

1 Corinthians 11:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

Analysis

Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?—

Paul shifts from theological argument (vv. 3-12) to appeals to propriety and nature (vv. 13-15). Ἐν ὑμῖν αὐτοῖς κρίνατε (judge among yourselves)—Paul invokes the Corinthians' own sense of decorum. Πρέπον ἔστιν (is it fitting/proper?) appeals to innate moral intuition and cultural appropriateness.

This isn't relativism but incarnational theology. Biblical truth engages cultural forms without being reducible to them. In Corinthian context, an uncovered woman praying publicly was *aprepon* (unseemly, improper)—it violated both creational order and social propriety. Paul doesn't separate theological truth from cultural expression; he expects theological truth to shape cultural practice. The Corinthians' own judgment, properly informed by Scripture and creation, should align with Paul's instruction. This rhetorical question expects agreement—surely you see the impropriety?

Historical Context

Greco-Roman culture valued decorum ($\tauὸ\ πρέπον$)—behaving appropriately according to one's station, gender, and context. Respectable women demonstrated modesty in dress and demeanor. Public worship was particularly sensitive—both pagan and Jewish traditions had gendered practices. Paul appeals to shared values of propriety while grounding them in deeper theological realities. His question

assumes the Corinthians' cultural instincts align with biblical principle, inviting self-reflection rather than authoritarian diktat.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you discern which cultural practices embody biblical principles versus which are merely conventional?
2. What role should 'seemliness' or propriety play in Christian worship decisions?
3. How can churches engage cultural norms constructively without becoming legalistic or worldly?

Interlinear Text

ἐν	ὑμῖν	αὐτοῖς	κρίνατε·	πρέπον	ἐστὶν	γυναῖκα
in	yourselves			Judge	comely	is it
G1722	G5213			G2919	G4241	G2076

ἀκατακάλυπτον	τῷ	θεῷ	προσεύχεσθαι
uncovered		unto God	pray
		G2316	G4336

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