

dissolved; society may be shattered. But one cannot imagine the time when Jesus will not be the fair image of perfection or the circumstances wherein He will not be loved. He can never be superseded; He can never be exceeded. Religions will come and go, the passing shapes of an eternal instinct, but Jesus will remain the standard of the conscience and the satisfaction of the heart, Whom all men seek, in Whom all men will yet meet.

JOHN WATSON.

“POWER ON THE HEAD.”

1 Cor. xi. 10.

THIS passage has been the despair of interpreters. Much violence has been brought to bear upon it, both as respects text and translation. The puzzling word is *ἐξουσίαν*, which is translated “power” in the Authorised, and “authority” in the Revised Version. In the one translation the verse stands thus: “For this cause ought the woman to have power on (her) head because of the angels”; in the other it runs as follows: “For this cause ought the woman to have (a sign of) authority on her head, because of the angels.” Both are accompanied by a marginal annotation. The Authorised Version explains the expression “power” in these terms,—“That is, *a covering, in sign that she is under the power of her husband*”; while the Revised, dropping this explanation, suggests for “have a sign of authority on,” “have authority over”—words which certainly do not elucidate, but rather add to the enigma suggested by the verse.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that many efforts have been made to get rid of the term *ἐξουσίαν* altogether, or to give it quite a different turn by the insertion of the word *οὐκ* before *ὀφείλει*. Heinrici mentions that Valkenaer proposed thus to alter the text, so as to bring out

the meaning,—“Non debet uxor habere sive exercere in maritum potestatem”—“the wife ought not to have or exercise power over her husband (head).” The various other conjectural emendations of ἐξουσίαν are given as follows by Dean Stanley in his note on the passage: “(1) ἐξουβίαν, a supposed Latinism for ‘exuviae.’ (2) ἐξουσίαν, a supposed derivative of ἔξις, ‘a habit,’ or a mistranslation of ‘habitum,’ on the hypothesis that the Epistle was written in Latin. (3) ἐξιοῦσα, ‘when she goes out.’ (4) ἐξ οὐσίας, ‘according to her nature.’ (5) ἐξουσία, ‘the woman who is the glory of man.’ (6) καυσίαν, ‘a broad-brimmed Macedonian hat.’ (7) a Grecised form of the Hebrew word ‘cesooth,’ ‘casooi’—‘a covering.’¹”

In like manner, many efforts have been made to get rid of the reading, or the rendering, in the remaining clause of the verse,—“because of the angels.” Instead of the words διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους, it has been proposed to read, (1) διὰ τὰς ἀγέλας, “on account of the crowds,” or ‘herds’; (2) διὰ τοὺς ἀγγελαίους, “on account of the men who crowded in” (Stanley, or, as Heinrici gives it, “on account of the drivers of cattle”—*Viehtreiber*); (3) διὰ τοὺς ἄνδρας, “on account of the (staring) men”; (4) διὰ τοὺς ἐγγελαστές, “on account of the mockers”; (5) διὰ τῆς ἀγγελίας, “throughout (the whole of) her (divine) message” (Stanley, or, as Heinrici more simply explains it, “throughout the preaching” *während der Predigt*); (6) διὰ τοὺς ὄχλους, “on account of the mobs”; while some critics, like Baur, have preferred to discard the words altogether, as a gloss which has been introduced into the text. Others, again, while retaining the words as they stand, have proposed peculiar renderings of διὰ or ἀγγέλους, such as (1) “on account of the bishops or rulers”; (2) “on account of the spies sent to watch the assemblies”; (3) “on account of the messengers sent by the

¹ A number of other explanations may be seen in Meyer (*in loc.*), but none of them seem worth discussion, and the above may serve as specimens.

bridegroom, to see the bride before marriage”; (4) as an adjuration “by the angels” (διά for νή); (5) “on account of divorces”—as a translation of the Latin term “nuntius” for a bill of divorce.

But all these conjectures and emendations must be set aside as utterly groundless. There is not the slightest doubt that both text and translation are perfectly correct as commonly given. We must face the words just as they stand,—“For this cause ought the woman to have power (or ‘authority’) on her head, because of the angels,” and endeavour, as we best may, to reach their true explanation.

The opening words of the verse, *διὰ τοῦτο*, refer us to the immediately preceding context. And when we glance at it, we find that, from the second verse of the chapter onwards, the Apostle is establishing a certain fact, and then applying it to a practical purpose. The fact which he brings into a clear light is that, with respect to order, woman is subordinate to man. It is important to observe that St. Paul’s reasonings on this point do not at all imply any *essential* inferiority in woman. They merely bring out the fact that, with reference to the sexes, as indeed throughout the universe, a certain *order* prevails, which must be duly regarded and maintained. This is a favourite thought of the Apostle, and one which he earnestly presses upon these tumultuous Corinthians. God, he reminds them, can never countenance any approach to “confusion” (*ἀκαταστασία*, chap. xiv. 33). He carries this idea of relation even into the sacred circle of the Godhead. “I would have you know,” he says, ver. 3, “that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” No disparagement, then, is meant as respects woman, when she is shown to be subordinate to man in the relation existing between the sexes. The order is—man first, woman second—man, the glory of God, woman, the glory of man—but both alike necessary to each

other, and both alike dependent upon God (ver. 12, ὡςπερ γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός, οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ διὰ τῆς γυναικός, τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ). Such is the Divinely appointed order here insisted upon by the Apostle.

The fact, then, being established, that in the scale of creation woman is subordinate to man, what, let us next enquire, is the practical purpose to which that fact is here applied by St. Paul? It is to the correction of one of the many abuses which had arisen in the Church at Corinth. Some professing Christians in that city, apparently acting upon the great truth set forth by the Apostle in another passage (Gal. iii. 28) that in Christ Jesus there is "neither male nor female," the sexes being on a footing of perfect equality as respects all spiritual privileges, had deemed themselves warranted in laying aside one of the most distinctive marks by which, in regard to dress, man and woman were discriminated from each other.

In itself, of course, costume has no ethical importance. Dress is a purely conventional thing; so that, what is deemed seemly and fitting in one country, may be considered utterly unbecoming in another. But nature herself suggests that the sexes should be marked out from each other by the style of clothing which is adopted; and, for manifestly wise purposes, a special precept had been given in the Mosaic law to that effect. We read at Deuteronomy xxii. 5,—“A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto the Lord thy God.” On mere general grounds, therefore, and simply from that concern which he always showed for what was orderly and proper, the Apostle would undoubtedly have condemned that abuse which, in regard to this matter, had sprung up in the Corinthian Church.

But far more than this was involved in the innovation which had taken place. We may perhaps be surprised, at

first, to find St. Paul making use of such warm and emphatic language, in denouncing the practice which had evidently been reported to him from Corinth. “Every man,” he says (ver. 4), “praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled, dishonoureth her head.” In order to understand these words, we require to know that, among many ancient nations, a covering on the head was regarded as a *symbol of subjection*. The veil referred to might be either natural or artificial; that is, it might consist of the human hair, or of any wrought covering placed upon the head. With respect to the veil furnished by nature, in the case especially of women, Milton, with his usual accuracy and beauty, tells us of what it was the emblem, when he says respecting Eve in Paradise,—

“She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
Her unadorned golden tresses wore
Dishevelled, but in wanton ringlets waved,
As the vine curls her tendrils, which *implied*
Subjection.”

With respect, again, to an artificial covering, we may regard it as pretty certain that *subjection* is the root-idea involved in the use of the Latin verb *nubo* to denote marriage on the part of a woman. That verb properly means “to put on a veil,” and the act of veiling seems to have indicated that the woman then came, as the Romans expressed it, *in manum mariti*—became entirely subject to her husband. Hence the sarcasm in the epigram of Martial,—

“Uxorem quare locupletem ducere nolim
Quæritis? uxori *nubere* nolo meæ.”—

—“Do you ask why I am unwilling to marry a rich wife? I do not wish to *veil myself* to my wife”—in other words, I

shrink from placing myself *in subjection* to her for the sake of her money.

We can now clearly understand the Apostle's words. He has said that "the head of every man is Christ." If then any man either wears long hair (ver. 14), or appears in the religious assembly with his head covered (ver. 4), he appears as if subjecting himself to the woman, and thus dishonoureth his head, Christ, to whom alone he is subordinate. If, on the other hand, a woman present herself in public uncovered, wilfully destitute either of her natural veil, which is her "glory" (ver. 15), or of that artificial covering which indicates subordination to her husband, she dishonoureth her head, the man, as claiming an equality with him, contrary to the Divine arrangement. And, in that case, says St. Paul, she has cast off the modesty that ought to be characteristic of her sex, and has in principle identified herself with those disreputable women, whose heads were shaven or shorn in token of the infamy they had contracted.¹

Now, after all this, what should we expect to be the summing up of the Apostle in verse 10? Probably the very opposite of what we find. "For this cause," says St. Paul, "ought the woman to have *authority* upon her head," whereas we naturally look for some such statement as the following,—"*For this cause ought the woman to have an emblem of subjection on her head.*" Here, however, the commentators crowd upon us with their explanations and illustrations; and let us listen to what they have to tell us in connection with the remarkable language of the Apostle.

We are informed, then, that when St. Paul says "authority" he means "*a sign of authority.*" It is not

¹ Tacitus suggests the disgraceful nature of the deeds for which cutting off the hair was in use among the ancients, when he tells us (*Germania*, ch. 19) that female adulterers among the Germans had their hair cut off—*accisis crinibus*—before being subjected to other punishments.

unusual, we are reminded, to meet with such a metonymy. An example is brought forward from Diodorus Siculus, who speaks (i. 47) of a certain image as “having three kingdoms on its head”—*ἔχουσαν τρεῖς βασιλείας ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς*—where the word “kingdoms” is manifestly used for *symbols* of power. Again, we are referred to Numbers vi. 7, where we read in the Greek version of the LXX.—*εὐχὴ Θεοῦ ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ*—“a vow of God,” that is, “the *sign* of a vow of God is upon his head.” Heinrici (*in loc.*) takes note of several other examples.

Most commentators are content to rest in this explanation. A few, indeed, have thought that the term *ἐξουσία* has itself sometimes the meaning of “a veil,” and should be so rendered in this passage. If this could be proved, perhaps the best of all explanations would be offered. But nothing at all satisfactory has been found to justify such a translation of the word. It is true that Irenæus, in quoting the passage (*Adv. Haer.*, i. 8, 2, *Mass.*) substitutes *κάλυμμα* for *ἐξουσίαν*, and that the Latin translator naturally represents it by *velamen*. That, however, only proves what meaning Irenæus found in the passage, and cannot be regarded as showing that *ἐξουσία* sometimes meant¹ “a veil.” In fact, no modern commentator so understands it, but all accept the explanation already suggested. Dean Stanley, for instance, thus states the opinion in which he and others acquiesce,—“It remains to suppose that the Apostle uses the phrase to signify ‘the symbol of a man’s power over the woman, as expressed in the covering of the head.’”

This may really be the only interpretation of the passage possible; but it certainly appears very harsh and unsatisfac-

¹ Harvey thinks (*Irenæus*, i. 69) that, through the Syriac version, it can be shown that *ἐξουσία* might mean “a veil,” and his learned note is well worth consideration. But, whatever might be true of the equivalent Syriac term, I am afraid no evidence can be produced that the Greek word in question ever had the meaning of *κάλυμμα*.

tory. It labours, in fact, under the disadvantage of making the Apostle say the very opposite of what he *seems* to say. His words, literally rendered, are,—“A woman ought to have authority on her head,” while the gloss put upon them is, “A woman ought to have a sign of her husband’s authority on her head.” And let it be noted that among all the illustrations of such metonymy which have been adduced, there is not a single one parallel to this. As has been well remarked by Stanley, “this use of the name of the thing signified for the symbol, though natural where the power spoken of belongs to the person, would be unnatural when applied to the power exercised over that person by some one else.” Meyer, indeed, remarks that “here the *connection* justifies the use of ἐξουσία to denote the sign of *another’s* power”; but this seems hardly a sufficient answer to Hofmann, who objects that the word is thus really “twisted into an opposite meaning.” Nor have other able writers, in my humble judgment, succeeded in removing the difficulty which is involved in the above consideration. May I, then, venture to look at this perplexing word ἐξουσίαν in a totally different light? I would beg, with much diffidence, to suggest that it should be viewed not as referring to the man at all, but as bearing only upon the woman. And if any tolerable sense can be brought out of the expression when thus regarded, it need not be said that most of the harshness will disappear which is inseparable from the other interpretation.

“The woman,” says St. Paul, “ought to have authority upon her head”; and, taking these words in their plain grammatical sense, the authority spoken of can belong only to the woman. What, then, are we to understand by this “authority”? Plainly, nothing else can be meant than the *rightful claim* which the woman, in her proper place, has to influence and honour.

It is supposed that she has accepted her God-assigned

position of subordination to the man; and then, by the language which the Apostle adopts, the thought is suggested that she has thus secured a dignity and power which could not have been acquired by any foolish attempt at independence. St. Paul might have expressed himself differently. He might have said,—“For this cause the woman ought to have a veil upon her head”; and we should probably have expected some such turn to be given to his words. But he chose rather to say instead,—“For this cause ought the woman to have *authority* on her head,” with the view of suggesting that the very emblems of submission, which a God-fearing woman bears on her person, really become to her elements of power. That artificial veil, which she was enjoined to wear, in contradistinction from the man, would, as a symbol of her modesty and meekness, add to her attractiveness and influence. And that natural covering with which she had been furnished—the long hair which, as the Apostle says, was truly her “glory”—would increase immensely the graces of her person. As Archbishop Trench has remarked regarding woman,—“Long beautiful tresses have evermore been held as her chiefest adornment,” and he aptly quotes, in illustration, that line of the Latin poet,—

“*Quod primum formae decus est, cecidere capilli.*”¹

Thus, the very types of her subjection became the instruments of her “authority”; and, in showing obedience to Him “whose service is perfect freedom,” she acquired a dignity and power which could not otherwise have been attained. This view of the passage seems to me greatly to soften and beautify the language here used by the Apostle respecting woman. He has often been accused of treating the weaker sex with undue severity. It has been said that the position he assigns woman savours more of an Oriental

¹ *Notes on the Parables*, p. 290.

and despotic, than of a chivalrous or Christian spirit. But, if we may regard him as here claiming "authority" for woman in her proper relation to man, such a charge will lose much of its apparent force. It will then be seen that the sexes are represented by St. Paul as each possessed of its own special dignity and power, so that the Apostle's language will be in accord with these well-known and beautiful words—

"As unto the bow the cord is,
So unto the man is woman:
Though she bends him, she obeys him,
Though she draws him, yet she follows,
Useless each without the other."

No mere translation could, of course, bring out the full meaning of the passage, as suggested above. That must be left to the *viva voce* explanations of any preacher who may be inclined to adopt the view I have ventured to present. Only in accepting it the pen must be drawn through these words—"a sign of," which have been inserted in the Revised Version, and the clause must simply stand thus,—
"For this cause ought the woman to have authority on her head."¹

It does not seem to me that the remaining clause of the verse—"because of the angels"—ought to cause much difficulty. No reference, I think, should be supposed to Genesis vi. 2, though this opinion has been held by writers both ancient and modern (Tertullian, Stanley). The thought suggested by the Apostle simply is, that the holy angels are present in the religious assemblies of Christians,

¹ Since writing the above, I have been pleased to find that among more recent interpreters, the late Bishop Wordsworth, of Lincoln, held that *ἐξουσίαν* refers to the woman herself. He says (*in loc.*) "She ought to have a badge of her own dignity and power on her head." Some of the older expositors seem also to have taken this view. See Meyer *in loc.* But I am not aware of having followed any one in the exegesis which I have suggested.

and that remembrance of this fact should have a deterrent power over those persons who might be tempted into lawless or disorderly conduct. These ideas are quite in harmony both with the angelology of Scripture, and the innate feelings of the human heart. We are told respecting the angels that they are deeply interested in the work of redeeming love (1 Peter i. 12), and that they act the part of “ministering spirits” to the heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14). Nothing, therefore, could be more fitting than that they should be spoken of as present with Christians in their worship of God.

Then, again, it is a well-recognised sentiment of human nature that the presence of superiors tends to restrain from anything unseemly or improper; and the vivid recollection that celestial beings were in their midst, though unseen, could not fail to have such an effect on Christian worshippers. St. Paul in another passage (Col. ii. 5) speaks of himself as being spiritually present in the far-distant gatherings of his Christian brethren, and as joying in beholding the “order” which there prevailed. And, if this were the case with him, doubtless the blessed angels must feel a similar joy in contemplating seemliness and propriety in the Churches of Christ, while they would be correspondingly distressed on perceiving any contrary behaviour. It was then a lofty no less than a tender argument, which was thus employed by the Apostle; and it could not fail to impress and influence his readers just in proportion to the spiritual susceptibility of which they were severally possessed.

A. ROBERTS.