

July 11, 2009

Fr. Anthony Ward, SM, Under Secretary

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

00120 Vatican City

Italy

Dear Fr. Ward,

Please allow me to bring to your attention what I consider an important matter for the benefit of the Catholic Church.

A patron of my apostolate, Catholic Apologetics International, forwarded me a letter that he received from a third party, dated April 30, 2009, regarding the issue of head coverings for women. A copy of the letter is enclosed for your perusal.

A few years ago I wrote a paper on the issue of head coverings. In it I addressed the Scriptural, Patristic and Canonical information on the issue. It was my conclusion that head coverings were required by a fair reading of: (a) Scripture, (b) a consensus of the Fathers, (c) nineteen centuries of tradition, (d) a comparison between the 1917 and 1983 codes of canon law, and (e) a critical evaluation of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1976 Instruction, *Inter Insigniores*, signed by the then Prefect, Cardinal Seper. It is my understanding that this third party read or heard about my paper and then proceeded to write to the CDW for its decision on the matter.

In reading your letter, it appears that although the CDW determined that head coverings are "no longer...mandatory by means of liturgical law," you did not give a reason or rationale for this conclusion. You only refer to an "attentive study of this question" as the basis for the conclusion but the depth and sources for that study are not disclosed. Perhaps your letter was not the place for long explanations, which I fully understand. However, I hope you will pardon my pursuing of this matter in light of the absence of authoritative sources in your letter. In doing so, I am following the permission granted me in Canon 212:3, which states: "According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful..." Being a Catholic parishioner who is very interested in maintaining the authentic doctrine and discipline of the Catholic Church, but who also recognizes the authority of the overseers God has placed before me, I humbly submit this important information (see enclosed paper) to you in hopes that a reevaluation of the matter may be forthcoming from the Congregation for Divine Worship. I

hope you will not mind if I suggest that the CDW may not have had all the facts and the implications of those facts available to it before coming to its conclusion about head coverings.

If you desire to respond, you may contact me at the following address, and I very much look forward to your response.

Sincerely in Christ,

Robert A. Sungenis, Ph.D.

PO Box 278

State Line, Pennsylvania, 17263

PS: A copy of this letter has been sent to Mr. xxxxxx, the gentleman to whom you wrote your letter of April 30, 2009.

A Study on Women's Head Covering

By Robert A. Sungenis, Ph.D.

Canon Law in General:

First, as regards canon law in general, canon 20 states:

A later law [laws in the 1983 code] abrogates, or derogates, an earlier law if it states so expressly, is directly contrary to it, or completely reorders the entire matter of the earlier law.

Here we see that the 1983 code puts limits around itself in relation to previous canon law. Apparently, the 1983 code will not allow itself to automatically dismiss an earlier law unless the 1983 code:

- (1) “states so expressly,”
- (2) makes a statement about that law which “is directly contrary to it,” or
- (3) “reorders the entire matter.”

With regard to the issue of women wearing head coverings, none of the three above requirements were exercised in the 1983 code.

To show that we are on the right track, canon 21 reinforces the meaning and extent of canon 20. It states:

In case of doubt [*e.g.*, about the application of head coverings], the revocation of a pre-existing law is not presumed, but later laws must be related to the earlier ones and, insofar as possible, must be harmonized with them.

It seems then, far from disavowing itself from the 1917 code, if the 1983 code is silent on an issue (*e.g.*, as it is with head coverings), it requires that we not presume a previous law was revoked, and, in fact, the 1983 code says it “must be related to” and “must be harmonized with” the 1917 code. Although on a legal basis the 1983 code abrogates the 1917 code, it is clear that the 1983 code imposes a legal stipulation on itself in the way it relates to the 1917 code, a stipulation which requires it to address the 1917 code so that the final decision on a given issue will be in harmony with, not opposed to, the 1917 code. This would be especially applicable in regards to a traditional practice that stretched uninterrupted for over nineteen hundred years and did so because of the original mandate in Holy Writ (*i.e.*, head coverings for women).

Immemorial Custom:

In your letter you refer to head coverings as being “a salutary practice that pertains to immemorial custom.” This type of categorization arbitrarily demotes an immemorial custom to being only a salutary practice, but according to the 1983 code, an immemorial custom is much more than salutary. Title II of the 1983 code has six canons in regards to “custom.” As I understand it, custom is important in Catholic legal code for two reasons. First, as Canon 27 says: “Custom is the best interpreter of laws.” This means, even though canon law is its own legal entity, it is not an end in itself, since it must be interpreted in accordance with tradition and, as Canon 20 said, it must “harmonize” with previous codes of law.

Second, if an act is practiced long enough, then it assumes what the 1983 code calls “the force of law,” and it becomes a law, in itself, without having to be validated by or connected to a canonical law. Regardless whether the custom enters or leaves canon law (as it did in 1917 and 1983, respectively), it remains a custom, since custom, legally speaking, is distinct from canon law.

In fact, custom is so strong that if the custom has been practiced for 100 years or longer, then not even a canonical law can nullify it. We find this law regarding customs stated in two of the 1983 codes. Canon 26 says:

Unless the competent legislator has specifically approved it, a custom contrary to the canon law now in force or one beyond a canonical law obtains the force of law only if it has been legitimately observed for thirty continuous and complete years. Only a centenary [100 years] or immemorial custom, however, can prevail against a canonical law which contains a clause prohibiting future customs.”

Before the 1917 code had included a specific canonical law for head coverings, the Church had practiced the custom for nineteen centuries prior, for history shows us that the practice had never been interrupted after St. Paul gave the original command in 1 Corinthians 11. The Fathers and Medievals, as I detail at the end of the enclosed paper, gave their unanimous consent to its perpetuation. Hence, as even you admitted in your letter of April 30, 2009, the wearing of head coverings must at least be considered an “immemorial custom” in the eyes of the 1983 code. As such, it is apparently impervious to abrogation. In fact, as the 1983 code regards the matter, we might conclude that practices such as the wearing of head coverings could even “prevail against a canonical law which contains a clause prohibiting future customs.” Of course, at this point I am merely arguing hypothetically in order to emphasize the point, since there is no canon in the 1983 code which “prohibits” such customs, yet this makes the thrust of Canon 26 all the more powerful for the case.

As I understand it, in the Catholic Church tradition holds sway. Perhaps the power and ubiquity of tradition is why the 1983 code does not bother to mention anything about head coverings, since it would be superfluous in light of the traditional safe guards built around immemorial customs. In fact, in the case of head coverings and the 1983 Code of Canon Law, it may be the case that what some think is a non-obligation due to silence is, in fact, silence due to obligation.

That the force of law associated with centenary or immemorial laws is virtually impregnable is noted in two more canons. Canon 5.1 states:

...contrary customs are...considered suppressed unless the Code expressly provides otherwise or unless they are centenary or immemorial customs...

and Canon 28 says:

...a contrary custom...unless it [the code] makes express mention of them, however, a law does not revoke centenary or immemorial customs...

Thus, even if a custom is “contrary” to the new code, centenary and immemorial customs have virtual immunity from being reversed unless the new code specifically says otherwise. Once again, my citation of these canons is in order to overemphasize the point, since: (a) wearing head coverings is not a “contrary” custom but a nineteenth-century tradition initiated by a divine command in Scripture, and (b) wearing head coverings is not specifically addressed, much less abrogated, in the 1983 code. In other words, if a contrary custom possesses a certain amount of immunity, we can only imagine how much more immunity a non-contrary custom, such as wearing head coverings, possesses.

In retrospect, we see that the 1983 Code of Canon Law does not rescind the scriptural and traditional-based practice of head coverings for women. By the 1983 code’s own admission, if the issue is not addressed, then one cannot presume that the 1983 code has rescinded the practice, much less tampered with or is antithetical to “immemorial customs” such as head coverings for women.

Liturgical Law:

In your letter you stated that the CDW “no longer considers this practice mandatory by means of liturgical law.” First, I am not aware of any stipulation in canon law or official statements by the CDW in which liturgical law addresses the matter of head coverings, much less “no longer considers it mandatory.” If it is no longer mandatory, what official reference is being used as the authority?

In light of the above, I am intrigued by your use of the word “considers” (*i.e.*, “this Congregation...no longer considers this practice mandatory by means of liturgical law”). This seems to be a rather weak word for something that the CDW is now requiring, even if your letter

is considered a private response to a single inquiry. Would I be correct in saying that “considers” means only that the CDW has made a preliminary conclusion but this conclusion is by no means binding on either the person to whom the letter was written or the Catholic world at large? If I am wrong and yours is an official decision, can we expect the CDW to publicize this decision to the rest of the Catholic world, and if that is the case, am I correct in assuming that April 30, 2009 is the first time since 1917 that the issue has been officially addressed by the Church?

Second, since the 1917 code made head coverings part of the liturgy due to the fact that: (a) women could not pray with their head uncovered at Mass, and (b) men could not pray with their head covered, it appears that we can use the canonical laws regarding liturgy to address this issue. For example, Canon 2 says:

For the most part the [1983] Code does not define the rites which must be observed in celebrating liturgical actions. Therefore, liturgical laws in force until now retain their force unless one of them is contrary to the canons of the Code.

Here we see that the 1983 code is admitting that it has not “defined” many of the things that take place in “liturgical actions.” Since the wearing of head coverings is included in liturgical actions, then it follows that, since the 1983 code does not address head coverings, “therefore” the “law” of head covering is “in force until now” and “retains its force “unless...contrary to the canons of the code.” Obviously, head coverings are not contrary to the 1983 code since the 1983 code does not address head coverings.

History of Head Coverings:

I consider the history of head coverings important for the simple reason that, since the Church practiced it for nineteen centuries without interruption, and yet we see the practice abruptly discontinued in the last half of the twentieth century, it raises suspicions as to the nature of the change. If, as I outline above, the Church herself (barring the CDW’s decision in the private letter of April 30, 2009) did not make any official or binding change against head coverings, from whence did the current discontinuance manifest itself? One likely possibility is that it appeared as a result of the dramatic societal and cultural changes our world has experienced in the last few decades. But if that is the case, then worldly pressure has changed Catholic faith and morals. As such, it should be corrected.

As for pinpointing the possible time and cause upon which head coverings fell into disuse, it is widely reported that during Vatican II a group of journalists had questioned Cardinal Annibale Bugnini, secretary of the New Congregation for Divine Worship and a Vatican envoy, whether women would forthwith be required to wear head coverings. Bugnini is said to have replied that the matter was not a topic of debate at the Council. By the way he expressed himself, however, Bugnini may have given some subtle indication that the matter could be open for discussion at a future date. The journalists, whether because they already had their own opinions or were inferring a conclusion from what Bugnini implied, interpreted his remarks to mean that women

would no longer be required to wear head coverings in the Catholic Church. Correct or not, their interpretation was reported in newspapers all over the world and soon thereafter hatless women became the prevalent, yet unofficial, practice in the mid-1960s. That, coupled with the fact that the 1960s was a decade of social revolution which entertained many heretofore unheard of ideas and practices, many bishops and priests began softening the requirement of head coverings, but all without one official word from the Vatican to do so. As more and more Catholic woman were coming to Church functions without the traditional head covering, it wasn't long before the Vatican was approached concerning the official teaching of the Church on this important issue. Surprisingly, the same man who may have fomented the disuse by his off-hand comments in 1963, Annibale Bugnini, held an interview, which was subsequently reported in *The Atlanta Journal* of June 21, 1969, in an article titled "Women Required to Cover Head, Vatican Insists." The article stated:

A Vatican official says there has been no change, as reported, in the Roman Catholic rule that women cover their head in church. The Rev. Annibale Bugnini, secretary of the New Congregation for Divine Worship, said the reports stemmed from a misunderstanding of a statement he made at a news conference in May. Bugnini stated: "The rule has not been changed. It is a matter of general discipline."

So, if head coverings were still a matter of "general discipline" in 1969, the Church was taking a renewed stand against those who were trying to dispense with head coverings.

The CDF's 1976 Declaration *Inter Insigniores*:

The matter of head coverings did not come up again except for a brief mention by the CDF in its 1976 Declaration titled *Inter Insigniores*, which, strangely enough, is only available in Portuguese on the Vatican website. The main topic of *Inter Insigniores* was not head coverings but the role of women in the church, particularly the continued exclusion of women from the ministerial priesthood. In the Declaration, of which I will underline the pertinent parts, Cardinal Seper writes:

Another objection [to ordaining women as priests] is based upon the transitory character that one claims to see today in some of the prescriptions of Saint Paul concerning women, and upon the difficulties that some aspects of his teaching raise in this regard. But it must be noted that these ordinances, probably inspired by the customs of the period, concern scarcely more than disciplinary practices of minor importance, such as the obligation imposed upon women to wear a veil on their head (1Co 11:2-16); such requirements no longer have a normative value. However, the Apostle's forbidding of women to speak in the assemblies (1Co 14:34-35; 1 Tm, 2:12) is of a different nature, and exegetes define its meaning in this way: Paul in no way opposes the right, which he elsewhere recognizes as possessed by women, to prophesy in the assembly (1Co 11:15); the prohibition solely concerns the official function of teaching in the Christian

assembly. For Saint Paul this prescription is bound up with the divine plan of creation (1Co 11:7; Gn 2:18-24): it would be difficult to see in it the expression of a cultural fact. Nor should it be forgotten that we owe to Saint Paul one of the most vigorous texts in the New Testament on the fundamental equality of men and women, as children of God in Christ (Gal 3:28). Therefore there is no reason for accusing him of prejudices against women, when we note the trust that he shows towards them and the collaboration that he asks of them in his apostolate.

Although the Congregation's statement appears to demote the status and requirement of head coverings, I believe such a conclusion is unwarranted for the following reasons:

- 1) The CDF Declaration's main topic, regarding which a binding decision for the Church appears to be made, is the issue of ordaining women to the priesthood, not head coverings. The issue of head coverings is added only to serve as evidence that St. Paul was not a misogynist or that he did not have "prejudices against women." As such, the Congregation was not making a specific decision on whether women should wear head coverings. As I understand it, the rule of interpreting magisterial documents is this: unless the magisterium is addressing the specific topic in question and intends on giving a definitive decision on that topic, than that topic is not being officially addressed and no formal decision regarding its validity is being decided. In effect, no one can appeal to *Inter Insigniores* to support the contention that the Catholic Church has made an official declaration that it no longer requires head coverings for women, especially in the face of Bugnini's statement from the Vatican seven years earlier saying: "The rule has not been changed. It is a matter of general discipline." An interlocutor may, of course, use the Congregation's statement to demonstrate the Congregation's provisional and tentative position may have been in 1976 before the issue of head covering had been studied in depth, but he cannot refer to it as an *official* teaching of the Church. Certainly, the Congregation would not want to be held to such rigorous and non-contextualized use of its words.
- 2) Regarding the intent of the CDF, it is obvious that the Congregation did not want to have its words regarding head coverings interpreted as official Church teaching, since it is careful to say that such ordinances were "*probably* inspired by the customs of the period." By using the word "probably," the Congregation was clearly making a non-binding observation, not handing down a judgment, on the origin and nature of head coverings. (The observation, in fact, is quite questionable, since there is little evidence to support the view and much evidence against it in Catholic tradition). The fact that the wearing of head coverings was practiced for almost two millennia prior to this Declaration and was actually part of canon law when at the time, means that the preponderant teaching and practice of the Church did not see it as merely a "custom of

the period” to be discontinued in any of the remaining nineteen centuries. Accordingly, as I noted earlier, the 1983 Code of Canon Law stated quite clearly that such “customs” attain the “force of law” if they have been practiced for a sufficient amount of time (canons 23-28), and as such, they are impervious to alteration, especially from documents such as *Inter Insigniores* in which the magisterium is not setting out to address the issue of head coverings formally and directly at all. Moreover, the 1917 code did not consider head coverings a “custom of the period” (the “period” being the first century Christian Church) since it issued a strict law that the practice was to be continued in the twentieth century. If head coverings were (as the CDF in 1976 considered “probable”) nothing more than mutable “customs of the period,” then the 1917 Code and the whole of Catholic tradition which insisted on women’s head coverings for nineteen hundred years would be wrong.

- 3) This leads us to investigate precisely what the CDF meant when it said “such requirements no longer have a normative value.” Since, as I noted above, the Congregation was basing its conclusion about the cessation of “normative value” on the premise that head coverings were “probably inspired by the customs of the period,” then, by virtue of the indecisiveness of the word “probably,” the conclusion about “normative value” was also based on an unproven premise. Therefore this unqualified and absolute conclusion (*i.e.*, “such requirements no longer have a normative value”) is logically invalid. The rules of logic demand that one cannot base a certain conclusion on a premise that is uncertain. Furthermore, that all the popes previous to the pontificate of Paul VI understood the practice of head coverings to have “normative value” is demonstrated by the mere fact that the Church, long after the first century – indeed for almost two millennia – continued insisting that women wear head coverings in Church. After all, if head coverings, being merely a “custom of the period,” had in reality no “normative value” after the first century, then the patristic, medieval, and post-medieval Church was mistaken in not seeing the practice as a mere first century idiosyncrasy, and were thus also mistaken in requiring all its women to abide by such a needless practice for nearly two thousand years.
- 4) Since in *Inter Insigniores* the CDF does not cover the issue of head coverings in any depth whatsoever but is only interested in the case against ordaining women, we do a disservice to the magisterium and to the Church at large if we attempt to use these cursory statements on head coverings as an official teaching of the Church.
- 5) Last but certainly not least, we must also consider that since *Inter Insigniores* was written in 1976, it was under the 1917 Code of Canon Law which specifically required the wearing of head coverings. Hence, it would be a gross breach of ecclesiastical protocol if

the CDF were to be interpreted as countermanding what the 1917 Code of Canon Law had already commanded.

- 6) It is quite likely that the cursory statement on head coverings in *Inter Insigniores* was not what the Prefect of the Congregation himself concluded regarding the exegesis of 1 Corinthians 11; rather, it was the product of more progressive exegetes. Not only is this possibility suggested by the direct reference in *Inter Insigniores* to “exegetes” who had conferred with Cardinal Seper,¹ but it is also evident if one reads the then current polemical literature on the issue of head coverings and other related matters during the 1970s, both in Catholic and Protestant circles. Women’s issues were one of the more controversial topics of the 1970s, and progressive thinkers were making quite an impact with neo-orthodox interpretations of Scripture. The books advocating a reinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 11, advising that head coverings were culturally biased against a modernized society, became the first shots across the bow in this ongoing war. These new interpretations not only went against 2000 years of Catholic tradition but also 2000 years of Old Testament tradition. In Old Testament times, uncovering a woman’s head was seen as a way of humiliating her or punishing her (*cf.* Nm 5:12-18, Is 3:16-17, Sg 5:7). Even in late second millennium BC, a Hebrew woman would never consider entering the Temple without a head covering. Today, however, in light of all the other signs of a generation who has sought to loosen what it regards as the shackles of tradition, progressive exegetes claim that such proscriptions of Scripture are based on nothing more than the cultural biases of St. Paul and the early Church.
- 7) The Vatican itself, to this very day, has not changed the practice of having women wear head coverings, at least on certain occasions. In the recent meeting, for example, between President Barrack Obama and Pope Benedict XVI, the women in the presidential entourage, including Mrs. Obama, were donned with black veils when walking through the Vatican and in the presence of the pope.
- 8) The eastern churches, both of Catholicism and the Orthodox, still require head coverings for women.

Fathers of the Church in Consensus:

Lastly, in the event that the CDW has not seen a compilation of the patristic and medieval consensus on the issue of head coverings, I offer the following as evidence that neither the Fathers nor medievals understood head coverings as a mere custom of the period, but as an Apostolic teaching that was to be preserved as a sign of the authority of the man over the

¹ “...and exegetes define its meaning in this way...”

woman, as designed by God himself. Despite what our modern society may want to believe otherwise, that relationship has not changed, and neither should its signs.

Clement of Alexandria: “For this is the wish of the Word, since it is becoming for her to pray veiled. They say that the wife of Aeneas, through excess of propriety, did not, even in her terror at the capture of Troy, uncover herself; but, though fleeing from the conflagration, remained veiled.”²

Augustine: “It is not as though one part of humanity belongs to God as its author and another to darkness, as some claim. Rather the part that has the power of ruling and the part that is ruled are both from God. Thus the apostle says, ‘A man certainly should not cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but a woman is the glory of man.’”³

“We ought not therefore so to understand that man is made in the image of the supreme Trinity, that is, in the image of God, as that the same image should be understood to be in three human beings; especially when the apostle says that the man is the image of God, and on that account removes the covering from his head, which he warns the woman to use, speaking thus: ‘For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man.’ What then shall we say to this? If the woman fills up the image of the trinity after the measure of her own person, why is the man still called that image after she has been taken out of his side? Or if even one person of a human being out of three can be called the image of God, as each person also is God in the supreme Trinity itself, why is the woman also not the image of God? For she is instructed for this very reason to cover her head, which he is forbidden to do because he is the image of God....”

“But because too great a progression towards inferior things is dangerous to that rational cognition that is conversant with things corporeal and temporal; this ought to have power on its head, which the covering indicates, by which it is signified that it ought to be restrained. For a holy and pious meaning is pleasing to the holy angels. For God sees not after the way of time, neither does anything new take place in His vision and knowledge, when anything is done in time and transitorily, after the way in which such things affect the senses, whether the carnal senses of animals and men, or even the heavenly senses of the angels.”⁴

Ambrosiaster: “The veil signifies power, and the angels are bishops... “This was the church’s tradition, but since the Corinthians were ignoring it, Paul made his appeal to nature.”⁵

² *The Instructor*, Book III, Ch. XI.

³ *Against the Manichaeans*, 2, 26, 40.

⁴ *On the Trinity*, Bk XII, Ch 7.

⁵ Commentary on Paul’s Epistles as cited in the *Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum* 81:122, 124.

Ambrose: One act is becoming to a man, another to a woman...How unsightly it is for a man to act like a woman!”⁶

Chrysostom: “Being covered is a mark of subjection and authority. It induces the woman to be humble and preserve her virtue, for the virtue and honor of the governed is to dwell in obedience.”⁷

“For this cause He left it to nature to provide her with a covering, that even of it she might learn this lesson and veil herself.”⁸

“A woman does not acquire a man’s dignity by having her head uncovered but rather loses her own. Her shame and reproach thus derive from her desire to be like a man as well as from her actions.”⁹

“No governor should come before the king without the symbols of his office. Such a person would never dare to approach the royal throne without his military girdle and cloak, and in the same way, a man who approaches the throne of God should wear the symbols of his office, which in this case is represented by having one’s head uncovered.”¹⁰

“To oppose this teaching is contentiousness, which is irrational. The Corinthians might object, but if they do so, they are going against the practice of the universal church.”¹¹

Jerome: “It is usual in the monasteries of Egypt and Syria for virgins and widows who have vowed themselves to God and have renounced the world and have trodden under foot its pleasures, to ask the mothers of their communities to cut their hair; not that afterwards they go about with heads uncovered in defiance of the apostles command.”¹²

Tertullian: “To her, then, to whom it is equally unbecoming to be shaven or shorn, it is equally becoming to be covered.”¹³

⁶ *Letter to Layman*, 78; FC 26:436.

⁷ *Homilies on First Corinthians*, 26, 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 14, 6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 26, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26, 5.

¹² *Letter CXLVII*, 5

¹³ *On the Veiling of Virgins*, Chap VII.

“Behold two diverse names, Man and Woman ‘every one’ in each case: two laws, mutually distinctive; on the one hand (a law) of veiling, on the other (a law) of baring.”¹⁴

“What is the meaning of the expression ‘every woman’ except women of every age, every rank and every circumstance? No one is excepted.”¹⁵

“It is on account of the angels, he says, that the woman’s head is to be covered, because the angels revolted from God on account of the daughters of men.”¹⁶

“Thus he says concerning the veiling of women: ‘Does not nature teach you this?’ Again, in saying in his letter to the Romans that the Gentiles do by nature what the law prescribes, he hints at the existence of natural law and a nature founded on law.”¹⁷

Liber Pontificalis: “Pope Linus forbade women to enter a church with uncovered heads.”¹⁸

The Teaching of the Fathers on the Role of Women:

The teachings of the Fathers on the requirement for women to wear head coverings coincides with their teaching on the submission of women in general. A representative sample is listed below:

Ignatius: “...and one Church which the holy apostles established from one end of the earth to the other by the blood of Christ, and by their own sweat and toil; it behooves you also, therefore, as ‘a peculiar people, and a holy nation,’ to perform all things with harmony in Christ. Wives, be ye subject to your husbands in the fear of God; and ye virgins, to Christ in purity, not counting marriage an abomination, but desiring that which is better, not for the reproach of wedlock, but for the sake of meditating on the law.”¹⁹

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1

¹⁵ *On Prayer*, 22, 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22, 5.

¹⁷ *The Chaplet* 6, 1; FC 40:242

¹⁸ Pope Linus was elected in 67 AD as the second Pope of the Catholic Church, he died in 76 AD and is buried near the tomb of St. Peter.

¹⁹ *To the Philadelphians*, Ch 4.

Augustine: “For the man is the head of the woman in perfect order when Christ who is the Wisdom of God is the head of the man.”²⁰

“Nor can it be doubted, that it is more consonant with the order of nature that men should bear rule over women, than women over men. It is with this principle in view that the apostle says, ‘The head of the woman is the man;’ and, ‘Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands.’ So also the Apostle Peter writes: ‘Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.’”²¹

“For the name of Christ is on the lips of every man: it is invoked by the just man in doing justice, by the perjurer in the act of deceiving, by the king to confirm his rule, by the soldier to nerve himself for battle, by the husband to establish his authority, by the wife to confess her submission, by the father to enforce his command, by the son to declare his obedience, by the master in supporting his right to govern, by the slave in performing his duty...”²²

“Nor can it be doubted that it is more consonant with the order of nature that men should bear rule over women than women over men. It is with this principle in view that the apostle says, ‘The head of the woman is the man’ [1 Cor 11:3]; and ‘Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands.’”²³

Clement of Alexandria: “The ruling power is therefore the head. And if ‘the Lord is head of the man, and the man is head of the woman,’ the man, ‘being the image and glory of God, is lord of the woman.’ Wherefore also in the Epistle to the Ephesians it is written, ‘Subjecting, ourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the Church; and He is the Savior of the body. Husbands, love your wives, as also Christ loved the Church. So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh.’ And in that to the Colossians it is said, ‘Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as is fit in the Lord.’”²⁴

Chrysostom: “Wives be subject to your husbands” he writes to wives: “That is, be subject for God’s sake, because this adorns you, Paul says, not them. For I mean not that subjection which is due to a master nor yet that alone which is of nature but that offered for God’s sake.”²⁵

²⁰ *Against the Manichaeans* 2, 12, 16.

²¹ *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, Bk 1, Ch 10.

²² Letters, CCXXXII.

²³ *On Marriage and Concupiscence* 1, 9, 10, NPNF1 5:267.

²⁴ *Stromata*, Bk 4, Ch 8.

²⁵ *Homilies on Colossians*, NPNF1 12:304.

“Observe again that Paul has exhorted husbands and wives to reciprocity...To love therefore, is the husband’s part, to yield pertains to the other side. If, then, each one contributes his own part, all stand firm. From being loved, the wife too becomes loving; and from her being submissive, the husband learns to yield.”²⁶

“‘Subjecting yourselves one to another,’ he says, ‘in the fear of Christ.’ For if thou submit thyself for a ruler’s sake, or for money’s sake, or from respectfulness, much more from the fear of Christ...rather it were better that both masters and slaves be servants to one another...Thus does God will it to be, for he washed his disciples’ feet.”²⁷

“Then after saying, ‘The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is of the Church,’ he further adds, ‘and He is the Saviour of the body.’ For indeed the head is the saving health of the body. He had already laid down beforehand for man and wife, the ground and provision of their love, assigning to each their proper place, to the one that of authority and forethought, to the other that of submission. As then ‘the Church,’ that is, both husbands and wives, ‘is subject unto Christ, so also ye wives submit yourselves to your husbands, as unto God.’ For she is the body, not to dictate to the head, but to submit herself and obey.”

“Wherefore, saith he, ‘Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.’...For if it is their duty to be in subjection ‘as unto the Lord,’ how saith He that they must depart from them for the Lord’s sake? Yet their duty indeed it is, their bounded duty...For he who resists these external authorities, those of governments, I mean, ‘withstandeth the ordinance of God (Rom 13:2), much more does she who submits not to her husband. Such was God’s will from the beginning.”²⁸

Ambrosiaster: As the church takes its beginning from Christ and therefore is subject to him, so too does woman take hers from the man and is subject to him.”²⁹

Epiphanius: “And the apostolic word has also escaped their notice: ‘I do not permit a woman to teach in such a way as to exercise authority over men. She is to preserve the virtue of quietness.’ And again, ‘For man is not from the woman, but woman from man.’”³⁰

Serverian: Since man did not make woman, the question here does not concern the origin of woman. Rather it concerns only submission.”³¹

²⁶ NPNF1 13:304

²⁷ *Homilies on Ephesians*, Homily XIX, NPNF1, 142.

²⁸ *Homilies on Ephesians*, NPNF1, 143-144.

²⁹ CSEL 81.3:117-118

³⁰ *Panarion*, 49, 3.

“For just as God has nobody over him in all creation, so man has no one over him in the natural world. But a woman does - she has man over her.”³²

Theodoret: “Paul is particularly concerned here with believing women who are married to unbelieving men: thus, their subjection is in service to the Lord, that is, as the Lord commands.”³³

“Man has the first place because of the order of creation.”³⁴

Tertullian: “Do you go forth (to meet them) already arrayed in the cosmetics and ornaments of prophets and apostles; drawing your whiteness from simplicity, your ruddy hue from modesty; painting your eyes with bashfulness, and your mouth with silence; implanting in your ears the words of God; fitting on your necks the yoke of Christ. Submit your head to your husbands, and you will be enough adorned.”³⁵

“Now, when I find to what God belong these precepts, whether in their germ or their development, I have no difficulty in knowing to whom the apostle also belongs. But he declares that ‘wives ought to be in subjection to their husbands:’ what reason does he give for this? ‘Because,’ says he, ‘the husband is the head of the wife.’ Pray tell me, Marcion, does your god build up the authority of his law on the work of the Creator? This, however, is a comparative trifle; for he actually derives from the same source the condition of his Christ and his Church; for he says: ‘even as Christ is the head of the Church;’ and again, in like manner: ‘He who loves his wife, loves his own flesh, even as Christ loved the Church.’”³⁶

Origen: “First, if our prophetesses have spoken, show us the signs of prophecy in them. Second, even if the daughters of Philip did prophesy [Acts 21:8-9], they did not do so inside the church. Likewise in the Old Testament, although Deborah was reputed to be a prophetess [Judges 4:4], there is no indication that she ever corporately addressed the people in the way that Isaiah or Jeremiah did. The same is true of Huldah [2 Kings 22:14].”³⁷

³¹ *Pauline Commentary from the Greek Church*, 15:260.

³² *Ibid.*, 15:261.

³³ *Interpretation of the Letter to the Colossians* PG 82:621A.

³⁴ *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 234.

³⁵ *On the Apparel of Women*, Ch XIII.

³⁶ *Tertullian Against Marcion*, Ch XVIII.

³⁷ *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 4, 74, 6-16

Thomas Aquinas: “For though the wife be her husband's equal in the marriage act, yet in matters of housekeeping, the head of the woman is the man, as the Apostle says (1 Corinthians 11:3).”³⁸

“For the higher reason which is assigned to contemplation is compared to the lower reason which is assigned to action, and the husband is compared to his wife, who should be ruled by her husband, as Augustine says (De Trinitate xii,3,7,12).”³⁹

“The Apostle says (1 Corinthians 14:34): ‘Let women keep silence in the churches,’ and (1 Timothy 2:12): ‘I suffer not a woman to teach.’ Now this pertains especially to the grace of the word. Therefore the grace of the word is not becoming to women. I answer that, Speech may be employed in two ways: in one way privately, to one or a few, in familiar conversation, and in this respect the grace of the word may be becoming to women; in another way, publicly, addressing oneself to the whole church, and this is not permitted to women. First and chiefly, on account of the condition attaching to the female sex, whereby woman should be subject to man, as appears from Genesis 3:16.”⁴⁰

³⁸ *Summa Theologica*, Treatise on the Theological Virtues, Question 32, Article 8.

³⁹ *Summa Theologica*, Treatise on Gratuitous Grace, Question 128, Article 4.

⁴⁰ *Summa Theologica*, Question 177, Article 2.