

**“The Commands Concerning Worship”, Session # 25 in the series on the
2nd Commandment, presented in the Adult Sunday School
on February 23rd, 2014, by Pastor Paul Rendall.**

Outline of Men and Women in Worship -

1st Corinthians 11: 4-16, 1 Timothy 2: 8-15, and 1st Corinthians 14: 34-38

- 1. The Abiding Apostolic Traditions and Principles of humility and submission** – This respect for and obedience to the hierarchy which God has established, exemplified by the Trinity Themselves applies all during the Church Age. These holy traditions were rules established by the Apostles for godly order in family and in the Church. Since there is hierarchy and submission within the Divine Trinity themselves, in regard to the outworking of redemption and our salvation, men and women ought to be able to receive their own role responsibilities with joy.
- 2. The Customs and Symbols which show humility and submission in the worship** of that day, and how they apply to us. This has regard to the outworking of these unchanging principles in regard to various cultural situations of that day and this, in relation to what men and women need to do to show forth their submission to God in worship in family, society, and church.
- 3. The Commands of the Lord** which are unchanging and how they apply to the worship of our day as well as that day - Women being silent in the public corporate worship of God, and men speaking and taking the lead as they are called by God and recognized by the existing leadership and congregation of the local church.

Last Sunday we saw our need to recognize God’s good order in the creation of man and woman.

1st Corinthians 11: 8 – “For man is not from woman, but woman from man.” “Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.” “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”

John Gill says here of this word “power” on her head, the “symbol of authority” as it is translated in the NKJV, the ESV, and the NAS – “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head,.... The generality of interpreters, by power, understand the veil, or covering on the woman's head, as a sign of the man's power over her, and her subjection to him; which Dr. Hammond endeavors to confirm, by observing that the Hebrew word $\eta\eta\eta$, which signifies a woman's veil, or hood, comes from a root which signifies power and dominion; but in that he is mistaken, for the word is derived not from $\eta\eta\eta$, to rule, govern, or exercise power and authority, but from $\eta\eta\eta$, to expand, stretch out, or draw over, as a woman's veil is drawn over her head and face. The Greek word $\epsilon\chi\theta\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha$ more properly signifies the power she had of putting on and off her covering as she pleased, according as times, places, and persons; made it necessary. (End of quote)

So, a woman would want to wear a Headcovering in that day, if she was praying or prophesying, to show forth her submission to her husband and all the godly authorities in her life if she, or others in authority over her in the Lord, thought that there was any question about this. And I believe that a woman would also want to wear a Headcovering, even in this day, if in the situation that she is in, praying or teaching, outside of the public gathered church, it is evident that the people whom she is with do not understand her submission.

Now, let's look at the parallel passage to 1 Corinthians 11: 2-16 and 1st Corinthians 14: 34-40.

1st Timothy 2, verse 8 - The Apostle Paul has been exhorting Timothy as his apostolic helper to instruct the church at Ephesus about prayer. In verses 1 and 2 he tells Timothy that “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may live a quiet life in all godliness and reverence.” And in verses 3-6 he tells us that this is good and acceptable to God that we pray for men in this all-inclusive way for Christ died for this; that men might come to know God. Then in verse 7 he tells us that he was appointed a preacher and an apostle; a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. He was a man appointed to teach Gentile people like you and me. Verse 8 – “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.” “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission.” “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” “For Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” “Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.”

Now I hope that you can see from this passage the difference between command and custom. Most of what Paul is saying here is related to command. **Verse 8** – Paul states that it is his apostolic desire; the holy tradition that he is inculcating here in relation to the enduring principle of male headship, that the men, (tous andras), “the males”, pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting. This is their role in the public gathered worship of the church, and everywhere that they might pray, he says.

The women are likewise to pray, but not audibly in the public assembly. In terms of their focus on their own role in public worship, they are to adorn themselves modestly, dressing appropriately and remembering the grace of moderation. They were not to overly focus on their hair (braiding it intricately), or adorning themselves with gold and pearls or costly clothing, but rather they were to be thinking of what was proper for women professing godliness, with good works.

John Gill says this: “Not with broidered hair, or plaited, as in 1Pe_3:3; see Gill on 1Pe_3:3. The Jews had women on purpose for this business; Mary Magdalene is thought to have her name from hence; See Gill on Mat_27:56. Or gold, or pearls, or costly array: not that the apostle forbids all use or wear of such things by proper persons, whose circumstances would admit of it, and upon proper occasions, and at proper times: certain it is, that earrings and bracelets of gold, and jewels set in silver and gold, and raiment, costly raiment, were sent by Abraham, and given to Rebekah, and wore by her, who was a woman professing godliness so the church in Psa_45:9 though in figurative expressions, yet in allusion to what is literal, and honorable, and commendable, is said to be in gold of Ophir, and her clothing to be of wrought gold, and to be brought to the king in raiment of needlework: but however justifiable such a dress may be at other seasons, the apostle judged it very improper at the time of public prayer, or at the time of public worship; seeing it might swell the heart of the wearer with pride, so as to forget herself and the business she was come about, and draw the eyes of others upon her; and so cause a general inattention.” (End of Quote)

The Pulpit Commentary says this: “Adorn themselves in modest apparel. This is obviously the true construction, κοσμεῖν depending upon βούλομαι. There is a little doubt as to the exact

meaning of καταστολή here, the only place where it occurs in the New Testament. Alford argues strongly in favor of the meaning "apparel." But it may also mean "steadiness" or "quietness" of demeanor; and then the phrase will be exactly parallel to 1Pe_3:5, "The incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit." And the meaning will be, "Let Christian women adorn themselves with a decent and well-ordered quietness of demeanor, in strict accordance with [or, 'together with'] shame-fastness and sobriety [μετά, 'in strict accord with,' or 'together with'] not with braided hair," etc. A woman's true ornament is not the finery which she gets from the milliner, but the chaste discretion which she has from the Spirit of God." (End of Quote)

The women, we are told here in verse 11, were to learn in silence, and not to think that they should exercise whatever speaking gift that God might have given them, in the public worship. The apostle did not permit this, and he gives another reason here besides the reason that he gave in 1st Corinthians 11. In relation to submission, in 1st Corinthians 11 he gave the reason of the hierarchical order which God had established. Here, in regard to silence, he gives the additional reason that Adam (representing all men) was not deceived when he fell into transgression, there in the garden of Eden. But Eve (representing all women) was deceived and thus fell into transgression. Therefore, God through the Apostle Paul insists that she should show her humility and submission by remaining quiet when in the public gathered assembly of the church. Her reward for fulfilling her submissive role in worship will be that she will truly find her fulfillment as a woman within the context of bearing children. If she continues in worshiping God in this way of humble submission, exercising faith and love and pursuing holiness with this Spirit-enabled self-control, she will fulfill entirely the purpose for which God created her.

Notice that there is nothing at all mentioned about head-coverings here in this passage. If ever there was a place to have put down instructions for the wearing of Headcoverings in the public assembled gathering of the church, it would have been here. The women being humbly silent is once again inculcated here, but not the wearing of Headcoverings. Therefore, I conclude that Paul did not intend that women be forced to wear Headcoverings in any public assembly of the Church. But he graciously gave instructions in 1st Corinthians concerning the situations where a woman should wear a Headcovering. It was in other situations whether public or private where a woman would perceive that her speaking and using her teaching gift, or her praying, might be misconstrued by those around her, as her taking authority to herself to lead or to teach in a way independently of her husband, or her father, or her pastor. Here is found the wisdom of God, when a woman will not allow her ability to pray or preach to be misinterpreted as her being independent of those authorities who she should submit to. And truly, a godly woman wishes to submit, and a godly man wishes to lead, in the ways that God commands. They will surely find their fulfillment in these God-appointed roles.

Additional Information from the Reformed Presbytery of North America on the Issue of Headcoverings:

(Issued in June of 2001) found on-line at:

www.reformedpresbytery.org/books/headcovr/headcovr.htm

(The full article is found on-line; these are some excerpts)

The Presbytery's decision to issue this report involves the significant issue of ecclesiastical authority. God alone has absolute authority. All authority received by man (whether in the familial, ecclesiastical, or civil sphere) is delegated by God and limited by God's Word. Since Jesus Christ is the only head of the Church, the officers of the Church must be careful that they do not exceed the lawful boundaries of their limited authority in their use of the keys of the

kingdom by imposing ordinances or practices upon the people of God in public worship which are not clearly warranted by Scripture. To do so is tyranny. For Christ's authority can never be used against the truth, but only in defense of the truth.

Their conclusion after examining the practices of the churches during the 1st and 2nd Reformation time periods was this:

The Scriptural Observations Of The Reformed Presbytery In North America Upon 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 –

The Presbytery prayerfully issues the following observations as those, which in our judgment, are most consistent with the text we are discussing.

A. The Context Of 1 Corinthians 10-14

We would draw your attention to the contextual flow of Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians concerning meat offered to idols, Headcoverings and the Lord's Supper.

(1) Meat Offered To Idols

In 1 Corinthians 10:23 Paul states: All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. He then goes on to teach the Corinthians, and the church at large, that the lawfulness of eating meat offered to idols depended upon the circumstances of the case. Eating such meat in a pagan temple where it had religious significance was an act of idolatry. However, when this same meat lost its religious significance and became simply a commodity of trade and consumption in the social realm, it was permissible to buy or eat it (unless it scandalized another, causing them to stumble). Thus, Paul is giving principles to the church in order that they may judge for themselves what was most expedient and orderly in various circumstances.

(2) The Lord's Supper - Skipping over 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 for a moment, we next consider the context and instruction of the Apostle Paul in his direction regarding the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). It is clear from the context of Paul's rebuke that the Corinthians were guilty of disorderly conduct during the administration of the Lord's Supper. Some were getting drunk, others were not waiting for the whole congregation to be assembled before beginning, and generally, as one might expect by such selfish behavior, these activities were causing confusion and offense in the church. Paul instructs them regarding how to restore godly order to the celebration of this ordinance.

Paul gives the following words of instruction:

Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come (1 Corinthians 11:33-34). Again, similar to Paul's concern for godly order, decorum, and the eschewing of offense in 1 Corinthians 10 (in regard to meat offered to idols), Paul instructs the Corinthians how they should order the circumstances that surround the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He teaches them that it is offensive and divisive to fail to wait for one another, and that if the reason one cannot wait is hunger, then it would be expedient to eat something at home before coming. Although, we may never see this particular offense arise in our circumstances, nevertheless the principle of inoffensive behavior in a public setting is applicable to many circumstances.

(3) Spiritual Gifts

As the Apostle continues into Chapters 12, 13 and 14, his emphasis is upon unity and edification within the Church of Christ, and the importance of not using spiritual gifts in a disorderly and offensive manner which, in effect, fails to edify the body by causing strife and division.

Our point here is this: From 1 Corinthians 10-14, Paul is giving general principles of good order, that the Corinthian Church may behave in an edifying and inoffensive manner. The flow and general theme of the context of this section of Scripture is clear. Paul is using specific circumstances and issues, which the Corinthians faced in their day and age, to teach them how to apply the godly principles which would minimize offense and would promote love, edification and unity. Meat sacrificed to idols is certainly specific to that age and culture, as is the error of getting drunk at the Lord's Table, as is much of the instruction in how to properly order prophetic gifts. While we, in our culture may not ordinarily face the case of meat sacrificed to idols, or people getting drunk at the Lord's Supper, or people abusing true prophetic gifts, we however, greatly benefit from applying these godly principles of good order to the situations of our time.

(4) The Headcovering

In keeping with this context, we believe that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 was continuing in the same general line of argument. He addresses the headcovering practice which was culturally acceptable to the Corinthians, and seeks to teach them that they are not to be offensive, divisive or contentious by altering the customs of the land, when they come to worship. He is laying down the same principle as that taught both before and after the headcovering passage. In effect he is saying, do not alter the established order of this circumstance when you see that it will be offensive and destructive to the unity of the church. Do not be contentious about this issue. Rather, do that which edifies and that which promotes unity within your current cultural context. Thus, the moral nature of covering or uncovering one's head in worship is not (in and of itself) the issue which Paul is addressing. To the contrary, he is addressing the detrimental effect that such activity would have upon the unity and peace of the church within the cultural context of Corinth. We have already demonstrated that this cultural perspective in approaching 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is not uniquely the view of the Reformed Presbytery In North America, but also the view that guided the best and purest churches of the First and Second Reformations. We concur with their scriptural judgment.

B. Other Cultural Issues In The New Testament

We offer the following supportive argument to demonstrate that in Scripture, cultural distinctions must be carefully considered when judging Scriptural commands. Consider the following two obligations in Scripture which clearly hinge upon the cultural context in which they were given— namely, foot washing and the holy kiss. (1) The Obligation To Wash The Feet Of Others. On the night in which the Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he gave His disciples an object lesson in serving one another: He, their Master, humbled himself and washed their feet. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (John 13:14-15).

Is this an obligation that rests upon all Christians in all ages to perform one to another? Or are there cultural considerations at that time in history which help us to understand this obligation given by Christ to the disciples? In fact it was the role of a servant to wash in cool water the

dusty, weary feet of the master, mistress, or guests. Although the Lord authorized his disciples to wash the feet of others, as an appropriate act in their cultural context, we do not believe that in our society we are presently under an obligation to practice that specific cultural custom. We recognize there is a moral principle (of selfless service) that stands behind that cultural practice which we must continue to exemplify in our lives as Christ's ministers and disciples. The Lord here illustrates the moral duty incumbent upon all who rule in His Church to be the greatest servants of all in caring for others. The actual practice of foot washing had cultural significance to those living in the ancient world, but it has no real significance to those living in the Western world of the twenty-first century. Perhaps our closest cultural equivalent to foot washing presently is offering refreshments and hospitality to guests who visit in our homes. It is interesting to note as well that this is not the only time that foot washing is mentioned in the New Testament. Foot washing was such a significant act within the apostolic Church that it formed one of the "good works" to which the Church was to look in setting aside those elderly women who were qualified to be financially supported by the Church. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work (1 Timothy 5:9-10).

There are a few anabaptistic churches that have made foot washing an ordinance to be observed at the time of the Lord's Supper. However, the vast majority of the Christian Church has correctly understood the actual practice of foot washing to be a cultural custom. We acknowledge that foot washing was authorized by Christ (in John 13:14-15) and commended by the apostle Paul (in 1 Timothy 5:9-10), and that it signifies the moral principle of selfless service. But we also acknowledge that we are not universally bound to the alterable, cultural custom of foot washing, but rather to the unalterable, moral principle of service. So likewise, we acknowledge that men and women are not universally bound to the alterable, cultural custom of uncovering and covering their heads, but rather to the unalterable, moral principle of lawful male headship under Christ and respectful female submission in the Lord within the assemblies of the Church.

(2) The Obligation To Greet One Another With A Holy Kiss

There are three places in the New Testament where we find imperatives to greet one another with a holy kiss. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you (Romans 16:16). All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss (1 Corinthians 16:20). Greet one another with an holy kiss (2 Corinthians 13:12). In one other passage, the imperative of the holy kiss is extended to include "all the brethren." Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss (1 Thessalonians 5:26). The same questions may be asked about the obligation of the holy kiss as were asked about foot washing. Is this an obligation that rests upon all Christians in all ages to perform one to another? Or are there cultural considerations at that time in history which help us to understand this obligation given by the apostle Paul to the churches at Rome, Corinth, and Thessalonica?

Again, it is generally recognized that the practice of the holy kiss was not the exclusive practice of those within the Church, but rather was a cultural expression of friendship in society at large. This being the case, we must not artificially cling to their cultural practice as being necessary among all believers in the modern Western world of the twenty-first century. The predominant cultural equivalent of the holy kiss among those in our Western society would likely be a holy handshake or perhaps a holy embrace. Is such a departure from the actual cultural expression of

the holy kiss as commanded by Paul a violation of God's Word? Again, we do not understand that we are bound by this specific cultural custom, although we would understand that the moral principle (of Christian love) that lies behind that practice does in fact continue as an obligation. So likewise, we acknowledge that men and women are not universally bound to the alterable, cultural custom of uncovering and covering their heads, but rather to the unalterable, moral principle of lawful authority and submission within the Church.

(3) The context of 1 Corinthians 11

As we consider briefly the passage itself in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, it should be apparent how significant the cultural context is in correctly understanding the text. For if the headcovering ought to be viewed in a similar way to that of foot washing and the holy kiss, as also the good order concerning sacrificed meat and the Lord's Supper, then Paul is instructing the Corinthians concerning the abiding moral principle of proper order and decorum between male authority and female submission in public worship within the appropriate cultural expression familiar to Corinthian society.

Thus, when Paul appeals to the order of headship in 1 Corinthians 11:3 (“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”), he begins by laying down the unalterable, moral principle of male headship and female submission. This, in reality, was the truth that was being denied when the men covered their heads and the women uncovered their heads contrary to the accepted cultural custom in Corinth. The uncovering of the man and the covering of the woman were merely the outward cultural expressions of this revealed order of headship (similar to the outward cultural sign of the holy kiss signifying the revealed truth of brotherly love). Paul also makes clear to the Corinthians (in 1 Corinthians 11:4-5) that when men cover their heads and women uncover their heads in public worship, they bring shame upon themselves by inverting the conventional customs appropriate to men and women within Corinth. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. Similarly, if the Corinthian believers had refused to greet one another with a holy kiss, it would have been tantamount to denying the unalterable principle of brotherly love and would have brought great shame upon their own heads for refusing to do that which even the heathens did one to another as a cultural expression of their love.

The same moral principle (of male authority and female submission) is taught from the order of creation in 1 Corinthians 11:7-9. We believe that if our present culture did customarily use male/female signs which express the gender order, it would be necessary to follow these. If, however the Headcovering is not cultural, but is rather (as some claim) a divine regulation required in public worship for all time, based upon the law of nature and the order of creation, we would expect to find evidence of this in the Old Testament. We would expect to find the Headcovering instituted in the Garden of Eden as a creation ordinance. The evidence, however, is to the contrary. For Genesis 2:25 teaches that Eve did not wear a Headcovering, but was rather naked. “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Nor do we find the Corinthian Headcovering regulation taught as an ordinance in the public worship of God in the Old Testament. Indeed for certain men in ecclesiastical office we find the exact opposite required. High priests were required to cover their heads in Leviticus 8:9 in contrast to Paul's instruction that men uncover their heads in public worship: And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the LORD commanded Moses. Similarly, the priests also were required to cover their

heads in Ezekiel 44:18 contrary to the regulations of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:4. “They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causeth sweat.”

We consider that this evidence is sufficient to demonstrate that the Headcovering practice of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 cannot be an unalterable moral requirement based upon the creation order, the law of nature, or worship regulations of the Old Testament. Paul uses every argument at his disposal to demonstrate the disorderly and unbecoming conduct of women who (within that cultural context) uncovered their heads in public worship. Even the angels, who approve of all good order rather than confusion within worship, become a reason for these women to cover their heads in accordance with the prevailing custom of women in Corinth. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10). If Paul can address the disorderly conduct of the Corinthians in the use of spiritual gifts by drawing their attention to the fact that “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints”; then he can also address the disorderly conduct of the women who have removed the cultural sign of their submission by reminding them of the outward order and submission in which the angels delight. Paul raises a rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 11:13: Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

We ask: If Paul was commanding the Corinthians and the church of all ages to obey an unalterable law of God, irrespective of time and culture, then what was he calling the people to judge in themselves? Was he encouraging the people to judge in themselves whether God's unalterable commands are right? No, that could not be the case, for we are not to judge the commands of God, but rather to adore and obey them. If one should answer, "Paul was calling the people to judge according to the law of God written in their hearts, and according to the light of nature"; we then ask: Does the light of nature in fallen man teach principles of gender comeliness in prayer? Specifically, do all heathen nations intuitively understand that it is sinful for a woman to pray to God uncovered, and a man covered? If so, then where is the evidence of that fact? To the contrary, we have previously demonstrated that among even the most reformed nations, men were at times covered for prayers and at other times uncovered. Likewise, women as well as men and children were (as in the French Reformed Churches) ordered to be uncovered during public and private prayers. We have demonstrated that even in enlightened and reformed nations the meaning of the sign of the Headcovering had changed radically. In one age a covered head meant submission, and in another age it meant the exact opposite—namely, authority. The light of nature in regard to women praying uncovered is not even close to uniform among the reforming Protestant nations. So how then do we assert that Paul was calling on the Corinthians to judge according to a uniform light of nature within a heathen land? What then was he asking the people to judge? They were to judge in themselves, whether, under the current cultural circumstances, it was comely for a woman to pray in public uncovered. This is something that could be easily judged and is a very relevant question for the Corinthians to answer. All they had to do was to look at what was considered comely in their culture and to respond accordingly.

One of the strongest objections against the cultural interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is claimed to be found in 1 Corinthians 11:14: Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? What kind of nature does Paul have in mind? The unalterable light of nature written in our hearts? John Calvin has rightly rendered the sense of the passage. Commenting upon 1 Corinthians 11:14 Calvin states: He [Paul—RPNA] again sets forth nature as the mistress of decorum, and what was at that time in common use by universal

consent and custom—even among the Greeks—he speaks of as being natural, for it was not always reckoned a disgrace for men to have long hair. Historical records bear, that in all countries in ancient times, that is, in the first ages, men wore long hair. Hence also the poets in speaking of the ancients, are accustomed to apply to them the common epithet of unshorn. It was not until a late period that barbers began to be employed at Rome—about the time of Africanus the elder. And at the time when Paul wrote these things, the practice of having the hair shorn had not yet come into use in the provinces of Gaul or Germany. Nay more, it would have been reckoned an unseemly thing for men, no less than for women, to be shorn or shaven; but as in Greece [Corinth—RPNA] it was reckoned an unbecoming thing for a man to allow his hair to grow long, so that those who did were remarked as effeminate, he [Paul—RPNA] reckons as nature a custom that had come to be confirmed (emphases added). If, as Calvin taught, nature is custom that has come to be confirmed within a society, then Paul is asking this question: "Doth not even a custom which has come to be confirmed in your culture, itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" This follows very well with the scope of Paul's argument and is indeed something that the Corinthians could easily judge. If we say that God explicitly commanded the use of the Headcovering in this passage irrespective of the culture of the Corinthians, then there was really nothing for the Corinthians to judge in themselves, and this makes Paul's question irrelevant. We are not prepared to assert this.

Conclusion Of The Reformed Presbytery In North America

We have come to the conclusion, based upon scriptural argument, and in accord with the best divines in the purest times of the church that 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 should be interpreted within a cultural context. We believe that Paul is not enjoining all churches, at all times, to follow the specific Headcovering practice which he prescribed for the Corinthian Church. We do assert, however, that the principles which are taught in this passage afford us great light as to how to conduct ourselves in decency and order within various cultural contexts. We further assert, like Paul, that in a land where the Headcovering is a cultural sign of either authority or submission that the orderly way to proceed is to follow the custom of the land, provided that such a custom does not oppose the general rules of the Word of God. In a land or time when the Headcovering is neither a sign of submission or authority (as is true within North America in the twenty-first century), we maintain that one ought not to wear a Headcovering as a sign of authority or submission, and thus cause confusion or offense within the church. If a man or a woman within our culture attaches no significant meaning of authority or submission to the Headcovering, and simply wishes to wear a hat to church, we believe they are at liberty to do so. In this way, we, as Christians, may use our liberty to promote unity and peace within the body of Christ and to drive away unnecessary contention from the Church.

The Presbytery heartily and without reservation testifies its full agreement with and approval of our covenanted subordinate standards and the rulings of our covenanted and faithful judicatories as being agreeable to and founded upon the Word of God. As with all our subordinate standards, we make no claims that this report is infallible. We confess that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the alone infallible rule of faith and practice (cf. Term #1 of our Six Terms of Communion) and that the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself (cf. The Westminster Confession Of Faith, 1:9). In the words of The Westminster Confession Of Faith (31:4), we further believe that All synods or councils, since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err; and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith, or practice; but to be used as a help in both. Indeed, if it is ever conclusively proved that any of our subordinate documents have erred from the infallible

rule of Scripture, our duty is to reform. The primary purpose of all subordinate standards is to state what we believe the Scriptures to teach.

Directive Of The Reformed Presbytery In North America

The Presbytery, based upon all the considerations mentioned in this report, directs the practice of all members under the inspection of the Reformed Presbytery In North America to be brought into full accord with our Covenanted Standards and the rulings of our covenanted and faithful judicatories. This change in public practice will be effective immediately.