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"Weak, feeble and foolish as it may seem to people, the simple story of the Cross is enough for all mankind in every part of the globe." ~ J.C. Ryle

CHRISTIANITY · DISCERNMENT · HEAD COVERINGS

What is the historic view concerning head coverings for Christian women?

May 1, 2015May 1, 2015 · annagracewood

Did we suddenly find some biblical truth to which the saints for thousands of years were blind? Or were our biblical views of women gradually eroded by the modern feminist movement that has infiltrated the Church of Jesus Christ which is "the pillar and ground of the truth."" R. C. Sproul

That's the question, really. For nearly 2,000 years, the Christian church taught and practiced headcoverings for Christian women in the worship service. Then as the feminist movement made its way into the church that changed. Either we obey God or we obey man. We cannot as Bible believing Christians look at Scripture and say "I'll believe and practice this part but not that". Yet, that's exactly what has happened, not only concerning headcoverings for ladies in the worship service but also concerning a plethora of other, politically incorrect and inconvenient, teachings. For this purpose, I'm posting quotes from Christian preachers, teachers, and writers through the ages—what I post today is simply a start. I'm reformed but I'm not limiting myself to quotes from reformed brethren but, rather, have chosen to take the larger view of what has historically been taught by Christians who went before us. Some of the quotes are more modern, proving that this teaching, though it has taken a backseat in the church is, in no way, dead.

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R. C. Sproul: "Though the many authors differ on various issues associated with headcoverings, one important issue upon which they are all agreed is that Paul was not commanding the women in Corinth either to let their hair grow long so as to use their long hair as a headcovering in worship, or to neatly place their hair upon their heads as a headcovering in worship, but rather to place upon their heads a fabric headcovering when they

worship before the Lord. This conclusion is reached by scholars from various denominational backgrounds, from different geographical locations, and from many periods of church history. The wearing of fabric head coverings in worship was universally the practice of Christian women until the twentieth century. What happened? Did we suddenly find some biblical truth to which the saints for thousands of years were blind? Or were our biblical views of women gradually eroded by the modern feminist movement that has infiltrated the Church of Jesus Christ which is "the pillar and ground of the truth.""

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Watchman Nee: "The matter of head covering belongs to God's government. For those who do not know God's government, it is impossible to exhort them to have their heads covered. They will not be able to understand how much is involved in this matter. But those who have seen God's government in God's revealed Word are able to appreciate the tremendous connection between head covering and God's government."

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Watchman Nee: "God has shown us that there are three different heads: God is head, Christ is head, and man is head. This is not a matter of being brothers and sisters; it is basically a governmental arrangement. Grace is concerned with brothers and sisters, but government is different. God has sovereignly willed that the head of Christ is God Himself, so Christ must obey; the head of man is Christ, so man must obey; and the head of woman is man, and so woman should have the sign of obedience on her head."

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Bob Deffinbaugh: "The solution to legalism is to continue to obey the rules, to keep God's commands, but to always do so in the light of the principles which underlie them. Women should cover their heads because Paul commands them to, and because of the principles of headship and of God's sovereign distinctions. Legalism is keeping the rules for the rules' sake. Christian liberty is keeping the rules for God's sake, and with a heart and mind which seeks most of all to be pleasing to Him by obeying His commandments."

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John Angel James: "If the veil were thrown aside, they might as well cut off their flowing hair, one of the woman's distinctions from the man, the ornament, as well as the peculiarity of the sex. Constantly and completely Christianity is the parent of order, and the enemy of indecorum of every kind. Why were not the women to lay aside their veils? Because it would be forgetting their subordination and dependence, and assuming an equal rank with man. This is the gist of the apostle's reason. It was not merely indecorous, and contrary to modesty, but it was ambitious, and violating the order of heaven."


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Charles Spurgeon: "Do you think you and I have sufficiently considered that we are always looked upon by angels, and that they desire to learn by us the wisdom of God? The reason why our sisters appear in the House of God with their heads covered is 'because of the angels'. The apostle says that a woman is to have a covering upon her head, because of the angels, since the angels are present in the assembly and they mark every act of indecorum, and therefore everything is to be conducted with decency and order in the presence of the angelic spirits."

.....


John Bunyan: "For this cause ought the woman to have power", that is a covering, "on her head, because of the angels" 1 Cor. 11:10... Methinks, holy and beloved sisters, you should be content to wear this power or badge..."

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7 thoughts on “What is the historic view concerning head coverings for Christian women?”

1. *healingInHim*

says:

MAY 1, 2015 AT 5:12 PM

This is very interesting because this morning I just finished listening to this: “Does God authorize women to be elders/pastors and do women need head coverings?” Pastor John Barnett, Calvary Bible Church <https://vimeo.com/125952686>

I have listened and studied several persuasions on this. Each sound very well studied and articulated. Personally, I have admitted to the Lord that I am unsure. He knows my heart; whether head covered or uncovered I want to be a woman who approaches Him clothed with a humble and contrite spirit.

Reply

1. *annagracewood*

says:

JUNE 19, 2015 AT 1:28 PM

Just pray and study, and God will guide you. Soli Deo gloria!

Reply

2. Pingback: [Covering the Web: June 19/15 | The Head Covering Movement](#)

3. *Amy*

says:

JUNE 19, 2015 AT 11:22 AM

I think you need to add some quotes from women. Also, I think John Angel James' quote should be struck. God did give us equality but different roles. John James' quote sounds sexist and is false, besides, and won't help to draw women in to following Paul's instructions on head covering.

Reply

1. *annagracewood*

says:

JUNE 19, 2015 AT 1:26 PM

I don't think James' quote was meant to be sexist. I certainly didn't take it that way; nonetheless, I see your point about how some women might. I do plan to include quotes from women. They are just harder to come by. Thank you.

Reply

4. *Amy*

says:

JUNE 19, 2015 AT 11:23 AM

Also, it would be helpful to include the comments of Tertullian, Hippolytus, and Clement of Alexandria, the early church fathers, as a proof that women did cover in early church history.

Reply

1. *annagracewood*

says:

JUNE 19, 2015 AT 1:25 PM

I do plan to include older quotes. Good idea. Thank you.

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