to see what the covering is, but exactly what the Holy Spirit meant here is difficult. Let me give a possible explanation:

Good Angels	Bad Angels
a) Submitted to God and kept their place of submission.	a) Rebelled and attempted to gain a place of authority that did not belong to them.
b) Christian women ought to have long hair to demonstrate their willingness to stay in a place of submission (like the good angels).	b) When women cut their hair, they demonstrate rebellion (like evil angels).

Another reason why women ought to cover their heads with long, uncut hair which is not based on local or 1st century customs.

VERSES 11-12

11:11 Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.

11:12 For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.

Here is a caution given to men. They should not think their authority as meaning the woman is inferior. Though Adam was created independently of Eve, each man thereafter came forth from a woman.

VERSES 13-15

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

11:14 *Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?*

11:15 *But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.*

First, Paul now appeals to our natural sense of right and wrong - the “*law written on the heart*” (Rom 2:14-15)

This verse underlines and emphasizes the kind of covering being considered in this chapter.

- a) *Man does not **instinctively** and **universally** recognize an artificial veil as a covering.*
- b) *Hair, however, is **instinctively** and **universally** recognized as such (cf. Rev. 9:8).*

By appealing to natural law, the Holy Spirit necessarily implies women with uncut hair is a divine edict which prevails throughout the NT era.

Second, we learn clearly from verse 14 that it is shameful for a man to have long, uncut hair. Thus, men must schedule themselves to get regular hair cuts.

Third, we learn just as clearly from verse 15 what the covering is.

- a) *The woman’s long, uncut hair is a natural covering which God Himself gave to the woman.*
- b) *This covering is portable -- she takes it everywhere she goes.*

- c) *Because this natural covering is always with her, she is ready always to pray or teach the word of God. She does not have to hunt for a hat or artificial veil to put on top of her head.*¹

VERSE 16

11:16 But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.

Some mistakenly think this means:

“If anyone is going to argue about this, then forget everything I said ... we don’t want to have an argument about it.”

If this is what the verse means, then this is the only time in all the Bible where God told us what to do and then backed off if it ends up upsetting someone.

Now ... here’s a contentious man. He doesn’t like what he hears.

Q: Which side of this issue does the contentious man favor and what was the prevalent custom?

A: The contentious man was striving against Paul’s instructions, stubbornly rejecting the necessity of a woman’s covering. Paul said to simply tell the contentious man that the church has no other custom than women with long, uncut hair covering their heads.

Again, this is not some local custom, but something that “all the churches of God” observed. ***If we claim to be a “church of God,” this is what we will do too!***

¹ If anyone argues about the Greek, note that Gen. 38:14-15 and Ps. 104:6,9 both use κατακαλύπτω and περιβάλλω interchangeably in the LXX.

Also, recall that neither verb necessarily infers an artificial veil. Those using mechanical instruments argue that the Greek word ψάλλω necessarily infers a mechanical instrument. We reply that the instrument does not inhere the word and must therefore be named in addition to the verb. The same is true in this case. See notes in sermon on singing for more information.

CONCLUSION

It may be that you have never heard this chapter explained and perhaps that is why your hair is not like it's suppose to be.

Perhaps, also, you have been sick and your hair appears short due to no fault of your own.

But please think carefully about this passage. Try your very best to do what the Holy Spirit instructed, because this affects your prayer life. You may need to pray to God one day and because of rebellion over this very matter He will not listen to you!

I would caution every woman here to be careful. Just because you never used scissors on your hair does not mean you are innocent of rebellion if:

- *You knowingly burned your hair off with a **curling iron**.*
- *You knowingly burned your hair off with **chemicals**.*

You're playing with your own soul when you think you can circumvent these commandments like this. This is like "corban" (Mk 7:11) – setting aside the commands of God to keep human traditions.

These are God's commandments and your soul is at stake!

“IF A WOMAN HAVE LONG HAIR”

QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do we know for certain that the teachings of 1 Cor 11:2-16 apply today?
- 2) What is the difference between an “*inference*” and a “*necessary inference*”?
- 3) What is the “*divine chain of command*”?
- 4) What brings shame to a man if he has it hanging down from his head?
- 5) What does a verb indicate?
- 6) What is the definition of the Greek verb κομῶ?
- 7) When people “*uncovered their heads*” in the OT, what were they doing?
- 8) When God gives commands, are men and women usually given a choice of whether they want to obey or not?

THE HEAD & ITS COVERING

by George Battey

This study involves an exposition of 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. Before studying verse by verse, consider the following five points:

- 1) **This passage is not merely a custom of the first century, nor a local custom peculiar to Corinth.** It is assumed by many that Paul is regulating a custom already in practice. This is not true. Paul does not use argumentation that would indicate a first century custom, nor a localized custom. He appeals to: (a) the divine "chain of command" (v3); (b) the principles of creation (vv7-9); (c) the angels (v10); (d) the law of nature (v14); (e) the entire "apostolic college" (v16); (f) the common practice of all the churches of Christ (v16).
- 2) **This passage not specifically discussing a worship service.** This is almost universally assumed, but it cannot be proven. No worship service is mentioned. In verses 17-18 there is clearly a worship service in view because Paul writes of "coming together as the church." But there is no such indication in verses 1-16.
Additionally, women may not "prophesy" in a worship assembly (14:34-35), but verses 1-16 speak of women praying or prophesying. Women, of course, pray silently in their own hearts during worship assemblies (cf. 1 Samuel 1:13; 1 Corinthians 14:28), but it is impossible for the woman to prophesy without violating the instructions to remain silent. Hence, these instructions for women to be covered apply when they pray anywhere – including worship assemblies – or when they prophesy in private capacities (cf. Acts 21:9). The point is, the passage includes the worship services of the church, but it is not restricted to just the worship services.
- 3) **Hair is the only covering being considered in this chapter.** The idea that an artificial covering is being discussed is erroneous as this study will point out.
- 4) **These teachings did not expire with spiritual gifts.** Though "prophesying" is mentioned, this does not necessarily imply spiritual gifts. Besides, "praying" is also mentioned and praying is an activity of all Christians, not just a "gifted few."
- 5) **The covering for the woman is uncut hair,** not simply hair alone, nor some subjective length that measures "long" by a tape measure. This too will be expounded upon during the course of this study.

With these thoughts in mind, let us look at the verses in detail.

VERSE 1

"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"

Most feel this pertains to the previous chapter. The exhortation is to follow Paul's example of foregoing liberties for the sake of the church.

VERSE 2

"Now I praise you"

Here is an obvious contrast with verse 17 when Paul will write, "I praise you not." Paul takes advantage of the opportunity to praise the brethren while he can.

"that you remember me in all things"

That they remembered Paul is evident by the fact that they had written him when questions and problems arose. As one observed, "There seemed to be a disposition on their part to abide by his teaching. Otherwise, why would they have written to him?" (Appleberry 202).

"[You] keep the traditions as I delivered them to you"

The word "traditions" refers to things handed down from generation to generation. This generally refers to things not found written in the law (Shaw 81).

The two words "you keep" come from a single Greek verb. The verb is either the indicative or imperative mood. Both moods take the same Greek ending in the second person plural. If the mood is taken as indicative, then Paul is giving another reason for praising the brethren. That is, he praises them (a) because they remember him in all things, and (b) he praises them because they keep the traditions delivered to them. If the mood is taken as an imperative, then Paul is giving the brethren a command to keep. That is, he (a) praises them for remembering him, and (b) then commands them to keep the traditions just as they were delivered. The indicative mood seems to fit the context better.

VERSE 3

"But I want you to know"

Here is the reason for keeping the traditions: because the ordinances delivered by Paul was based on divine authority.

"the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God"

"Head" means "head of authority" (cf. Judges 11:11; 2 Samuel 22:44). The verse shows plainly that God submits to no one. Christ submits to God the Father (cf. John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 15:27-28). Man must submit to the authority of Christ (Philippians 2:10-11). Finally, woman must submit to the authority of man (1 Corinthians 14:34-35). God is mentioned last in this verse so that it stays in our minds longer. If a man dishonors his head (of authority) he also dishonors all above his immediate head (i.e. God also). If a woman dishonors her head (of authority) she also dishonors all above her immediate head (i.e. Christ and God both, for they placed the man over her). People cannot reject an authoritative figure without rejecting the One who placed that authority over them (Lk. 10:16).

VERSE 4

"Every man"

"Man" is from the Greek "aner" rather than the more generic "anthropos." It means man as opposed to woman. "Every" man means just that – all men, not just married men. Keep this point in mind when looking at verse 5.

"praying or prophesying"

"Praying" here is the ordinary word for praying. Nothing necessarily implies an "inspired prayer."

"Prophesying" means to "(a) proclaim a divine revelation, (b) prophetically reveal what is hidden, (c) foretell the future" (Arndt & Ging.). Though we do not often think about this, all aspects of "prophesying" still occur today. (a) Men today still "proclaim divine the revelation" of God (the scriptures). The difference being that men in the first

century could "proclaim" without studying (cf. Matthew 10:19-20), whereas men today "proclaim" the same message naturally after studying. (b) Men today still "reveal what is hidden," but naturally after first studying the written word. (c) Men today still "foretell the future" when they preach about the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, and the Judgment Day. Whereas first century "prophets" preached these things by direct inspiration, gospel preachers today proclaim the very same message after much study in the written word.

Vine observes, "In his measure the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, cp. the significant change in 2 Pet. 2:1. The difference is that, whereas the message of the prophet was a direct revelation of the mind of God for the occasion, the message of the teacher is gathered from the completed revelation contained in the Scriptures."

Notice that praying and prophesying are mentioned together in 1 Corinthians 11:4. Whatever interpretation is applied to one must be applied to the other. In times past, elaborate theories were constructed to explain why a woman needed to have her head covered while praying and why a man should not have his head covered. Somehow these theories never took into consideration the "prophesying" that is also mentioned in this verse.

"having his head covered"

The Greek construction (*kata kephales echon*) is unique in relation to the man. This wording is not used of the woman – an important thing to remember. Echols observed correctly, "'Having his head covered' is a commentary, not a translation. Lenski translated the sense correctly: 'having something down from his head.'" (Echols 2).

"dishonors his head"

"Head" refers here to the man's spiritual head – Christ (v3). If "something" hangs down from the man's head, it shames Christ. What is this "something" that, if it hangs down from the head brings shame to the man and his spiritual head? "Hair that keeps on growing" (v14). More on this later. When a man's hair gets so long that it begins to "hang down from" his head, it is too long and shames both him and his spiritual head – Christ.

Does this instruction include artificial coverings? Is it wrong for a man to pray or teach with a hat on his head? No. While it may be culturally inappropriate in the United States for a man to have a hat on when praying, it is not scripturally wrong. The covering being spoken of in this chapter is clearly the hair (v15).

Consider the apostle Paul. He often went into the synagogue – even in Corinth (Acts 18:4). It is common knowledge that in the synagogues Jewish men wore (wear) a skull cap or a "tallith." Paul said, "To the Jew I became as a Jew that I might win the Jews" (1 Corinthians 9:20). This means that he conformed to Jewish customs, when possible, in order to have a converting influence upon the unbelieving Jews. The fact that the unbelieving Jewish leaders cheerfully and unhesitatingly called upon Paul to speak in

the synagogue (Acts 13:15) points to the fact that He was conforming to the customs prevailing – including the skull cap.

Romans 14 applies here. The Jew should not be required to remove his skull cap because it does not matter. In fact, if he has doubts about it, he must keep wearing it (Romans 14:23). Furthermore, we have Bible examples of godly men praying and prophesying with artificial veils upon their heads and there is nothing inherently disgraceful about it. Moses prophesied with a veil on his head (2 Corinthians 3:13). David prayed with his head covered (2 Samuel 15:30ff). While "nature itself teaches" that a man growing long hair" is a disgrace (1 Corinthians 11:14), neither "nature" nor revelation teaches that a man with a hat on his head dishonors Christ when prayer or prophesying occurs. There is nothing inherently shameful for a man to pray or prophesy with a literal hat on his head.

For emphasis sake, we remember "praying and prophesying" are mentioned together. Whatever is said about one must be said about the other. If it is a shame for a man to pray with a hat on his head, the most natural question arises, "May a man prophesy with a hat on his head?" In Russia our brethren meet people on the street and speak about the scriptures. No one feels the brethren should remove their hats when it is –20° in order to discuss scripture.

As a final comment on this verse, we merely observe that Paul is stating a fact of what constitutes shame and dishonor to the man and his head. How do we know it is shameful for a man to pray with hair long enough to hang down from his head? Because Paul is telling us in this passage it is a shame. No need to dig through all the artifacts of history to see if society in those days thought it was a shame. Paul declared that it was a shame – a fiat decree.

VERSE 5

"Every woman"

Every sister in Christ is included in this expression – not just married women. Just as every man is under the authority of Christ (married or unmarried), every woman is under the authority of man (married or unmarried). The idea of a woman being "independent of a man" and without authority is clearly refuted in verse 11.

"praying or prophesying"

As observed in the "preliminary remarks," this does not necessarily imply a worship assembly. In all likelihood Paul mentions these two items for two reasons.

First, praying and prophesying are the times when the shame of an uncovered woman becomes the most outrageous and the most noticeable – when her "head" is most vulnerable to criticism and shame. Matthew 23 mentions "praying" and "prophesying" together also, not because a worship service is occurring, but because sins were then most repulsive. The Pharisees "taught" others (23:2-4), but were not practicing what they preached. They were "praying" (23:14), but hypocritically. (cf. Mt. 5:19). When women reject God-given authority, their attempts to pray or teach others becomes the more repulsive. (cf. Tit. 2:5).

Second, "praying," in this passage, carries with it the idea of "leading" a prayer orally (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8). When a woman prays orally or prophesies, it carries with it the appearance of being a "leader" in spiritual matters. Thus, she wears long hair (her natural veil) to demonstrate that, though she appears to be leading, she acknowledges that man is the true spiritual leader in these matters. Does this imply that there are times when a woman does not have to be covered? Does this necessarily imply a removable covering? No, a removable covering is not necessarily implied just because praying and prophesying are specified. By way of illustration, the scripture says, "Despise not your mother when she is old" (Proverbs 23:22). Does this mean we may despise our mother when she is young? Of course not. Again, "Remember your creator in the days of your youth" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Does this mean we do not have to remember the Creator when we get old? Obviously not. Just because a passage mentions a specific time ("when she is old," "in the days of your youth," or "while praying or prophesying"), it does not necessarily mean this is the only time the instructions apply. Such "time" indicators may merely be pointing out occasions when certain instructions are most critical. In 1 Corinthians 11, the point would be that a woman needs to be covered at all times, but especially when praying or prophesying. The woman's head (man) is shamed anytime she does not have her head properly covered, but especially when she is praying or prophesying.

"with her head uncovered"

The word "uncovered" in the Greek (*akatakalyptos*) is used only here and verse 13. Once it is used in the Septuagint (Leviticus 13:45). This is actually a rare adjective. It is listed by Smyth as a "adjective of one ending" (Smyth 86). It looks masculine or neuter when declined, but is actually used here as a feminine adjective.

The woman of verse 5 is uncovered because of something she chose to *do*. In other words, this woman's problem is not because she was not given a covering, for God gave her one (v15). Neither is her problem because her covering is inadequate, for had she cared for the covering given to her it would have been adequate. Her problem is because of what she has done.

"dishonors her head"

What covering will give glory to a woman and keep her from dishonoring her head? Is it some artificial veil? No, it is her hair which she keeps growing long (v15). She honors or dishonors her head because of something she does.

Some women do not understand these teachings and they need to be taught. But some willfully disobey (cf. Lk. 12:47-48). In either case, sin has occurred (cf. Leviticus 5:17-19), but in the latter case the sin is willful and the scriptures abound with examples of the dire consequences of willful rebellion (cf. Numbers 12; 16; Hebrews 10:26ff).

We are told here by Paul himself that a shaved head is a shame on a woman. There is no need to dig through all the artifacts of history to see if society in the first century thought it was a shame for women to have shorn or shaved heads. Paul declares the shame right here – a fiat decree. This settles the question.

"for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved"

If a sister will not "fully cover" her head with the covering God has given her, she may as well shave her head – she would be no worse off. She has shamed her head of authority, and she might as well shame herself by shaving her head completely.

VERSE 6

"If a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn"

This is the first occurrence of the verb *katalupto*. The three English words "is not covered" come from this one verb. *Katalupto* is a compound word consisting of a prefix and verb (*kata* + *kalupto*). *Katalupto* does not necessarily infer an artificial veil as some have argued in the past.¹ This verb may imply a variety of coverings: God speaks of "fat that *covers* the inwards" (Exodus 29:22); "[Israel] *covers* the face of the earth" (Numbers 22:5); "waters *cover* the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14); "with [two wings an angel] *covered* his face" (Isaiah 6:2); "shame *covered* our faces" (Jeremiah 51:51; 28:51 in Septuagint); "dust shall *cover* you" (Ezekiel 26:10); "a cloud to *cover* the land" (Ezekiel 38:9). All of these passages use the verb *katalupto* in the Septuagint. Obviously the type of covering (noun) does not inhere the verb.

To argue that *katalupto* necessarily implies an artificial veil is to make the same mistake which some make in regards to the Greek verb *psallo*. Mechanical instrument advocates argue that *psallo* necessarily implies a stringed instrument because it means "to

¹ See the [Miller-Lindsey Debate](#). E. H. Miller argued that *katalupto* necessarily implied the noun *kalumma* (an artificial veil).

pluck" or "to twang." However, the instrument being plucked must be named so that one knows what is being plucked. Robinson's Lexicon points out that (a) hair, (b) bowstrings, (c) stringed musical instruments (1 Sam. 16:16), and (d) cords of the heart (Eph. 5:19) were all "plucked." The instrument does not inhere the word, but must be named in addition to the word.

To summarize, the Greek verb *katakalupto* means simply "to cover." The covering (noun) must be specifically named. A specific covering does not inhere the word itself. Verse 15 clearly teaches that hair is the covering under consideration.

"KATA" INTENSIFIES

Because the preposition *kata* ordinarily means "down from," many have concluded that Paul is speaking of a veil that "hangs down from the head." The argument goes, "If this passage is speaking about an artificial veil, it would mean a veil that hangs down. A hat would not do. Likewise, if the hair is the covering, then it must be hair that hangs down. Wearing the hair up (e.g. in a bun) would not do."

The problem with this argumentation is the assumption it is built upon. The assumption is that, when the preposition *kata* is prefixed to a verb, the ordinary meaning of "down from" continues and attaches to the verb. Actually *kata* only intensifies the verb rather than alter the meaning.

- 1) "At times [*kata*] is emphatic; as Mt. 3:12, *to de achuron katakausei*, and he will burn completely the chaff" (Dana & Mantey 107). "Nearly every preposition may be prefixed to a word and thus add a new idea to the word or modify or even intensify the meaning of that particular word. A very frequent use of prepositions is in composition with words for the purpose of expressing emphasis or intensity. Grammarians term this the "perfective" use of the preposition" (ibid. 98).
- 2) "There is still another very common use of the preposition in composition. It is that of a mere adverb and intensifies or completes the idea of the verb" (Robertson 563).
- 3) *katakalupto* - "to cover up (*kata*, intensive)." (Vine)
- 4) *katakalupto* - "to completely cover" (Hickie 97)

The intensifying effect of the preposition means simply that a woman must be **completely covered** by her hair. Having some hair is not enough. At best "some" hair would partially cover the head of the woman. The Lord used a word meaning the head must be completely covered by the covering He has given. Hence, cutting the hair in the slightest would render the woman only partially covered at best – a violation of the command to be "completely covered." Mark Bailey gave an excellent illustration of this very point: "If I were to cover my house with roofing and then remove or cut away a small amount of the covering – during the first rain, I would quickly understand that my house is not properly or 'completely covered.' Likewise, when women remove or cut away part of their covering (long hair) they are not properly or completely covered; therefore, they are considered 'uncovered' regardless of how much hair they may have left" (Bailey 36).

(RESUME VERSE 6)

"But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered"

Was it shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved? Yes! Verse 5 has already told us it was! If someone argues, "But today it's not really a shame for a woman to shave her head," the reply must be, "Yes, it is a shame, because verse 5 said so."

VERSE 7

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head"

"Ought" signifies moral obligation. The man is morally obligated to not cover his head. These are not first century customs of which Paul writes, but a higher law.

"since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man"

By looking ahead to the fifteenth verse we see now three things that give glory: (a) man is the glory of God, (b) woman is the glory of man, and (c) hair is the glory of woman. God respects, cares for, and loves His glory (man). The man will be warned in verses 11-12 not to abuse his authority over the woman. She is his glory and he must re-

spect that and care for her. The woman likewise will be taught in verse 15 to care for her glory (her hair).

VERSES 8-9

"For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was the man created for the woman, but woman for the man"

The very order of creation establishes the fact that man would be the head over the woman. She was to be his helper, hence subordinate in authority and different in function. The idea that man became the woman's head when God cursed the woman in Genesis 3:16 is missing the point of the passage. Adam was Eve's head before sin entered.

VERSE 10

"For this reason the woman ought to have [a symbol of] authority on her head"

"For this reason" – a singular reason is being referenced. This looks back to verse 7. Because the woman is the "glory of the man," she needs a "symbol of authority" upon her head.

"Symbol" is absent from the Greek; though thought by many to be "necessarily implied."

The woman's hair gives her authority to do what otherwise she may not do. She may not pray or teach without being fully covered by her hair.

"because of the Angels"

Here is exhortation to remember what happened to the angels who refused submission to the authority of God (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). If the angels were punished for rebelling against divine authority we too should fear! (cf. 1 Timothy 3:6). "Because of the angels" should strike fear in the heart of every Christian woman. If God did not spare the angels who rebelled, He will certainly not spare mortals who rebel against their head of authority. "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:23).

VERSES 11-12

"Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are of God"

The reason man is the head of woman is because of a previous choice made by God, not because of an inherent superiority of the man. Let it be remembered, though, that Deity did make that choice. The Christian's place is not to question choices of God, but to respect and honor His decisions.

VERSES 13-14

"Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?"

Based on what has just been stated in verses 2-12, Paul appeals to these brethren to pass a judgment on the matter. He has presented enough sound reasoning to convince the church of the need for men to cut their hair and women to wear their hair long.

"Is it proper?" is a rhetorical question and the answer is understood to be, "No, it is not proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered."

"Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?"

"Nature" is the "natural sense, native conviction or knowledge, as opposed to what is learned by instruction and accomplished by training or prescribed by law" (Thayer 660) God placed within each of us the ability to know that a man should not have long hair, but a woman should.

Because "nature" taught this, Paul could use it as an appeal to the Gentiles at Corinth as well as the Jews – because both Jews and Gentiles have the same "native instinct" of which Paul speaks.

When man refuses these instructions, it shames not only his head of authority (Christ – v4), but it shames the man personally.

VERSE 15

"If a woman has long hair"

The Greek word to notice in this verse is the verb koma – present, active, subjunctive, third person, singular of komao. Though one word in Greek, it requires three or more words to translate into English – "has long hair." It is defined as follows:

- 1) Thayer: "to let the hair **grow**, have long hair" (354).
- 2) Souter: "I wear the hair long, I allow the hair to **grow** long" (137).
- 3) Pickering: " to let the hair **grow** long, to abound with hair; to have long hair" (760).
- 4) Bullinger: "to let the hair **grow** long, wear long hair" (349)
- 5) Liddell & Scott: "to let the hair **grow** long"
- 6) Arndt & Gingrich: "to let one's hair **grow** long" (443).
- 7) Rienecker: "to have long hair, to let one's hair **grow** long" (424)
- 8) W. E. Vine: "to let the hair **grow** long, to wear long hair" (189).
- 9) Louw & Nida: "to wear long hair as part of one's attire – 'to have long hair, to appear with long hair, to wear long hair,' ... **In a number of languages it may be necessary to translate komao as 'to let one's hair grow long' or 'not to cut one's hair.'**" (527).

Here are eight Lexicons that all use "grow" as part of the definition of komao. In addition, Louw & Nida say it means, "not to cut one's hair." Louw & Nida are regularly consulted by the United Bible Society for guidance.

The subjunctive mood is called a "potential" mood because the action is only potential and not actually taking place. To illustrate:

- **Indicative Mood** would say, "Jack sees Spot." This is the "mood" of reality. The action is actually occurring and not just "potential."
- **Subjunctive Mood** would say, "If Jack sees Spot, he will kill him." This is a "potential" mood. The action is not occurring yet. It may or may not occur. Everything depends on certain conditions being met.

- **Imperative Mood** would say, "Kill Spot." This is also a "potential" mood. The action is not yet occurring. It may or may not occur. This is the form which commands take, hence the name "imperative."

Let us focus on the subjunctive mood for a moment. In the subjunctive mood there are two possible tenses:

- Present tense: to stress continuous action.
- Aorist tense: to indicate action without any reference to duration.

Proof of the foregoing is easily found. I wish to belabor this for a moment, for there are many who doubt the validity of the "continuous action" in the subjunctive mood.

- Carroll D. Osburn: "In moods other than the indicative, such as the imperative, subjunctive, and infinitive, the aorist tense is normally used regardless of the type of action involved. However, when the writer wishes to call special attention to the continuity of an action, he uses the present tense of those moods" (237)
- Dana & Mantey: "The progressive force of the present tense should always be considered as primary, especially with reference to the potential moods ..." (181).
- J. Gresham Machen: "The distinction between the present and the aorist concerns merely the manner in which the action is regarded. The aorist subjunctive refers to the action without saying anything about its continuance or repetition, while the present subjunctive refers to it as continuing or as being repeated." (131).
- Perschbacher: (under "Subjunctive Mood: Present Tense") "The tense does not indicate the time of the action, past or present, but the kind of action. The aorist tense refers to punctiliar or undefined action, whereas the present tense refers to stative, durative, or repeated (iterative) action" (340).
(Under the "Imperative Mood: Present Tense") "The present tense denotes progressive, iterative, or stative action, rather than temporal action" (357).
- Robertson: (under the heading of "Subjunctive") "The rarity of the present subjunctive (and optative, of course) has already been commented upon. The aorist is used as a matter of course here unless durative action is to be expressed ... The subjunctive is very common indeed but not in the present tense" (889).
(Under "Imperative") "The present imperative was found to be regularly durative" (890).

- Summers: "Except for some very rare occurrences in the perfect tense the subjunctive mood is used only in the present and the aorist in New Testament Greek." (105).
 "In previous study it has been observed that two things are indicated in Greek tense: time of action and kind of action. Of these two only kind of action remains outside of the indicative mood. ... The kind of action finds its expression as linear in the present and punctiliar in the aorist." (107).
- Williams: "The tenses of the subjunctive mood rarely have a temporal significance; it is rather their aspect that is significant, the present being used for continuous or repeated action or state, the aorist for a single act" (100).
- Jackson: "The verb is present tense, middle voice, 'let her keep on covering herself.' (3).
 "HAVE LONG HAIR is from the Greek koma, 'to let the hair grow, have long hair,' The present tense indicates a continuous process. ... Again, koma is used in the present tense suggesting 'If a woman lets her hair keep growing long ...'" (5).
- Crouch: Lexicographers do not delineate the meanings of verbs in all tenses and moods. They present the basic definition of the word and then show how it is used within various contexts. That is why Thayer or Liddell or Gingrich can say that the meaning of KOMAO is, "to have or wear long hair." [Some] say, "But it does not say to continually grow long hair." True. That is because this is emphasized by the tense and mood of the verb – it is not inherent in the verb's definition. I believe this an important point to stress. Many people are unwittingly led down the wrong road in their use of Greek lexicons because (1) they do not know how to use them properly, and (2) though they may come up with a proper definition, they do not know how to properly apply that definition to a specific context because they know nothing about Greek grammar. This is especially true in respect to Greek verbs.

Some Bible passages to illustrate the foregoing would be helpful. Each of the following passages use the present tense, subjunctive mood and each of them are stressing continuous action: "Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them"– i.e. "you keep on doing to them" (Luke 6:31); "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" – i.e. "let us keep on walking in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25); "I pray this, that your love may abound yet more and more" – i.e. "that your love may keep on abounding" (Philippians 1:9); "In order that we may live a quiet and peaceable life" – i.e. "that we may keep on living a quiet life" (1 Timothy 2:2); "I counsel you to put eyesalve on your eyes in order that you may see" – i.e. "keep on seeing" (Revelation 3:18).

The point is, 1 Corinthians 11:15 is literally saying, "If a woman keeps on growing her hair long, it is a glory to her." She must "keep on" "continually" doing this. She may not momentarily stop and get some of it cut off.

But the argument to "counteract" this goes as follows: "If continuous growth is part of the definition of komao, then it immediately becomes impossible for a man to obey God – for his hair is continually growing and he cannot stop it. Even after he dies his hair will continue to grow for a while." This argument does not "counteract" the fact that "continuous growth" is required for at least two reasons:

- 1) The Holy Spirit used a present tense verb in the subjunctive mood. All the Greek grammars write that the purpose of the present tense in the subjunctive mood is to stress and emphasize continuous action. (See the quotations above on verb tenses.) The objection is saying the text does not mean what it says. For this weighty reason alone, the objection fails to override the plain meaning of the text.
- 2) The objection being made is actually arguing from the standpoint of the perfect tense rather than present tense. Perfect tense means action that occurred in the past which carries abiding results. The argument says that in order to obey God, the man must stop his hair from growing completely – once for all with abiding results. But the verb is not perfect tense. The verb is present tense. Present tense tells a man not to "continuously allow his hair to keep on growing long." He obeys this by getting regular haircuts.

To illustrate, suppose a father told his son, "I'm going out of town for two weeks. I want you to just let the grass grow while I'm gone." But the son reasons similar to the objection above. He reasons with himself, "The grass is always growing. It is impossible to keep it from growing. Even if I mow the grass every day, it's impossible to keep it from growing." Will the son be obedient if he mows the grass every day? Of course not.

Look at Matthew 13:30. The landowner told his servants, "Let the tares and the wheat continue to grow together." Suppose the servants reasoned like the objection above, "The wheat and the tares are always growing. It is a physical impossibility to keep them from growing. Even if we mow the field every day, they are still growing." Will the servants be obeying their master if they attempt to mow the field – even once? Of course not.

Putting the facts of the case together, we can clearly see that the woman's hair is to remain uncut:

- 1) The covering is the hair that grows long (v15).
- 2) A woman can be "not covered" and still not be shorn or shaven (v6).
- 3) This shows four possibilities:
 - (a) Hair that grows long (v15)
 - (b) Hair that does not grow long, but is not shorn or shaved either (v6)

- (c) Hair that is shorn (v6)
- (d) Hair that is shaved off (v6)

Aaron Risener worded this well when he wrote:

It seems to me we can use this verse to prove the covering of verse 15 is uncut hair without ever grabbing a lexicon. Paul says, "For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head" (1 Cor. 11:6, NAS). Paul is speaking of a case where a woman is not covering her head, but she, at this point, is not shorn or shaved either (he says she might as well be, but she wasn't ... she was merely without a covering). That implies that the woman had something less than the covering, but something more than "shorn or shaven." Since we know the covering is her hair (v. 15), Paul seems to be describing a situation common, unfortunately, to many of our sisters today: trimmed or shortened hair. She may not be shaven or shorn, but she's not covered.

The conclusion we draw is the only logical conclusion: "Having long hair" means to not cut the hair at all.

THE NAZARITE VOW

The Nazarite vow cannot be ignored. "All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow" (Numbers 6:5). Although the wording in the Septuagint is not identical to 1 Corinthians 11, the subject matter is too closely related to cast the passage aside completely. Both speak about the hair. Both say, "Let the hair grow long." Notice the following translations of Numbers 6:5:

- NIV – "he must *let* the hair of his head *grow* long"
- NASV – "he shall *let* the locks of hair on his head *grow* long"
- ASV – "he shall *let* the locks of the hair of his head *grow* long"
- Hebrew-English Interlinear: "he shall *allow* the locks of the hair of his head to *grow* long"

To "let the hair grow long" is a Bible way of saying, "do not touch the hair with a razor." Furthermore, the Hebrew word *naziyr* (translated Nazarite in Numbers 6) is an interesting word. In Leviticus 25:5 the vines were to grow "untended" (*naziyr*). That is, they were not to be pruned, trimmed, or cut, for every seven years were to be a sabbatical year for the land. In the same chapter, verse 11 reiterates that the vines were to grow "untended" (*naziyr*), or uncut, because every fifty years was a Jubilee and the land rested again. In Judges 13:5 Samson was to be a Nazarite (*naziyr*) from birth and that meant "no razor was to come upon his head." In 1 Samuel 1:11 Samuel was to be a Nazarite from birth and it was specifically said, "No razor shall come upon his head."

Josephus wrote in Greek. When commenting on Numbers 6:5 he used the word *komao* to accurately describe what the passage was teaching. Robinson's Lexicon cites this example from Josephus: "Moreover, when any have made a sacred vow, I mean those that are called Nazarites, that suffer their hair to grow long (*komao*) ..." (Antiquities 4,4,4). The point is, *komao* can be used to describe the Nazarite who does not "touch his hair with a razor" but merely allows it to "keep on growing long" (*komao*). What, then, are we to conclude when we see the same wording in regard to the Christian woman? Is it not natural to conclude they are to allow their hair to "keep on growing" without cutting their hair?

Again, the Lord told the prophet, "They must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long, but they are to keep the hair of their heads trimmed" (Ezekiel 44:20 – NIV). There are three hair lengths here: (a) shaved hair, (b) trimmed hair, and (c) hair that grows long. The point is plain enough. When God told people in the Old Testament to "let your hair grow," He meant by that, "Do not touch your hair with a razor." What, then, are we to conclude when we read the same wording in the New Testament? It seems reasonable to conclude that *komao*, in 1 Corinthians 11:15, means simply that a Christian woman is to "continue to let her hair grow long," which is the usual way of saying, "Do not cut your hair."

VERBS

Komao is a verb. Verbs describe action. God is not so much concerned about something (noun) a woman possesses. He is concerned about what women do. When women "keep on letting their hair grow," that is something they do. When God uses verbs, He is showing us that what women do is more important than what they possess (nouns). Thus, when a woman makes a confession or is baptized, if she allows her hair to "keep on growing," it does not matter how much hair (noun) she possesses. God punished Samson for allowing his hair to be cut off (Judges 16:19); but when he began to grow it again (Judges 16:22), God accepted him. God was more concerned with what Samson was doing (verb) than with what he was possessing (noun).

The English Bible may leave the impression that "long hair" is a woman's glory – as though length were primary. But in the Greek, the glory is an action performed by the woman (a verb) – she must do something to receive glory from God – she must "keep on growing her hair." Her "hair is given to her for a covering" (v15). But she must *do* something with that hair – "keep on growing it."

(RESUME VERSE 15)

"it is a glory to her; for"

"For" (hoti) explains why hair is a glory for the woman – because it has been given to her by God. A "manmade" covering would not be a glory to a woman. Hair is a glory because it was made and is given by God Himself.

"her hair"

Note carefully, this did not say "long hair" is the woman's covering – as if length were the important factor. Thayer correctly said, "the notion of length being only secondary and suggested" (354). If the Holy Spirit wanted to emphasize length as measured by a ruler, He could have used "makra thrix" or "makra kome." Both of these expressions would properly have been translated "long (adjective) hair (noun)" with emphasis on the length of the hair. But what the Spirit could have said, He did not say. He did not use wording to emphasize length per se (adjectives), but rather words emphasizing action (verbs) and He used present tense verbs to emphasize continuous action.

The question before us is, "What sort of hair is a glory?" The scriptures tell us the answer very plainly, "The covering is hair that continues to grow long." This leaves no room for trimming, cutting, burning off, plucking out, and or other ways of removing the hair.

"is given to her"

"Given" (dedotai) a perfect, passive, indicative verb meaning "it has been divinely given and remains given" by God to serve "instead of a covering" (anti peribolaiou). Paul will use various forms of this word indicating something that is "given by God." The "traditions" which the Corinthians were to keep were "given" by Paul (11:2). The Spirit had "given" gifts to various people (12:7-8). Jesus would "give" the kingdom back to the Father (15:24). God "gives" a body to each one as He pleases (15:38). God "gives" us

victory (15:57). Other expressions are used to indicate the idea of something "given" by God. Paul would "give" instructions concerning the communion (11:17). Paul would "receive" from the Lord what he "delivered" to them (11:23). When we read that "hair is given" it means that continually growing hair is "required" or "commanded" (cf. 14:37). God required long hair, but He did not command an artificial covering.

"for"

"For" (anti) in this case is a preposition which means "instead of." To illustrate the idea of substitution found within this preposition notice the following passages taken from the Septuagint. In Genesis 22:13 Abraham offers a ram "instead of" (anti) Isaac. He substituted the ram for his son. The ram only was actually sacrificed – not both the son and the ram. In Genesis 44:33 Judah would stay in Egypt "instead of" (anti) Benjamin. Judah was not suggesting that both he and Benjamin together stay in Egypt, but that he would serve as a substitute for Benjamin and serve in Benjamin's place. In Numbers 3:12 the Levites were taken "instead of" (anti) the firstborn. They took the place of the firstborn and served around the tabernacle of meeting. The Levites did not serve along with the firstborn, but they were substitutes for the firstborn. "These three sentences unmistakably deal with substitution" (Dana & Mantey 100). The point is, continually growing hair is given to serve the purpose of a covering.

"a covering"

"Covering" (peribolaion) is defined as "covering, wrap, cloak, robe of an article of clothing" (Arndt. & Ging.). This refers to an artificial veil. The woman's continually growing hair has been given to her (by God) to serve as a covering when praying or prophesying. The woman does not need an artificial veil when praying or prophesying, because her hair was given by God to serve "in the place of" (anti) an artificial veil. The chapter never required a Christian woman to wear an artificial veil. All along it envisioned hair as being a covering. But an action (verb) must be performed upon the hair for it to qualify as a covering that "fully covers" (kata + kalupto) the head. The action is to "let the hair keep on growing long."

VERSE 16

"If anyone seems to be contentious"

"Contentious" (philoneikos) is literally "a lover of contention." There are some brethren who are fond of contention. This verse tells us what to do with brethren like this. We need to remember this verse.

"we have no such custom"

"We" refers to the apostolic college. Previously Paul wrote, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Paul is not saying that all the instructions of this passage should be "tossed to the wind" if someone is going to argue over them. The apostles never hinged their instructions on the likes and dislikes of anyone. To understand the point of verse 16, we need only to recall the custom which the apostles taught and the customs which they did not have. The custom which the apostles taught was women being covered with uncut hair when praying or prophesying. The custom they did not have was women with cut hair. Hence, "We have no such custom as women cutting their hair. If someone wants to be contentious, just remind them of this fact." This should remind us of 14:38, "If anyone ignores this, ignore them."

"nor do the churches of God"

Paul wanted unity among the churches. He wrote "to the church of God which is at Corinth, ... with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord ... that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:2, 10). Again, " For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (4:17). What Paul taught in chapter 11 he taught in every church he went to.

The Expositor's Greek Testament summarized this final verse well: "If, after all that the Apostle has advanced ... any one is still minded to debate, he must be put down by authority – that of Paul himself and his colleagues, supported by universal Christendom." (Findlay 2:876).

CONCLUSION

Men are taught to show respect for their head of authority by keeping their physical head uncovered. Christian men may not wear hair that is long enough to hang down from their head (v4). However, men may wear an artificial covering when praying or prophesying – for the covering under consideration is the hair only. No artificial veil is ever considered. The Bible clearly says that hair is the covering, not an artificial veil.

Women, on the other hand, must show respect for their head of authority by having their physical heads "completely covered" with hair that "keeps on growing long." They may not cut their hair at all. However, they may wear their hair up in a bun – for the wording of the Greek points to "being covered completely." The Greek does not require something that hangs down from the head of the woman. The following seven points should be remembered:

- 1) Women are specifically told to "keep on growing the hair long" (present tense).
- 2) "Let the hair grow long" is the Bible way of saying "do not touch the hair with a razor."
- 3) Cut hair does not "fully cover" the woman (v6) (kata + kalupto).
- 4) Cut hair is a shame to the woman (v6).
- 5) Uncut hair is a sign of subjection (v10).
- 6) Uncut hair is a glory to the woman (v15).
- 7) Uncut hair has been divinely given (and remains thus) to serve the place of an artificial veil.

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