

HEAD COVERING:

QUESTIONS PEOPLE ASK US.

WHY DO YOUR LADY MEMBERS WEAR A HAT, BERET OR
SCARF AT YOUR MEETINGS?

*It is true that female members have some form of covering on their heads at the various gatherings. Generally, people regard it as old fashioned, but the practice is based on the Bible, which explains our desire to maintain it. It would be helpful if you could consult the relevant verses, **1Corinthians 11.2-16**.*

1Corinthians 11 is a chapter of symbols. In the first half the human head is seen as a symbol: in the latter part a loaf and a cup are symbolic of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus.

In the passage, the man's head is seen as a symbol of his spiritual head, Christ. The woman's head is seen as a symbol of her spiritual head, the man.

Verse 3 explains that there are various levels of headship, i.e. various levels of authority. Christ is the head of the man. The man is the head of the woman. God is the head of Christ. (In His incarnation, the Lord Jesus voluntarily assumed a position of subjection to His Father. This does not affect the truth of His deity or equality with the Father: these facts are taught elsewhere in Scripture).

*For a man to be in the gathering with a covered head is dishonouring to his spiritual head, Christ: **Christ** must be supreme - this must be true literally, and is expressed symbolically in the uncovered heads of the males. In emblem, Christ must be visible and obvious.*

For a woman to be in the gathering with an uncovered head is dishonouring to the man, for she is assuming the appearance that he ought to have. The only alternative to having her head covered is to be "shaved or shorn" which is deemed to be so repulsive that it is no alternative at all.

Because the man is the **image and glory of God**, his head should be **uncovered**: because the woman is **the glory of the man** her head should be **covered**. When we gather, God must be the acknowledged Authority - the man's position is subservient; so the woman by covering her head is saying symbolically that man's glory should never be on show in the things of God.

Another factor that is introduced is that of angel spectators. The women should have covered heads, acknowledging the authority of the men, because of the angels. Paul had been speaking of the first man and the first woman. The first woman had acted independently of the man with disastrous results (Genesis 3). Angels had witnessed that. They had also seen some of their own number being carried away by Lucifer's rebellion against God's authority. The New Testament church should be a place where angels can observe God's order of authority being acknowledged both literally, and symbolically, in that the males have uncovered heads, and the females covered heads.

The final argument is that our own natural instincts should help us to appreciate that what has been taught about the head covering is right. An added factor is that God has further distinguished between the appearances

of the sexes in that long hair is a natural glory for a woman but dishonouring

to a man.

OBJECTIONS.

Some believers are unhappy about applying the teaching of 1Corinthians 11 in the modern world. It has been suggested that the wedding ring is the modern equivalent for the covered head. However, 1Corinthians 11 is not dealing with husbands and wives in a domestic situation, but men and women in general, in the context of a New Testament church.

Another objection that has been raised is that the problem addressed is local to Corinth and should be interpreted within the culture of the district.

Chapter 1.2 shows that the letter has to be applied universally: as an inspired document it should have acceptance with every believer in every place.

If the head covering is seen as irrelevant, it seems inconsistent to accept the symbolism relating to the Lord's Supper at the end of 1Corinthians 11, and to reject the symbolism of the early verses.

(The foregoing has set out our position at the Gospel Hall as to why our lady members cover their heads at the gatherings. However, these gatherings are public meetings, and visitors come to hear the Gospel being preached, and the Word of God being taught. We like all visitors to know that they are welcome on these occasions whether or not they share our convictions about the head covering).