

I Corinthians 11:2-16

Paul wrote the letter known as I Corinthians to the church at Corinth primarily to correct major issues in the church body. Paul founded this church (Acts 18:1), and ministered there for more than eighteen months before departing. Paul subsequently received reports from friends in the assembly (I Corinthians 1:11), and was presented with questions for him to answer.¹ Paul responded in I Corinthians, and addressed both the problems in the church and the assembly's questions. The letter contains six sections: introduction, division and discord in the church (chapters 1-6), practical issues of faith (chapters 7-10), church order (chapters 11-14), the guarantee of the faith (chapter 15), and the conclusion.

Chapter 11 begins the third division of the letter, addressing church order. Immediately preceding this chapter, Paul discusses the practical aspects of being a Christ follower in Corinth. He deals with marriage and personal freedom issues, and then transitions into instruction on how the church should act. The first correction found in 11:2-16 deals with a subject that will contribute to understanding how women may serve in ministry; however, women in service is not Paul's primary topic. In Corinth, the church was engaging in practices that blurred the distinction between men and women.²

The specific issue the Corinthian church struggled with relates to head coverings in corporate worship. In verses 4-6, Paul specifically addresses this practice and how the Corinthians should understand it. As Paul does this, his argument seems to be based on a

¹ Thomas Lee and David Black, *The New Testament, Its Background and Message*, 2d. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 404.

² Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Discovering Biblical Equality, Complementarity Without Hierarchy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press), 159.

hierarchy established by God at creation. In this hierarchy, women and men are equal (v. 11-12), but have different responsibilities in regards to their relationship to each other (v.3). A proper understanding of what Paul is teaching, as well as how it applies to the modern reader, is crucial. Paul's argument is complex, and does not lend itself to easy interpretation. Paul's convoluted arguments, the distance between modern culture and Corinth in the First Century, the problem of discerning exactly what practice Paul has an issue with, and the difficulty of establishing a definite meaning for some of the primary terms Paul used in this section all contribute to making this passage problematic for interpreters.³

I Corinthians 11:2-3

In the introductory portion, Paul begins by commending the Corinthians for remembering him in their practices. This statement seems almost disingenuous, if not blatantly sarcastic, given the way Paul has rebuked the Corinthians in the first ten chapters of his letter. But this conclusion is not necessarily accurate, as this introduction also makes sense as a *captatio benevolentiae*.⁴ Paul starts with praise in order to win the goodwill of his hearers, before offering them another rebuke for their actions. Paul mentions the *τὰς παραδόσεις* (traditions) he taught the Corinthians, and how they were mindful of them. This focus on their prior willingness to heed his instruction sets the stage for this new correction they now need to implement. Unlike his beginning in 7:1, Paul does not mention a question he is answering for the Corinthians. It is likely that he heard about their practices through those who brought him news of the church's

³ Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987, reprint 1989), 492

⁴ Barrett, C.K., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 247.

troubles and wrote to correct them preemptively. He thought their actions were causing enough of an issue to address in this letter.⁵

Verse 3 begins Paul's argument about head coverings. He begins with what Fee identifies as a *theologoumenon*, a statement about theology that is in the area of opinion not doctrine.⁶ This statement is the cornerstone of his teaching in this passage. Paul tells the Corinthians, in a comparison that visually resembles a mathematical compound inequality, about the interdependence of man, woman, Christ, and God. Paul writes that Christ is the head of every man, man is the head of every woman, and God is the head of Christ. The way the comparison is constructed, the middle term is accentuated by the outer terms, which is fitting since the male/female relationship is at issue.⁷ Some translations (ESV, TLB) translate "man" and "woman" as "husband" and "wife." Paul uses the generic nouns *ἀνὴρ* and *γυνή* in this passage, which carry the sense of both meanings. The specific meaning of the passage has to be determined by context. The translations that use "husband" and "wife" come to that conclusion by assuming the passage is about hierarchical relationships. However, there is no article indicating that "husband" and "wife" should be used.⁸

Understanding what Paul is establishing in his three-part comparison begins with determining the meaning of the common word driving each comparison: *κεφαλή*. This term is

⁵ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 530. Fee thinks Paul was reasonably underwhelmed by his own argument.

⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 504.

⁷ Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One In Christ, An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 109.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

difficult to understand because of the nature of the argument Paul is building. The word is literally translated “head,” but it is also used metaphorically in this passage. The metaphorical meaning has to be determined from the cultural context, as its usage here is unclear. The metaphorical usage in I Corinthians 11:3 is the only time that Paul uses the image of “head” where it is not directly tied to a “body,” making the meaning even more difficult to determine.⁹

There are two primary interpretations for Paul’s meaning of *κεφαλή* in this passage. The first carries the idea of “leader” or “ruler.” This is the traditional understanding of Paul’s words. There are several reasons why this meaning could be correct, beginning with the fact that Greek lexicons generally give this as the metaphorical meaning.¹⁰ Secondly, in Hebrew thought, this metaphor would be indicative of an authoritative relationship where man rules over woman.¹¹ If Paul is addressing Jews, they will understand that he means authority. Combining this meaning with verses 7-9, it paints the picture that Paul is establishing male headship based on the order of creation. This conclusion drives the complementarian argument, and is reflected in the commentaries written by these scholars. Peter Naylor sums up this view when he states that the hierarchy implied by *κεφαλή* “is of function” not of value.¹²

The second possible meaning for *κεφαλή* is “source.” In Greek thought, *κεφαλή* as a metaphor had a wider range of meaning than in Hebrew.¹³ Instead of “head” meaning “ruler,” it

⁹ Pierce and Groothuis, 149.

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Publishers, 2010), 122-123.

¹¹ Werner Neuer, *Men and Women in Christian Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 111.

¹² Peter Naylor, *I Corinthians* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2004), 274.

¹³ Payne, 95.

would be more natural to read “head” as “source,” similar to the meaning of “headwaters.”

Payne identifies this as the most intelligible meaning to “head” in this passage because it makes the most sense in the Corinthian’s Greek context.¹⁴ There are examples of Paul using this meaning in his other letters. In Ephesians 4:15 and Colossians 2:19, Paul speaks of Christ as the *κεφαλή*, where “source” makes sense as the proper meaning of “head.”¹⁵ In addition, the translators of the LXX only rarely used *κεφαλή* to mean authority, indicating that most of them would not regard *κεφαλή* as the right word choice to represent authoritative leadership.¹⁶

Additional supporting evidence for “source” comes from Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria, who concluded that *κεφαλή* must mean “source.” To interpret it as “head” would support an Arian understanding of this verse, namely that Christ must submit to God.¹⁷ This charge of subordinationism may be spurious, but their assessment shows that early patristic writers thought that “source” was Paul’s intended meaning.

One other view of *κεφαλή* in this passage is a moderate position that attempts to reconcile the two primary views, arguing that *κεφαλή* means both “source” and “authority” in the passages. Schriener examines both sides of the argument and concludes that both meanings are present in the text.¹⁸ However, this position contributes little to the discussion of what Paul is saying in regards to relationships between men and women. Charting a middle course leaves both options

¹⁴ Ibid., 97-100.

¹⁵ Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill, *Good News For Women* (Grand Rapids: MI, Baker Books, 1997), 151.

¹⁶ Payne, 95-96.

¹⁷ Groothuis, 151.

¹⁸ James R. Beck, ed., and Craig L. Blomberg, ed., *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 212-213.

open, but makes it more difficult to determine Paul's meaning. If Paul was alternating between the literal and metaphorical sense of *κεφαλή*, the passage becomes even more complex, introducing an unnecessary layer of meaning to his message.

The arguments for and against the two primary understandings of *κεφαλή* are both very persuasive. Wayne Grudem did an exhaustive study of *κεφαλή* and its usage in the time period when Paul was writing. He concluded that there were no uses of *κεφαλή* that are best translated as "source" in the contemporary writing. In addition, he points out that no Greek lexicon lists "source" as a possible meaning for *κεφαλή*. His initial research concluded that "authority" is the only established meaning in Greek at the time of Paul's writing.¹⁹ Many other works have countered the claim that Chrysostom uses *κεφαλή* as "source," concluding that he most certainly thought *κεφαλή* meant "authority."²⁰ In contrast, however, Philip Payne rebuts all of the claims that Grudem makes, listing multiple Greek lexicons that contain "source" as the meaning of *κεφαλή*. Payne cites contemporary research that argues "authority" was actually an uncommon meaning for *κεφαλή* when Paul was writing. Payne cites various texts from the time period that translate *κεφαλή* as "source." Gordon Fee also concludes that the meaning of *κεφαλή* as "ruler" would be exceptional due to its rare use.²¹

The best conclusion of what Paul means, therefore, must flow from the text and Paul's purpose in writing. The main point that Paul is trying to communicate has very little to do with a

¹⁹ Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism*, 125.

²⁰ Wayne Grudem, ed., *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 146-157.

²¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 502-503.

hierarchy of authority between men and women, but is instead intended to correct practices in the Corinthian church that were straining and confusing male/female relationships. In the preceding chapter, Paul states that he wants the Corinthians to “give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” (10:32). This theme carries into his present discussion, as the men and women in Corinth are giving offense by their practices in worship. Paul is not teaching on authority structures, but on proper order.²² The idea in verse 11-12 of interdependence clarifies that Paul is not establishing a creation-ordered hierarchy, but showing the uniqueness of man and woman in creation.²³ Fee rightly points out that any understanding of this text that concludes with a hierarchy had to bring hierarchy with them into the reading, because the context does not support it.²⁴

Looking at the comparison itself, it is of note that Paul has stepped back from the specific circumstances to view interdependence from a distance. A good reason for this is that he had to step back far enough to get the Corinthians to agree with him before making a direct correction.²⁵ With a big picture perspective, the pride of the Corinthians would be less likely to prevent them from receiving Paul’s teaching. Establishing a clear tie to the relationship between God, Christ, man, and woman grounds Paul’s argument in something they would believe already; this makes sense of his appeal to their judgment (v. 13).

²² David E. Garland, *I Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 513

²³ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 523.

²⁴ Pierce and Groothuis, 151.

²⁵ Frederic Louis Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1889), 535.

There are two possible meanings in Paul's comparison, closely related to the two possible meanings for *κεφαλή*: If Paul means "authority," he is creating an authority structure that should be followed, not just in Corinth, but in all churches and walks of life. Paul would be arguing from creation, and the innate authority of man over woman could not be limited. This is the traditional view, and the complementarian framework is built upon this supposed creation structure. Those who hold this view understand that the authority structure is one of function not essence due to the inclusion of Christ and God, hence eliminating subordinationism. That idea fits nicely with the comparison to men and women: they are the same, but have different authority structures (Galatians 3:28).²⁶

If "source" is the meaning Paul has in mind, the comparison becomes one of chronological order. Initially, Christ was the source of man at creation, man was the source of woman at her creation, and God was the source of Jesus at His incarnation. This comparison is not arguing for a relationship hierarchy, or the structure confuses the authoritative positions. One would expect God's authority to be first, followed by Christ's, then followed by man's. However, the structure of encapsulation highlights the middle term, revealing Paul's intent to discuss the relationship of men and women in the context of God's theme of interdependence. Paul desires relationships in the church to reflect the dependence of each second term in this comparison on its source. Relationships in the church should be respectful, not disgraceful and offensive.²⁷ In conclusion, the proper understanding of *κεφαλή* is "source;" this is the meaning that Paul has in mind in verse 3.

²⁶ MacArthur page 254.

²⁷ Alvera Micklesen, *Women, Authority, and the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 137.

I Corinthians 11:4-10

In verses 4-6, Paul addresses the issue of covering one's head during the worship gathering.²⁸ Commentators are divided on what Paul means when he says "prays and prophesies." Some believe that Paul is being very specific and "prays" and "prophesies" are the only two actions that Paul is addressing here. Grudem states clearly that the New Testament always distinguishes teaching and prophesy, and taking the endorsement of one as endorsement of the other is incorrect.²⁹ Others believe that Paul is speaking of all functions of the church gathering, because "prays" and "prophesies" are representative of the two core practices of the church. As Fee states, "Paul is being representative, not exhaustive" in the functions he addresses.³⁰ In chapter 14, Paul indicates that prophecy is the highest gift given to the church. If women were allowed to participate in that role, it seems likely to conclude that they could fulfill all other functions of ministry.³¹

In either case, Paul asserts that women and men both have the same ability to perform these functions. Paul states that men are to leave their heads uncovered because it is shameful for them to cover themselves, and women must cover themselves in order to not be shamed. "Head" is alternating between literal and metaphorical meanings in this passage, tying Paul's statement to verse 3. Covering the head means covering the literal head, and dishonoring the head means to

²⁸ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 505.

²⁹ Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism*, 136.

³⁰ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 506

³¹ Payne, 124.

dishonor the metaphorical head (man dishonors Christ, woman dishonors man). There are two primary views on what is the head covering Paul refers to: a veil, or a woman's hair.

The veil argument states that women generally wore a veil if they were not disreputable, as this social custom represented propriety.³² Paul is telling the women “keep your veils on,” because removing them is causing discord in the congregation. If this view is correct, Paul is saying that no man would cover his head with a veil, because it is disgraceful for him, and no woman can cast aside her husband's authority by removing her veil. It makes sense that some translations render *γυνή* as wife here, because the passage makes more sense as a wife dishonoring her husband if the veil is meant as a symbol of authority.³³ This is why many commentators assume that the topic in 4-6 is the relationship between husbands and wives.³⁴ If a respectable married woman must cover her head, then removing the cover would disgrace her husband and bring Paul's admonition. There are several difficulties with this view, the first being that the word veil is never mentioned in this passage and has to be supplied by the reader. Payne argues that there is no evidence to support Greek women veiling themselves in the first century so reading a veiling custom into this text would be anachronistic.³⁵ There is also no clear evidence that it would be dishonorable to disregard the veiling custom.³⁶

³² Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969, reprint 1994.), 206.

³³ Grudem, *Countering the Claims of Evangelical Feminism*, 204-205.

³⁴ F.W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* 2 ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1954), 249.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Payne, 125-126.

The second view is that Paul is addressing a lack of adherence to the hairstyle customs of Corinthian culture. Men in the church were wearing long, effeminate hair, which would be representative of homosexual men in this culture. Paul's condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27, and the cultural connotations of this hairstyle in Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture indicates this practice would certainly bring disgrace to the men in Corinth.³⁷ This behavior would also bring dishonor to God and ties in with Paul's inclusion of "the angels" in verse 10. The continued flow of discussion in verses 7-9 would center on presenting oneself honorably.

In contrast to the men, women are letting their hair hang loosely over their shoulders. This practice would bring dishonor, because it would typically indicate that she was available for pagan sex acts, or that she was sexually free.³⁸ Loosing the hair also indicated participation in cultic practices in the city of Corinth, specifically the Dionysiac cult.³⁹ Paul tells the women that when they loose their hair, they are assuming the station of an adulteress or one with "her head shaved" (v. 5). This connects with the practice of shaving a woman's head when she was convicted of adultery.⁴⁰ The Jewish process to determine if a woman has been unfaithful to her husband in Numbers 5:18 supports the idea that loose hair is equated with sexual immorality. When a Jewish woman was accused of sexual immorality, her hair would be loosed on account

³⁷ Ibid., 116-117.

³⁸ Ibid., 133-134.

³⁹ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 137.

of her supposed impropriety, and when she was found guilty her head would be shaved.⁴¹ The difficulty with this interpretation stems from verse 15 where Paul says that a woman's long hair is given as a covering, which seems to differ from the covering mentioned in 4-6.⁴² In addition, the text does not lend itself to the understanding that "covering" actually means "put her hair up." Paul could have said, "put your hair up to be covered," but instead he uses a very convoluted argument to make that point. It is likely that Paul is trying to be delicate with his language because the topic he is addressing is a difficult one.

In either case, Paul is saying that the practices of the men would dishonor Christ as creator, who made them male and female; and the practices of the women are dishonoring men because they were created distinctly from his side. In the context of this work, it is not necessary to know exactly which practice was being condemned, because the principle Paul is concerned with is the dishonoring practices that men and women were engaging in that caused division in the assembly.⁴³ It makes the text more understandable as a unit to understand the admonition in regards to hair, specifically because hair is mentioned in the text and head coverings are not. The cultural context and customs of Rome, Greece, and the Jews also make the most likely meaning of Paul's admonitions to men and women in Corinth about their hair.

In verses 7-9 Paul brings the argument from the local circumstances to a more general context based on creation. Paul tells the Corinthians that covering the head for a man is

⁴¹ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her, A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (Danvers, MA: Crossroads Publishing Company, 1994), 227. Payne, 147.

⁴² Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 512.

⁴³ Roy L. Laurin, *First Corinthians, Where Life Matures* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1950), 183.

dishonoring because he is the image and glory of God, and a woman should cover her head for she is the glory of man. He then says that this is because woman was made from man and for man, not the reverse. This argument harkens back to Genesis 2:18-25, where God recognized that it was time to make man a companion. God put Adam to sleep and fashioned Eve from his rib. Adam then named her, and they were united in marriage.

Paul could be talking about created order, reaffirming the subordination of women to man.⁴⁴ In this view, woman is described as subordinate to man with the express purpose of bringing him glory.⁴⁵ MacArthur writes of these verses that, “man is the image and glory of God, because it showed what a great creature God could make, but woman is the image and glory of man, because it shows what a great creature God can make from man.”⁴⁶ Man glorifies God by representing His image properly in conduct, and woman glorifies man in the same way. Women will bring glory to God by keeping their subordinate place to their authority (man, verse 3), as men do to their authority (Christ, verse 3).⁴⁷ Paul’s main point is to make sure women know their place in the church. This view has to be correct if *κεφαλή* means authority.

The second view is substantially different from the first. Instead of Paul teaching that women should know their place with respect to man via creation, Paul is applying verse 7-9 to blur gender lines, reminding men and women that God created them for each other. Assuming

⁴⁴ Hodge, 210.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Romans 9-16* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1994), 258.

⁴⁷ Gregory J. Lockwood, *I Corinthians* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publish House, 2000), 371.

that the argument Paul was making in verse 4-6 is about long hair on men and unbound hair on women, this passage is specifically about proper sexual relationships. Men should desire to be with the partner that God made for them, because it reflects the original design of the Creator.⁴⁸ Woman is the glory of man, because she is his sexual partner.⁴⁹ When men and women engage in a proper sexual relationship it brings honor to the One who planned it, but if women become sexually free and men work against nature by being homosexuals, the sexual relationship no longer glorifies God. This view gains credence from the fact that the word “glory” never refers to subordination in the Scripture.⁵⁰ It is not clear from the text that the Corinthians were actually engaging in immoral behavior, but their presentation in public worship could have led to this assumption by church members and the community. Paul corrects this practice because he wants the church to have every opportunity to win people to Christ, and this behavior could hamper their influence in spreading the Gospel (I Corinthians 10:33).

Verse 10 is regarded as one of the more difficult passages to interpret in all of Scripture, especially for the subordination view. Paul makes two statements that are difficult to parse: that women should have “authority over her head,” and this is “because of the angels.” Fee argues the reason that Paul uses “authority” and “because of the angels” is that these are references to questions from the Corinthians. This would make interpretation difficult, because these questions

⁴⁸ Payne, 148.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁰ Pierce and Groothuis, 152.

are not available to the modern reader.⁵¹ If this is true, it makes sense for Paul to include them in his response after his arguments of verses 3-9, but this is ultimately conjecture.

Understanding what Paul means when he says the woman ought to have *ἐξουσία* over her own head is crucial, and it is heavily influenced by the context of the entire passage. If one concludes that Paul is teaching a created order hierarchy, it would be expected for Paul to say “subjection” not authority.⁵² Women having authority though they are themselves subordinate does not fit the context of what Paul is saying. Complementarians must understand Paul to mean that the woman has a “symbol” of her husband’s authority on her head, instead of having her own authority.⁵³ Godet says that “...most definitely the power she is under should be on her head.”⁵⁴ This means that the word “authority” is actually a metonym for veil.⁵⁵ In light of the presupposition that women must be under the authority of men, some translations like the RSV, have supplied the term veil into the text where it does not exist in the original. This would indicate directly that the authority Paul is speaking of actually rested in her husband. The problem with this view is that it forces *ἐξουσία* to be passive, and there are no other known texts where it is used this way.⁵⁶ In opposition to these conclusions, Grenz says the “Greek term (*ἐξουσία*) cannot be interpreted here as referring to a head covering, because every Pauline use of

⁵¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 518.

⁵² Pierce and Groothuis, 156.

⁵³ Hodge, 211.

⁵⁴ Godet, 550.

⁵⁵ Roy E. Ciampa, and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 531.

⁵⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 519.

the term *ἐξουσία* designates an abstract reality, or one who has that reality.”⁵⁷ In other words, Paul is referring to the authority of a woman over her head, not a literal representation of the authority she is under. Other subordinationists believe that a woman has the authority to prophesy and pray in the church service only when properly adorned with authority given to her by her husband.⁵⁸ Adherents to the subordination view struggle with this verse, because the conclusion that a woman is under another’s authority is required.

The interpretation of this statement becomes a bit easier if it is understood that Paul is not teaching a creation hierarchy, but a proper relationship between the sexes. It would not be odd for Paul to discuss the woman’s authority over her head, if it is recognized that she has authority. Paul already confirms that women are able to pray and give prophecy in church by not rebuking the practice. The woman, Paul says, has complete authority over her head, so she should honor it by respecting herself in creation. This means that while she has the freedom to do with her head as she pleases, she should seek to honor both God and man with her authority. This is a clear reference to verse 4-6 indicating that a woman should take authority and wear her hair up.⁵⁹ This reading makes the text much clearer and would harmonize an otherwise difficult to understand statement.

The second difficulty in verse 10 is Paul’s qualification about woman’s authority being because of the angels. There are three primary views on the meaning of this statement. The first

⁵⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 113.

⁵⁸ MacArthur, 259.

⁵⁹ Payne, 152.

hearkens back to fallen angels who are assumed to have mated with women in Genesis 6:2 to produce the Nephilim (Genesis 6:4). Payne dismisses this conclusion out of hand as a myth from I Enoch 6-19.⁶⁰ Another possibility is that the angels are human messengers visiting the church who are offended by the behavior they witness. This view is espoused of the angels of the churches in Revelation; however, Paul never refers to angels in this way.⁶¹ The most likely conclusion is that Paul means that God's good angels are observing the Corinthian worship services. Paul includes the definite article relating to angels, and this is always used in Scripture to refer to good angels.⁶² As praise is given to God in the worship of His people, angels are witnessing the event, and their presence makes giving offense something to be avoided. Some would argue that angels, as submissive creatures, are naturally offended by women who step outside their role of submission.⁶³ Angels as the guardians of created order are offended by any disregard for that order in worship.⁶⁴ This view is unlikely due to the problem of *ἐξουσία* in this passage, as stated above. Others believe that disrespecting the differences between the sexes, not relating to hierarchy but to creation, is offensive to angels because it is offensive to God. This seems to be the correct view, especially since Paul is not teaching about created order, but about the interdependence of individuals.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 152-153.

⁶¹ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1979, reprint 1997), 42. Payne 152.

⁶² Lockwood, page 374.

⁶³ MacArthur, 259.

⁶⁴ Charles H Talbert, *Reading Corinthians: A Literary and Theological Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2003), 69.

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Paul begins to conclude this pericope by restating his main theme: the interdependence of men and women as ordained by God. The adverb *πλήν* indicates that Paul is honing on the main teaching point of the passage, the one thing that he wanted the Corinthians to understand.⁶⁵ In verse 11-12, Paul states that woman is not independent of man, and man is not independent of woman. Fee sees verses 11-12 as a double chiasm with verses 8-9, underscoring the interdependence of men and women.⁶⁶ The obvious implication is stated in verse 12: woman came from man (Genesis 2:18, referencing back to I Corinthians 11:3), and now all men come from women through birth. Paul includes the phrase “in the Lord” in verse 11, however, to be sure that the Corinthians know he is not just speaking of physical birth, but of the interdependence of men and women. This highlights how important it is for men and women to respect one another, and to stop disgracing themselves in their appearance.

For the subordinationist, the reason Paul includes verse 11-12 is to protect against misogyny.⁶⁷ Even though men hold a position that gives them administration and leadership, women are indispensable and of equal worth (Galatians 3:28). In contrast, the egalitarian believes this verse is asserting the fundamental equality between men and women. The adverb *χωρίς* is typically translated as interdependent. Fiorenza quotes Joseph Kurzinger that “this translation has little basis. Usually the term means not ‘without,’ but ‘different from.’”⁶⁸ If this is correct, verse

⁶⁵ Payne, 158.

⁶⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 523.

⁶⁷ MacArthur, 260.

⁶⁸ Fiorenza, 229.

11 now reads, “In the Lord, woman is not different from man, nor man from woman.”⁶⁹ There is an undertone of individuals no longer being understood as sexed beings in this statement, which sounds very similar to the overly realized eschatology of the Corinthians. However, Paul’s point is that there are indeed two sexes, as God created, and they should be represented properly.

Verse 13 begins Paul’s closing statement, circling back to the practices that were dishonoring in verse 4-6: should a woman pray with head uncovered? Paul appeals to the Corinthians’ own judgment on his conclusions, because he believes he has made his point convincingly.⁷⁰ Paul uses two rhetorical questions to reinforce his teaching, beginning with the statement that nature teaches that men should have short hair. Fee says that Paul is not a stoic appealing to nature, but that he is appealing to proper behavior that is culturally relevant.⁷¹ Men in Corinth knew they should not present themselves with hair that would make people think they were homosexuals, just as in verse 15, women should not present themselves with hair that would be dishonoring to men. Paul states that a woman’s hair is given to her for a covering, which can seem to conflict with the content of 4-6; however, Payne points out that Paul is discussing proper public display of hair, so her long hair is her glory when it is done up (verse 15b), allowing for this interpretation to still make sense.⁷² Paul finishes with the statement that if anyone wants to be contentious, Paul and his companions have no custom, nor do the other churches of God. “If anyone wishes” is a common phrase in I Corinthians, and indicates that

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Payne, 167.

⁷¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 527.

⁷² Payne, 171.

people were being contentious in the church, and this was not a rhetorical exercise.⁷³ Paul then summarizes that the custom of blurring the lines of gender differences is not an accepted practice by him or churches in general.

This passage is extraordinarily difficult to interpret due to the differences in culture, and by Paul's use of terms whose meanings are obscure for the modern reader. The interpretation that makes the best sense given the context, language, and argumentation is that Paul is not teaching about authority in this passage, but about proper public conduct in worship for men and women. The Corinthian church was blurring the lines of socially acceptable behavior, and Paul rebuked this practice on the grounds that it would hurt the witness of the church in the community.

The best conclusion is that Paul's use of *κεφαλή* in this passage is to indicate "source." This makes the most sense of the passage and Paul's goal of instruction in worship. The view that Paul is teaching about creation hierarchy complicates his letter and his dialogue in an unnecessary way, especially since the only authority that Paul references in the entire passage is the authority of women in verse 10.

It also makes sense that Paul is discussing hairstyles instead of veils, as hair is used in the text of I Corinthians 11:2-16. The introduction of veils and veiling customs causes unnecessary complications, and is only done eisegetically to support subordinationist presuppositions. This view assumes cultural convictions that are unable to be substantiated in Corinth at the time. Paul's purpose of correcting practices that were dishonoring to men and God fits better with a discussion of hairstyles, because both men and women are blurring the gender distinction. Seeing the chiasmic structure of verses 8-9, 11-12 emphasizes the equality of man and women in the

⁷³ Ibid.,172-173.

Lord, and shows that Paul wants women and men to understand their equality in Jesus. They should represent themselves properly, not disgracefully, in the church worship gathering.

Understanding verse 11 to say that there is no difference between men and women in the Lord underscores Paul's belief that men and women are equal in the eyes of the Lord. Paul never condemns women praying and prophesying in public worship, in a passage about this very subject. It should be clear that Paul does not find this practice to be in error. Paul's approval then, should be applied to the modern church as well, and women should not be prevented from praying or prophesying in church. As men and women are interdependent, and Paul has not established a top-down, male leadership model in this passage, the conclusion must be reached that Paul is not restricting women from performing functions in the church, but instead requiring men and women to operate out of respect for one another.

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