Because of the Angels

1 Corinthians 11:10

Have you noticed the frontal assault on the biblical concept of genders? Ten to fifteen years ago there was a cultural move towards androgyny, which could be defined as a gender-neutral society. You may remember the popping up of “unisex” barber shops…is it even acceptable now to call a hair-cutting business a “barber shop”?

Having accepted androgyny, our culture is now advocating gender fluidity. It is no longer proper for men to be masculine and women to be feminine. Advertisements will feature someone who looks to me like a woman, but is speaking with a male voice. As a tenor I can sing pretty high, but I am still an octave lower than all the women I know.

We all shake our heads at the male swimmer who is winning races over all the women; these girls lose the chance for national competition because of the immoral worldview embraced by the current administration; did I mention that they all use the same locker room?

Christ’s church should have nothing to do with embracing a blurring of genders. 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is the central passage on gender issues. Paul argues that the church should always observe the cultural distinctions between male and female. Folks have used this passage to make sure men don’t wear hats in church and women do, and please be sure Bob cuts his hair…it’s too long!

A better translation would help the reader realize Paul is speaking about something that hangs down from the head. The preposition used is the same as when the pigs in Matthew 8 went down from the hill and drowned in the sea. Since both genders wore long, flowing robes, the veil distinguished males from the females. Where I travel in Africa, the women cut their hair short like mine, and traditional garments are essentially robes; however, the women are clearly recognizable because they wrap their heads in colorful scarves. Every culture has masculine and feminine markers; veils made that distinction in Corinth.

Paul’s audience would have enjoyed his teachings. The women and men, sitting on opposite sides of the room--the women and children together and separate from the men and adolescent boys--would have been laughing. Which woman wants to start shaving her face or chopping off her longer, styled hair?

Why argue then that maintaining gender distinctions is for the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10). Angels, also called “Watchers,” observe the salvation and discipleship of humans. These holy, spirit beings “go to school” on what it means for humans, created in God’s image, to worship and serve the Creator. Before the creation of the world, these holy angels faced a temptation and made a choice: should they be like the most high God or should they remain in their first estate, that of a ministering spirit?

Since the angels appreciate masculine men and feminine women, so should we. Christ’s church should resist the blurring of the genders, even when the culture condemns us for doing so.