

EXCERPTS FROM

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BIDEFORD

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WHAT IS AN ORDINANCE?

In its broadest sense an ordinance is "an authoritative rule or an observance commanded"- "an order" laid down by a constituted authority. In the biblical sense it has reference to obedience to civil powers (1 Pet. 2 v.13-15, Rom. 13 v.1-2), but also and more particularly to the worship of God, (having reference to laws, regulations and directions - institutions of Divine authority concerning worship. The Old Testament abounds with such. (Exodus 12 v. 14 & 24 - Num. 10 v.8 and Ch 18 v.8 - cf.Heb. 9 v.1 & 10). Many of these ordinances have now been superseded with the inauguration of the New Covenant as the epistle to the Hebrews so clearly points out, but let us never form the impression that in the New Testament age we have liberty and licence to do as we please, or to conduct ourselves and our church worship in our own way for this is not so.

The Head of the Church has given His mandate for this age, (with directions and rules which are authoritative. Rules for church government - Elders and Deacons - these are always plural and such were "set apart" in the early church (Acts 6 v.1-6 - Acts 14 v.23 - Titus 1 v.5 - Phil. 1 v.1): Directions pertaining to the ministry. The teaching elder or minister of the Word is to teach "all things whatsoever I have commanded thee" - "The whole counsel of God" (Cf. Matt 28 v.20 - Acts 20 v.27). To the guidance, counsel, and rule of the elders the church is to submit (Heb.13 v.17); also to be diligent in their attendance of the assembling of the saints (Ps. 5 v.7-Heb. 10 v.25) and this is on all occasions, for the preaching of the Word (whether to the believer or the unbeliever), for prayer, for praise, for the Lord's Supper and for fellowship. Directions pertaining to the sexes is also given (1 Cor. 14 v. 34-35 - 1 Tim. 2 v.8-15).

Some may say that they have been taught that there are only two ordinances for this age, i.e. Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This is not strictly correct within the true meaning of the word ordinance, for any command or rule laid down must be regarded as a God-ordained precept.

However, there are certain ordinances which have a special significance in that they are physically and materially illustrative and demonstrative. At this point reference might be made to the word "SACRAMENT". This, like the word "TRINITY", is not found in the scriptures, nevertheless such words are very meaningful and wonderfully express the truth to us. The word sacrament means an

"outward, physical and visible sign of a great spiritual truth". This definition throws much light and great understanding upon certain ordinances, particularly, The Passover in the Old Testament and Baptism, The Lord's Supper, and the demonstration of "Christ's Headship" in public worship in the New Testament.

The Passover being an Old Testament ordinance is now past; this being so, we will not elaborate, except to say that was it not a very wonderful physical demonstration of a great spiritual truth?

One must say at this point that these ordinances now before us being visible and material signs of deep spiritual significance, add nothing to the Word of God. There is nothing contained in the sacraments which is not contained in the Scriptures. Hence the Word is all important. The Word can exist without the sacrament whereas the sacrament is meaningless without the Word. For this reason therefore, if for none other, the Word must ever take precedence over the observance of sacraments. The sound preaching of the Word of God must always take priority within the local church.

At regeneration we are born of God and a new nature is implanted by the power of the Holy Spirit. The old nature is still there which has to be put down and mortified in order that the new might thrive. This is wonderfully set out in Galatians Chap. 2 v.20 and Romans Chap. 6 v. 1-11, where Paul speaks of being crucified with Christ, baptized into Christ's death, and raised to walk in newness of life - This is the spiritual truth.

BAPTISM gives a physical demonstration of this truth, where the newly born spiritual man or woman goes down into water and is totally immersed, thus signifying death and burial, and is then lifted up and comes out of the water, so depicting resurrection to a new life. This is how Christ has ordained that believers should give expression to this truth. BAPTISM BY TOTAL IMMERSION. No other way expresses the truth.

Prior to new birth we were the children of wrath (Eph.2 v.3), sinners "condemned already" (John 3 v.18), awaiting the judgment of a holy God, but in love, the grace of God brought salvation, and that salvation was by virtue of a substitute, God's own Son incarnate - the Lamb of God, upon whom the Father laid the sins of all His believing people. "He was made sin for us" (2 Cor.5 v.21). "He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53 v.5). "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15 v.3). "Redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1 v.18-19 - cf. Rev. 5 v.9).

By the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost we were "reconciled unto God in one body by the cross" (Eph.2 v.16). Now are we members of His body (1 Cor. 12 v.27) Christ himself being the Head (Col 1 v.18) and fitly joined together (Eph.4 v.16 and Eph. 2 v.21). His church as seen in Christ is as "...not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. 5 v.27). This again is a spiritual truth.

THE LORD'S SUPPER is a physical or visible sign and demonstration of this truth. Bread which we break, symbolizing His body broken for us, when it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him and lay upon Him our sins. Outpoured wine, typifying the shed blood of the Lamb of God. "The New Covenant in His Blood" (Luke 22 v.20). The one loaf (not wafers). The sharing of the cup (not individual), is indicative of the One body, in its wholeness, its perfection as seen in Christ (1 Cor.10 v.16-17). The communion - the fellowship - the harmony of the body, is set forth here. The Lord's Supper is a communion service: in its observance we EXPRESS that communion and we SHOW the Lord's death (1 Cor.11 v.26).

Further truth concerning the body is that we are members -not head. He is controller we are subservient. In Ephesians the analogy of husband and wife is used. The husband is head of the wife, even as CHRIST IS HEAD OF THE CHURCH, and says the Spirit of God in 1 Cor.11 v.3, 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. This too is a spiritual truth.

HEAD COVERING is the physical expression of this and is so ably dealt with by Mr. Terence Brown in a separate article in this magazine. The man typifies "The Head" and gives evidence to his head and to authority by uncovering his head in the assembling of the saints (1 Cor.11 v.7). The woman typifies the Church - His Body: she is in subjection and she covers her head to signify this.

As has been previously stated these ordinances are nothing of themselves but what they are designed to demonstrate is All important. Divorced from the Truth these things are but empty rites and formalities and far better abandoned, for such oblations are an abomination unto the Lord. Cf. Isaiah 1 v.11-14. But for those who know these glorious spiritual truths, and by sovereign grace have been brought into the good of them, we dare not ignore the Divine direction and instruction to express these truths and demonstrate them in the GOD APPOINTED manner.

1 Corinthians 11.13 “Is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?”

The question is often asked: Does this passage of Scripture require that women present at a service of worship and prayer today are required by God to wear a hat or some kind of headcovering? Some assume that the instructions given in 1 Cor. 11 were only relevant to the place, the age and the community to which they immediately refer, and that they do not apply to women in our own country today. Others retain the custom, but may have great difficulty in explaining the passage on which it rests. All who respect the Bible as the Word of God must acknowledge that this portion of it is meaningful and designed for the guidance and instruction of the Lord’s people.

Verse 1 may be regarded either as a conclusion to chapter 10 or as an introduction to chapter 11 – “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”. In either case it reminds the reader that the epistle was written by an apostle who “followed Christ” in his life and teaching.

In verse 2 Paul commends his readers for their remembrance of him and for their attention to the “ordinances” which he delivered to them. The word could be rendered “traditions” – meaning instructions handed down, first by the Holy Spirit Who inspired him, and then handed on from Paul to his readers.

In verse 3 the apostle lays the foundation upon which his instructions are to rest. All things stand in a certain order in relation to each other and to God. That order is part of God’s design and an expression of the perfection of His own Being. “The Head of every man is Christ; the head of the woman is the man; and the Head of Christ is God”. The second clause does not separate Christian women from the Headship of Christ, but asserts the position which God has designed that the woman should occupy in relation to the man. The third clause does not assert that Christ is less than God or inferior to Him. In His Person, Christ is equal to the Father and could say “I and My Father are one”. In taking upon Himself the office of Mediator and in undertaking to redeem His people, Christ humbled Himself – “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered” – Hebrews 5.8.

There is a place in the Divine order for the acknowledgement of the Headship of the Father by Christ, the acknowledgement of the Headship of Christ by man, and the acknowledgement of the headship of the man by the woman. This acknowledgement is made in words and in conduct and in the attitude of the heart and of the mind. The apostle proceeds to demonstrate that it also has a bearing upon the use of a headcovering in public worship.

Verse 4 plainly states that a man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his Head – Who is Christ (verse 3). This is hardly ever the cause of argument among Christians today, but it has not always been interpreted in the same way, even by “reformed” scholars. In some of the Continental churches at the time of the Reformation it was not unusual for the minister and male members of the congregation to wear their hats during a

public service. Today, however, Christian people would feel a sense of outrage if their minister entered the pulpit wearing a hat, and they would say that it was dishonouring Christ. Obedience to this precept as far as the man is concerned is unquestionably regarded as a mark of reverence, humility and subjection to God.

Verse 5 makes it clear that the woman praying or prophesying should have her head covered, and that if she does otherwise, she “dishonoureth her head” – that is, she dishonours her husband. The covering of the head was a mark of subjection, not servility. “The Church is subject unto Christ”. (Eph. 5.24). In that relationship to Him the Church occupies a place of high dignity and honour and is loved by Him. The woman is subject to the man, and in that relationship she is honoured and loved by the man. If the headcovering is a token of that relationship, can she discard it without dishonouring him? Paul makes it clear that she cannot. Shaving a woman’s head was the punishment meted out to an adulteress, and a woman so shorn would be ashamed to appear anywhere in public, least of all among an assembly of Christian people at worship, for she would be known by all to have “dishonoured her head”. In verse 5 and 6 the apostle says that to discard the head covering is just as dishonouring – “let her be covered”.

Verse 7 forbids the man to cover his head while at worship, because “he is the image and glory of God”. His Divine “Head” is not visibly present, and if the man veils his face or covers his head it might be interpreted as an indication of subordination or subjection to men, to the minister or elders. The last part of verse 7 is closely connected with the statements of 8 and 9—”For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man”. This refers back to the creation – Genesis 2.23 “She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man”. Paul continues, “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” – a further reference to Genesis 2 verse 18 “I will make him an help meet for him”.

Upon these truths of Holy Scripture Paul establishes the instruction given in verse 10, “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels”. This verse has been a difficulty to many readers. “For this cause” – because the woman was taken out of man and was made for man – the woman ought “to have power on her head” ... Our English word “power” stands for two different words in the Greek, one meaning “might” or “physical power” and the other meaning “right” or “authority”. The context has already shown that the covering of the head was a mark of subjection, and this verse emphasizes that in public worship the woman should wear upon her head that covering which was symbolic of her relationship to her husband and her acknowledgement of his authority, which she must not usurp. (See 1 Timothy 2.12 “...nor to usurp authority over the man ...”). The woman worships God in the presence not only of men but also of His invisible ministers, the angels – “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Hebrews 1.14). The woman is reminded that she is in

the presence of God and of holy angels, and that in honouring her husband she honours God Who made them both.

Verses 11 and 12 remind the man that in another respect he is dependent upon the woman, and although in the order of creation and of nature she is subordinate to him and subject to him, he is not to tyrannize over her. “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord”. They are dependent upon each other and are exhorted to love one another – Eph. 5.21 “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church ... Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it ... Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” “The woman is of the man ... the man also is by the woman; but all things of God”. The relative position of man and woman was not ordained by men, but by God, and He has not made one a master and the other a slave, but He has made both to be dependent upon Him and upon each other, to love Him and to love, honour and respect each other. Where there is such love, honour and respect, can it be a very great burden to show it in such a small thing as an article of dress?

In verse 13 the apostle is moved by the Holy Spirit to address the consciences of his readers – “Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?” This does not refer to her private approach to the Throne of Grace, but to her appearance and conduct in public worship—when the congregation at large are in a position to “judge in themselves”. The verse does not suggest that the women prayed audibly in the course of public worship and the contrary is clearly established in other passages such as 1 Tim. 2.8 “I will therefore that men pray everywhere” (Greek “the men”). The apostle asks in effect whether his readers’ minds were entirely at rest when any of the women of the congregation appeared with their heads uncovered. He knew that it must have caused more than embarrassment to many, and he has written enough to stir the consciences of some who perhaps had accustomed themselves to accept conduct which they would have censured a few years before.

In verses 14 and 15 he shows that they were almost instinctively aware that some things which are becoming in a woman are offensive in a man. They would frown upon a man who appeared in their assembly with excessively long hair like a woman’s. “Doth not nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him.” They would know it and admit it, and would not even argue about it. It would be clear to them that such a fashion was not suitable and becoming for a man. On the contrary “If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering.” For that glory to be removed would be a mark of shame – “If it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven let her be covered.”

Verse 16 has been explained in many ways and many students have adopted in good faith quite erroneous interpretations. One serious danger involved in the use of commentaries is that the student may devote more time to the commentary than to the Scripture and close his mind to any interpretation that is not adopted by his favourite commentator. One interpretation is “If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom...” it is not our custom as Christians to contend about such matters. This is a very weak exposition, as contention can hardly be described as a “custom”. Another interpretation attaches verse 16 to what follows rather than to what goes before. In this case the verse is made to relate to the disorders at Corinth in the administration of the Lord’s Supper, but there is no grammatical or structural link between verse 16 and verse 20 and this cannot be the apostle’s intention.

A third interpretation is that Paul asserts that for a woman to cover her head at public worship is not a Christian custom and is not of sufficient importance to become a matter of contention. This cannot be the apostle’s meaning, for he himself has devoted an important section of his epistle to contend for reverence and order in public worship and his whole presentation of the subject makes it clear that it was not a trivial matter, but one of great importance, related to God’s own design in the order of creation of man and woman and His purpose concerning their relationship to one another.

The correct interpretation is the most obvious and direct one. Paul has touched upon two things in the immediately preceding verses – verse 13 “Is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?” and verse 14 “If a man have long hair it is a shame unto him”. Now the inspired writer brings the matter to a conclusion in verse 16 by telling his readers how to deal with any man who wants to argue about it. Tell that man, says the apostle, that “we have no such custom, neither the churches of God”. It is not a custom in the churches of God for a woman to pray with her head uncovered, any more than it is our custom for a man to have long hair.

Who are “we” in this verse? Paul and Sosthenes, 1 Cor. 1.1 “Paul ... and Sosthenes our brother”. The pronoun may be more inclusive and refer also to the Corinthian Christians to whom the epistle was addressed – “We – Paul, Sosthenes and the Corinthians – we have no such custom, neither the churches of God (in other places)”.

Some professing Christians today would agree that the interpretation given in the present article would have been appropriate only to the time, the (dace and the circumstances immediately referred to in the epistle, and that in a later age, in another country, and in a community long accustomed to a concept of equality of status of men and women, the teaching of this part of the epistle no longer applies. Against this accommodating view it should be stated that the principles set forth by the inspired apostle are traced back to the sovereign purpose of God from the foundation of the world, and the mere passage of time does not nullify the purpose of Him Who changes not.

In asserting the relative positions of men and women the Scriptures elevate the woman to a place of dignity, honour and respect, and these will be preserved only where those restraints are recognized which God Himself imposes in those portions of His Word which require modesty in apparel and behaviour – “that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” (1 Timothy 2.9). In public worship “modest apparel” includes the head covering, and Paul shows that to discard it implies a lack of respect toward man and toward God.

Although 1 Cor. 11.1-16 appears to refer primarily to the dress and conduct of the married woman in the assembly, it is evident from the context that it applies with equal force to all of the women, whether married or single. At the present time many who genuinely profess to have no desire to be irreverent or careless with regard to what is taught in the Word of God may contend that so many women are seen hatless in the churches that those who conform with the precepts of this chapter will appear conspicuous. To this we must reply that it is better to conform with God’s Word than to conform with the world. “Be not conformed with this present world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind ...” (Romans 12.2).

Today many may brush these requirements aside with amusement or with angry contempt, but it must be remembered that the precepts did not originate in the mind of a man, but are set forth in the Word of God, being designed for His glory and for the spiritual well-being of His people.

TERENCE H. BROWN
(Secretary, The Trinitarian Bible Society)

Extract from “The Reformation in England”
by J.H.Merle D’Aubigne.

... He (Miles Coverdale) turned to the Scriptures, read them again and again, and perceived, like Tyndale, that the reformation of the church must be effected by the Word of God. The Inspiration of that Word, the only foundation of its sovereign authority, had struck Coverdale. “Wherever the Scripture is known it reformeth all things, and setteth everything in order. And why? Because it is given by the inspiration of God”. This fundamental principle of the Reformation in England must, in every age, be that of the church.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

Special meetings and visiting preachers for the current period are as follows:

Thursday	4 th Oct	Mr.F.Stanbury	Bow
Sunday	14 th Oct	Mr.W.Bennett	Bideford
"	21 st Oct	Mr.J.Hooper	Exeter
Thursday	1 st Nov	Mr.A.G.Ashdown	London
		Secretary - Protestant Alliance	
"	15 th Nov	ANNUAL CHURCH MEETING - 6pm	
"	22 nd Nov	Mr.F.Stanbury	Bow
Sunday	9 th Dec	Mr.T.Fitzgerald	Bradninch

The Sunday evening sermons on "The Attributes of God" have now ended and are available on Cassettes which may be had on loan through the Book Room, or may be purchased at £1. per tape. A further series on "The Atonement" will begin in the autumn on Sunday evenings.

The Annual Church Meeting will be held on Thursday 15th November at 6.30pm. Would church members please note.

The speaker at the meeting planned for the 1st November will be Mr.Ashdown of the Protestant Alliance. His subject will be THE ISRAEL OF THE ALPS - an account of the history and testimony of the oldest evangelical church in the world - the Waldensian - in which the light of the Gospel was preserved during the Dark Ages. This lecture will be illustrated.

The visit of Mr.K.Dix, Deputation Secretary, of The Trinitarian Bible Society on Saturday 25th August, was greatly appreciated. The subject of his address, following a brief account of the progress and expansion of the Society's work over the years, was "The Sufficiency of the Scriptures". On this was fought the battle of the Reformation and continues to the present day. Commentaries etc. are of great value in shedding light on Scripture but when they are added to Scripture, such as in the form of paraphrase, and presented as the Word of God, this is unacceptable.

Although our programme for the "Drive in Church" was delayed due to works being carried out on the Quay, this public testimony, with the preaching of the Gospel has been maintained, and we are grateful to the Authorities for allowing us to conduct this service in the car park.

On Tuesday the 14th August our brother Mr. Edwin Smith was suddenly called Home. Although not a member of our fellowship he and Mrs. Smith regularly attended our meetings on Sunday and Thursday evenings. He was loved and respected by us all and will be greatly missed. The funeral service was held in the Chapel on Monday the 20th August and was conducted by Mr.W.H.Molland assisted by Pastor Stanton of Plymouth. Our deepest sympathy is extended to our sister, Mrs.Smith, who is assured of our continued love and prayers.